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PROCEEDINGS

Moderator: Good afternoon everyone welcome to this special event hosted by Brookings-Tsinghua center for Public Policy. Before I introduce the speakers today let me just introduce some of the guests who are with us today. We have the Dean of the School of Public Policy Management here in Tsinghua University, Professor Xue Lan. Also with us today we have the Director of the John Thornton China Center of Brookings Institution, Professor Li Cheng. We are here today to talk about the Middle East, and also in this context of the US China relationship, the two major powers, are some say the two countries have great interest and also important roles to play in in this situation now facing in the Middle East. And we know from the news media every day, and we watch the television we know there are lots of conflicts and even chaos happening in this area of Middle East; and the Middle East may be far from us here in China but China does have intimate interest in this area especially as China grow in economically and also politically and we see the demand for oil energy and importing from this area has been increasing as a matter of fact China now has become the number one importer of oil from the Middle East and in addition to oil and other economic interests will also see and this is a major area that Chinese entrepreneurs is considering to expanding their operations and investment and economic growth therefore for China to think about the situation there and to come up with the strategies and how it would work with partners on-site and also partners like the United States. The United States has been the major player in this area, the major force in resolving the many of the, in making progress towards resolution of these issues in the Middle East. We have today two scholars have been working in this area for a long time. Let me just first introduce our first speaker today, Dr. Martin Indyk. Martin is Vice President of Brookings Institution and he's also the director of Foreign Policy Program at Brookings Institution, the largest program within, among the five programs in Brookings institution. Martin is also my boss here in Brookings Institution, but most importantly and he has a such a long career in working in this area. Before his returning back to Brookings Institution in July he was working as a special envoy appointed by President Obama for this issue of Palestine and Israel relations and negotiations. And he was during the Clinton administration served twice as the American Ambassador to Israel and he was also a special assistant to President Clinton and serving in the White House special advisor on the

National Security Council and he also one time served as Assistant Secretary in the State Department, and he himself during his career of research, teaching and practice, he set up some major think-tanks on Middle East and Near East research, and he has a lot of extremely well-respected scholar in the study of the Middle East, and we are very fortunate today to have him with us to talk about these issues, and then followed by the commentary and also for by some discussions. So, before, let me first invite Dr. Martin Indyk for his presentation. Welcome.

Martin Indyk: Thank you very much. Thank you Dean Xue Lan for joining us today but more importantly, for hosting Brookings and Brookings-Tsinghua Center in your School of Public Policy. It's a relationship that is being very productive for Brookings and we are very grateful to you for everything you've done to make our partnership so fruitful over the years. The Brookings Institution has now had a eight-year relationship with Tsinghua University, and our Brookings-Tsinghua Center is one of 3 overseas centers that we have running. Doha, the Brookings-Doha Center in Qatar and one that we recently established two years ago in New Delhi, the Brookings-India Center. The Brookings-Tsinghua Center is our oldest overseas center. It was the first that we established as part of our efforts to turn Brookings into a global Think-Tank. And so it has great importance to us especially because of the important role that China is now playing as a result of its rising power on the world stage. But I think that one thing that is clear is that China's relationship with the Middle East has yet to reflect China's growing role in the world. If you compare China's involvement in the middle east to China's involvement in Latin-America, China's involvement in Africa or Europe or the relationship with the United States, it really comes in last and I think that's probably a function of the fact that China's dependence on middle eastern oil is a fairly recent phenomenon and China's preferences for the United States to take responsibility for maintaining order in that part of the world. But as China's dependence on the import of Middle-Eastern oil increases, and it's increasing quite dramatically, and America's ability to maintain order in this very troubled part of the world is going down quite dramatically, the United States and China, I think, do have a common interest in trying to find a way to promote order out of the chaos that now engulfs the region. A hundred years ago, this year, the modern state system of the Middle East was established. Not as a result of historical developments within the region. In China's part of the world, in Asia, the States of Asia have been long established, whereas the states the Middle East were created by British and French colonialists after the First World War, with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Two gentlemen,

cartographers, a Frenchman named Picot and an Englishman named Sykes, drew up the borders of the States of the Arab world. Brittany separately promised to the Jewish people a homeland in Palestine. And so out of this experiment came the States of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Israel, there was supposed to be a State of Palestine, but that is still in process. And so what you have is essentially an artificial arrangement. And those states over the years gained identities, and national identities, but they were never fully coherent. They were a mosaic of peoples, tribes and religious allegiances that were not quite coherent with the borders that had been imposed by the colonial powers. Egypt and Saudi Arabia were two big exceptions to that. Egypt, ancient Egypt, with a civilization that goes back 5000 years is a coherent State with a coherent population. Almost entirely Sunnis but with a 10-15% Coptic Christians, ancient Christians. Saudi Arabia was forged out of an alliance between King Abdul Aziz and the Wahhabi religious sect based on the Wahhabi tribe and that nation was forged by the sword. Upraises came out of the desert and put modern day's Saudi Arabia together by defeating over the neighboring tribes. And so it has a coherence that comes from that basic role of the Wahhabi's on the one side and the Abdul Aziz tribe , which became the Saudi Royal Family, on the other. But as for the rest it was a, as I said, artificial creation. And today we see how these states are beginning to come apart, at the seams. After the Second World War with the withdrawal of the British forces east of Suez, the United States came to the region to fill the vacuum and then engaged in a Cold War competition with the Soviet Union, for influence in this region but essentially with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the expulsion of Saddam Hussein's armies from Kuwait, back in the early 1990s. The United States became the dominant power in the region. And the United States had a basic focus on ensuring the free flow of oil from the Middle East to the United States and the other growing economies, industrial economies of the West, and Japan. You see those years China was not an importer of Middle Eastern oil. But that was America's primary interest in the region as well as the survival and well-being of the State of Israel. It was like Israel, oil, oil, and oil. And in order to secure the stability of the region we sought to do two things: one was to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict so as to ensure stability in that Arab-Israeli hot land, and the second was to bolster the autocratic leaders in the Arab world, particularly in Egypt and in Saudi Arabia to ensure the stability in that volatile region. The urge of Americans to promote our values overseas, as well as our interests, our values and freedom and democracy, that urge was suppressed in the Middle East. Became known as the Middle East exception, because judgments were made by successive administrations and presidents whether they were Republican or Democrat that given the vital

interests we had in the region, stability needed to take precedence. And so we backed to these autocratic leaders and cooperated with them, as they denied rights to their people, and instead ensured their autocratic rule by suppressing their people and over the decades by failing to meet the basic needs of their people. So we were always faced with this tension between our values and our interests and we chose our interests. The only problem with that was that we ended up with neither, because the failure of these autocratic regimes to meet the needs of their people resulted eventually in the revolutions that we saw spread across the Middle East in the last 5 to 10 years. And that dynamic in which the people of the region revolted against their leaders demanding freedom for themselves led to our inevitable situation where we were forced to choose, and had to stand by the people, against the autocratic leaders that we had stood by for so long. At the same, actually a little earlier jump up on one part of this critical history. The post 9/11, when we suffered attacks from Al Qaeda, the worst terrorist attacks in our history, the impact of that as you know was to lead to a decision by President Bush to remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq and promote democracy there, as well. And, in promoting democracy there we managed to impose a Shia majority government on Iraq and, so, the combination of these circumstances created a situation in which the whole region began to shake. Whether it was as a result of the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia, or the revolt in Libya which led to the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi, or the revolt in Syria, that resulted in the Syrian civil war that's taken over 200,000 Syrian lives and created displacement of some 5 million Syrians, and now the rise of ISIS in Iraq. We see that, in effect, that international, that regional order that was first established 100 years ago, with the Sykes-Picot agreement on the creation of the various states that I was referring to, we see it now coming apart, and collapsing, into ungoverned territories and failed states, and post-revolutionary or counter-revolutionary, leaders in Egypt. And the, out of, out of this turmoil has emerged this proto-jihadist State that calls itself the Islamic State: ISIS or Da'ish. So we face a situation in the region which is the very opposite of the stability that we had once, sort, and this creates a problem not only for the United States but, in many ways for the whole world, including China. The way in which ISIS is recruiting foreign fighters, including, as I heard from some of your government officials in the last two days, including some that have been recruited from China. But large numbers from Western European states, and the United States, and even from as far away as Australia. The rise of ISIS has created a threat not only to the region, but a threat to many countries around the world. We saw it's manifestation, terrorist attacks in Canada in the last couple weeks, attempted terrorist attacks in Australia, and the real

fear is that this is going to become a more widespread phenomenon. What you have, though, is, now, three basic conflicts in the region that are intersecting with each other and making it particularly different, difficult to try to restore order out of this chaos. The first conflict is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which used to be referred to as the Arab-Israeli conflict, except one thing the United States did succeed in doing, was to [unclear] a peace treaties between Israel and Egypt and Israel and Jordan and that helped to reduce the conflict to its Israeli-Palestinian core. That conflict was supposed to be resolved as a result of the Oslo process which the United States led and has been heavily involved in last 20 years, and I myself have been heavily involved in trying to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but it is now turned into a chronic conflict, which we saw, manifested itself in the war in Gaza this last summer. But that is the Third war in Gaza that is taken place in six years and I think it's only a matter of time before we have another conflict breakout there. Today, this low-level conflict going on in Jerusalem in parts of the West bank. So notwithstanding a massive effort to try to resolve it, it remains as one of the conflicts in the region that causes instability in the heartland of the region. The second conflict is a sectarian conflict, a religious conflict, that has found its origins in Lebanon, between the Sunnis and Shias there, but has spread in particular out of Syria, and out of Iraq and now it's in Yemen and in Bahrain, and threatens to drag the whole of the Arab world into a morass of bloody sectarian conflict between Sunnis and Shias. You'll see it manifest itself in its bloodiest form in Iraq and Syria but it has the potential to spread because throughout much of the region you have Sunnis and Shias living in close proximity and now the conflict is spreading between them. And the third conflict is one within Sunni communities themselves, and that is a conflict essentially between the Sunni Monarchs, particular Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, but also with Egypt, in which the conservative Sunni leaders appeared against the Muslim Brotherhood and it's Hamas stepchild in Gaza, and so is that these three conflicts intersect and create crosscurrents, undercurrents, and that combines to create this turmoil that becomes very hard to resolve. So look at what happens when we try to mobilize a coalition against ISIS out of a belief that ISIS represents a threat to the United States and beyond. So we have Sunni monarchs in that coalition by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the Emirates, but they are divided. They do not want the war against ISIS to advantage the Shiites and their Iranian [unclear]. And that's precisely what they feel will happen in Iraq if we succeed in defeating ISIS, people claim to the benefit of Iraq Shias and Iran. And from the point of Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, Iran is the real enemy, the strategic adversary, versus ISIS, which certainly presents a threat, but not in the same dimensions,

especially with Iran's nuclear program and the potential for Iran, if we do not succeed in curbing that program, to have nuclear weapons in the relatively near future. So, they are conflicting. They also don't want the United States Air Force to become Bashar Al Assad's Air Force in Syria. And there is the problem there if we as we bomb ISIS it plays to the advantage of Bashar Al Assad and sure enough now he's moving on Aleppo feeling emboldened by the fact that we're all distracted by the battle against ISIS. And so it is with the Turks, as well. They see ISIS as a threat, but not as much of a threat as the PKK, the Kurdish terrorist organization that has operated out of Syria and out of Iraq into Turkey. And so, we have a situation in which there is an alliance in which the partners are conflicted about what their real priorities are versus American priorities. And that's just one manifestation of the way in which these three conflicts intersect and create really complicated situations in terms of trying to devise a strategy for creating order out of this chaos. So what is to be done? Clearly we have to find a way to defeat ISIS, and that is first priority. In doing so we have to adopt, I believe, a fairly pragmatic approach, of prioritizing, in which we essentially have to fight ISIS as if there were no Assad and fight Assad as if there were no ISIS. It will take time to reestablish the Iraqi Army for the government, the new government in Baghdad, to reach out to Sunnis and reassure them of their role in the unified Iraq. It will take time to enlist the Sunni tribal militias in Iraq who feel betrayed by the previous government of Maliki in Baghdad, and betrayed by the United States when we left there. It will take time to train up the free Syrian army and give them the capability to deal with ISIS and with Assad. And until we can do all of that, and of course equip the Peshmerga, the Kurdish forces, we don't have the capabilities on the ground to actually take territory away from ISIS. We can contain them with air raids, you can see in Kobani the battle is taking place on the Turkish border with Syria that it is possible to hold them off with airstrikes, but it is not possible to take back territory without armies on the ground. And there is a great unwillingness on the part of the American people, at least so far, to support a recommitment of American forces on the ground in Iraq and Syria. And certainly President Obama is very reluctant to do so having committed that he would be the President who ended America's wars in the Middle East, not started a new one. So that is going to be the first challenge. Beyond that it will only, I believe, be possible to establish order in the region, again, if we wielded on the [unclear] of our allies there, and that starts with the Gulf States, led by Saudi Arabia, but it includes Turkey, Jordan, Israel, Egypt, and an interesting thing about most of those countries that I mentioned, Turkey is a kind of question, question mark, but the others all share a sense of

common threat and a sense of common interest. Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Palestinian Authority, Jordan, the Emirates, Qatar, all have a real concern about Iran, about Iran's ally in Syria, Assad, about Hezbollah and also about the Muslim Brotherhood, and Hamas, And so it becomes possible to build on that common interest. It won't be possible to do it unless we also find a way to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and try to move that as one of the sources of instability in the region, and it will require the United States to go back to a policy that is, has a checked history, let's put it that way, which is a policy of favoring stability in, for the time being, over our values in the region, because, in my view, the instability and turmoil there requires us again to prioritize and work with these Arab States, autocratic rulers, in order to reestablish stability, so that we can, then begin and help to promote freedom in the region. But given the circumstances for the time being stability will need to come first. And that leads me to my final point about China's interests and role. China surely has an interest in Middle East stability because it has an interest in the free flow of oil at reasonable prices to China's industries. And instability can really create havoc in the oil market and create real problems for China's sources of energy. So there is, I believe, a common interest that the United States and China have in trying to work together to restore order out of the chaos. Naturally China is not going to be playing a major role in that, but it will need to play its part, commensurate with its interests and that will require greater familiarity with this very complicated and somewhat strange arrangement, a much greater familiarity than China's had up to now because it hasn't really had the need to focus on that, but the need is there, and the common interest is there, and I think it is an area where the United States and China could benefit from working together. Thank you very much.

Moderator: Thank you very much, Martin, for you, for sharing your knowledge and your insights on this currently very complicated situation in the Middle East and I really appreciated those comments on China's role in this situation. Let me just also mention, being with us today are also quite a few non-residential senior fellows. I saw Professor Yu Qiao earlier, Arthur Kroeber were quite a few of us. We, here, at the Brookings-Tsinghua Center we have residential fellows we have more non-residential fellows, myself, my name is Qi Ye, director for BTC. For those few, who would like to, prefer, to listen in English, please have your headset ready, because I'm about to introduce our second speaker for today, Professor Tang Zhichao. Professor Tang is research Professor in Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Institute of Western Asia and

Africa. Professor Tang had a classic career studying International Relations, he started off in Nanjing Normal University, then studied in Peking University, in China Institute for Contemporary International Relations and he was one time, while he was in the China Institute for Contemporary International Relations served as the deputy director for West Asia and Africa and now he is a serving, he is a serving as a senior fellow senior research professor in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Professor Tang has made remarkable achievement on his studies of the Middle East. He is also very active to give his comments in public on issues such as Arabian-Israeli relations. Professor Tang has met with Dr. Martin Indyk before, in Washington D.C. Today we are very happy to have him to share with us his opinions on the Middle East issues. Welcome.

Professor Tang: I'm very pleased to see Professor Martin Indyk here. It was five years ago when I first met Martin. He told me then that he hadn't been to China, which gave me a big surprise: such a world renowned scholar, studying Middle Eastern issues—a subject so relevant to China—should have come. And here he is. Middle East has been playing an increasingly significant role in shaping Sino-U.S. relations.

Just now, Mr. Indyk has examined the history of world political order since WWI—how it was established, how it collapsed, and what role China and the United States have played in the process. I would like to offer a few comments.

First of all, I totally agree that the Middle Eastern order formed since WWI is now collapsing, and its political dynamics are also undergoing radical changes, especially since the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring led to changes first in the relationship between government and the society, then in ethnic relations, religious relations, and so on. The transition from the old political order to a new one may take 10 to 15 years, punctuated by trials and errors.

Second, as was recognized by Mr. Ambassador, the conflict over Palestinian-Israeli issue and the conflict among Sunnis now loom large in the Middle East. Another—and often overlooked—conflict is caused by the United States. Be it the Syrian unrest, the Libyan crisis, the Palestinian conflict or the Iran nuclear issue, U.S. has been an important player behind the scene.

Mr. Ambassador mentioned the crackdown on the Islamic State, which I personally don't think is the key to rebuilding Middle East political order. Instead, the Palestinian issue and the Syrian war, and the Iran nuclear crisis are rather more important. As President Obama said, rebalancing in the Middle East is to restore the relationship between Arabs and Persians, Sunnis and Shiites, Iranians and Israelis.

Last but not least, Mr. Ambassador mentioned Sino-U.S. relations and its relevance in the Middle East. As was said in the beginning, ten years ago, China had little, if any, strategic interest in the Middle East. But now, there are a great number of opportunities in regional security, economic development, and cultural exchange for China and the U.S. to work together.

However, the room for cooperation is admittedly limited, if we take into consideration the U.S. strategic interest and China's own economic strength. Thank you.

Moderator: Thank you Professor Tang. Now we come to the part of Q&A, please feel free to raise your hands and don't forget to identify yourself while you ask your questions.

Let me take advantage of being the moderator, and ask one question for each of our speakers here. My first, let me ask the question first, for both of you, and you choose the order, whichever order. Martin, Professor Tang, [unclear] in addition to the three conflicts you laid out, one important trigger for the disability, and for, in the world collapse of the Middle Eastern order, now we see is the role of the United States at the war in the second, I think the Gulf War, which was Iraq. My question is whether or not you would agree with this assessment. In addition to that, I would like to hear from you, what the US would like to be entitled to play, what kind of role the US would like to play in this situation right now. My question, for Professor Tang is similar, you also mentioned about Chinese interest in this area, I wonder if you could better define the Chinese interest, and also I wonder if you would agree that US and China, whether you see how the US and China collaborate in this issue, in Middle East. And, can we actually work together? Especially considering what you just mentioned, what, the United States may be a trigger, if not a cause of many of these problems there. Right?

Martin Indyk: Thank you. Thank you Qi Ye. And thank you Professor Tang for your comments. There is no question that the United States having devoted some 3 or 4 decades of efforts to

stabilize the region, in a wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. And the decision to invade Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein from power, that was a deeply destabilizing decision. And it was done out of concern from threat that ended up not existing, that is to say, Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction. And it was done; as I explained on my remarks, with a view to establishing democracy in Iraq, which had the effect of putting the Shia majority in power, whereas before the Sunnis would rule over of the Shias in Iraq. And that, when it gets to the basic approach, that successive administrations, republican or democrat, have applied in the case of Iraq, which was essentially, whatever we did to deal with Saddam Hussein, to contain Saddam Hussein, to prevent him from becoming a threat again to his neighbors, we did it with a view to avoiding opening Iraq to Iran, because that would become [unclear] threatening to our Gulf Arab allies. By the process of removing Saddam Hussein, we dropped that concern, and we essentially took care of Saddam Hussein, which is a threat, real threat to Iran, but in the process, enabled Iran to get a foothold in back there to the Shia government of President Maliki, and that helped to destabilize the situation. That, having done that and realized that the problem that we have helped to create, I think, should also be brought to mind, that we did try to advance investment [unclear], American [unclear] and American treasure to correct the situation and to, through the surge of American tributes, to try to stabilize Iraq, to rebuild the Iraqi army, and to give Iraqis a more stable situation, and thereby try to stabilize the neighborhood as well. And it didn't work, it didn't work not because of lack of effort, but because the basic conflict between Shias and Sunnis had generated a situation in which Maliki ruled for the Shias, he didn't rule for the Iraqis, and we were unable, unwilling, whatever you want to say but, that circumstance, we cannot change that circumstance, and the American people were no longer willing to invest the time or to get the treasure involved in changing that circumstance. So I agree, that our role there was destabilizing and despite the effort over 10 years to try to re-stabilize, It didn't work, and, as a result, we see the consequences in Iraq today. The consequences were also felt in Syria, where because of the vast amount of resources, human resources as well as physical resources that we invested in Iraq, to now to the end, and were also invested in Afghanistan, American people were no longer willing to play that role when it came to Syria. And I think that this is very important when you think about how to reconstruct order out of the chaos, is that the American public has a limited willingness to reinvest in this region. The president enjoyed support for the air raids in Iraq, but beyond that is a very questionable proposition. The one other point that I would make is, I think people were faulty in that respect, saying that we toppled the regimes, the regime particularly in

Egypt, and that is not historically correct, because the Egyptian people who toppled that regime, and it was the Egyptian people that voted in the Muslim brotherhood regime. And it was the Egyptian people that kicked out, or supported the army, kicking out that Muslim brotherhood. They're terribly hated, Muslim Brotherhood. And we played a role in assisting that Mubarak's step down, but it was marginal compared to the demands of Egyptian people. So, yeah, we should remember that, it is often ascribed to the United States that we are about to start everything in the region, but in this case the people had a very important role. And they're not.

Professor Tang: I would like to add some comment to the first question.

As Martin said, the current Middle East crisis was caused by a myriad of reasons, among which the most important being the Arab Spring and President Obama's policy of strategic contraction. The latter, I would say, has a mightier effect even than the Iraq war.

Professor Qi also mentioned the cooperation between China and the U.S. in Middle Eastern Issues. Actually, such cooperation is already underway—in Iran's nuclear crisis, the Palestinian-Israeli issue, and the Syrian war. More importantly, the two countries are sharing more common ground.

Building a new Middle East order is one of the areas China and the U.S. are keenly working on. Unlike President Bush who intended to break the existing order, President Obama aimed at restoring the political order and stability, which left much room for the two countries to cooperate.

Moderator: Ok let me open the floor. Yes, ok, let's just quickly respond.

Martin Indyk: No, no, I agree with Professor Tang. But I wonder, in light of this responding question, really. China, I think there are a couple of remarks I want to make. Which is, first of all, as China's dependence on Middle Eastern oil increases, American dependence on Middle Eastern oil is going down. And in fact, we no longer depend on Middle Eastern oil. The United States, under President Obama's orders will become an exporter of oil, next year. And that is a huge change in terms of how strategic interests. But we still have an interest in the free flow of oil at reasonable prices because that oil is going to our major trading partners, China and India,

and our allies, Japan and Europe, and so, that interest remains, but it's not for us anymore, and, it is for you, for China. I must argue this. And the American taxpayer is paying to ensure the free flow of oil to your industries. We are deploying a huge very expensive force in the Persian Gulf, to ensure that free flow of oil. And that is something that we are prepared to do, we are, in fact, kind of providing a public good. It serves our interests because of the globalization of the economy and our independence with the economy that are oil importers, like China. But I do think it is important to recognize that we are bearing the burden here, and China is getting the advantage from us.

Moderator: Ok now I open the floor. Let's have a few questions, let's go first question over there, then come over here, then here, ok? First question.

Question 1: My first question is for Professor Tang. I've noticed last month Wu Sike who is the former Chinese Envoy to the Middle East said that about 100 Chinese people were involved in the ISIS training of fighters in the Middle East, so in your opinion how big is the threat of ISIS to the region and does China have a clear policy addressing this issue? My second question is to Martin. When it comes to the global fight to contain the eminence of ISIS, what kind of role does the US want that China play?

Moderator: Identify yourself, please.

Question 1: I work in the field of journalism, and I come from the Financial Times.

Question 2: My question goes to Dr. Indyk, I'm from Beijing News. What do you see, due to the shared interest, what do you see as the promising areas of mutual and official collaboration between the United States and China, fighting against the terrorist? Will President Obama address this issue in the upcoming, in his upcoming meeting with President Xi? Thank you.

Question 3: Hello, my name is Beni Camaros, I am a student from University of Southern California studying here in Beijing. My question is for Mr. Indyk, So, I wonder if you, if you want to please elaborate on what kinds of things the US really does request of China, whether if it's material aid, as far as supporting fighting in this conflict, whether it is actually dedicating

soldiers or engagement or, there is anything else involved, and pretty much the same question for Mr. Tang, as far as what China would be willing to incorporate into this conflict.

Moderator: Ok, Martin would you like to or?

Professor Tang: For the first question, I didn't get much information. However, from the media observation, the ISIS did pose serious threat to China's interest and security. Firstly, there are indeed people fighting as jihadists in Syria, although we may have different versions of the exact number. And these people are not only from China, but also from regions as South Asia, East Asia, countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Secondly, we have also spotted terrorists groups who engage and support East Turkistan terrorists in China's surrounding areas. Besides, the situation in Syria ranks only second to the jihad once happened in Afghanistan, and it can be concluded as a greater threat, for it is the first time those East Turkistan terrorists get involved in such a global network of terror, which has offered them battlefield training and techniques of terrorism thus made them more capable. At last, China's interests in the Middle East, including the security of personnel and corporations, are also at risk because of it.

Moderator: Martin?

Martin Indyk: I think that we have to be realistic about what China can and will be willing to do; I think Professor Tang already ruled out the notion that that China would commit troops or technology, forces to this fight, and I assume that the reason for that is that one very interesting counterterrorism cooperation you don't see the threat to China in the same way we the United States see the threat to us. And so you end up not being prepared to do that. I think that's understood, I think we all have to be realistic about that. But there is a lot that can be done in terms of counterterrorism cooperation, there's a real concern that is shared by China and the United States that your citizens and our citizens will, some of them will be attracted by this nihilistic destructive atavistic ideology that the Islamic State propagates and that that recruitment will not only enhance the capabilities of the Islamic State but will also provide a training ground for citizens of your country by citizens of our country to come back here, and we're already saying the way which this understates go for random acts of terror, by people who identify with the Islamic State's ideology. And as I learned it already happened with Hamas. It's already

manifested itself in Australia, in England, in Canada, and who knows where it will manifest itself next, so that's one common concern and there are ways in which we can work together with countries a similar threat in terms of sharing information, sharing ways of dealing with this, I think that is the first level of cooperation. Stopping your citizens from going there is also important. We need to find a way to cut the number of recruits that ISIS is able to mobilize from around the world. A third area, and I don't know whether China has an ability to contribute in this area, is in terms of cutting the funding that goes to ISIS, from rural, as also coming from the Gulf, but there are a variety of financial transactions, particularly with the expanding of oil that ISIS has been able to use generate revenue, again I don't know whether China can help in that regard, but it's certainly worth exploring. But I think that is the extent to which is likely to be kind of collaboration that can come out of this center of common threat.

Moderator: I do see some more hands. Let's go some final, a final round of questions.

Question 4: I come from a government department, and my question is for Dr. Martin Indyk. You've mentioned in your speech that the Middle East locals should be responsible to handle the situation, so I wonder, does that mean the future of this region should also be left in the hands of the local people? My second question is you've talked about 'interests', and U.S. government is not very consistent in its Middle East policy, so I want to know how does U.S. see the relations among interests, culture and historical development? How to balance different interests in the region? What are the criteria for defining interests?

Moderator: Ok. Over there. Here, here.

Question 5: Hi, my name is Chris I teach at the China Foreign Affairs University here in Beijing, and I was just hoping if Dr. Indyk would share a little bit of his perspective on the failure of the recent efforts to bring about a resolution between Israel and Palestine. Thank you.

Moderator: Ok so no problem.

Question 6:

My question is, to achieve the strategic balance in the Middle East, will U.S. try to diminish or suppress China's influence on the reconstruction process of this region?

Moderator: Let's have one more question, the last one. You Bill.

Question 7: Thank you. My name is Bill Kazer, I'm on the Wall Street Journal, and I would like to ask ambassador Indyk a question about the cooperation with China, could you balance the fact that China seems to have its interests coinciding very much with Russia's interests, and how that limits the cooperation the US will expect from China, in particular, and particularly in Syria which is where it's most obvious.

Moderator: Looks like you got all the questions. And we have only like three minutes.

Martin Indyk: Well I can't possibly do justice to the crackdown in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiation in three minutes; I will answer the other question. Well I'll try. The question about the people, whereas is the side of the people, or whereas it's the side of the government, essentially, I think it's the essence of the question, it's an ongoing dilemma for the United States, and there is no simple answer to that challenge. As I explained, for decades we supported the governments, urging them to make [unclear] to their people, but accepting it when they failed. And then in regard to when people revolted, we stood by the people, and now we face the dilemma where, I think that to restore order, we have to stand by the government. It's not a simple answer to your question. It's situational dependent. We have to find a way to balance the two more effectively, and the problem is with the shifting sense of the middle east it's just very difficult to do so, so we try one way we try the other way, and we maybe we try a middle way, but the environment is not, is not conducive to that middle way, so I'm afraid we'll have to make the choice, so that's what I'm saying, we're going to have to go back to stability and stabilize the situation first, and then you can find a way to balance the interests of people, and freedom, and justice. What happened with the Israeli-Palestinian peace process essentially, that we were really, I think, played by a lack trust, a lack of trust by the people in both sides, and the intentions in the other, where both, the parties on both sides, at least at the time [unclear] try to negotiate so [unclear] a two-stages solution, but [unclear], they did not believe that the other side wanted it, and because they didn't believe the other side wanted it, they didn't believe it was possible, and

therefore they did not press the governments and their leaders to make the difficult decisions. That dissolution at a rival trust is hard to be reasoned where are conflicts and are crimes, and so difficult to resolve. And to that is a lack of trust between the leaders, and that discussion of trades and benefits it shows very clear today, in the [unclear] engagement kind of slanging match fusing each other. And all matter of things. But it will matter if they will stay in the negotiations as well. And they have talked with each other for long enough now that, they've come to believe that the other one doesn't want any peace, just want to find a way to [unclear] them. And that, the common failing between Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas and that too made it very difficult. And that's on top of the, just the wild gap that exists between the parties, of all of the core issues that remain to be resolved, if there will be any agreement. Territory, borders, settlements, Jerusalem, refugees, mutual recognition, all of those issues are very at stake. The passage of time, bear in mind it's 20 years since the Oslo Agreement was signed on the White House floor in September 1993. And that causes it was supposed to be just a five-stages agreement in five years, and 20 years on, we're still not there. So I think there's been a hardening in positions, a deepening of distrust, and that proved, all of those issues proved in unanimous, in circumstances where it seemed that only the United States was the one that was really trying to solve the conflict. Syria, I mean, I think that it's a good question, they, the Chinese government aside with the Russian, when it came to supporting the regime of Bashar Al Assad, whereas the United States has been supporting the removal of Assad, [unclear]. Siding with the people. [unclear] And it does reflect this recent disagreement between what is the best way to secure stability in this part of the world, I think the Chinese government, and the Russian government must believe that the best way to secure security in Syria is supporting the Assad regime, when it's so real that, that will never work. The Syrian people will never accept it, especially after 200,000 have been killed. And that results in the removal of Assad, not the redemption of Assad. And that's a reality, which I think is not going to be resolved anytime soon, and something we just have to agree to disagree about.

Moderator: Ok. Well, I wish we had more time for this very important discussion. Thank you for your participation; apologize to those few who, did not have a chance to ask more questions. Please, do join me thank our two great speakers for everything said. Thank you.

[END]