THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

MEET THE PRESS AT BROOKINGS:
THE EGYPT REVOLUTION ONE YEAR ON

Washington, D.C.
Wednesday, February 8, 2012

PARTICIPANTS:

Introduction:

MARTIN INDYK
Vice President and Director, Foreign Policy
The Brookings Institution

Moderator:

DAVID GREGORY
Anchor, *Meet the Press*
NBC News

Panelists:

TAMARA WITTES
Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs
U.S. Department of State

ROBIN WRIGHT
Joint Fellow
United States Institute of Peace and the Woodrow
Wilson International Center for Scholars

SHADI HAMID
Fellow and Director of Research, Brookings Doha Center
The Brookings Institution

MARTIN INDYK
Vice President and Director, Foreign Policy
The Brookings Institution

* * * * *

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. INDYK: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to Brookings. I'm Martin Indyk, the director of the Foreign Policy Program at Brookings. We're delighted to have you here for another *Meet the Press* at Brookings. And if it's *Meet the Press* at Brookings, it must be David Gregory who's in the chair. And thank you, David, very much for coming down to anchor the session today.

Our other panelists, to my right, Tammy Wittes. Tamara Wittes served as deputy assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern Affairs until last month, where she oversaw the State Department's Middle East Partnership Initiative, known as MEPI, and in that capacity, had responsibility for all of the democracy promotion programs in the Arab world.

I'm delighted to announce the news that Tammy is about to join us as the new director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy starting on March 1st. Ken Pollack will be stepping down after a yeoman's duties since 2009, and he's going to be a full-time senior fellow in the Saban Center, devoting himself full-time to research.

On my left is Robin Wright, an award-winning journalist, author, and foreign policy analyst who's currently a joint fellow at the U.S. Institute of Peace and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. And, of course, she is a former fellow at Brookings. Her most recent book, *Rock the Casbah: Rage and Rebellion across the Islamic World*, deals very much with the issues that we're going to be talking about today. The last time I saw Robin, we were together in Cairo, with Shadi Hamid whom I'll introduce in a moment, outside of the office of one of the presidential candidates.

And joining us from Qatar on the big screen is the director of research at our Brookings Doha Center, Shadi Hamid. Shadi, as you all may know, focuses his work on democratic reform in the Middle East, especially focusing on the role of Islamist political parties. He's one of the co-authors of the most recent Saban Center publication book, *The Arab Awakening: America and the Transformation of the Middle East*, which you can get on your way out.

And so without further ado, I'm going to hand over to David, and take it away.

MR. GREGORY: Well, thank you, Martin, and welcome, everyone. Welcome, Shadi. A few of you may know that Shadi is actually wearing shorts. Well, they're in Doha, and we'll keep him seated the whole time.

There's so much to explore about the still unfolding story. And I'd like, over the course of our time, before we take your questions, to explore what it is that's happening inside of Egypt, where the discussion began and persists of such strategic importance to the region, the U.S. policy, to what else is happening certainly in terms of Syria, even Iran. So we'll look at all of those angles.

And I want to start with Martin. If we come upon a year, since the revolution in Tahrir Square, and if you say to the democratic movement in Egypt, you've just toppled the dictator, you've got a democracy, now what? So now what, what's happening?

MR. INDYK: Well, I think what's happening is, what we're witnessing is a kind of tumultuous process in which the politics of the Square, which produced the revolution and Mubarak's fall from power, is being translated in a rough and tumble political fashion into the politics of parties and Parliament and the presidency. And that process is still unfolding.

What people are probably aware of is that two things happened with Mubarak was toppled. We had a revolution and a military coup. And the military are essentially in power at the same time as we have an elected Parliament, elected by 40 million Egyptians, therefore, empowered by the Egyptian people, legitimate, but as yet, under the old Constitution, the Parliament has practically no powers. Those are in the hands of this interim military regime, the SCAF as it's called, the Supreme Council for the Armed Forces, who are supposed to hand over power in the next few months to the Parliament and the president. But the responsibilities of Parliament and the president still have to be resolved in a Constitution that has to be changed. According to a constituent assembly, they'll be established as part of the Parliament. And so all of that is supposed to happen in the next few months. And the timetable has just been accelerated because all of the violence of recent months has led the SCAF under pressure to accelerate the timetable.

So we're going to have -- we already have a Parliament that's just convened, we're going to have a constituent assembly that's going to change the Constitution, there's going to be a ratification of the Constitution in a referendum, and there's going to be a presidential election. In the meantime, the powers of the military, the powers of the Parliament and the powers of the presidency are going to have to be defined while the street is still engaged in demonstration.

MR. GREGORY: Let's pick up on the street, Robin Wright, because if you saw what

was happening in the street, you had a loose-knit, younger generation looking and finding their way in terms of the building blocks of parties and political parties; you had the Muslim Brotherhood in the wings, not discouraging, but very actively organizing; and you had the military playing a stabilizing role, but still a large role, and all of this tension in between them. You're working on a book about the idea that, in fact, the Islamists really are the future.

MS. WRIGHT: I think so. I think we've gone through three phases in the past year. One was the first period which toppled Mubarack. And I actually don't think that was a revolution. I think that it really was a military coup, in part because the military didn't want Mubarack's son.

We tend to forget that Egypt has been a military state since the revolution by the Free Officer's Movement in 1952, and that all of the presidents have been military men. We've looked at it from the prism of autocracy, political autocracy rather than the military angle.

And the second phase we saw play out from October through December, when you saw people go back to the streets over a variety of issues, including what the military was dictating about the next phase, and each month the violence became greater.

I think we've begun a third phase now with this contest taking a -- now really beginning to be a revolution in challenging the military power. And they're trying to change the status quo that has prevailed really in modern Egypt since the ouster of the monarchy. And that's where we see the most tension.

When I went up to Tahrir Square, the kids are not talking -- we're not talking about the elections as much as we have to challenge the military. They have turned out to be just as much a part of the regime, with the same goals, and in some cases, even tougher action. They have tried 12,000 people in Egypt, civilians, in military courts, some of them simply for criticizing the military. And so now I think we're actually reaching that stage where we're seeing something much more basic happen, and I think this is likely to play out both in the writing of the Constitution and what balance you create, that they're trying in the new Constitution to weaken the presidency and make it a system that balances both Parliament and the presidency.

And also, the military basically had veto power over legislation and foreign policy. It is held up to a third, according to some estimates, of the economy, including large tracts of land, directly or indirectly control over the economy.

Its budget has been so secret that not even Parliament knew what it was. And so on all of these fronts, it's trying to preserve its privilege. And so there's a lot really at stake besides just who the next President is and writing a new Constitution. It's really the balance of power in Egypt.

MR. GREGORY: Shadi, let me bring you into this. One year later, what have we learned?

MR. HAMID: Well, I think, first of all, I think we've realized that the military in Egypt is perhaps the greatest threat to Egyptian democracy. And I think if all the alarmism about Islamist movements that we see in the U.S., if that was transferred to the military instead, I think we'd be in a better position right now, because unfortunately every step of the way, they thoroughly mismanaged this transition.

And I think there were some ideas at the start of this that the military could be a kind of midwife for democracy in Egypt, that they could help manage the process and maintain stability, and what we found out is that that didn't quite work. In fact, I think under military rule, Egypt has become more unstable. You don't know what to expect with them. They flip-flop a lot. Sometimes they repress, sometimes they make concessions.

The second thing I'd say is, we've learned that this was not the secular revolution, that it might have been non-ideologically, but at the end of the day, Egyptians want to see more Islam in their politics. And it's remarkable to think that the Islamist movement in Egypt was able to win not 40 percent, not 50 percent as some were expecting, but more than 70 percent. And I think that forces us from an American perspective to kind of say, you know, this is simply going to be part of the Egyptian landscape. Instead of hoping that it's otherwise, we have to learn to live with political Islam going forward.

MR. GREGORY: Shadi, can I interrupt there? When you say that Egyptians want more Islam in their politics, what does that mean on a practical level? What would that look like?

MR. HAMID: Well, I'm not even sure that they know, at least not yet. And there's a lot of debate about what it means to implement Sharia law. Everyone says that. I mean, the odd thing about Egypt is that even liberal parties support Article 2 of the Constitution, which makes Sharia the principle source of legislation. So you had a very odd phenomenon where liberal parties would campaign in the countryside and raise banners saying, "The Koran is our Constitution."

But I think going forward you have a main divide between the Salafis, which are the far-right Islamists, and the mainstream Muslim Brotherhood. And I think a lot of people thought that they would join together, but the fact of the matter is that they're not getting along, and you see a lot of division going forward. And there was a very interesting video that some of you may have seen where the new Muslim Brotherhood Speaker of Parliament -- there was a Salafi Parliamentarian who stood up in the middle of the Parliamentary Session and started doing the call to prayer out of nowhere. And the Muslim Brotherhood Speaker of Parliament had to shout him down and say, "You're not any more Muslim that we are. You have to stop. You're interrupting the Session." So I think that image was very much reflective of the tensions we see within the Islamist movement.

MR. GREGORY: So let me bring Tammy into this. So this is this landscape, which is very complicated and going in numerous different directions. Martin wrote in a paper, kind of a report, on his trip there and concludes with this: "At a time of supposed decline in American influence in the Middle East, we suddenly find ourselves with new possibilities in democratic Egypt, the largest, militarily most powerful, culturally most influential, geo-strategically most important country in the Arab world." So inside the Obama Administration, they're watching all of this over the past year and thinking what? What is it that the administration is doing and should be doing?

MS. WITTES: Well, let me start by saying that I think if you put together the comments of the preceding panelists, what you hear is that Egyptians knew last year and know today what they don't want. But they're still very much trying to figure out what they do want, what kind of Egypt they want to live in. They knew they didn't want Mubarak. They knew they didn't want another Mubarak. And as Robin --

MR. GREGORY: Is the military another Mubarak?

MS. WITTES: Yes, and I think this is one of the questions that's very much in contention today. Do they want an Islamist Egypt? Do they want a civil state? And Shadi notes that Islamists won 70 percent of the seats in Parliament, but there's not one movement there. There are multiple movements, contending movements, contending visions. And so the phase that we're in right now is the phase of defining what kind of Egypt do we -- do these Egyptians want.

MR. GREGORY: But the administration had to view the military coup -- if there's some agreement about that being what it was -- as the best outcome because it was the most

stabilizing outcome. I mean, we forget in so much of the dialogue that the strongest relationships were military to military between this country and Egypt's military. So if you're going to have an overthrow of a stalwart ally for decades, it's best if the military steps in because they can run the party the rest of the way for a time.

MS. WITTES: I think it's important to note, number one, that there has certainly been other cases of democratic transition in allies of the United States where that hasn't happened, and the United States has sustained a strong partnership with the country in question whether you're talking about South Korea or the Philippines or others.

But I think more concretely if you look over the course of the last year, anyone who assumed that the military's shepherding of a transition would produce a more stable outcome, can question that assumption on the basis of the events we've seen over the past year. The choices that the military made at various points -- not laying out a clear roadmap for the transition, keeping the emergency line in place in the face of intense demand to end it, putting civilians on trial in military courts in large numbers as Robin pointed out -- all of these things have raised questions in the minds of Egyptian citizens and the political elites there about the military's intentions, questions that didn't exist to the same degree a year ago.

And so their shepherding of this transition, I think, has been far less stable than they would have hoped or than anyone predicted at the time.

MR. GREGORY: All right, but what about the piece about what the Obama Administration ought to be doing now to deal with this reality a year in?

MS. WITTES: Okay, well let me circle back around because if Egyptians right now are trying to define what kind of country they want to be, a very important part of that is what role do they want to play in the region? What kind of relationships do they want to have with other countries, including very importantly the United States? Because as Martin pointed out in his analysis, this is a geo-strategically crucial country for the U.S. and for U.S. interests.

The role that the U.S. can play is to help lay out a vision for what a U.S.-Egyptian relationship with a democratic Egypt can be like. That requires the United States to struggle with questions like, how would we interact with a government led by the Muslim Brotherhood? But it requires most of all that the United States make clear its respect for the process, its respect for the self

determination of Egyptian citizens, and its willingness, its readiness, to engage with a much broader range of Egyptian politics in society.

MR. GREGORY: But that sounds to me like, Robin, the government is saying, "We're going to stand back and see how this plays out before we decide what to do because we may not as a government have a lot of options here."

MS. WRIGHT: I actually think the Egyptians want less U.S. influence and less of a U.S. role than ever before. We've seen it with the NGOs, the non-government organizations; the fact that there is a suspicion even among the secular and liberal Egyptians about what U.S. intentions are. And they would like to do it kind of on their own. And they think well, we don't need all the aid that the U.S. has given in the past. It's kind of like the Iranian Revolution where they went into one of the bloodiest modern Middle East wars and at the same time paid off their debt because they wanted simply to establish the principle that -- their debt to the United States and the international community -- because they didn't want that dependence. And I think you see the same phenomenon playing out. There's a pride, a sense of "We did this. This is our moment and for the first time we're going to be in control of our future."

This is where, I think, the United States can help on economic issues, but when it comes to democracy promotion, we ought to stand back and not play the role that -- we want to altruistically, but we'll be perceived by many on the ground as interfering.

MR. GREGORY: Martin, let me ask you about the NGOs specifically because you're talking about Americans being detained and indicted in some cases. Why is this happening? And how is this reflective of the mood there?

MR. INDYK: It's in many ways a real head scratcher. There are various theories. The first is -- and it's probably the most accurate -- the military simply is feckless and unable to control a situation in which -- somebody brought up the issue of the NGOs, the American NGOs acting outside the law; went to the Cabinet. They didn't know what to do with it at the Cabinet so they gave it to the Judiciary. The Judiciary is now issuing arrest warrants and so on. So that's one theory.

There's a second theory that relates to what Robin said about the unpopularity of the United States. After all, we backed Mubarak for 30 years and the desire to separate from that relationship. There's a kind of anti-Americanism as a consequence and so there's an audience for this

kind of action. I suspect, but I can't prove it, that the military saw the statement that President Obama made in December when they started firing on the demonstrators, which was not part of the deal at all. They were supposed to be the mid-watch to the democratic transition, and they started shooting demonstrators. The President comes out and says pretty much what he said to Mubarak. "You need to hand over power immediately to civilian rule and you need it to be inclusive, meaning you need to bring the Islamists into it as well." And I got a feeling that they were not going to be pushed around by Obama in the way or in the sense that he did with Mubarak. He was already heading out the door, but he gave him a humiliating push. And so I suspect there's part of that as well, that they don't want -- the military doesn't want the United States to come into what is a very delicate negotiation between the military and the Muslim Brotherhood about the division of power.

And in that context, they want the United States to stay out of it because Obama signaled that we're on the side of the Islamists. Now there's the ultimate irony in this situation. Being on the side of civilian rule is to be on the side of the Islamists now. And do you want to hear another irony? The Islamists want the United States. They want the aid because they've got to focus on taking power and feeding 87 million Egyptians. And they look around and they don't see the Gulf Arabs coming up with the money. They don't see that Europe is going to come in with the money. It's the United States.

MR. GREGORY: So, Shadi, can you amplify on that, talk more about the strategic thinking of the Muslim Brotherhood right now as they think about rule in Egypt? But they're also thinking about the relationship with Israel and Hamas. How are they playing this right now?

MR. HAMID: Correct. Well, I mean, first of all, I've met with Brotherhood leaders, and they've told me in private we're afraid of American decline; we don't want the U.S. to disappear from the scene, because the alternative is much worse -- Russia, China, and others. So, they might not say that in public, but I think there's a real realization among Muslim Brotherhood leaders that the U.S. has the potential to play a positive role. It hasn't reached that potential yet, and even before the revolution, Muslim Brotherhood leaders would always ask me why isn't the U.S. doing more to put pressure on Mubarak to democratize the country. So, I think that's the first thing.

But in terms of how they're looking at this current phase, I don't think it's useful to look at ideology here. The Brotherhood is as pragmatic as they get. The ultimate flip-flop route is actually

very to follow what their position is on any given issue, because the issue contradictory statements, whether it's the relationship with the military, the NGO crisis -- and I think this is a strategy, a strategic ambiguity -- it gives them wiggle room going forward.

So, I think in terms of how we deal with that, we have to understand that they are going to be pragmatic. That means that if their interests are served by maintaining the status quo with Israel, they'll do that. If they feel they have something to gain by stoking nationalist sentiment against Israel, they'll also do that.

So, you know, we'll have to wait and see, but I think it's also -- you know, it's interesting to note that they're welcoming U.S. officials. There's been a stream of U.S. officials going to Egypt, shaking hands with the General Guide of the Brotherhood, and that's just a remarkable image. But I think it shows that they've craved that international legitimacy. They want to be seen as respectable actors on the international stage.

MS. WITTES: Can I jump in on this point, David, because I think Shadi's last comment gets at something really important. These revolutions in the region are primarily about domestic issues. They're about dignity. They're about freedom. They're about opportunity for this rising young generation. But they're also about a sense that the leaders may have that we're holding them back in important ways, including from connection to the rest of the world. And, you know, what are the aspirations that people in these countries feel? They want to be part of what's going on globally. They want to be part of the global economy. It's not, you know, the same poll as the Eastern European countries who wanted to be Western Europe. No. It's distinctive. They want to be Egyptian. But they want to be part of what they see going on globally, whether it's Internet, whether it's entrepreneurship. And I think that there is a lot of potential for the United States to play a positive role in the region on these grounds, because we are still the symbol of technological prowess, of economic prowess, of educational prowess globally.

MR. GREGORY: So, how do we use that influence then? If we want to unleash all of that, then what is the right play for the administration? I mean, you talk about encouraging these things but not stepping in too far. I mean, that balance is important, but you can't discount American influence at this critical juncture.

MS. WITTES: Absolutely, and the balance is terribly difficult and terribly important.

This isn't our story. This is someone else's story, but we are such a presence in the region, and we have such important interests in the region, and we're deeply engaged in the region. Of course we're going to influence the outcome. So, I think what's incumbent on the United States is to be conscious of the ways in which our going about our business has an impact on these environments, on domestic politics. And, you know, we have to adjust the way in which we engage to account for the fact that domestic politics is a much more complex thing than it once was and that we can't sort of deal at one level and not think about what's going on down here.

MR. GREGORY: Martin and Robin, pick up on something that Tammy mentioned that stokes my interest as somebody who studied Arab nationalism and the Ottoman Empire, which is, you know, if we think about Palestinian nationalism, you think about it being about land. If you think about Arab nationalism you think about it primarily as being cultural. What is the Egyptian-ness? What is that impact like when they can integrate into the rest of the world? What singular impact does Egypt think it can make as a power, as a force in the world that's distinct from some of the other countries?

MR. INDYK: Want to go first? Oh --

MS. WRIGHT: No --

MR. INDYK: Okay --

MS. WRIGHT: -- but I will.

MR. INDYK: Oh, okay.

MS. WRIGHT: Okay, go ahead.

MR. INDYK: What's distinctive about Egypt first and foremost, and every Egyptian's aware of it, is that this is an ancient civilization going back, what is it, 5 millennia with a very proud tradition, and so there is a real Egyptian identity. And that presumed role -- Egypt -- I mean, one in four Arabs is an Egyptian. It is the dominant player, actor in the Arab world, and yet it's been asleep, it's been dormant for a decade. It's lost its influence. It's lost its role under, you know, this tired old pharaoh. Nothing was happening. And so now they're leading the Arab revolutions. And so the Egyptian pride and dignities is restored in that sense. So, that's, you know, that's on the level of pride of dignity.

But on the level of practice, well, they're actually going to do -- they've got huge problems, and now you've got democratically elected political players who are going to have to deal

with those problems. And what are the problems? I mean, the Egyptian economy depends on tourism; in the toilet and just made much worse by the kidnappings that took place last week. The inflow of capital is gone. Who's going to invest in Egypt these days, at least not till things settle down? They get remittances, but, I mean, you've got a huge population now, with expectations that democracy is going to bring jobs and housing and --

MR. GREGORY: And we know in this country the importance of the economy and economic challenges when you have a political system that seems inept in facing up to those challenges, right? And our democracy is a little bit further along, but we still have these same problems. So, as you look at a presidential election and at the prospect of a uniquely Egyptian reemergence, what has to happen first?

MS. WRIGHT: Well, they do have to get this balance of power right in terms of Parliament and a presidential system, and this is in many ways the role that Egypt feels that it has traditionally played in defining Nazarism and so forth in creating the ideologies, creating the systems that others then mimic or copy. And I think that when it comes to the issue of the Islamist parties, they're looking to create the new model that blends what I think will be the trend throughout the region for the next decade, maybe even generation, but looks to us in the West like contradictions. One is this great push for political empowerment, freedom of the press, you know, everybody's represented, everybody has a shot at a better job or whatever, but also that is more culturally familiar in the form of Islam.

And we've talked about now, since the Iranian revolution, about can you blend Islamic democracy? And Egypt has finally tried to take on that question and say, look, the theocracy in Iran was wrong; we're going to create something that accommodates both. And that's reflected, as Shadi said, in just this great tension between the Muslim Brotherhood and newer party. They don't like each other. One will say all the others, you know, naïve and inexperienced, and then the newer party will say of the Muslim Brotherhood, oh, they compromised, they've lost their principles.

And so we're beginning to see the emergence of this Islamic spectrum and how politics -- 70 percent of politics is defined in Islamic terms. And I think that when we come to the presidential election we could all be in for a surprise that there is a widespread assumption that Amr Moussa, former foreign minister, head of the Arab League, is kind of the automatic winner. And I think

we could be, you know, in for --

MR. GREGORY: Well, what's the -- so, Shadi, what is the dream? I mean, for a lot of the Islamists, is it the idea of, like, a Pan-Arab nationalism where there is not just culture but there's Islam? Is it aspirational? Is it positive? Or is it, as we fear in the West, is it more defined by a return to the caliphate and kind of anti-, you know, Zionist, anti-Israel views?

MR. HAMID: Yeah, well, I think in two areas, the economy and foreign policy, the Turkish model is very instructive. And, you know, on foreign affairs I think if, you know, the Brotherhood has control of the foreign policy, which it doesn't yet, it would look something like Erdogan and the AK party in Turkey. So, a lot of anti-Israel rhetoric, a lot of, you know, Egyptian nationalism wanting Egypt to play an important role in the region, but, at the same time, not fundamentally undermining the relationships it has with the U.S. and Europe. No one is talking seriously in the Brotherhood about canceling the peace treaty with Israel. That's not on the table right now.

On the economy, the interesting thing about the Brotherhood is it's actually surprisingly pro-free market, and that's a criticism that a lot of leftists have about the Brotherhood, that the Brotherhood believes too much in the private sector.

And then on the issue of Islamic law, I think there the Brotherhood wants to play a long game. They're not looking for immediate application of anything in the first, you know, one to five years, because they realized that that would frighten people domestically, and also bring about the ire of the international community.

So I think, for them, they want to secure their position in Egyptian politics. And for them, that means getting the economy back on track. Because if you do that, people will listen to you on other things. They'll listen to you when you start talking about the role of religion in public life.

So I think that's the foundation upon which everything is built, which is why the Brotherhood has really made an effort to engage with U.S. officials. And one of the things they're talking about is the economic recovery, and how the U.S. can help on that.

MR. GREGORY: You know, Martin, maybe I'm misinterpreting this, but there's a study of -- or, not a study, but something I read about, you know, views in the Jewish faith about the Messiah. And even some orthodox rabbi -- I said, "Well, do you believe in the Messiah?" And he

says, "Well, yeah, I believe, but that doesn't mean I'm standing by the front door waiting for him to come."

And I wonder, in this case, whether this pragmatism is about -- it's not that they've forgotten some of their old hatreds, but they're saying, "Honestly -- you know, this is no way, really, to live. Let's get people working. Let's get new technology here. Let's win at the game of the international system, and maybe we'll put on the back burner some of the old hatreds and old goals."

MR. INDYK: Well, I think that is very much the feeling, not just amongst the Muslim Brotherhood, but also amongst the Salafis, to the right, the Islamists to the right of the Muslim Brotherhood. They're all being very pragmatic -- at the moment. Because it's all about gaining power, and meeting the needs of the people.

And they will all tell you -- and I'm sure you heard the same thing, you know -- "We've been elected by the people. We have to meet the needs of the people. The people want stability, they want order, they want police back in the streets, and they want the economy revived."

SPEAKER: Jobs, jobs, jobs.

MR. INDYK: Right. That's the priority that they're focused on.

It doesn't mean that, later on, they're not going to go back to their ideological roots. I think they all tend to view this is a long game. And the Turkish model is a good one in that regard, too, that I think they're watching very closely -- their fellow Muslim Brotherhood AK Party in Turkey has played that long game.

And it doesn't mean they won't be an actor on the international stage over time. But they're not going to be playing that role now. And you can see that.

They've got too many pressing issues, to put it very bluntly. They can feed the people or they can fight Israel. And they've decided, for the time being, they're going to feed the people.

MR. GREGORY: Let's just talk about some of the reverberations here, before we get to your questions, and address Syria.

Tammie, what is it that we're going to do about this?
I mean, people are getting killed. I mean, you don't have to be an expert on Syria to know that you have a bad guy who's running the country, who's killing his own people.

Is the world going to stand by and let this happen?

MS. WITTES: Ahh. Well, I guess I have to pause for a moment and say I'm grateful that I'm no longer in the seat where I have to figure this out myself.

I think that the United States has worked hard, with others, to try and increase pressure on this regime, to see if there is a way to persuade it to change its behavior -- or to corral it into a place where, you know, it's got to be responsive.

And, unfortunately, those efforts have been stymied by others in the international who have concerns of their own -- whether those concerns are parochial, or rest on principles that were articulated in New York last week.

I think the challenge is that every day this goes on, the prospects for destabilizing impacts -- not only in Syria, but more broadly in the region -- escalate. And, in fact, that's been true for months. And that's why the United States was pretty early to call for Assad to step down and, you know, working with the Europeans to escalate sanctions as much as possible to try and increase the pressure. Because the quicker this ends, the fewer people die, but also the less likely that it's going to have these negative repercussions.

Now, there is going to be a tipping point inside Syria, where what started out as an exclusively peaceful democracy movement is going to fall further and further into the sort of community-level security dilemmas, where neighborhoods and cities feel little choice but to take up arms to protect themselves against this onslaught.

Now, that's already happening in a lot of different places, but it hasn't yet coalesced into an all-out civil war.

MR. GREGORY: Shadi, you wrote about a responsibility that the U.S. has to protect Syria. Has that responsibility been met?

MR. HAMID: Yeah -- so I think we're at the point where military options are perhaps still premature, but at least have to be considered.

Right now -- you know, we've waited a year. It's been a year since the protests in Syria began. We've tried nearly everything -- diplomacy, negotiation, Arab League Mission, the U.S., talking to Assad, you name it -- and it's only gotten worse. In the last five days we've seen a consistent assault on city of Homs that is killing dozens of people every day, if not more.

So I think there comes a point where we have to ask ourselves: What we've been doing so far isn't working. And if it's not, what are the alternatives?

Now, there's a couple different options on the table. Humanitarian corridor establishing safe zones, arming the Free Syrian army.

And I think it's the time now to determine the feasibility of those options. Will they do more good than harm? And, if so, is there international support for moving in that direction?

And I think Tamara brought up a really important point. We are seeing the militarization of the opposition. The UN veto by Russia was the best recruiting tool the Free Syrian army could have asked for. Because now it's much easier for them to make the case to the Syrian people that there is no other option but taking up arms.

MR. INDYK: And I would just add one thing that I saw coming over in the press this morning. -- I don't know whether it's been confirmed -- that 15,000 Iranian Al Quds forces have been dispatched to Syria today.

Now, if that's confirmed, then you get the sense that if the Iranians are sending forces in, then the question becomes what are the Turks going to do about it? They've talked about setting up humanitarian corridors. Are they going to respond to this?

So I think that for one reason or another, as the violence continues, and this descent into civil war goes on, the potential for a kind proxy war, or even military intervention, is going to increase quite rapidly.

MR. GREGORY: So how do you see it, Robin? What does the U.S. do?

MS. WRIGHT: Well, the danger is that we're all -- you stand on top of the world and look down, and it's not just Syria that's at stake, it is this kind of block that's being formed with China, Russia, Iran, Syria, kind of against the rest of the Arab world, the West, the United States. And the stakes do elevate.

Now, if the Iranians are stupid enough to send 15,000 troops to Syria, that changes the dynamics. It makes it much harder for the Russians.

But the Russians and the Chinese are very nervous, because the whole idea -- they faced their own restive Chinese -- or Muslim population in China, and people-power demonstrating on

the streets of Moscow. And so the whole idea of Syria being able to oust its leader makes them nervous for their own domestic politics.

And so the stakes here are much bigger. And I think, when we look at the question of what do about Iran and its nuclear program, suddenly Syria takes on much more importance. Because this is a place that some of this could play out; that the Iranians were more nervous in 2003 when the U.S. intervened in Iraq, because suddenly the balance of power in the region was changing against them -- that if they lose Syria, that the balance of power changes again.

And when you talk about the United States, and what role it plays, and what its strategic interests are, then suddenly Syria becomes kind of a tool, and an important tool, in squeezing Iran, and doing even more than -- whether its sanctions or UN resolutions can.

MR. GREGORY: But is the bet -- if the bet with Iran at the moment within the Administration is that they can choke off their air supply with sanctions, is that even more the case in Syria? Particularly because there's really not a particularly good military coalition that you could put together at the moment?

MS. WITTES: Well, I think the Syrian economy has a lot less going for it from the beginning than the Iranian economy. But sanctions always take time to work. They never have an instantaneous effect.

And the Syrian sanctions, while we've had a number of sanctions in place for a long time, the escalation that you've seen in the last months is going to take some time play out in terms of impact on the economy.

But if the conflict on the ground goes in the direction that Robin's suggesting, the economic impacts are secondary, frankly. If we end up with a proxy war in Syria.

But I think what Robin's getting at really is important -- that there's a broader dynamic taking place across the region.

The Arab Awakening started out with peaceful movements' overthrowing dictators, and bringing about change in a way that violent extremism always promised to bring about but was never able to. And the potential of that moment, of that model, for the region was so powerful that those in the region who have made heavy, heavy investments in violent extremism are incredibly threatened by it. And they have been working, since, to try and undermine the potential for peaceful democratic changes.

That's what's at stake in Syria right now.

MR. GREGORY: Well, but I want to talk a little bit more on ground level, which is a little bit scarier. So, Martin, if a National Security meeting and the President says, look, I need some options here about what we're going to do. If there is a proxy war that's building, what do we do, you know, now, I mean, in weeks and in a month?

MR. INDYK: Well, I don't think that American military intervention is an option that anybody around that National Security Council table is going to propose. The President, going into an election year, one of the platforms he's running on is he's ending wars in the Middle East, not starting new ones. And in any case, an American military intervention is highly problematic in Syria.

The answer is the Turks. And because the Turks have a very capable military army on the border with Syria and they have a common interest with us in preventing this descending into a civil war, which would be highly problematic for them and they have a common interest with us in getting rid of Assad and seeing some

peaceful transition if that were at all possible. So, we need to work closely with them.

Now, the problem the Turks have is that they don't want the Iranians stirring up their Kurdish problem as a tit for tat for anything that they might do in Syria. So even though they talked about humanitarian corridors, lately they've gone quiet on that and so I think they're kind of hesitating.

MS. WRIGHT: Can I just add one little thing?

MR. GREGORY: Please.

MS. WRIGHT: When we look at Syria and what are the things that are at stake here, the rulers are from the Alawite minority and when we talk about what are the things that squeeze the regime, economics is part of it, but if you get those who are the Alawite officers in the military and they see that the writing is on the wall and that Assad can't survive long-term and they fear the kind of retaliation against them down the road that whether it's the Shah's army in Iran or anyone who is sympatric to old regimes may have to pay a price.

And you may get the Alawite businessmen who have done very well under the current regime and they say, you know, we could lose everything we own, that you could get the Alawite minority. When you get -- and whether it's the Christian minority as well, which has sided, in part, with the Alawites because they're a minority and it's the minority issue at stake.

But if you start looking at who are the players inside the regime? What internal elements? Yes, the Turks are of importance, so are the Saudis, the Gulfis who have taken the lead in challenging Assad in defining what the Arab position is, but it's also looking at what's inside this country that you could -- how do you negotiation something that will get those players to then take the stand and do -- and take the final step.

MR. INDYK: What you need -- sorry, just quickly, David -- what you need is a credible opposition, Syrian opposition, that is capable of saying to those Alawites and Christians and Sunni business elite that are still supporting the regime --

MR. WRIGHT: And the Kurds.

MR. INDYK: -- there is a safe place for you in a post-Assad regime. At the moment, Assad is saying to them, it's kill or be killed and you need to stick with me because you're going to be dead if I go. And so, we have to find a way to separate from them.

But there the problem is the Syrian opposition is not effectively formed, divided, it's not -- there's an urgent task of supporting them in a way that makes them credible when they engage the supports of the regime that have to be broken away.

MR. GREGORY: Shadi, I want to make -- ask one other question before I turn it to the audience for just a few questions, which is return back to where we started. I began by asking what's happening in Egypt one year later and we're concluding with a discussion about what's happening Egypt is actually not just in Egypt, it's churning throughout the Middle East and it becomes a really difficult question for how much change you can tolerate, how much change you can absorb, when you are, you know, a dominant power like the United States still trying to influence where it can.

So, when you look at Syria and no good options and you say it's a question of how much we can actually do in the course of this first year when things are moving so quickly and so dangerously.

MR. HAMID: Yeah, well, I might differ with Robin a bit on this, but I think the U.S. has a great opportunity now to fundamentally reorient its policy in the region. We made a lot of mistakes the past 50 years; we consistently supported the most autocratic regimes in the region. Now it's time to learn from that mistake and to forge a

new relationship with people on the ground.

I think wherever you look any time the Arab protestors in their time of struggle, they don't turn to Russia and China, they turn to the U.S. We see that in Bahrain, we see that in Syria where the Syrian National Council has formally endorsed foreign military intervention. In Libya, they were pleading for the U.S. to get involved last March.

So, there is a role for us to play because at the end of the day sometimes domestic forces can do it on their own. They did in Egypt and Tunisia but since then we haven't seen that. Libya required NATO intervention. Syria, we know, Bahrain, stalemate, the list goes on.

So, if we find a way to genuinely support democratic forces on the ground and commit ourselves to that, I think that will really change perceptions of America in the region. I don't think, so far, we've done that. I think the Obama Administration has generally been quite hesitant and has done a lot of half measures but hasn't gone as far as it can on some of these issues.

And it's also been inconsistent, Bahrain being the most obvious example where the U.S. hasn't supported democratic forces in that country.

MR. GREGORY: All right, let's get a couple of questions. Let's try to keep them to the point, we'll keep the answers to the point. Way in the back there. Yes, you with your hand up. Go ahead. Start us off.

MS. RIZZO: Hi. I'm Patty Rizzo of the Public International (inaudible). So my question is about the judiciary. It's my understanding that the judiciary is relatively independent and this is just much to their own culture, not necessarily because it's been codified or anything of the like. Does anyone up on the panel think that Parliament would do something to change this, either to make the judiciary more independent or less

independent through prospective legislation?

MS. WITTES: Well, I'll address your question in just a sec, but let me start out by saying, David, I have to quibble a little bit with the way you posed the question that you asked Shadi, because you asked, how much change can the United States handle, and I think we have to start by recognizing that there is change occurring across the region, that actually it's been building for a number of years and that what's happened over the last year is this sort of breaking out of stuff that's been bubbling under the surface for a long time and that exists everywhere in the region.

There is nowhere in the region where you don't have this combination of a rising young generation with escalating expectations, concerns over corruption and stagnated economies, concerns over rights violations --

MR. GREGORY: Right, but what's the point? I mean, it's still a question of choices.

MS. WITTES: Right, but what I'm saying is, our challenge is not, do we want change or do we not want change. Our challenge is: how do we deal with the change that's there?

MR. GREGORY: Right, but you make choices about where you try to affect change. This administration decided to do it in Libya but not in Bahrain, so you can't say that you're consistent. There is a determination that's made about what change this administration wants to address, just like the previous administration made. So, the question is about absorbing as policy, yes, there's all this change coursing through the region, where do we want to put our thumb on the scale? Those are strategic choices that are made; you can't just stand back and say, well, we want to just follow the aspirations of the region.

MS. WITTES: Well, no, you don't just stand back. As I said, standing

back isn't a realistic option because we're involved everywhere already, but I do think it's absolutely crucial that things be led from the ground and that the change that's been successful over the last year, in Tunisia in particular, but also in Egypt and elsewhere, has been locally driven, locally led. To the extent that the Egyptian transition to democracy succeeds, it will succeed or fail because of the actions of Egyptians and the choices of Egyptians in their elections this year --

MR. GREGORY: But it's never quite that pure.

MS. WITTES: No, it's never --

MR. GREGORY: I mean, you dealt with Bahrain because you had a guy who was pro-Western, pro-American, you thought you could do business with, and you didn't want to upset the apple cart.

MR. INDYK: No.

MR. GREGORY: No?

MR. INDYK: It was because of Saudi Arabia, it wasn't because of Bahrain. It's because Saudi Arabia is next door, Saudi Arabia is the biggest oil producer, it's the only swing producer that can moderate the price of oil. And if Bahrain, the king was overthrown, then the prospect we feared was that the Shia revolution there would spread to the Shias in Saudi Arabia, who happen to be 10 percent of the population. They're all concentrated in the Eastern province on top of the oil reserves --

MR. GREGORY: But there wasn't leadership there that we thought we could do business with in Bahrain?

MS. WITTES: David, it's about choices. About the choices.

MR. INDYK: Right. We made a choice in favor of our --

MS. WITTES: The status quo.

MR. INDYK: -- interests as opposed to our values. In Libya we chose --

MS. WITTES: I'm sorry.

MR. INDYK: -- values instead of our interests because we didn't have many interests there.

MS. WITTES: Martin, with all respect, I think that's a simplistic description of where we were. Where we were in Bahrain --

MR. INDYK: We're at *Meet the Press*, you know.

MR. GREGORY: That's right.

MS. WITTES: Where we were in February and March --

MR. GREGORY: We'll get to the judiciary question. It always sets people off, those judiciary questions. (Laughter)

MS. WITTES: Where we were in February and March in Bahrain was that the United States was working very, very intensively for a solution, a Bahraini solution to a Bahraini problem, and the decision was made by the Bahraini government to invite in Saudi troops and troops from elsewhere in the GCC that overrode any hope for a negotiated reform process that we had been working on.

That was not a U.S. decision. That was not a U.S. preference. Now, it's a Bahraini decision with, as you note, a heavy role from the Saudis. So, I think the lesson there is that, yes, we have a lot of influence, but others do as well.

MS. WRIGHT: And we did nothing about it. We looked the other way, and we had the -- you know, there are things that we could have done, even in a small way. This is -- David's right, we made choices.

MS. WITTES: To be continued.

MR. GREGORY: Well, no, but, I think this is actually -- I mean, we can get to a couple more questions, but I do think this is really important because you made the point. I mean, there's so much change happening all at once, but I remember talking

to White House officials, you know, a year ago and it was it's very difficult to try to affect it. A determination was made with regard to Mubarak, in part because of military-to-military relationships. Let's put the thumb on the scale there and push him at the right time, get on the right side of history. A different choice was made, for a variety of reasons -- and Martin is certainly right or I wouldn't have the standard to argue with him -- about our strategic interests in the region. But, again, it was these choices.

So now we face these choices with regard to Syria, and even in whatever our influence is as this politics is breaking out in Egypt.

MR. INDYK: But we are putting our thumb on the scale in Syria. There's no question we're trying to get to the far side.

MS. WITTES: That's right, there's no question of where the United States stands on Syria.

MS. WRIGHT: But we're not doing that much, I mean --

MS. WITTES: Well, and the question that Shadi posed, I think, is the right one, is what are the options that do more good than harm? And I think in the Syrian context, given the complexity of the neighborhood, as you noted, that is a really tough question to answer.

MR. GREGORY: But so, Shadi, if the President of the United States were to stand up -- and let me just tell you, this is not going to happen -- if he were to stand up in this election year and say, let's have a fundamental reorientation of the United States toward this region, what are some concrete things that he would actually say and that the United States would start doing that it would address some of these problems? Because what you're suggesting, that kind of fundamental orientation to reverse the last 50 years, I mean, that's going to take time to build both a consensus for it in the United States and even within the government to begin that reorientation.

MS. WITTES: And I guess I would add onto your question, David, isn't it possible that the United States putting its thumb on the scale in that way would be seen as interventionist as the foregoing, you know, support for autocratic governments?

MR. HAMID: Yeah, well, I think one thing that the U.S. can do more of is using its aid. In countries where we have large aid packages, using that aid as leverage and pushing hard on regimes to get serious about democracy. I think what the Egyptian government is doing now with NGOs, I mean, it's remarkable to think that the son of the U.S. Transportation secretary, a member of Obama's cabinet, is threatened with up to five years in prison because he works for a U.S. NGO. That's really outrageous considering that the Egyptian military is also foreign-funded.

So, they criticize others for U.S. funding, but no one receives more than they do and I think that they think that we're bluffing. They don't think the Obama Administration is seriously going to withhold aid. So, I think we have to freeze it until they're willing to resolve this and call them on their bluff. That's just one example.

In other countries that we have large aid packages -- Jordan, Morocco -- I think there should be explicit benchmarks that these countries have to meet to continue receiving the same levels of aid, and we can decide on those benchmarks with countries that are interested in reform. At least Jordan and Morocco want to move in that direction. But I think a lot of it is going to have to do with how much money we can commit.

We have budgetary constraints, yes, but I think committing, you know, only 1- to $2 billion to support Egypt at this time is simply not enough. We have to find a way to be creative and get more money to support these transitions. I don't know if Congress is going to be very excited about that, though.

MS. WRIGHT: It’s not going to happen.

MR. GREGORY: Let's -- I want to do one more question, but can we get

the judiciary question answered? (Laughter) Can anybody actually answer that?

MS. WITTES: Okay, so briefly the Egyptian judiciary, I think, has a strong tradition of independence and it is probably the most highly-respected political institution in Egypt. That said, under the previous government there was a lot of influence by the executive branch on the judiciary. The Executive Branch appointed, promoted, set salaries, et cetera, and the Judge's Club -- the sort of association of judges -- was also interfered with quite a bit by the Mubarak government.

And so I think there -- you know, there's a lot of pride in the Egyptian judiciary, but there's definitely some reform work to do as they do the constitutional revision if they want to have a truly independent judiciary.

MR. GREGORY: All right. So, we'll do a final -- can we do one question? Let's do one question. Yes, sir.

DORGAM: My name is Dorgam. I'm here with the Osgood Center. I'm from Palestine. I just had a curious question to you, actually, and to Mr. Hamid about your understanding of what exactly is going on in terms of the relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and Egypt right now rising to a political Islamic orientation and their parliament and Hamas.

We've seen the prisoners exchange deal, we're seeing the Doha announcement two days ago with the help of the Egyptians and the Qataris, actually, regarding reconciliation, and it seems as though Hamas is moderating forward and had been expected or anticipated, at least here in the U.S. or elsewhere in the West.

So, with the rise of that political Islam across the world, either in Tunisia or in Egypt or other countries likely in the near future, where will Hamas fall? Because if we recall, Hamas did win democratic elections but it was contested by the West and their allies in terms of their political orientation and everything. How is that going to play out in

terms of their relationship with Israel, and where is the Muslim Brotherhood as an Islamic party going to fall in this?

Thank you.

MS. WRIGHT: I was actually in the Palestinian territories for the election in 2006. I think, look, what's happening across the board is that governing is a reality check politically and that's happening with the Muslim Brotherhood, it's happening with the Salafis, it's happening with Hamas. That doesn't mean they're overnight going to become pragmatic on every issue, but the fact that both the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis are talking about honoring all international treaties that Egypt has made, including for the Salafis who, you know, are ultra-conservatives and are the most rejectionist.

I think, you know, Hamas was a branch of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the alliance is very close. At the same time, I think you'll see the Muslim Brotherhood take positions on Camp David that call for changes, whether it's on the gas price, you know, getting more real from the $3 that was artificially paid to the $9 it is now, whether it's more troops in the Sinai, that there are, you know, steps that they will take but they're not going to aggregate.

Nobody in the region wants a war. We haven't had a real kind of conventional war now in quite a while. They've all been -- you know, it's Hezbollah-Israel, it's Hamas-Israel, it's the non-state actors. And I think that across the board everybody -- like I said before, jobs, jobs, jobs. That's where the reality is.

And when you come to government and you realize that you're part of an electoral system that you have to deliver or pick up the garbage or all of these things in a way that gives them -- you know, when I went to see the Salafis, it was fascinating that they were talking about, well, we want to create Egypt as a medical center for both the Arab world and Africa. And if you know anything about the Egyptian health care system,

you think dream on. But the idea is that they are talking about how do you create jobs and how do you make Egypt great? And how do you do those things that will solve -- give people a sense of the future, which is really what they wanted when they went to Tahrir Square the first time.

We see it as democracy, it's really a future. And that means participating and have some control over their destiny.

MR. INDYK: Just one quick visual here of Hamas' external headquarters moving out of Damascus. What does that mean? They're moving out of the rejectionist camp, out of the Iranian-Syrian-sponsored anti-Israel camp into the Muslim Brotherhood Egyptian camp, which has a peace treaty with Israel.

MS. WRIGHT: Or moving the headquarters to Doha where they have commercial ties with Israel.

MR. INDYK: Nobody is actually allowing them to set up their headquarters anywhere, which is interesting. But they face the same dilemma in Gaza. They've got to serve, so they've got to feed the people who fight Israel. They've decided to feed the people, too.

So, I agree with the questioner that there is a process of pragmatism that can lead to moderation with Hamas as well, especially if they're Muslim Brotherhood patrons or they become the patrons, because they no longer have Iran as a patron. They're saying we don't want to have war with Israel, either.

MR. GREGORY: Well, if things continue to look up, maybe they can figure out tax reform. (Laughter)

So, thank you all. We're going to end it there. Thanks very much. (Applause)

* * * * *

CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Carleton J. Anderson, III

(Signature and Seal on File)

Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Virginia

Commission No. 351998

Expires: November 30, 2012