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THE MIDDLE EAST IN TRANSITION:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. SHARQIEH: Thank you all for coming. It's be a season of discussing U.S. foreign policy in Qatar this week and last week, so we're glad to continue the discussion that began last week and this week, and also with the U.S. Islamic Forum we had last week. Then the America conference this week, so we continue the discussion here.

This is not very surprising, of course, as you know the U.S. foreign policy is a very important subject here. It's one of the most important debates that you can have in the region here about the U.S. foreign policy and the direction that the U.S. foreign policy is taking, and the changes of policies happening between one administration to another and all of that.

Despite great interest in U.S. foreign policy in the region there is still a struggle understanding really what the U.S. foreign policy is about the region. Especially during the latest administration, the Obama administration, the U.S.

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foreign policy, from my observation, has emerged as an anomaly for the region. What is really Barack Obama's thinking? What is the real position of this U.S. administration on Syria, on Egypt, North Africa, Libya, Tunisia, the Arab Israeli conflict, and mostly simply Iraq? Iraq back to the news and, of course, everyone is watching where the U.S. position is moving or is taking or is forming on this level?

So in order for us to understand this anomaly of U.S. foreign policy in the region we are pleased to welcome Ambassador Richard Murphy who's been following the developments in the Middle East Region for over 50 years. 34 years of which has been in the Foreign Service. Ambassador Murphy was the ambassador in Saudi Arabia, Syria, Mauritania, and the Philipppians. Between 1983 and 1989 was Under Secretary of State also for the Middle East Region and South Asia.

So Ambassador Murphy watched the developments here not only in the Foreign Service, but also as a senior analyst, a Senior Fellow with the

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Council on Foreign Relations in New York. Also, Ambassador Murphy is the Director of the Friends of UNRWA, the UN Agency that's in charge of the policy in the refugees affairs. Also on the Board with the American University of Beirut.

We're pleased to have Ambassador Richard Murphy with us to help us understand where the U.S. foreign policy's going and important big issues that are happening in the region. So we thank you for your generosity with time, and for being with us to discuss and hear questions from our guests here. Welcome to the Brookings Institution.

MR. MURPHY: Thank you. First of all, it's a delight to be here because this institute didn't exist when I was last in Doha. I think it was about 10 years ago. I first came to Qatar on a visit that would be have been about 1965. You had been born by then, I hope. I find an increasingly small number had been born by then. It has changed, shall we say, slightly over the years. I mean, the growth of the city of just extraordinary.

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I'm flattered that you asked me to come here and explain the anomalies of American foreign policy. Does anomaly translate easily into contradictions or mysteries?

MR. SHARQIEH: Mysteries.

MR. MURPHY: Well, I hope at the end of our session everyone will raise their hands who feels better informed and fully understanding about American foreign policy in the Middle East.

It is not an easy issue to follow. It used to be easily defined as well. It was guaranteed access to the energy flow from the Middle East, the security of Israeli and, you know, helping develop a stable and emergingly, increasingly powerful in the world.

There was a time when I first went to Washington which I successfully avoided doing for about 12 years after I joined the Foreign Service because in those days there was a rule you had to be, I think it was, of the first 12 years you had to be in Washington for 3 years. I didn't get back from having

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started, in what is now Zimbabwe, we went to Beirut for the Arabic Language Program that the State Department had there, to Lepo, Tagitta, packed up all of our stuff ready to take a plane back to Washington to meet the requirements of being home and someone took ill that couldn't get to his assignment in Jordan, so we went there.

So I broke the rules by not getting back for 13 years except for home leave. Stayed for three years, and then went to Mauritania followed by a return visit to Saudi Arabia. This time as Ambassador when we reopened the Embassy, shut in '67, then the Philippians, then a second tour in Saudi Arabia.

So I started my acquaintance with the area in 1959 just after the language school itself had reopened. That'd been the Hadius in Beirut which closed the Study Institute down and the students were sent out to be wardens to the American community, and Eisenhower sent 5,00 Marines to stabilize the situation in the wake of the Iraqi revolution. When there was a general apprehension that not only in

Lebanon, but elsewhere in the area that there was going to be a wave of violence and change.

In any case, he landed the Marines. My namesake, Robert Murphy, no relationship, but we're both from the side Irish tribe which was incidentally descended from kings in Ireland. Did you realize that? They were or head of the clan, at least.

Five thousand Marines landed in full combat gear, waded ashore, and were met by some very small boys selling Chicklets, which was a little disillusioning for the Marines. They had come to defend freedom and democracy and stabilize a situation, and all they had to offer was Chicklets.

But it worked. I mean, psychologically that military presence sort of quickly set the mood in Beirut. I don't think it stabilized Lebanese politics. That's a continuing anomaly, is that the word? But we stayed in Beirut from '59 to '60, spent the last three months in a Lebanese village up in the mountain just below Alle, which was a marvelous experience, and a severe test of the formal training I



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had that was half Druze and half Orthodox village.

After being there about three weeks I was walking up the village path when down came the Sheik of the Druze who was, just where he was in the hierarchy I don't know, but he was a very tall man and he had the lifee which added another 10 inches to his height. He just said, stop. That's what I understood was stop. I was trying to get home.

In very clear, classical Arabic he asked where was the world before God created it. Well, I had been trained in certain social exchanges, some discussion of economics and politics, but the Institute was very weak on theology. I looked at him. He looked back and waited, and I knew I was not getting home that night unless I came up with the answer, so I finally said (speaking foreign language). I'm no deeper into theology today than I was in 1960, but at least that was a good password apparently.

Syria, we lived through the last year of the United Arab Republic and the separation by Syria. The counter efforts to bring Syria back to the UAR in '62

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then the Bathe coup in '63, and we left a week later for Saudi Arabia.

So that was the start. There was the war in Yemen at that time, then we got to Jordan a year before the Six Day War and stayed a year later. When I went to Washington I worked on Arabian Peninsula affairs, and was very fortunate to be selected to go after Mauritania to Damascus to reopen the Embassy.

Having reopened the Mauritanian Embassy I was getting pretty expert at what it means to lose relations and restore them in the Arab world. We had a humanitarian program in Mauritania. It was the end of a terribly severe draught. The Air Force was bringing in grain supplies for the herds that were surviving.

If I'm going on too long tell me and we can get to the easier questions about my life. But the message reached me. I was riding with the Air Force on one of the trips out to the eastern part of the country. The message was, well, the President had passed a message to the Embassy, he wanted to see me

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as soon as I landed, said go straight over.

This was October of '73. He was correct and warm as ever, but he said, I just wanted you to know that it looks like a war is coming, and if you repeat, and I had explained we had not participated in the '67 war, but if you repeat what you did or said to have done in '67 I'm going to have to cut relations. I said, oh, here we go.

He didn't cut the relations. Nixon put the country on high alert issue of nuclear potential, nuclear weapons being readied. The Soviets were going full blast with their publicity about their support for the cause. The war went on a bit longer.

What it lead to was a peace conference in Geneva. We had on one in Damascus when Kissinger first arrived in December of '73. He had been to Cairo, to Jerusalem, to Amman to say what he wanted to do was to get everyone together in Geneva and discuss how to make a fresh start making peace.

He's been fond of repeating this story, it may be in his memoirs, he sat down with Hafez al-Assad

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and described Geneva, Assad nodded. What the agenda would be for the talks, yes. That's fine. Anyway, he went into several details and Assad nodded repeatedly, and Kissinger finally said, well, I've been misled Mr. President because everyone along the way has told me how difficult you would be.

Assad looked at him and said, well, no, but I never said I was going which charmed Kissinger. He's not used to being taken by surprise. Assad didn't go. Syria was represented by others.

I arrived that August after Nixon had been there with Kissinger in June. I arrived bearing credentials which the initial set had been signed by President Nixon which I was to deliver to President Hafez, and Nixon flew off the resign the day after he signed the credentials. Whereupon, the Syrian said we want real credentials. We got another set, and I have the originals which is an unusual achievement to have the originals in your possession to this day.

Well, it's been a long process in the Middle East trying to expand on what was seen as a single

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achievement in '79 with that agreement. It then took another 15 years to get the Jordanian-Israeli agreement worked out which was done largely by the two of them. We were just facilitating. There it stands to this day.

MR. SHARQIEH: Thank you, Mr. Murphy, and it's great to hear that history from someone that's lived the history. So this is a great opportunity for us to hear from you about Assad.

Let me begin my first question, actually with the most recent history. Just, actually, as recent as half an hour ago, that Secretary John Kerry just stated, well, it was half an hour ago, that Iraq is a strategic partner for us. Commenting on the crisis -- on the latest development in Iraq, that Iraq is a strategic partner for the U.S. What does that mean? What does he mean by a strategic partner?

Also, I want to mention the previous statement by President Obama about not intervening directly or on the ground in Iraq and waiting for the Iraqis to lead. So how strategic is the strategic?

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Who is really the strategic? Is it Iraq or Maliki? What is the difference here? I would like to ask you to help us how strategic is strategic, and whether he's referring to Iraq as a country or to the Maliki government?

MR. MURPHY: Is this going to be our easiest question?

MR. SHARQIEH: That's just the beginning.

MR. MURPHY: Okay. Well, first of all, I haven't talked to Secretary Kerry. We're from the same State of Massachusetts, so I understand the language up to a point, but what's in his mind right now.

I'll tell you, let me describe what I think is new is a realization that the word the Obama Administration has been repeating for some time now that these are serious problems and there for the people in the area to solve. We can do a certain amount. We can try to help, but at the end of the day it's their lives, their problems, and they're going to have to find their way.

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I mean, he, President Obama, invested initially, if you recall, considerable prestige and energy bringing George Mitchell to work on the Arab-Israeli issue. It didn't work.

On Iraq he was visibly hurt in speaking -- it's about two days ago I think I saw it on the television. He was standing in front of the helicopter. We have invested an enormous amount of energy, of money, of lives, not to speak of the lives lost by the Iraqis, and they must find, I'm paraphrasing, but they must find the solution.

The fact is the solution isn't in our hands, and pretty clearly it's not just in the hands of the Iraqis. The ISIS force which has moved surprisingly quickly in the country after being at work in Syria, some of them are Iraqis, but it's a mixed group of nationalities. They've suddenly made a dramatic move in Mosul and now down towards Baghdad.

Now here I'm getting into my view of the situation that the area is not about to be left alone to handle its own problems. The rivalries,

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international rivalries are all at play. When the Syrian trouble started in 2011 I had a fantasy that maybe this once it would be handled by the Syrians. Then you have the Russians, the Iranians, the Turks, the various Arab countries in the neighborhood and further afield all getting involved.

What is needed now is a much better understanding that exists today between the outsiders, the real outsiders such as the Americans, the Russians, the Iranians, the Saudis, the Turks, and I name just those five, have got to find a way to limit their competitions, which they're engaging in for reasons not necessarily to do with Syria or with Iraq, but they each have their own agenda.

For the sake of creating a framework which is then presented in Baghdad, in Damascus, in wherever that gentleman this is what we can agree on and let's find out what you're ready to work on to compromise to rationalize your positions which have left the region at the moment in an unusual turmoil, and a miserable situation, a tragic situation, which started in 2003



with the American invasion which blew up and expanded, of course, with what we call the Arab Spring beginning in 2011.

I don't think these are problems which are going to be solved by a set strategic partnership be it Iraqi-American-Maliki-Obama. It's going to have to be a broader understanding because there are too many conflicting interests in the area at this point.

When I set out on this trip my wife and I traveled first to Beirut for a meeting at the American University of Beirut. The situation there is more fragile than ever. The memories of that civil war, yes, are alive among those who watched it who today are 20 plus in age. They don't want to get sucked in again, but they're desperately afraid all hell is going to break lose over them and the refugee situation is well known.

I have not served in Iraq so precisely what President Obama has in mind I can't honestly share what strategic partnership may mean. We have a responsibility having cracked open this society with

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the invasion, with the best of intentions. I, for the past two and a half days, over at the Arab Research Center I've been hearing how bad the best American intentions appear from this part of the world.

We've been anxious to give a hand, but it's not a bad position to say that, look, at the end of the day you are going to have to live your lives, and what can you do with these guidelines to cut off as quickly and completely as possible the sort of mini cold war atmosphere that's governing Russian-American relations.

I mean, some of the talk by Hilary Clinton, by Lavrov, back in the fall of 2011 rang those bells. My golly, we're sliding back into a situation that we thought was long gone. Well, it isn't going to develop like that. There won't be a renewal of the Cold War, and Russia is not threatening America's strategic interest as it was those days.

There is a rivalry and it's not working in the interest of stability and peace development of this region, of Iraq, of Syria, or any of the

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countries. The lack of any dialogue between Iran and Washington is an embarrassment.

Now, diplomats are understandably faulted by always thinking that talking will help. Not talking to the Iranians hasn't helped, so I hope that we can start something going there. I don't know if you saw it, but it was an amazing interview on the Sunday television in Washington where Senator Graham of Carolina was emphatically saying, we must talk to the Iranians because of ISIS.

Well, Senator Graham, Senator McCain, I don't think have been talking that way for a long time. So all of a sudden, there seems to be at least a small opening for an initiative between Tehran and Washington. Can there be a broader one with the Saudi, the Turks, the Russians? We'll have to work on it.

MR. SHARQIEH: Actually, speaking of the Iranians, or actually the Iranian Berlin region. Actually there were also statements made yesterday by Iranian officials that if the U.S. intervenes in Iraq

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we will help.

So what does that mean in terms of the U.S.-Iranian approachment that we're seeing in the past few months? We had the interim nuclear deal, and now we're seeing more consistency, and American-Iranian consistency in the policies in Iraq. Also hopes and talks about a possible nuclear deal in the near future.

Now, my question is do you see there is a possibility for a nuclear deal with Iran? Should we expect to see more approachment and progress made between Tehran and Washington? What does that mean for the Gulf Region that we're here in Doha? Would that have implications for the Gulf?

MR. MURPHY: Well, on the nuclear there's a very serious effort going on working against, I think it's a July deadline, for the six month deadline.

MR. SHARQIEH: Yeah.

MR. MURPHY: Probably to be extended. Deadlines tend to be extended. That's a very important facet of the U.S.-Iranian relationship.

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For quite a period the position in Washington has been we will not discuss anything else. That has to be achieved before there's any other dialogue. That statement by the Senator, by the Secretary of State, and now you quote from Tehran. I think it makes, to me, plain that in both capitals there's a conviction that an Iraq falling apart and with a major influence of an outfit such as ISIS, Al Qaeda affiliates is in no one's interest in Tehran or Washington or in the broader world.

So there are grounds. There's an appreciation that something has to be done. President Rouhani's -- I don't know was it the President who said this or an Iranian official?

MR. SHARQIEH: An Iranian official of the government.

MR. MURPHY: I think it's a good sign that what's going on is not seen to be in the national interest of anyone outside of Iraq.

It doesn't mean there's a honeymoon and a blissful relationship between Iranians and Americans

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that's going to take years. I mean, we're both fond of remembering. Iranians will never forget what we did to Mosaddegh. We will never forget what they did to the Embassy in '79.

It gets to the point of some of the feuds in the mountains in America and common in Arab society. I don't remember exactly what went wrong, but you did something wrong to my family and I'll forget the details, but I'll never forgive you. I hope that we will let some things go and the bad memories.

MR. SHARQIEH: Now, part of the struggle of understanding the anomaly of the U.S. foreign policy, again, is what emerged lately to be in the past 10 years when American intervention in the region is a problem, as saw in Iraq, that I can vision. Also, less intervention, as in the case of Syria, is also a problem.

So where are we going with the U.S. policy? Whether it's for more intervention or less intervention? Where is President Obama's take in it in Syria? Have we reached certain limits? Are we in

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a stalemate? We are in a stalemate, obviously, but how long, you know, this stalemate is going to continue in Syria? Should we expect to see substantial changes in the U.S. position on Syria?

MR. MURPHY: Go back in time a bit. The U.S.-Syrian relationship was one filled with frustration on both sides from, at least the 60s when I first dealt with Syrians, right up to the present time.

When I was sent to Damascus in '74 the mission was to find a way to interest and bring the Syrians into what was the newly termed, Peace Process. That really was the main responsibility. The other was once the Syrian forces had moved into Lebanon to try to make sure that didn't cause further explosions in the region.

But frustration over the resistance of the Syrians to starting peace talks continued for years, irritation. It turned into anger with Syria when Syria opened its doors to various Mujhadideen crossing the country to go into Iraq to confront the Zionist

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imperialist of the United States.

When Americans were getting shot at by types from the Mujhadideen who got in thanks to Syrian opening of the passage ways. Then it turned very dark as a relationship. That's from the American standpoint.

On the Syrian side, you know, it's been a long history of foreigners marching through, occupying, cutting the country up. I've sat through many conversations describing what the Romans, not to mention the Greeks, what the Ottomans did to the country, what the French did, because of Hati what the world did with imposing the colony called Israel all on Syrian territory.

I remember Hafez al-Assad telling me at one point when I was shuttling back and forth between Cairo and some of the other capitals, it was the negotiation well after the peace treaty about that little spec of land on Sinai that was in dispute, Taba.

Well, Taba was, among other things, the site

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of a hotel built by a friend of Ariel Sharon and it obviously was Israeli territory because it'd never been part of Sinai. It just happened to be part of Sinai. The Israeli lawyer at the time -- the international lawyer said, hey, we haven't got a case, but it was an issue which was very worrying to Mubarak and here his country was supposed to be fully restored and there was this speak of land there.

The Israelis went back to the survey of the Naval Survey of 1903, I think. The mile stoned demarcating the boundary had been moved, lost, whatever. But they calculated that the camel at that time of year could not have gone more than such and such a distance. I mean, the argument got pretty silly.

Anyway, I recount that antidote just that I said to President Hafez, sorry, I have to excuse myself because there's a meeting tomorrow in Cairo. I hope the last meeting about Taba. He said, oh, well, if you're having trouble with the negotiations just remember that is part of Bladi-Sham. He knew his

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history. It had been part of Bladi-Sham, and there have been a lot of other territories that were part of the domain ruled from Damascus.

I think that while he was introducing it in a joking manor it's just a reminder this sense the world has always been trying to do something against our interests here and I'm not going to let that happen.

MR. SHARQIEH: Thank you. Before I turn it to our audience I have the last question also on the current administration's policies towards the region. Of course, it's the big elephant in the room is the Palestinian issue.

We have the failure of the negotiations, and we don't know yet whether this is supposed to be the end of the U.S. intervention of the (inaudible) intervention or this is just one cycle because, you know, of many other things to come.

Now, the U.S. mediation or management of this conflict, they've managed it for the past 20 years has kind of, like this is the nature of the

intervention is just to continue to manage this conflict forever. So our we expecting to see new cycles of intervention with the same exact paradigm that lasted for the past 20 years where a U.S. mediation, the two parties preventing any other intervention from other parties, and just keeping the conflict between the two parties.

Which, of course, the whole paradigm has been questioned so many times in terms of its effectiveness. It failed miserably. Whether we are going to continue to see the same thing? With that, I would like actually to link it to the conference that we had the past two days with the Arab Center for Studies and the poll that they had on the attitudes and the perceptions of this region towards the U.S. foreign policy.

Over 50 percent, actually, of the respondents answered that the major reason for the antagonism and the negative perception of the U.S. in the region is they show unlimited support to Israel.

Now, the U.S. Administration, of course,

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this is the latest poll just confirmed the facts, so this is not new to the U.S. Administration. The U.S. Administration knows this very well. Now, we would like to understand what is exactly the position? That you know the facts and you don't want to do anything about it or if since you know the facts and this is, like, the center of antagonism against U.S. foreign policy in the region that you're not doing anything about it?

MR. MURPHY: I wish you had Secretary Kerry sitting here and describing his current views. He, who was labeled as obsessive and messy annex in his approach to peach making between Palestinians and Israelis.

We've been persuaded for years that the terms of a peace settlement were clear to everybody what would have to be given, what would have to be compromised on. Some of the best minds have produced some long papers detailing just how you get there and what the final agreement would look like.

Again, going back in time. We were before

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the Six Day War not the peacemaker. After that we saw the brief effort of Gunna Yaring as the United Nations mediator to start the effort. But very quickly Washington reached the position that it could do -- not only it could do a better job than any other country, but that was basically because we thought we would be acceptable to both sides.

We were. We were initially very much welcomed by both sides. But things never really got moving. Despite the achievements in '79 and then '84 in Oslo we could never find the key to a Palestinian-Israeli agreement. But we spent a fair amount of time in the years I recall the best, the 80s, telling the world, including the United Nations leadership, various European countries, just please stay away. We are accepted as the negotiators and the mediator here, and we'll carry on. Thank you. We don't need your help.

That was probably a mistake. It was warmly welcomed, of course, by the Israelis because they felt with their relationship with the States that they were

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in the best hands with having us as the mediator.

Today we've all been tracking the right wood movement of politics in Israel. It is much more polarized within the State of Israel than perhaps many people realize. You can see the articles in Hattit and some of the writers, you know, bemoaning this state of affairs. But basically the Israelis for the past several years have gotten comfortable with the occupation.

They can't answer the problem, and I see that Archbishop Tutu has just made his statement saying not only is Israel the worst example of apartheid, but I guess embracing the boycott movement saying everyone should get moving on the boycott.

You think back over the decades and see a hardening of the position in Israel. While back in the time of Balfour, he could write a few sentences of the declaration which talked of the right of home for the Jews without prejudice to the rights of the people of the area. That's been brushed aside. They're his prejudices towards the Palestinians, and the Israelis

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have not come to terms with what the academic, not just the academic -- with the position that they can't have both a Jewish and a democratic society.

They claim they want both and they'll point to many examples when the Palestinian and the Israeli Arab is better off there than he is on the West Bank. Then he has been in Syria, or in Lebanon, elsewhere, and they don't want to be moved out of Israel. But they can't argue against the facts of demography, and there the tide is running very high, so that if the solution isn't reached soon and that darn window of opportunity does close that they're stuck.

I think there are some that fantasize that one day they'll wake up and magically Palestinians won't be there. They'll just have all decided to leave, and there are various ways of pressuring them which have been used over the years, but I see no evidence that the Palestinians are planning to leave, and that Israel can become what the vision of its original Zionist felt was going to be the state, which we now call Greater Israel.

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I mean, after Isiah Quick to point out the British took the East Bank away and made it Hashemite Jordan we can't bring ourselves to deal with the West Bank as anything other than Israeli controlled. It's not occupied, mind you, and there are quick apologies from any American politicians who use a phrase that it's occupied territory.

It's a mess. Psychologically they've tied themselves in knots. I'm not saying the Palestinians are without fault in the way they've negotiated over the years, but what I think we can all see emerging is this conviction that somehow the Israelis have the right to stay, at least to the Jordan. It's not really religious, there's a religious ting to it in part of the populations, but it's just they say that's the home we were promised.

MR. SHARQIEH: Thank you. I know it's not easy to explain the U.S. foreign policy in this region, so I appreciate your patient. Now, with questions from our audience.

QUESTIONER: Thank you for this

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presentation. So I'll shift the discussion. So I'll ask you what is terrorist form your point of view? Second, do you think that the United States has a responsibility in creating terrorism?

I was a professor in Afghanistan at the end of the 80s. So I saw that you paid \$20 million in this time. (inaudible) paid \$70 million. You finance these people, train them and (inaudible) them. They tell me to ducks biting you now. That is one.

The second, do you think, Your Excellency, that a powerful partner and serious partner is better than a weak collaborator who's reality in this region -- you're always dealing with collaborators, not serious partners.

The last thing, what is your point of view about the coup d'état in Egypt? Now, they're accusing us revolutioners who are rivals that were to risk. Who is the risk? Who made the coup d'état or who is countering the coup d'état? Thank you.

MR. SHARQIEH: Let's take three questions this round. Then we'll take more later.

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QUESTIONER: Thank you for the Brookings Institute, and thank you for his Excellency Ambassador Murphy for this opportunity. Mr. Murphy I lived most of my life in the west. I'm originally from Iraq. I belong to the minorities. But I believe the foreign policy of the U.S. is highly threatening to the minorities because it's using the minorities to oppress the majorities.

In the long run, the minorities are used in the Middle East to high oppress the majorities. They are being used in a foreign agenda. Those people leave for thousands of years peacefully and together. I can see highly what the creative cares did in Iraq. About 1.5 million people died and under the slogan that God told the President to go and invade Iraq. I wonder if God told the President to be abiding by the commandments of being peaceful and kind to humanity.

Now, the issue you're playing it ultimately with Iran to oppress further the Iraqis. You claim the Sunnis are minorities. I wonder what minority that the whole world cannot find them or cannot make them

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abide or live peacefully. Those are not minorities. You are standing by foreigners who you brought in 2003 in the Green Zone, and this is not an issue of Sunni or Shia.

Sunni and Shia live for thousands of years in Iraq peacefully, happily. We inter marry together. My cousins are from all broad prospects of Iraq. Trouble only came when in 2003 creative cares were brought, Al-Qaeda was brought to Iraq. Iraq never knew terrorism before 2003. It's a highly educated society. It's a very secular society.

They are very tolerant that even, you know, other minorities run away from Europe and came to Iraq to live for over 700 years. Now, the issue is where do you stand? With the oppressed people or with the Iranian government in the Green Zone? Thank you.

MR. SHARQIEH: Introduce yourself, please, and then your question.

QUESTIONER: (speaking foreign language.)

MR. SHARQIEH: Mostly about the U.S.

intervention and Egypt in particular. Really the part

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is believing that there's support in the U.S. also. But mainly the U.S. intervention is causing much of the problems, including Egypt.

MR. MURPHY: It was shortly after the American invasion in Afghanistan that I was hearing a commentary by a former Soviet official at their Embassy in Kabul who had, I believe returned to Afghanistan as the new Russian Ambassador. It was a rather forceful lecture on don't make the mistakes we made as Soviets in Afghanistan.

In the case of Afghanistan and Iraq both have been invaded by Americans convinced that we could transform societies. That it wasn't just a matter of who was president, who was the top leadership, it was the societies' needed American leadership and help in developing democracy and enjoying freedoms.

This is, I've found over the years, it's unbelievable to many audiences in the Arab world. It's heard as total cynicism on the part of the Americans, who see us as very, very slightly different from the British and the French of the mandate period

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and before the First World War. We're close to them and we're really looking to dominate others in the way that they did.

In Afghanistan there's been a pretty solid history of failure of foreigners to change the ways of the Afghan society, going way back in history. We didn't take that lesson. We didn't learn it, and we went in to free up the people.

I think life may be getting better for some in that country, but they're going, as the Arab's are going to, they're going to do it their way at the end of the day without the great help of the benevolent United States, which is seen as manipulating them in every way, every night and day.

The good news, perhaps is, in Iraq Americans, as a whole, came to realize fairly soon after the war we weren't getting anywhere. With all of our money, all of our ideas, our weapons we were not transforming that society. I think the word transformation was part of the vocabulary in the George W. Bush administration. Things were going to

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be changed root and branch.

I think what you got today, and it's very frustrating today to listen to President Obama who doesn't commit to a particular course of action. He's standing back and he's saying, you've got to do it. Now, he's not ignoring the tragedies that have occurred during the invasion and afterwards, and what the breakup of a dictatorship can mean to the people involved as they try to forge new patterns for their lives.

I think the one clear benefit of the Arab Spring, which probably you could think the historians started with Baghdad, not in Tunis, that the people are not ready to accept the dictation of their leaders. They demand participation today.

How to get it? What form it will take? I don't know. I just know it's going to be probably at least a decade before the new forms are clear, but they are not today afraid of authority. I find that, I think you can say generally in the Arab world.

President Bashar said it will never happen

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here because the people respect us. They respect our leadership. They love us. We are anti-Zionist. We are anti-imperialist. All right. Fine, but there are a lot of people that wanted a change.

It didn't mean, necessarily, a change in the president, but they wanted a change in their role in society. That new relationship, which is still taking shape throughout the Arab world, is going to be one which, I believe is going to be a lot more beneficial for the people in the region and for the world.

It's region in torment, and we have played a part in enhancing that torment, but the troubles were coming. No one could honestly say they never saw it coming. I think there were any number of experts looking at the Arab world, looking at the demography, the young people, the bulge of youth, the lack of jobs, the corruption in administrations.

But when it was going to come, just where it might start, okay, that was the surprise. But it spread and Americans have devised a number of programs to help, an AID in scholarships offered to the youth

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to come to our institutes, to our universities, but it's a region that's in a mess.

Where, I think, one part of your question, sir, was where do we stand --

MR. SHARQIEH: Yes, on Egypt.

MR. MURPHY: Vis-à-vis the Maliki government? Was that a specific --

MR. SHARQIEH: On Egypt.

MR. MURPHY: I'm sorry, on Egypt. Where do we stand on Egypt? Well, it was a wild week when Tahrir Square erupted. I think the American public, to the extent that it pays attention to foreign affairs, and you've got to remember that's not every American, were caught up in the excitement of the calls for freedom, for democracy. I mean, it sounded like we were hearing a replay of the American Revolution.

Where we have, you know, Frank Wisner, I think who's been here, he went out on a mission and it was to talk about an orderly transition from Mubarak, perhaps to finish the calendar year and have

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elections. Well, he was flying out of Cairo the policy suddenly changed and we said, well, perhaps it is time for the change.

That's led to the familiar accusation America has no friends, only interest. You abandoned the Shah. You abandoned Mubarak. There are an often a lot of Egyptians who had abandoned Mubarak, and has abandoned the Shah in the earlier period.

It was recognizing that fact that the time had run out. It looked as if there could be a transition which would give the voice to those who were calling for a new life and a new way.

I've said there are still a number of white horses in the Arab stables waiting for riders to promise that they, and they alone, can give development, security, stability to their people. But I repeat, I think the big change of the last years is that approach isn't being accepted as it used to be. They do want a share in the government, and they want their voices heard.

Ours is a very open society in that every

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Senator, every Representative knows exactly what our foreign policy is and will interpret it according to what he thinks it ought to be and make a speech. Then that's heard out here and said, oh my God, the Americans have changed once more. We're a very hard society to, I think, track and to follow, and to accuse us of being deceptive and manipulative is our fate because there are many different points of view, and they're all being aired very loudly about developments in the Arab world at this point in time.

We have interests in Egypt. We've long had them well known. Preserving the peace treaty with Israel is a very important interest. Preserving the access to Suez to the over flights of Egypt is a key concern to our military. We look to preserve those certain interest.

We don't look to preserve a certain leadership. At the end of the day it is the people who are deciding. Everyone's, I mean, participating in this sense of turmoil and torment and looking for an answer now. I think it's wise for Americans to

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take a step back. I think that's Obama's appreciation, so that you give some space and time for the situation to become clearer for the people themselves.

But it's a miserably uncertain time and we know. Who is it, Erich Fromm writing about in the 30s the Communist rule and they have a book called Escape From Freedom. It's a very unsettling thing to suddenly have authority figures changed and structures begin to change.

MR. SHARQIEH: Thank you. There are many questions. Let's take another round of three questions, very quick.

QUESTIONER: Thank you. Dr. Summa Kubar, the Vice President of the High Council of Evolutionists in Libya. The U.S. Ambassador on Libya is certainly playing a very active role in the Libya political scene, Ms. Deborah. Since she was assigned Libya she was a really leading figure in connecting with everyone except the Freedom Fighters who fought (inaudible) Gaddafi.

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My question here is basically what is really the clear stand of U.S. here with the latest Libyan development when it comes to Haftar, and the way he was trying to impose his will?

We all know that Haftar was a former, or maybe still CIA agent. So it is very clear that Americans are really standing behind their man. While he doesn't really have -- his battle is basically in the media, okay? In ground he does not really hold anything while the Americans are still really supporting him as standing behind him.

Although publicly they didn't really confess for that, but Miss Deborah in many of her lectures, especially one about a month ago in the U.S., she was clear in her statement that U.S. is behind Haftar.

I really wonder why the U.S. is doing this? Why you guys don't really reach to all the parties down there? Why you don't really recognize that the Freedom Fighters of (inaudible) Gaddafi are the ones who are really trying to protect the democratic process in Libya. We are the ones who are doing that,

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and it is very clear to everyone.

I really would like to know or to hear a clear statement about the U.S. position in Libya. Thank you.

MR. SHARQIEH: Thank you. He's mostly referring to the latest position actually announced by Deborah Jones, the U.S. Ambassador in Libya, who in a conference in Washington D.C. I think at the Smithsonian Institute in D.C.

She publicly supported, or not supported, she said that General Haftar of what is perceived in Libya as a coup, he's fighting groups. He is referring to Islamist groups as on our terrorist list and we cannot basically prevent them or condemn them, that's what she said. Then the question is on General Haftar, yes.

Yes, your question, please. Introduce yourself.

QUESTIONER: Yeah, my name is Ayett Robbie. I'm a journalist. I live in the USA, originally from Egypt. As part of the United States, I'm a citizen of

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the United States, I see how the democracy actually implemented in the United States of America. But when it comes to the Middle East I see America double fist. I see the hypocrisy. It comes in every part of the Middle East except Israel.

Right now I'm going to ask a specific question on Egypt. When the uprising happened and mobbed all your men in the Middle East starting from Zine El Abidine in Tunisia and Mubarak in Egypt and Ali Saleh in Yemen, now we see how America's playing the bad role. Especially when Egypt they elected the President Morsi, and you said we always leave it to the people.

So Egypt elected a president, but America, again, played another role and what happened in the coup. You actually, America, they came out with unclear position in the beginning. We all know that the Constitution of America they can't give the U.S. aid to any army that applied coup in their country.

So now the question is how do you see the situation now in Egypt? Egypt now is not disabled,

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and I know how dangerous this is for Israel, for your strategy, like, plans in the Middle East. So how do you see the situation right now, specifically when the people of Egypt, 60 percent of them are not with the coup, they're against the coup, and you see that in the street?

MR. SHARQIEH: Last question, please.

QUESTIONER: Thank you. My question is whether you have concerns or afraid from a surge in radicalism? You know, I just follow on everyone's question here and see that when people uprised and went through the democratic path, elections, then a president invested, and so on. You saw that the old establishment, the old regime, mainly through the military arm went and made a coup d'état.

So given what's happening in our days in Iraq and the spearhead of ISIS giving a landslide victory in Eastern Iraq. So do you think we're going in the next decade to a surge in radicalism, and a period similar to the post-French Revolution where Robespierre made, like, millions of death? Thank you.

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MR. SHARQIEH: Thank you very much.

MR. MURPHY: The questions don't get any easier.

MR. SHARQIEH: No, they are only getting more difficult. Thank you for your patience.

MR. MURPHY: Perhaps, let's finish that.

QUESTIONER: About why the U.S. is insisting on having Tehran as partners and imposing them onto the Iraqi's and (inaudible).

MR. SHARQIEH: Why they're making Iran a partner?

QUESTIONER: (inaudible) the Iranian (inaudible) to rebalance the debt. The Iraqi side is taking the national (inaudible). America is insisting on having Tehran as a strong agent in Iraq and (inaudible).

MR. MURPHY: Well, no. I mean, that's not a fact, in fact. That may be the way comments about an interest in a more normal relationship with Iran. Sounds like we're seeing Iran as all powerful, owning Iraq, ever right to do what it wants in Syria or in



Lebanon, et cetera.

No. As I understand, the Iranian position, one of their main resentments is that they have not been recognized as a regional power. They are a regional power. The population, the history, and all, they're there.

But they don't have any extraordinary rights over Iraq or the future of Syria. They've been pretty frank, some of the Iranians in recent years about this. Why in God's name do people think that we want to run Iraq as a Shabbir or Shia power? The Sunnis of Iraq are the majority.

QUESTIONER: Because that's your achievement (inaudible).

MR. MURPHY: But they want to influence. I mean, countries try to extend their influence, but that doesn't give them extraordinary rights in Iraq. At least the Iranians I've heard speak to this don't see themselves in any way able to take over Iraq.

But, you know, they've joked about it that America has been very generous with Iran, giving it

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Iraq to start with, and then brining the Taliban under greater control, so we never expected such generosity. That wasn't the master plan in Washington to give either country over to Iran.

But when we went into Iraq, I think it's the one good result for us as a people that we have come to realize that our money and our might don't transform other societies. I think you'll be seeing a much more humble, modest American program. But that doesn't mean we're going to welcome take-overs of other countries.

I don't think, personally I don't think the Iranians have that in mind, but they want their influence, and they welcome the American doctrine of one man, one vote. You know, they had a lot of votes coming as Shia from the Shias in the Iraqi elections.

Are you shaking your head because you don't think it was an honest election or --

QUESTIONER: (off mic).

MR. MURPHY: Maliki's got his problems. He has persuaded the Sunnis that he is the leader of all

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Iraq.

QUESTIONER: (off mic).

MR. MURPHY: Well, on Libya I didn't hear Deborah Jones' statements, but it was that we can't condemn Haftar for working against the radicals of --

MR. SHARQIEH: Yes.

QUESTIONER: (inaudible) by the United States to stabilize.

QUESTIONER: General Haftar was -- he left Libya after the Chad War back in '89.

MR. MURPHY: Yes.

QUESTIONER: He was leading the Chad War and then he defected. He left. He went to the U.S. to Virginia where he was close to the CIA. It is widely believe, especially in Libya, that General Haftar was, and he is still a CIA agent or supported by the CIA.

Now, regardless of his old and present connections with the CIA or others, General Haftar is leading, again, what's perceived in Libya as a coup. That he basically created alliances, and he's leading a movement against the elected central government in

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Tripoli. In, obviously, a very undemocratic way.

Here is the concern, that despite -- it's a general and whether there is or there isn't U.S. CIA connections, but leading a coup or was perceived a coup, and this U.S. or (inaudible), in particular, are still supporting him.

Why not the U.S. supporting a democratic process? In Tripoli that is, there as well, there is an elected general national Congress, and a representative government, and then the U.S. chose to support a general what is also perceived he is now like the Cici of Libya?

MR. MURPHY: Well, I think the quote you've cited from Deborah Jones is that we cannot condemn him --

QUESTIONER: Yes, that's what she said.

MR. MURPHY: You know, that's -- English is not known for a great deal of nuance, but cannot condemn doesn't really translate into we really support everything he's doing.

Libya is awash in warlords at this point in

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time. If you want to call Haftar a warlord, fine. To the extent that he's coping with some particularly nasty radicals, and I don't know Libyan politics that well. I shouldn't be saying what I'm saying now, but I think that's what she meant. He's dealing with groups which are operating in Libya very much against Americans as well as order and stability in Libya, so we can't condemn him. That is not a blank check.

Now, on Egypt, the question. You've watched Americans try to pick a path in Egyptian politics pretty clumsily. When is a coup not a coup is one of the questions that thrashed out in the Congress? As one said, when a military move is made against an elected official it walks and quacks like a duck, it's a coup, which made a certain sense.

But then you've got those guardians of American interests in the executive thinking of the peace treaty of the transit rights, air rights, naval transits. We have interests in Egypt. If we had outright labeled it a coup, and not quite a coup, we were legally bound to cut off all assistance programs

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to Egypt.

QUESTIONER: It's a coup.

MR. MURPHY: Well, as I say, the debate was agonizing and heavily criticized in the United States. It was a coup, and I think we finally said that it has been a coup, yes.

QUESTIONER: Exactly.

MR. MURPHY: But the interest remain, and we try, like most governments try, to find some balance between the principles they believe in and they say they always live by, and they rarely always do, and the interest that they have to maintain in their foreign relations.

QUESTIONER: What about the peoples' interest? The people of Egypt?

MR. MURPHY: Well, we hope that we find a common cause with the people of Egypt and the other people. We're not doing very well at this point.

But when I saw the posters with the picture of our former Ambassador who's now Assistant Secretary with a big x and witch go home, and, you know, a few

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other, sort of unfriendly comments, she didn't deserve that. She was trying to explain in that case she was most criticized for talking to the Brotherhood before the elections she was criticized for trying to promote the Brotherhood.

No. She was trying to understand, explain our policies to people who we had not been in contact with. The only Brotherhood representatives that American officials had seen over the years were the handful that were elected to the Parliament who had to say they weren't Brotherhoods. They were Independents, I think was the cover story.

So the Brotherhood is a force in Egypt. It is now outlawed in Egypt. I don't think that it's going to stay outlawed. I don't see how it can. In one form or another the people that were its followers will want a role in the leadership of Egypt.

They had a problem in the year that they were governing Egypt. You don't find all the answers in your faith and religion to governing a country, and the experience was not a good one for the Egyptian

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people or for the -- as it turned out, for the Brotherhood itself.

But they're a big number of the Egyptian people and their voice is going to be heard. I hope it's going to be heard in a peaceable way, and that their role will be one of these days accept.

QUESTIONER: (off mic)

MR. SHARQIEH: Excuse me, no. There is a great interest in the discussion with you, Mr. Murphy, but I promise one last question. I'm sorry, because there is one last question. Just one last question.

QUESTIONER: (speaking foreign language).

QUESTIONER: It's not that I share what's happening on this revolution on Iraq. The last question, why does America allow the (inaudible) movement run it?

MR. MURPHY: I mean, it's not American policy to support the spread of Shiaism all over the world. Shiaism, what are they 10 percent of the Islamic population of the world, if that.

MR. SHARQIEH: Yeah, around 12.

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MR. MURPHY: Are you suggesting it's an American interest that they breed like rabbits and take over Islam? No, I mean, that's nonsense. It's certainly not American policy. It will be damaging, if not fatal to America to get caught in Sunni versus Shia type arguments.

At least I was raised to deal with national governments, and national interests. Iran, in the early days of the revolution talked a line which was deeply unsettling here in the Gulf and in many parts of the Arab world that the Islamic countries were under corrupt leaders, blasphemous leaders, and they went through a list in those early days of those leaders.

It turned out the only leader that wasn't corrupt and blasphemous was Iatola Komani. You haven't heard that kind of talk out of Iran, I would suggest since the first decade of the revolution. They're still revolutionary. They think they have a message, but are they going to be able to persuade the Sunnis?

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Even with all the might of America, and the wealth of America to impose Shiaism on the Sunnis? No, come on.

MR. SHARQIEH: All right. Well, thank you. On behalf of everyone thank you again, Mr. Murphy, Your Excellency for your patience and generous with your time.

MR. MURPHY: It's a great privilege to be with you.

MR. SHARQIEH: Thank you very much. Thank you everyone for your questions.

\* \* \* \* \*

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