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HOW ARAB PUBLIC OPINION IS RESHAPING THE MIDDLE EAST

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. INDYK: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I'm Martin Indyk, the director of the Foreign Policy Program here at Brookings. Welcome to Brookings. I especially want to welcome the Ambassador of the Arab League, who is joining us today.

This is a Saban Center for the Middle East event, and under Tammy Wittes' directorship, the Saban Center is going from strength to strength, I'm very proud to say. Just a little ad for them at the beginning, before we get into the main event. The Saban Center has launched its blog. It's called *Iran at Saban* and you can find it on the Web and via our Brookings website. It is launched in the run-up to the elections in Iran. It will be edited by Suzanne Maloney, and if you want to follow what's happening in Iran, look at *Iran at Saban.*

We're here today to launch the latest book by Shibley Telhami, *The World Through Arab Eyes: Arab Public Opinion and the Reshaping of the Middle East*. Many of you will be familiar with Shibley. He's been at this podium many times over the years giving us his analysis of Arab public opinion -- occasionally Israeli public opinion, too, and occasionally American public opinion. But his focus over, I think at least a decade now, has been on Arab public opinion. And he is without doubt the preeminent expert on this subject. We're very proud to have him as a non-resident senior fellow at the Saban Center at Brookings. And in his day job, of course, he is the Anwar Sadat professor for peace and development at the University of Maryland.

Why do they hate us? It's a question that you might remember was emblazoned on the front cover of *Time* magazine the week after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. It was an article by Fareed Zakaria that I think probably launched his career. But it's a question that has really been answered effectively, and it's a question that is still very

much on the minds of Americans and on the minds of people in the West, especially when we have things like the recent Boston Marathon bombings.

And while it's much-debated and there's much discussion about it amongst pundits, there is rarely the kind of analysis based on surveys of Arab public opinion that give us real insights -- accurate insights -- into the way that Arabs see themselves and how they see themselves in the world and how they view the rest of the world. And Shibley has been the one to put in a great deal of work over many years to try to accurately understand and convey this issue of Arab public opinion. That's what this book is about, and I'm delighted to have the opportunity to host the launch of it.

To respond to Shibley's introductory remarks, in which he'll talk about the book, we're very pleased to have Kim Ghattas join us on the podium. She is the BBC State Department TV and radio correspondent since 2008. She travels regularly with the Secretary of State. She's previously been a Middle East correspondent for the BBC and the financial times, based in Beirut, and was part of an Emmy award-winning BBC team coverage of the Lebanon/Israeli conflict of 2006.

Her recent book is called *The Secretary: A Journey with Hilary Clinton from Beirut to the Heart of American Power*, published earlier this year. And I should say while we're talking about books that Shibley's latest book is a book that he wrote with Dan Kurtz and Bill Qwant and other experts on Arab/Israeli peacemaking. It's called, *The Peace Puzzle: America's Quest for Arab/Israeli Peace.* And it, too, was published earlier this year.

But today, we're here to hear about *The World Through Arab Eyes*. Shibley.

MR. TELHAMI: Good afternoon. Thanks so much, Martin, not only for

the introduction and for hosting this event, but really for this project. I mean, the truth of the matter is Brookings has been a big part of this project. I think almost every major poll that I've conducted over the past decade has been revealed here, and we had a discussion here and my proud association with Brookings dates back to 1995, even preceding the Saban Center and certainly since the Saban Center, and I've been proud of this relationship and it's certainly benefited my thinking and my analysis. And so, Brookings is a big part of this book as well.

Before I tell you a little more about this book, allow me to remember my mentor and friend, Kenneth Waltz, who passed away last week at age 88. Kenneth Waltz, those of you who don't know him, was a giant in the field of international relations. Influenced the field perhaps more than anyone else, and certainly by any measure among the four or five people who influence international relations since World War II, more than any other figure in the United States. And whether you agreed with him or not, you couldn't ignore him. And so, people who agreed with his school of thought labeled “neo-realism”, whether they're liberal or constructivist, whatever term people gave them, generally started with him and defined their position in juxtaposition to him. And certainly, trained no clones. A lot of his students have become successful in their own way, and that was one of the things that he counseled.

But two things I think he left all of us. One was to be concise and clear, and if not then it's not worth doing. And the second is, wherever you start in the study of politics, start with power. Understanding its sources and how it operates, and then go from there. And those things certainly were in operation to my thinking, and I in some ways -- I mentioned Ken, who is remembered here, and he was a close friend and I talked to him not too long before he died in New York. But I mention him also because,

to be honest, studying public opinion isn't a natural thing, given the training that I received coming out of a school of thought that emphasized global power, particularly state power. And in some ways, seemingly ignored the importance of public opinion. And so, it seemed to many in the caricature interpretation of what people thought realism was or how they understood power to be that public opinion really doesn't play a role. I think that's a caricature that's ultimately incorrect.

But nonetheless, my own beginning of interest in this broader field of Arab public opinion goes back to 1990 specifically. It was actually the year I published my first book, and it was called *Power, Leadership, and International Bargaining, a*nd it was focused on power and leadership. But that year, I was on the staff of Congressman Lee Hamilton. He was at the time the chair on the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East in the House of Representatives, and I was then an international affairs fellow of the Council on Foreign Relations assigned to him, and I advised him on the Middle East.

In that Spring -- this was the Spring at the end of the Cold War. The Cold War is ending, the Middle East is changing, the Iran/Iraq war had just ended, a huge transformation had taken place in the Middle East. And I was sent to the Middle East to essentially examine how the end of the Cold War was going to impact the region. And I went there, to many places, four or five countries, talking to people, scholars, journalists, officials, ordinary people, essentially trying to piece together a report of my analysis of where the region is after the end of the Cold War.

One place I went was Bagdad, and it was in June of 1990, exactly 2 months before Iraq invaded Kuwait. I went to -- my host was actually Ambassador April Glaspie in Bagdad. That evening, she persuaded me to join her at a dinner at the house

of the Italian ambassador, who was having Italy's national day party. And there, I learned that Arafat, Yasser Arafat, was actually still in Bagdad because he had come for this Arab summit. And it was suggested that I should meet him because there was an andalah (?) going on between the U.S. and the PLO at the time. And that my meeting with him might be helpful, both in conveying to him where Congress is and then in having him send messages to Congress. Since I wasn't an official of the U.S. government, I wasn't bound by this no communication, no conversation with him.

Well, overnight the Egyptian ambassador actually arranged for me to meet with Arafat the next morning, and I had a lengthy 3-1/2 hour meeting with him, after which I filed a report, about my own interpretation of what was happening. But one of the things that struck me at that time was not so much, you know, the calculations pertaining to the Palestine question, but a bigger, broader issue about the Arab public opinion. And what came across in Arafat's story was that Arab public opinion is central, he was trying to persuade me. That the Arab pro-American Arab governments were very weak and vulnerable and sensitive, and that Iraq and its leader, Saddam Hussein, had emerged as very popular and that, in fact, this public pressure will serve to insulate him and to get other people to cooperate with him.

And in fact, I had written about this in the past in the early 1990s. I ended up writing a couple of academic articles, but also a *New York Times* piece in which I argued that Saddam Hussein actually -- his miscalculation was about Arab reaction. He thought that Saudi Arabia was simply not going to allow American troops on its soil because of Arab public opinion, and therefore the United States couldn't succeed in its war without it stationing its forces on American -- on Saudi soil.

But the bottom line is, when I left that conversation -- and I had written a

report and the report, after meeting with people in Egypt and Jordan and Syria and Iraq -- was that Arab public opinion was highly angry with the United States. I even compared it with the period after 1956, that kind of anger with the West. And it was for a variety of reasons, I'm not going to enumerate them here.

But the bottom line is, there was the Iraq war and the Saudis invited American troops on their soil. They stayed in power, and seemingly Arab public opinion had no impact on at least these big politics. And so, there was this kind of gap that is ongoing between what we were getting from elites and governments and what we were seeing, witnessing in the -- what was happening on the ground.

And so, it was during that time that I started thinking, so Arab rulers think Arab public opinion is important, why is there something really different here that is taking place that I'm not measuring or understanding? Or is it that I'm not measuring Arab public opinion correctly? Because I was mostly reporting the positions of elites, the positions of journalists, governments, and so forth. Not really the ordinary Arab people. And so, I had different theories about it. I wrote about it.

It was during this time that then there was the information revolution. 1995, Al Jazeera comes out, and then the place opens up in terms of discourse. And I really thought that what I needed to do was not only try to have scientific studies of public opinion with public opinion polls to measure what public opinion is in the Arab world, but really to measure it over time to see how it's changing and to measure it as this information revolution is breaking out. To see how behavior is changing, now -- whether or not this information revolution is ultimately having an impact on how people see the world, how they define themselves. Not only their opinions on issues, but also how they identify themselves, their identities.

And so, that is really the context of this project. It's really a 20-year old project, including over 10 years of public opinion polling that started in the late 1990s experimentally, and then in 2003 in a very consistent fashion of annual public opinion polls in 6 countries.

And many of you have heard the findings of these polls over the years, and I'm not -- just those of you who might be worried that I'm about to put out there all these graphs and Power Points, as I usually do. There are no Power Points today, no data displayed today. I'm just going to summarize some findings.

Obviously the Arab uprisings have created a new sense that we need to understand our public opinion. So, given that we had a decade prior to the Arab uprisings of data, we also did some polling after the Arab uprising to see if there was change and how, if there was any change, what kind of change had taken place.

What I'm -- the product is this book, which is in 12 chapters. I'll just give you flavors of the issues that it addresses, because today I'm only going to focus on one central theme that is tied to the first chapter. It goes through Arab identities, it's Chapter 1, in which I discuss the issues I'm going to talk about today. The information revolution and public opinion, the relationship between those two and how it has evolved over the past decade. The network that Americans love to hate, Al Jazeera. How it's evolving, what drives it, what's behind the Al Jazeera rulers in supporting a channel like this, and what kind of threat is it under now in the new changed environment in the Middle East?

Incitement, empathy, and opinion, an issue that I'm also going to address indirectly today. The Arab prism of pain that specifically addresses the Palestinian/Israeli conflict and its role. How Arabs view their uprisings, trends in Arab attitudes toward the United States, attitudes toward Iran, attitudes toward democracy, women, and religion.

Global perspectives, in terms of how Arabs see the rest of the world -- China, Europe, other powers around the world. And one on American public opinion toward the Arab world entitled, *From 9/11 to Tahrir Square: The Arabs Through American Eyes*, based on public opinion polls we did here in the U.S. about the Arab world. And finally, Arab public opinion and the reshaping of the Middle East. What we should anticipate in the coming years from the Arab uprisings.

So, allow me to focus my discussion essentially on one theme that comes out in my first chapter, Arab identities. Because this issue of identity is central to my research. It has been central to the study of the impact of the media, and I think it's ultimately central to how we understand public opinion. And so, I'm going to focus on this issue of identity, but allow me to do so by starting with an observation about the Arab uprisings.

Those of you who watched the early days of the Arab uprisings, particularly in Egypt and Tunisia, know that one of the most mesmerizing chants -- and I was there in Cairo just a week after the revolution, two weeks after the revolution, in one of those big gatherings in Tahrir Square. And it was absolutely mesmerizing to hear hundreds of thousands of people chant, raise your head high, you are an Egyptian. Raise your head high, you're a Libyan. Raise your head high -- and I think that's why a lot of people said this is a revolution about dignity. Arabs who were not raising their heads high, they're raising their heads high. In some ways, this was about dignity.

And what I want to do today is try to unpack this sense of raising one's head high, what it means, and what is it that people meant by it? And what I want to put forth on the table is, unlike conventional wisdom of the Arab uprisings, which is that in the first place they were motivated by domestic issues -- certainly repression, but lack of jobs

and poor economy. I want to posit that these uprisings cannot be understood without reference to foreign policy. And I want to make the case of the centrality of foreign policy in the Arab sense of anger that is reflected in the Arab uprisings.

Now, let me start by saying, first of all, I have no doubt in my mind that in the end, based on all the polling done over the decade, but beyond. That in the end, people reject authoritarianism and they want liberty from authoritarian rulers. And I have no doubt that the economy and the absence of jobs have been factors in the Arab anger towards the regimes. I have no doubt. And they are an important part to the collective sense of anger that people have in every country, varying from Tunisia to Egypt to Yemen to anywhere else that people want to get -- to control things into their own hands.

But what I want to do is give you three factors why I think we cannot fully understand these uprisings without reference to foreign policy and specific foreign policy issues. Let me begin first by acknowledging what has already been acknowledged, which is that without the information revolution it would be very difficult to explain the timing of the uprisings, in large part -- not so much because the information revolution created new reasons for Arabs to revolt, but in large part because it provided new instruments to organize without the need for traditional political organization or charismatic leadership, which is really essentially translating the public anger into mass political mobilization.

And so in that sense, there's no question that the media was central, and I think the timing of it -- why the Arab uprising took place in 2010 and 2011, not in 1995 or 1980 isn't because there was an absence of reasons in 1995 or in 2002 or 2005, but in some part it was a function of this availability of instruments to mobilize without the need for political parties that didn't exist before. So in that sense, there's no question that the

media is a factor. But put that aside and address the causes.

It's not that we didn't know the Arabs were angry in the past decade. I mean, those of you who watched me unveil the annual Arab Public Opinion Polls year after year, I'd say the gap between publics and governments is only increasing year after year. So it's not that we didn't know people were angry, we were just trying to explain -- in fact, rather why it is that that anger cannot translate into revolt, rather than the other way around.

But if you look at that decade preceding the Arab uprisings and I ask you to put your finger on something dramatically different in terms of new economic-type of crisis that didn't exist in the Arab world in decades past, or to a new form of repression that Arabs didn't experience in decades past, or a new absence of jobs that Arabs didn't experience in decades past, I don't think you'll find it because the decade didn't exhibit anything profoundly different from previous decades. Those things about the absence of jobs and economy and everything else were constant. They were not changing. That is not what changed.

And if you look at that decade, you can't ignore the role of foreign policy. Let me start by making three observations about it. The first is a review of the events. What is most striking about the decade that mobilized the Arab public more than any other in demonstrations or writings or anger or anything else? First, the collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in 2000 that led to the (inaudible) and then the violence between Israel and the Palestinians. That was the obsession in 2000, and even in 2001 after 9/11. And then it was 9/11 and the reaction to 9/11, and you witness what happened in the relationship between the U.S. and the Arab world, and many Muslim majority countries as well. And then there was the Afghanistan war, and then there was

the Iraq war, and then there was the Israel-Lebanon war in 2006, and then there was the Gaza war in 2008.

And in all of these events, Arabs were angry because the governments were impotent to deal with events that went against the perceived interest, and even against their identity. And even worse, in most cases were seen to be collaborators of the public's enemy over these events. And if there was any anger with governments that accumulated -- that essentially poured oil on fire -- wasn't so much new absence of jobs, which did exist, but it was that these resentments that fueled more anger with governments because of impotence in their sense of collaboration with the outside world against the public's interest.

And in fact, if you're going to say the Iraq war had something to do with the Arab Spring, it didn't have something to do with it because it was done in the name of democracy. In the polling that we do in the chapter that writes about democracy, there's a lot of evidence that the overwhelming majority of Arabs never believed that the U.S. was trying to advocate democracy in any of the countries. Never believed that the U.S. was trying to do that. That wasn't even on the horizon of the Arab public, but it was more about here's a war that was seen to weaken the Arabs to go against their aspirations over which their governments couldn't do anything. And at worse, many of them seemed to collaborate over it. And I think that is an added -- that's factor number one.

Let me give you a second set of evidence. It has to do with the polls. One of the things that I ask in those polls is, name the leader that you admire most in the world. I asked it as an open question. Many of you have heard that. Now, I don't think that people know these leaders around the world. I don't expect them really to know when they're saying Hassan Nasrallah to know him or even to want him to be their

president. My aim in these questions is to get at the prism through which they make a judgment. What is the angle that they use when they're choosing someone? That tells me more about the mindset. Doesn't tell me about the individual.

And you look at all the people who were identified over that decade, all the way until now. All of them had to do with foreign policy, and mostly with the Israel-Palestine question, starting with Jacques Chirac in 2003, 2004 when he hosted Yasser Arafat, the dying Yasser Arafat and treated him like a head of state, and was also seen to have stood up to George Bush on the Iraq War -- going to Hassan Nasrallah after the 2006 war, most admired even as people were talking about the Sunni-Shia divide. Here are the Arab Sunnis identifying a Shia leader as the most admired leader in the Arab world over this issue. And then in 2009, Hugo Chavez with Venezuela being the only country that broke its diplomatic relationship with Israel over the Gaza war.

And then, we have the Arab uprisings. And people say, okay, well that was before the Arab uprisings. So what do we have after the Arab uprisings? Well interesting, we do have the Prime Minister of Turkey, Erdogan. And people say, well, we got you. This is a Muslim Democrat. We've got the right choice, and people are embracing democracy. Well, in part it's true. But it's not entirely true, because people don't get why did Egyptians and Jordanians not choose Erdogan in 2006 or 2005 or 2004 or 2003? Why? I mean, he was still the Muslim Democrat in Turkey. Why do they choose him only after the Gaza war and the position that he took on the Gaza war?

So, Erdogan, yes. There is evidence in the polling that we have that Turkey has emerged as sort of a model because of its mix of Islam and democracy. But more importantly, because of its assertiveness in foreign policy that it is seen to have the power and the strength to stand up behind its identity, and also to stand up to Israel and

the United States.

And here's another thing. The year after the Arab uprising started in my poll, in Saudi Arabia and Jordan the most admired leader, the most frequently mentioned name for admired leader in these countries, you would think would be some other democrat, maybe Erdogan, but it wasn't. It was Saddam Hussein. And this is not one where I'm providing names, it's an open question. We can analyze that, but it has to be over foreign policy. It can't be over something else in this particular case.

The third evidence -- and really, the one that I think is the most telling evidence in some ways -- and that's where I spend a lot of my time, because it is really about identity. It is about how Arabs identify themselves. Who are they? When an Egyptian says I'm an Egyptian or an Arab or a Muslim, or a Jordanian says I'm a Jordanian or a Muslim or Arab, what do they mean? And how has that evolved over the past decade?

We have a lot of evidence about the evolution of identity in the Arab world. For one thing, one of the things that is clear that across the board in the six countries that we studied -- that includes Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, and Morocco -- the identification with the state has declined over the decade. Identification as a Muslim has increased, but also in relative terms, Arab has increased in relation to the state. So, the state has lost over the decade.

When you ask people, are you -- I know you're all these things. You're Arab and Muslim and Jordanian, but which one is more important to you today? Then they rank those issues and we could tell how this is evolving.

Now, the causes of this decline of state identity are complex, and they're addressed here. And one issue that is closely studied is the link between the

transnational media and identity, namely Al Jazeera and Al-Arabiya and all the transnational media. Whether or not they're correlating with the intensification of what I call transnational identity, identity outside the boundaries of the state.

And we do find evidence that transnational media is correlated with transnational identity. So, those who watch transnational media tend to identify themselves more as Muslim and Arab than with the state. That's for sure. However, as we -- as I argue in the book, a lot of this is of course self-selection. And we talk about self-selection in this particular project where people watch the station that caters to their identity, but in the process there's a reinforcement. So, over time this self-selection perhaps increases the sense of transnational identity over time. So, that's one sense.

But the other sense is a sense of threat in terms of which identity is seen to be more under assault. As someone once put it, you are what you have to defend. And as Islam was seen to be more under assault -- even beyond the religious aspect, which one can talk about. I'm not denying that, but I'm saying that as that goes you also have an increase.

Now, I grant that the meaning of each term -- when someone says I'm a Muslim or an Arab, it can be debated. We understand and we have a lot of evidence to show that context matters. For example, if an Arab -- fellow Arab asks someone, what are you? They might give them a different answer than if an American asked them, what are you? Sometimes when people say, “I'm Muslim”, they could mean religion, they could mean a political identity, they could mean somebody from Muslim countries, they could mean identification with someone, there could be all kinds of meaning that -- not necessarily political.

Nonetheless, no matter what the meaning is, I want to read you my

interpretation of the implications of that. Regardless of the meaning of Arab or Muslim, one thing is clear and consequential. When they assert either of these as core identity, citizens of the Arab world are identifying themselves mostly in connection with people outside the boundaries of their own states.

For example, when an Egyptian identifies herself as an Arab, she's indicated commonalities with Lebanese, Saudi, Jordanians, and every Arab in the world. This feature has important implications for these individuals' relationships with their governments, for their transnational relations, and for media viewership.

What is good for Egypt is a matter for its people and government to decide within Egyptian boundaries. But what is good for Arabs and Muslims cannot be decided by Egyptians and Moroccans or Saudis alone. In this broader context, what other Arabs and Muslims think matters for legitimizing an action. Or more important, a government.

Whenever identification with a state is superseded by a combination of Arab/Muslim identities, this creates what I call “legitimacy interdependence”. Such interdependence is the reason the media battle for narrative becomes central, and the reason for the information revolution -- the reason the information revolution has been so threatening to the legitimacy of governments in the region.

One final point on this is that in addition to this test of how people identify themselves and how that's changed over time, I have one other question that I ask. And that question is, do you believe that the government should serve the interest of its citizens or the interests of Arabs and Muslims? Now that's different than the identity because that goes to the core of the relationship with the government. Do they think the governments should do what's good for the citizens only, or should do what's good for

Arabs and citizens outside? Half or more in every country say Arab or Muslim, and that really puts foreign policy at the center of the debate. It can't be ignored.

I'm going to end with this, and this is only one chapter. But I invite your questions, particularly about the centrality of other issues. The chapter that I called, *The Prism of Pain,* about the centrality of the Palestinian and Israeli conflict. And also this unique chapter, I think, that I haven't seen anything on this elsewhere. Trying to test whether public diplomacy can really win a war against incitement, or whether you can get people to empathize in conflict. And I suggest you can't, and I have good evidence to suggest that.

Thank you very much. (Applause)

MR. INDYK: Excellent, Shibley, thank you. That was a great introduction.

I'm going to turn to Kim now to ask you, Kim, to respond to Shibley's presentation on the book.

MS. GHATTAS: Well, thank you very much for inviting me to this wonderful event. Martin, it's great to be here. Shibley, I loved your book. I'll say that from the onset. Tamara, as well, thank you for having me.

I think an alternative title for your book would have been, *Everything You've Ever Wanted to Know About the Arab World and Aren't Getting From the Headlines.* I think what this book does is go through a lot of the issues that are at the very heart of the debate about the Arab world today, issue-by-issue, breaking down the stereotypes, adding nuance and context where there usually isn't. And you mentioned the context. When you ask a question in polling, the context matters. Who is asking the question? Is it an American, or is it another Arab?

And I think the context matters to understand attitudes in the Arab world, and I found myself as an Arab woman -- I grew up in Beirut, I lived there my whole life until I moved here five years ago -- that the context is often lacking when we're looking at the Arab world from the United States.

One word that keeps coming back, both in your presentation and in the book which really struck me as well is the word “dignity”. I think it's easy to ignore that word or to, you know, roll your eyes and say, you know, we're talking here about the hard issues of power or strategic debates about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, et cetera. But the word “dignity”, I think, is important because we can argue about is democracy good for the Arab world or not, should it be imposed, should it come from inside, is it a Western value or not, but I think everybody can agree on the fact that we all want to have dignity and be respected. And I think that's what we all have in common around the world, whether it's in China in the Arab world or in the United States. And that very much ties in with what you were saying in terms of foreign policy, how that is central to Arab attitudes in the Arab world, because it is connected to dignity as well.

There is a sense that rulers in the Arab world have for too long trampled upon the rights of their citizens, whether it's in terms of giving them jobs or listening to their opinions and what sort of foreign policy they should have.

The question that perhaps you can answer a bit later on is, if people in the Arab world did have jobs, were respected, were well-fed, would foreign policy still matter to them that much? Or is it just a reflection of that overall dignity that they feel has been trampled on? And when it comes to dignity, I think that it is an important theme to discuss because I think recognizing that we all want the same thing would help us, perhaps, move beyond the debate when it's framed in the terms of them versus us. Why

do they hate us?

I find that this question is a little bit outdated in this day and age, when we can all agree that we have a lot in common and that it's time to try to understand each other a little bit better, and that's what I think your book does so well. It shows that the Arab world is not one monolithic mass with one opinion that isn't changing. Attitudes are changing. They evolve; they respond to events, they respond to changes in the region. And so, it doesn't become very much an us-versus-them, but what do we have in common and how can we move beyond the very reductive debate? And that's what I think your book does very well, showing the commonalities between people in the Arab world and in the United States.

Because in the end, what I have found in writing my own book which doesn't focus just on the Arab world, is that the reason why there is often resentment towards the United States isn't because it's the United States per-se. It's because there is a sense that the United States should be doing what's right, and there is a sense in the Arab world that the U.S. isn't necessarily on the right side of history when it's backing, you know, autocratic leaders in the Arab world, as it used to over the previous decade.

So, that's where my sense is, that's where I sense that some of that resentment comes from. And as you discuss in your own book, when it came to Libya, the military intervention in Libya -- you know, there is ambivalence towards the West, towards military intervention. There is ambivalence about the West's intentions. But if there is a sense that the U.S. is delivering for the people, there is a certain openness to American foreign policy and American intention.

So in a nutshell, I think that's my response to the book. There is -- you know, the wider value that it brings of adding context and nuance to a debate, bringing up

the issue of identity, and reminding people that it isn't just about values, it is also about foreign policy. What are the issues, what are the policies that the United States is pursuing? And how do they affect people in the region?

MR. INDYK: Thank you, Kim. I wonder, Shibley, if you can just focus on this issue of dignity and what you call the prism of pain, and explain to us a little bit more -- I mean, posit for us in terms of the Palestinian issue, which is a theme that you have come back to again and again?

It's not, as I understand it -- perhaps, is it a Palestinian issue, per se? Or a Palestinian issue that's emblematic that has meaning in terms of this prism of pain?

MR. TELHAMI: Yeah, exactly. And in some ways it relates to the question that Kim raised about what would happen if there was economic prosperity and jobs. Would this be an issue? Is it related to a notion of dignity that's bigger than that?

My short answer to that is, look at Turkey, where their assertiveness is out of strength, and even though they're not Arab the focus on that issue -- it tells you something about their understanding of what issue dignity is. But specifically on the Palestinian question, allow me to read you --

MR. INDYK: Excuse me, just to say -- they are worked up about the Palestinian issue as well.

MR. TELHAMI: They are. They're interpreting what Arabs and Muslims feel are dignity issues, and their public is focused on it, even though they're doing well economically. They're being assertive about them. They're not shying away from them, they're not hiding them, they're being more confrontation about them by virtue of their power, is what I'm suggesting. And they're not even Arab.

But if you would allow me just to read a section on this that -- on this

question. For Arabs, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict still embodies collective historical and psychological experiences that are integral to the way they view the world -- the outside world.

The conflict that presents not only the painful experience of Arabs losing Palestine in 1948 and facing another devastating defeat in 1967, it is also a reminder of a contemporary Arab history full of dashed aspirations and deeply humiliating experiences, usually tied to the West. Since '67, Israeli control of East Jerusalem, a city that symbolizes an even older painful conflict dating back to the times of the Crusades, has added fuel to the fire.

But what distinguishes the Palestine-Israeli conflict from other painful experiences is that it is seemingly unending with repeated episodes of suffering, over which Arabs have no apparent control. This is an open wound that flares up all too frequently, representing the very humiliation that Arabs seek to overcome, including in their relations with the rulers. If the Arab awakening is in the first place about restoring dignity, about raising Arab heads high in the world, then the Palestinian-Israeli conflict represents dignity's antithesis.

And I would add one more thing about the importance, particularly since the Arab uprisings. I think there's one other way in which -- I'm reading from this conclusion. One other way in which the Arab awakening has raised the importance of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in Arab public priorities -- separate from the generally-acknowledged argument that Arab public tends to be more sympathetic with Palestine than rulers and that empowerment, you know, adds more weight to that argument, they are also distracted right now by their internal affairs.

But there's a broader issue that I think has to do with identity. A good

place to start is Israel's sense of deep insecurity. Without Palestinian-Israeli peace, Israelis know that war with Arab parties will remain ever possible. For Israel, this means that it must plan for every contingency of war with the Arabs, and even with non-Arab Muslim states, such as Iran. The net result is that Israelis feel that their security requires strategic and technological superiority over any combination of Middle Eastern states, especially Arab.

On this, they have the unreserved support of the United States and complete assurance from Congress and the White House that Israel will receive all the technological and military assistance it needs to keep its superiority, and that Arabs will be denied similar capabilities. There is near consensus on this in Israel as well, regardless of the political outlook on matters of concessions to the Palestinians.

Seen from the Arab side and Arab public side, in particular, this Israeli imperative entails exactly the sort of dominance that they reject and are revolting against, the very essence of the prism of pain through which Arabs view the world. In an Arab awakening, a half-billion Arabs and Muslims in the Middle East and North Africa find it impossible to accept the strategic domination of a country of 8 million, especially when they don't accept the Israeli narrative for the absence of Palestine-Israeli peace to begin with. And they see America, to some extent -- and to some extent, other European countries -- as providing the support to make this possible.

So, the bottom line is, this is really kind of built into the things they're revolting against, in my own judgment. And you can see it in some ways manifesting itself in -- take what happened in Egypt just last week. You had this huge demonstration against the Israeli strikes on a military facility in Syria. Now, one of the largest demonstrations on foreign policy since the -- now of course there's domestic politics in

Egypt, and we know the Brotherhood is playing -- we know that. But the fact is that it tells you how much this issue resonates.

Here when you look at the public opinion polls, 90 percent of Egyptians are opposed to Assad -- 80, 90 percent opposed to Assad. But they're focusing not on Assad. In the middle of 80,000 people getting killed, they're focusing on the Israeli attack on -- this is what they're revolting against. They are -- it just rubs in the fact that they can't do anything about this issue. It is tied in to their sense of humiliation.

Right now, no doubt they're busy with their own affairs politically, and right now the Arab-Israeli conflict is not flaring up. Fortunately, we don't have bloodshed. But if you have anything like that ongoing, you can see a lot of that energy being channeled there. So, I think it's certainly in -- the Arab awakening is there.

MR. INDYK: Kim?

MS. GHATTAS: I'm going to disagree a little bit with Shibley, if I may. I think that the Arab-Israeli conflict is still very important, but I do feel from my travels to the region, from talking to my friends, whether in Syria or Lebanon or Egypt or Jordan, that it has taken a little bit of a back seat because of the urgency of all the economic -- socioeconomic problems that people are having to deal with in their own countries. For years they could not express their frustration at their own humiliation at home -- the lack of jobs, the lack of reform. And the Arab-Israeli conflict was a rallying cry that Arab leaders used to silence dissent at home.

So even though it is, of course, a very emotional issue for people, when it comes to bringing bread to the table, as you call it -- you know, (inaudible) in Arabic -- that trumps everything on a day-to-day basis. There is no doubt that the Arab-Israeli conflict will be center -- will be a priority again if things stabilize a little bit more or if there

is renewed bloodshed, or if we see progress in any potential peace talks. But my sense is that at the moment, the priority is for countries like Egypt and Jordan -- it is to try to improve their own house. In Syria, it is trying to end the bloodshed.

And I think the reason why there is an uproar when Israel suddenly sends out the jets to conduct a strike. The reaction here that I thought was very interesting was, how come people are condemning the Israeli strike that is potentially damaging President Assad when they've all been supporting the rebels. What's going on? Well, what's going on is that these attitudes are ingrained in people for years, and you don't change, you know, from one day to the other. Your perception of the world has been formed by your background, your upbringing. Whether you believe what your leaders are telling you or not, they just become part of your identity. And it's difficult to change overnight and suddenly say, well, yes, you know, we've been against Israel or we've hated Israel all those years, but now we support it bombing a site in Damascus. It's just too big a mind shift to make.

I remember in Lebanon in 2006 during the war, the Lebanese were very divided about what they thought about the Israeli-Hezbollah war. There were a lot of people who were initially very angry with Hezbollah for provoking the war, but secretly wondering whether perhaps, you know, Israel could help Lebanon get rid of Hezbollah for them because no one in Lebanon had the courage to do it because Hezbollah is the largest armed group.

But as the conflict evolved and infrastructure was bombed by Israel and other communities beyond South Lebanon were targeted, the tide turned and there was an uproar because, you know, then the sense of humiliation because of this conflict for decades came back to the surface. So it's a very fine line that you walk in those

moments.

MR. INDYK: What about the conflict that we now see between Sunnis and Shias? Sectarianism in the Syrian context, in the Iraqi context, in the Bahraini context? To what extent does that affect the way that -- does that affect the Arab identity, in the first place, and the way they see the world?

MR. TELHAMI: That's a good question. And by the way, just on Kim's point, just quickly. As you know, in the book I agree with you, because I talk about the priorities.

MS. GHATTAS: Well just for the sake of debating, we'll say we disagree a bit.

MR. TELHAMI: Well, that's fine. No, but the issue of course, you know, on this one is that there is of course a Sunni-Shia divide. There is no escaping that. You can see it in attitudes that we have, and I'll give you examples.

In Lebanon, attitudes are very much divided along sectarian lines. We know Shia, Sunnia, and (inaudible) generally have different views on foreign policy issues, whether it's Iran or the Syria question or Bahrain question. What they watch on television is different. Most of the Shia actually watch Al-Manar, Hezbollah's -- Sunnis watch (inaudible) or (inaudible) watch NBC, and many watch Al Jazeera. But it's complicated, even in terms of choice of media as reflective. And on assessment of the Arab Spring, there are differences.

But, it's interesting that there is a broader -- these issues are there as a factor, but it's not always the trumping factor. Let me give you an example on the poll we did about the Arab uprisings. Whether the public sympathizes with the governments or with the rebels in each one of the countries that witnessed the uprising.

So for example, in Syria we find, you know, 90 percent of Arabs -- mostly in Sunni countries, because that's where we mostly poll, except for Lebanon, that's mixed -- they sympathize with the rebels against the governments. In Bahrain, that's also true. A majority of Arabs in Egypt sympathize with the rebels against the government in Bahrain, but only by 60 to 40 percent. So, as opposed to 90 to 10 percent in Syria. Or, for that matter, in Yemen as well. That was the case. So, you have -- there's a factor but there's also a sense that there is something there between people and government, not just Sunni-Shia.

We also find it in the attitudes toward Iran. I have a whole chapter on attitudes toward Iran, which I analyzed this question because it's where you find the conflictive attitudes. And what we find in the public -- among the Arab public -- is really conflicted views of Iran. And mostly because they rank the Israeli threat as they see it, or the American threat as they see it, higher than the Iranian threat. So, their attitudes toward Iran are far more complex.

One of the interesting things is that in January of this year, I was in Egypt. I met with -- through our common friend, Dr. Sadin Ibrahim -- with one of the members of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, who had been imprisoned for belonging to the group that killed Anwar Sadat, whose title I hold. And he had been imprisoned from 1981 to 2006, off and on, or 2007 off and on.

And I interviewed him -- and those are people who now think they made a mistake, by the way. Now think that historically made a mistake, they should not have killed Sadat, they should embrace politics. Many of them, in fact, asked to join a liberal party in Egypt and the Egyptian elections -- another story. But one of the fascinating issues I asked because, as you know, in Egypt people talk about the threat of Shia

conversion. And here is a country that is overwhelmingly Sunni, certainly the Muslim population. And why would anyone worry about being converted to Shia? Of course, some of it is a narrative-driven -- self-serving narrative-driven, but there is.

But I asked this person, who is obviously a very devout Sunni, about what it is. And he said, you know -- he said that he himself in 1981 was inspired by Khomeini. That the inspiration for what they did in 1981 was the Iatola Khomeini, as a symbol of an Islamic revolution -- Shia Islamic revolution. And he said, to this day they admire much about Iran, especially its standing up to the West and so forth, but “we don't want them to rule over us”. So, there's this kind of complexity in the relationship.

MR. INDYK: So, defiance of the West, which is something Ahmadinejad specialized in, always got to bounce in Arab public opinion.

MR. TELHAMI: That's right. It gets a bounce in Arab public opinion, even though a lot of Arabs obviously are uncomfortable with Iran's role. I mean, separate from government.

MS. GHATTAS: Actually, I want to ask you a little bit further about this issue of sectarianism. Because we hear a lot about it now, as you mentioned, when we look at the Arab world, and there's talk about an impending clash between Sunnis and Shias, and you have Hezbollah now fighting in Syria against -- with Assad against Sunni rebels.

I mean, obviously there is, you know, a history there of animosity between Sunnis and Shias, a historical one. But to what extent do you think leaders or some leaders in the region feed that narrative to suit their own political objectives in the way they line up? Perhaps another sort of rallying cry as well.

MR. TELHAMI: Absolutely, no doubt about it. And there's no question in

my mind that a lot of it is narrative manipulation, and that's what we needed the public opinion to show.

And in fact, when I reported my public opinion polls that showed that most of the Arab public don't want to see Iran pressured to stop its nuclear program consistently, every year we find that -- by the way, including among Arab citizens of Israel. This is not just Arabs in the Arab world. Including among Arab citizens. The majorities don't want to see the international community pressure Iran to stop its nuclear program.

A lot of people said, well, how could that be? Because you've got this narrative and the governments and so forth? Well, it can be. And in the book, what I did in addition to looking at the public opinion poll, I went into the electronic conversations to see what Arabs are saying on the Internet, what Arabs are -- how they are commenting on Iranian actions, including seemingly offensive Iranian actions, such as Ahmadinejad going into Lebanon or Ahmadinejad going into the Abu Musa island that the United Arab Emirates claims as its own. And you can see how mixed the results are and how far more complex Arab reactions are than is being portrayed by the narrative. And there's no question that the narrative is, in part, self-serving by rulers to divert attention.

It doesn't take away from the fact that there is a Sunni-Shia divide, that there is mistrust, and there is a religious difference and there are, you know, some concerns and worries, undoubtably. But the way they work themselves out and whether or not they're a priority in the behavior of people is not strictly a direct function of that divide.

MR. INDYK: One quick question before we go to the audience. Tom Friedman lately has been arguing in his columns that the Arab awakenings has a lot to do

with climate change, and that doesn't figure in your book. (Laughter) So, I wondered what you thought about this argument? Of course I'm simplifying his argument. You're familiar with it.

MR. TELHAMI: Yeah. Well, I actually like his other argument better, and I can read it to you. And I think --

MR. INDYK: That's all right. We're reading your book.

MR. TELHAMI: Bottom line is, the nexus of the olive branch, he talked about how the information revolution has created this super-empowered individual, and he was right.

MR. INDYK: Yeah.

MR. TELHAMI: I think it created this super-empowered individual. And that's why I believe that there's no going back. There is no going back. You have a public empowerment.

What we don't know is what this public empowerment will lead to. Why? For a number of reasons. One of them is, everybody is empowered, left and right, rich and poor, you know? Secular and religious. So, we've got all these forces contending in society. We don't know how this is going to work itself out.

Second, it was never true, ever. Not in democracies, not anywhere, that public opinion is the only or even the principal source of power. We have distributions of societal power, organizations, institutions, bureaucracies, distribution of wealth and society. All these things remain forces that are going to play themselves out and juxtaposition to some of the newly-empowered people.

So, what we're going to see is a variety of reactions that are going to play themselves out differently in every country depending on those distributions. But there is

no going back. And so, I think, for example -- a lot of people fear that in the end, Arabs will be frightened by the anarchy, like in Syria, and say, forget the Arab revolution. We want authoritarianism.

And in fact, so much so that you have people among the Arab intellectuals, like (inaudible) in Egypt arguing that some of the Gulf states really are trying to create an instability and they don't want to see Egypt succeed because they want to frighten the people that Arab revolutions are not good for them, or something along these lines. I think it's far-fetched.

But nonetheless there are, you know -- there are people who believe that somehow people are going to say, you know, we want stability. There will be people who will say it. There are already people who say it. I happen to think that actually instability is a far more likely outcome in places where you're not going to have a stable outcome, then an authoritarianism. Because I think people just simply will not accept that.

MR. INDYK: Okay, let's go to your questions, please. Please wait for the microphone and identify yourself, and then ask a question. Up the back there, gentleman with the beard.

SPEAKER: My name is (inaudible), I am a Syrian journalist. About Palestine's dimension. I mean, I think Assad, our dictator deluded himself saying that he's on the right side and so on vis-a-vis the Arab-Israeli conflict. But it proved he was wrong. The Syrians did not believe his lip service and his killing of the Palestinians and all this.

Secondly, on Israeli. I was surprised on the flood on the Facebook of people congratulating each other of Syria hitting Syrian targets --

MR. INDYK: Israeli.

MS. GHATTAS: Israeli.

SPEAKER: And so, it's really -- now they want even Israel to hit the Iran which, you know, had been the Syrian regime. So there's a shift completely, at least on Facebook and other -- I mean, there's a shift of the Arab attitudes towards Iran and the Hezbollah and -- so, the Palestinians I don't want to claim for Ahmadinejad and his Arab predicament that Palestine is dead and the Arab -- every country for its own, and so on. But still, really in the -- I think you mentioned, you're right. But when it comes to Syria, it's not right.

MR. INDYK: There is this video now you can see of the Israeli bombing in Damascus, taken by Syrian opposition in which they're shouting out in the foreground, “Allahu Akbar” as the Israelis are bombing. Anyway.

MR. TELHAMI: Yeah, no. First of all, it's a good point and I think that when we talk about Arab public opinion we're talking about majorities. According to the polls, we're measuring majorities.

There are significant minorities who feel differently, including on Iran. So there are people when we ask, you know, do you want the international community to pressure Iran to stop its nuclear program, we get a significant minority that says “yes”. We just get the majority which says “no”. So, what you're identifying are people there, and they're significant percentages. But for now, according to our numbers, they're still a minority in the group.

But the second is that the fact that -- you might have people who equally dislike Iran and Syria. It's not particularly surprising -- or even might like Iran a little bit less than -- I mean, Iran and Syria. Iran and Israel, is what I meant. And —-- but I think you have people that I talked to who say that if they -- if Iran and Israel engage

themselves in power, it would be good because they're weakening each other, both of them. In some ways, like the Israelis looked at Iran and Iraq weakening each other.

So, it's a very complicated story. It's not a straightforward story of rooting for Israel or straightforward story wanting the Israelis to do well. Very often, people will ask for “the devil” to help them. We saw that in Iraq. People who were vying to get an American intervention, then turning very quickly against the Americans, and thanks but no thanks. I mean, that's the reality of politics.

But as Kim said, in the short-term in every country people are desperate for their own livelihood. You know, whether it's a Palestine issue or any other issue isn't what's on the table for those people struggling to survive, whether it's in Aleppo or in any other city where you have fighting in Syria.

MS. GHATTAS: And also, as I was mentioning, in Lebanon in 2006 what we saw was that for those who opposed Hezbollah initially, they welcomed some Israeli military action to try to weaken Hezbollah. But if it goes too far, the tide turns. So you may have the initial applause for an Israeli strike against targets in Syria, but the tide can turn very quickly if there is a sense that Israel is, in essence, overshadowing or striking too far.

But if I may, Martin, I just want to go back to a point you raised about Tom Friedman's column about climate change and the drought. I mean, I think he does have a point which, you know, I think we agree upon. Which is the sense that people were out of jobs, that their needs weren't catered for by their governments, that there was a monopoly on -- or there were a lot of monopolies on, you know, power, on -- you know, on the economy. Elites were in charge of everything. Even in Syria, where there was some kind of economic opening-up, there was still a lot of poverty and the majority of

people outside of Damascus, where you did have glitzy hotels opening up, felt left out.

And I think that what Shibley identifies in his book, which is, you know, really the work of several decades of polling in the Arab world, is a real understanding that what happened at the end of -- or at the beginning of 2011 when the uprisings erupted -- or the end of 2010 with the actual incident in Tunisia, is a slow build-up of anger. I mean, everybody could identify that it was there, that it was happening, that there was a drought, that there was lack of means, lack of jobs, and that it was all slowly building up to something. No one could quite predict what it was going to be, but I remember speaking to activists in Syria after the uprising had started, and they were telling me about the small acts of rebellion that they were already engaged in against the government in 2007, when no one -- not even me. I was traveling to Syria a lot at the time, and it was very difficult to find these people and to talk to them, but they were there. And eventually, it all erupted.

And going back to your point about, you know, the difficulties that the region is going through, I think there is going to be a lot of instability and there are going to be people who say, you know, we wish we were still under the good old days of Hosni Mubarak or, you know, perhaps even people thinking that stability under Assad was better. But you know, nostalgia for a dictator is really not a policy. I mean, that's not the way forward. And I do think that for people in the West, it's very scary sometimes to watch what's going on in the Arab world, but it is a coming-of-age of the region. People are sorting through their identities and deciding what it is they want for themselves and for their future. But that's a very difficult process, and as ugly as it gets and as unstable as it gets, we have to bear with it.

I mean, I would like people in the Arab world to be able to do that and not

have anyone say, well actually we better keep Assad in place because that's just much more predictable and we know how to handle that. So.

MR. INDYK: Okay. There a lot of questions. I'm going to take three together, and then have you answer. So, take notes.

Yes, over here, please.

MR. RODDY: Hi, I'm Jay Roddy and I'm an Arabic-to-English translator. I've lived in the region.

I was wondering if you had any data that might explain the differences between countries where there's either been a successful revolution or at least a prolonged struggle, like in Syria, and countries where the demonstrations either petered out or never really caught on to begin with. So countries like Jordan, where there were demonstrations, Bahrain where it's been suppressed and not really continued, things like that.

MR. INDYK: Yes, please. Up the front here?

MR. OVAN: Yes, hi. My name is Tansal Ovan. I'm a masters' student. I was just wondering about sort of -- you mentioned 1991 -- or, 1990, sorry. And I'm wondering sort of about Saddam Hussein, selling the invasion of Kuwait to Arab public opinion, and whether or not sort of it was able to be manipulated into a strongly-authoritarian regime attacking a less one –-- taking over another country. If that was just -- I guess an element of narrative manipulation, or what it was?

MR. INDYK: And there's one over here, also.

MS. FARSA: Hi, I'm Elaine Farsa and I'm an Arab and also Palestinian, also American. And I'm interested -- very interested in what you were talking about in terms of dignity and respect, and the way that the Palestinians are treated by the Israelis

now is on display for anybody to see if they have a computer or a television. The Israelis -- and I think many Israelis will admit this -- that the government is not behaving in a particularly respectful way towards the Palestinians, to put it mildly.

And having -- knowing this and having people have access to those issues and to see things with their own eyes, I wonder if you could talk a little bit about our government, the U.S. government and John Kerry, I would say in particular, with what he's doing, say, for now with the EU and pressuring the EU not to put labels on settlement products. Also, to try to pressure the Turkish Prime Minister not to go to Gaza before? There was one other point, but I think you get the general idea.

And what can we do -- I mean, it feels as an American and as a Palestinian -- I feel that the U.S. government still has a pretty condescending attitude towards the feelings of the Arab world and the Palestinians in particular. Thank you.

MR. TELHAMI: Okay. Well, let me talk very quickly. The first question about countries' differences. The only country where we polled -- that went through a revolution is Egypt, obviously. So, I could tell you a couple of things about Egypt and whether or not they're differences with other countries.

The striking thing about Egypt is that in a year after the uprising, on most of the issues that we repeat over time -- you know, things about identity, the Palestine question, attitudes towards the U.S., attitudes toward democracy, women, heroes, villains, Iran, there was very little change in public attitudes before and after the revolution. And to the extent that there was any change in identity over time, it was slight bump up in state identity, but minor, just very little. It's not -- it's hard to say it's because of it or that it's statistically significant. So, we don't really have a lot of data beyond that.

On the narrative of 1990, yes. There were a lot of battles of narrative. In

fact, we just published a book called *Into the Desert.* It was a collection that came out of the 20th anniversary of the war that was hosted by Bush Sr. in Texas, and I contributed a long piece on that issue and how it played itself out in the Arab narratives particularly. We also had access for the first time to the so-called "Saddam Hussein tapes". These are taped conversations between Saddam Hussein and his closest aides that were obviously kept -- like the Nixon tapes. We kept them for history, whatever. And they fell into the American hands. So, a lot of them have become -- they are public, now. You can go to the archives. Some have been translated. I went through a lot of them to piece together how much of the public posture matched the private.

The interesting thing about Saddam Hussein is that when you go through all the tapes and his conversations, the public posture was almost identical to his private posture. There was hardly any difference. That he really seemed to believe -- or at least wanted his aides to believe, it's hard to know -- what he was saying publicly. So it was a very fascinating story, that this wasn't just a made-up narrative for public consumption, that this is really what he was saying in private as well. It was striking.

On Secretary of State Kerry. I actually don't -- you know, these tactics one can agree or disagree with. I'm not sure -- he, of course, is getting a lot of criticism from the other side of this equation, saying you're focusing on this issue too much, with all the priorities that you have globally, why are you choosing this one? And to his credit, I think -- and the President's credit -- they both understand how important this issue is to the United States of America.

Whether or not they're going about it the right way is obviously up for debate, and I think one of the problems I have -- and this is a problem that I -- I articulated in the chapter on the prism of pain, because that chapter isn't so much about

the importance of the issue as to what people really think about the specifics of the issue. And it's matched, by the way, by Israeli public opinion polls. So what we did in that chapter was juxtapose Arab public opinion with Israeli public opinion on this issue.

But on this specific issue, the biggest problem that we face now is not the fact that we have no negotiations or not the right negotiations. The biggest factor is people don't believe anymore. They have no trust. We have the overwhelming -- not overwhelming, but majorities of Arabs and majorities of Israelis and majorities of Palestinians don't believe the two-state solution will ever happen. And if you don't believe, then it doesn't matter what else you do because people think you're wasting your time or trying to distract them from dealing with it in some other way.

That's the problem right now. And unless we find a way to address that, I don't think we can move forward.

MR. INDYK: I want to ask you and Kim also about the Al Jazeera phenomenon. You do address in the book the role of cable television, satellite television, and so on. And clearly, Al Jazeera led the way in that regard, but it seems -- at least I've heard anecdotally -- that Al Jazeera is now falling dramatically in the ratings, at least in Egypt. And I wonder if you could address the nature of this phenomenon. It's rise and apparent fall.

MR. TELHAMI: you know, it's actually really quite extraordinary if you think about it, because Al Jazeera is facing so much competition, not only from Arab channels, from -- you know, Egyptian channels, Saudi channels, to everybody who is going satellite, but also BBC and (inaudible) and the German TV and every -- and Iranian TV and (inaudible) and everything else.

MR. INDYK: Hezbollah, too.

MR. TELHAMI: And Al-Manar, too. So, how they have maintained, according to the polls, over the past decade, Al Jazeera pretty much grew to command up until 2012 -- almost half of the Arab public says that they're still their first choice of news, and another 20 to 30 percent say they're second choice of news. That's absolutely extraordinary, given the competition. So the question is, why? And they're now facing something else.

If they are facing something else, we haven't yet seen it in the polls. Anecdotally, it's true. We know particularly the coverage of Syria. I think what happened for Al Jazeera is two things are going at the same time. One is that you can't decouple Al Jazeera from the design of the Qatari government. Obviously, why does the Qatari government empower Al Jazeera? I mean, they fund it. So, obviously they have interests to be served.

In 1995 or 1996, Qatar's foreign policy was a very small part of Middle East politics. The big giants were Egypt and Iraq and Syria and Saudi Arabia. Today, Qatar is a relevant foreign policy player, and therefore people will not simply forgive an apparent coincidence between Qatari foreign policy and Al Jazeera. And they will not allow that separation as they did before. We see that in the commentary.

Has it really affected the viewership? You know, I haven't seen the evidence yet, and I could tell you why I think I haven't seen the evidence. I think in large part they still are bolder than anyone else, even with their editorial position. They have an editorial position, but they still understand the public, and they are bolder than anyone else.

But more importantly, they have more resources. Don't underestimate -- we talk about the Egyptian -- we talk about the Egyptian media. There's a lot of talent in

Egypt. Ultimately, if Al Jazeera will be overtaken, it'll be by possibly an Egyptian media. But here's the problem. Most of the ones that have the money are government-controlled, and obviously that's going to have a different editorial line. And those that are private don't have the kind of resources to have seven reporters covering Gaza when an -- and people want fresh news. They can do it without the need to make profit. There simply isn't enough in the marketplace, enough money, to generate profit. And so, you have to have somebody with deep pockets who is willing to do it, to give you fresh news. People want fresh news. They will be there, and they will have a market.

The threat to them -- the biggest threat to them in the short-term isn't from competition -- to Al Jazeera -- is not going to come from either Egyptians or Saudis. It's going to come from the Internet. Because what I found in my -- the only evidence for the decline is that when I asked in 2000 where do you get your -- what's your primary source of news? I had, you know, almost 95 percent say television. Maybe 1 percent said the Internet. Now, I have a significant chunk of minorities still say the Internet, and so they're losing to the Internet. And they understand that, that's why they're investing on Aljazeera.net and other social media outlets, because they know that's the next war that they're going to have to fight. But for now, they're still king of the media.

MR. INDYK: Kim, your last word on this.

MS. GHATTAS: I think that Al Jazeera is a very interesting channel to watch, but I don't know whether at some point you're going to have to change the title of your chapter, *The Network Americans Love to Hate,* because Al Jazeera is making inroads in the U.S. and they're going to have Al Jazeera America, and so you may have to change that title. It's interesting to watch people's attitudes towards Al Jazeera during the uprisings because at the beginning, everybody turned to Al Jazeera to watch

coverage of the Egyptian uprising. There was a sense that they were ahead of everyone, including BBC, including Al-Arabiya, they were just ahead of everyone.

And then what happened -- and that again goes to one of the great points that you make it the book is that, you know, the region is made of countries that are different, and every country has a different set of, you know, specific -- has a history, has a specific kind of ruler, whether it's Assad or Mubarak or the Saudi monarchy. They're all different, it's not one monolithic region. And so, when Al Jazeera is covering those countries, because Qatar has -- is trying to have a bigger foreign policy, Al Jazeera reflects that foreign policy.

And in some cases, Al Jazeera became the sponsor of some revolutions, but not others. And you quote from Pierre Abi Saab's piece here, where he says the station returned to its national size. Suddenly, viewers noticed that they were watching an official media akin to those we see in all the authoritarian systems because they were -- you know, they're very much in favor of the revolution in Syria and covering it extensively with no balance, and yet Bahrain barely gets a mention because that doesn't suit their narrative. So, that's part of the problem, I think, with Al Jazeera.

And in Lebanon, what's very interesting is that Al Jazeera used to be watched by those who were opposed to the West, to simplify. Lebanon is very complex --

MR. INDYK: Sympathetic with Hezbollah --

MS. GHATTAS: -- and who were sympathetic to Hezbollah. You know, if you were pro-Hezbollah, you watched Al Jazeera. If you were anti-Hezbollah, you watched Al-Arabiya. But now that Hezbollah is involved in the war in Syria next to Assad, you know, that doesn't work anymore. You cannot watch Al Jazeera anymore if you are

pro-Hezbollah because you're watching the wrong channel. So, you know, you turn to Al-Manar and you're certainly not turning to Al-Arabiya because they're pro-Saudi.

And so again, just going back to some of the points we've been making. It's a complex region, it's not a monolithic block, one massive, you know, people who all think the same. And I think that this book really breaks down the stereotypes and gives a lot of nuance and context to that discussion.

MR. INDYK: Thank you, Kim. *The World Through Arab Eyes.* Buy it outside. Shibley's going to sign your books for you. Thank you, Shibley. Thank you, Kim, for a great discussion. (Applause)

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