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IKE'S GAMBLE:
AMERICA'S RISE TO DOMINANCE
IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. WITTES: Well, good morning everyone. Wow. I'm Tamara Wittes, Director of the Center for Middle East Policy here at Brookings. I really want to thank all of you for joining us for a celebratory occasion, which is to mark the publication of a wonderful new book by Mike Doran, "Ike's Gamble: America's Rise to Dominance in the Middle East", for sale outside. If you haven't gotten your copy yet I hope you will after the event.

I think for any of us who watches the region, works on the region, it's clear that the Middle East is in a state of disorder today that shares many features with the period that Mike Discusses in "Ike's Gamble", and America's role in the Middle East is likewise at an inflection point as it was for Eisenhower as the British withdrew, to dive in more deeply to this disordered region or to try to stay out of the internecine struggles under way.

And to help us parse this question, Mike, who identified it early on as a head scratcher, has been quietly toiling in the vineyards for a few years now and emerging today with what I think is a truly exceptional book. Mike spent years combing archives in the Middle East and in Washington, reading oral histories, doing interviews, and he has unearthed a wonderful story and some priceless nuggets of historical evidence that reveal the personalities and paradigms that shaped that era of U.S. foreign policy, and also helped uncover I think important differences between what the media this week might call public and private policy positions. (Laughter)

Mike's look back at the Eisenhower administration's policy in the Middle East was designed from the first both to tell a great story and to help illuminate our current policy dilemmas. And I think in this book he has accomplished both of those

goals wonderfully and I really commend it to all of you.

Now, this kind of painstaking archival work and beautiful storytelling does not come easy. This book has been in gestation longer than any elephant. (Laughter) Mike started working on this book as a Senior Fellow here at Brookings and he finished it at the Hudson Institute where he has been since he left us a couple of years ago. Success has many fathers, I know, but we at Brookings are proud to have been able to provide Mike with a platform to do this spade work and to produce this beautifully told tale, which is illuminating I think for all of us.

Mike is going to come up here and tell you a little bit of this story and what it can teach us about the present, and then he'll be joined on stage by our colleague and Executive Vice President of Brookings, Martin Indyk, working on some archival storytelling of his own. And we'll have a bit of a conversation up here before opening it up to all of you.

I want to remind you please silence your cell phones, and if you're interested in Tweeting along during the event, you can see the hash tag we've got for today's event, #SuezCrisis.

And with that, let me invite my dear friend, author of "Ike's Gamble", Mike Doran. (Applause)

MR. DORAN: Well, that was such a generous introduction. It's really a great pleasure to be back here. Thank you, Tammy, for having me and for the introduction. Thank you, Martin, and thanks to all of you for coming. And I also want to thank Brookings for all the support they gave me when I was writing the book. I have only -- well, I have one disagreement with Tammy in her introduction, she said you can buy a copy back there, I'm expecting you to buy copies (laughter). You have family, you

have friends, there are old folks who need charity. There's a lot of reasons to buy many, many books.

Tammy told the truth when she said the book had been in gestation for a long time. I wish it was not true, I wish I could tell you I just dashed it off last summer, but no, it was long in coming. And one of the reasons was the tension between the narrative and the analysis. I wanted to write a book that people could read and maybe might actually want to read. That was my goal. I hope I succeeded. But I also wanted it to be more than just a story, I wanted it to have some kind of enduring significance for the present. That's the goal, I'll let you guys decide whether I achieved it or not.

So a few words about the story. The story traces the intellectual evolution of President Eisenhower as he grappled with the Middle East. You know, Eisenhower is famous for saying that planning is everything, but plans are worthless. So the process of getting everybody together to think about what we're going to do in a crisis is very useful, but what you actually do when your plan meets reality has nothing to do with what you thought you were going to do. And that's precisely what happened to him with the Middle East, but it took him a long to change is idea. The Eisenhower administration came into power with the conviction that Truman had carried out the greatest strategic blunder in the history of U.S. foreign policy, if not the greatest, then one of the greatest. And that was recognizing the State of Israel, tying the United States to Zionism. Because that was alienating all of the Arabs at a moment when the Arabs were needed in the Cold War.

Now, as somebody -- and I think Martin and Tammy can identify who this was -- as somebody who worked as political appointee in a White House, one of the things that really amazed me about the Eisenhower administration on the Middle East

was the complete consensus that existed between political appointees and area experts, career bureaucracy about the Middle East. Everybody was convinced that we were alienating the Arabs through our support for Zionism, and they were also convinced that we were alienating the Arabs through our connection to British Imperialism. So they had a vision, they had a picture of the world in their head that you had Israelis and Imperialists, British and French, on this side and all of the Arabs on this side over here, and we were being pulled in this direction towards the Imperialists and the Zionists, and that was alienating all of the Arabs. The problem with this picture was that it didn't have any place in sort of their strategic thinking for conflicts among the Arabs and Muslims. Those just did not exist.

This is not to say they didn't have enormous information about this. They were better informed -- at least Washington, through the reporting of the State Department and the CIA and so on, was better informed about what was going on the ground among the Arabs and Muslims than just about anybody in the world. But that information never rose to sort of the level of strategic importance. The important thing was to demonstrate to Arab rulers and to the Arab public that the United States could be a conduit for helping them reach their nationalist aspirations. Eisenhower saw Britain in decline and nationalism rising, and the goal therefore was to make an alliance with nationalism. If we failed to make this alliance with nationalism, then the nationalists would be pushed into the arms of the Soviet Union. And Nasser, the charismatic leader of Egypt, he was the key to sort of organizing the whole Arab world.

Once Nasser cottoned onto the fact that this is how the Americans saw him he was quite happy to reinforce that line of thinking because it helped him. His number one goal when Eisenhower came into power in January '53 was to get the British

out of Egypt. And one of the things I show -- I think it's actually -- I didn't tout it in the book as a great revision of the historiography, but I think it is. The people who tell the story of Suez usually start the story in 1955, I started it back in 1953 and I show that Eisenhower pushed the British out of Egypt. In public he had great friendly relations with Churchill. It was the last Churchill government. Behind the scenes Churchill and Eisenhower were at loggerheads. Neither one of them wanted to show this publicly, but behind the scenes there was really quite a struggle. And Eisenhower was urging Churchill to retire. It's quite an interesting story in its own right I think.

So Nasser, once the British were forced out of the canal zone -- this is 1954 -- Nasser started gravitating toward the Soviet Union, and it wasn't supposed to be that way. While he's gravitating toward the Soviet Union he's telling the Americans that he loves them, that he's going to line up with the West in the Cold War, but he has to do this because of Israel, Israel is putting pressure on him on the border. And he has -- and I hope this sounds familiar to you -- I didn't draw the connection in the book, but he depicts his regime to the Americans as divided between the extremists and moderates, and he explains that the United States has to give him concession because he's the leader of the moderates, and if we don't give him concessions the extremists will take over. And of course those concessions are concessions from others, from the British, the French, and the Israelis. So the Americans treated Israeli, French, and British interests as kind of a bank that they could draw from in order to pay off Nasser.

The irony is that by the time we get to July 1956, when Nasser nationalizes the Suez Canal, Eisenhower has cottoned on to Nasser. This is one of the things that I think is very interesting too in the book that Eisenhower realizes the game that Nasser is playing before anybody else in the administration does, before his experts

do. And this is something that I saw time and time again. He who was in bad health, was focused on many other things besides the Middle East and so on, I think he read the game better. Because he was savvy and because when you're the guy in charge and you realize that you're going to be held responsible for whatever happens, it kind of focuses the mind I think. But he was also savvy and intelligent. But he had turned completely against Nasser the man, but when Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, and the British, French, and Israelis started to organize against him and eventually in October of '56 they attack, simultaneous and coordinated attacks against Nasser. Eisenhower is still taking Nasser's side even though he's finished with Nasser the man. And that's because he's afraid of the demonstration effect. He still has this concept in his head of Imperialists and Zionists on this side and Arabs over there. And he's afraid of the demonstration effect if the United States teams up with Israel and the European Imperialists against the leading Arab nationalists of the day. And he's fearful not just of the effect on the Arab world, but on the entire -- what we would now call the third world.

So he's expecting -- and this is the meaning of the title, "Ike's Gamble" -- he places a bet essentially on Arab nationalism and a bet against his traditional allies, his NATO allies, and Israel. And he's expecting a strategic pay off in the form of keeping the Soviet Union out of the Middle East and stabilizing this region, which is going through a kind of revolutionary wave, not unlike what happened to us in 2011. And eventually he realizes that the payoff never came. There was supposed to be a strategic benefit from putting daylight between our allies and Israel, and that never came. In fact, quite the opposite. By the time we get to 1958 and there's a revolution in Iraq he's gone 180 degrees, his thinking has changed 180 degrees. And when he goes into Lebanon, when we intervene in Lebanon, the principles on which he is intervening are the exact opposite

ones of the ones that he used when he lined up against the Israelis, British, and French in 1956. I mean the dramatic story in '56 is that Eisenhower lines up with the Soviet Union -- I forgot to mention this -- with the Soviet Union against his allies. But the time we get to '58 there's a dramatic debate in the National Security Council where his advisors say if we go into Lebanon and at the same time we help the British go into Jordan, we'll be doing exactly what we stopped the British and French from doing in 1956, that is taking a military action in order to weaken Nasser. And Eisenhower basically says yeah, and we're going to do it, even though it's going to alienate the third world. So this whole concern about alienating the third world has just completely disappeared by the time we get to '58.

In the (inaudible) the book I cover three instances where Eisenhower after '58 expressed regret for what he did in '56. These stories of regret had been out there for a long time, but historians have dismissed them, as you know, just things, little throwaway statements that Eisenhower and others may have made. But I think when you put those statements against the background of the paradigm shift that he went through between '56 and '58, they make a lot more sense.

So that's the story and I think it has applications to the present. I think we'll probably end up talking about those there, so I'll just briefly say a couple of sentences about that. And I think the book shows the role that the United States actually has in the Middle East, our debate about our role in the Middle East and what Middle Easterners expect of us. The role that they expect of us I think is often very different and I think it brings that to light, that it's our job to build up a coalition of the status quo powers against the anti-status quo powers. And we have to understand that all of the different arenas in the Middle East are connected. In the Middle East everything is connected to

everything else. So you have to be careful of thinking about I have an Iran policy, I have an Iraq policy, I have a Syria policy, I have a peace process policy, and so on, and you have to understand all of the linkages between them. And failure to that, to understand the connections and to understand them correctly, can lead to all kind of difficulties that you may not even be aware of. Because on the other side, the anti-status quo powers -- in the '50s that's the Soviet Union and Egypt, today it's Iran and Russia and others -- they're strategic actors, they're acting along a number of different fronts simultaneously. And we need to think of ourselves as acting along all of those fronts simultaneously as well.

There are lots of other implications, which I think we'll bring out. I think the DNA of Eisenhower's way of seeing the Middle East, that's Eisenhower A -- the book says there are two Eisenhowers, Eisenhower A, up to 1958, and Eisenhower B, after 1958 -- the DNA of Eisenhower A's thinking I think is still alive and well in our system. And I think it exists on both side of the political divide. It's more present I think these days on the democratic side than on the republican side, but it's on both sides for sure. It's an American way of seeing the region. You have to do some -- I don't play the parlor game of saying who's Nasser of today and so forth, but I don't think it's that hard to do. I wanted to leave it up to the reader to make that decision so that I didn't yoke the book to a particular political position today, but I'm happy to do that in discussion. (Laughter)

Thank you. (Applause)

MS. WITTES: Well, Mike, thank you. And it truly is a great story and a great story too of foreign policy learning. And I'm going to turn it to Martin in a little bit to talk about the point that you ended on, which is that as Americans we have this fixation on problem solving. And when we look at the Middle East we think that we can solve the

equation. And that was Eisenhower's first mistake, is that he thought by pulling one way something else would come together.

Martin, you are now embarked on a project looking at Henry Kissinger's role in problem solving, particularly on the Arab-Israeli conflict. But as I read Mike's book and was thinking about the book you're working on now, it struck me that Kissinger actually managed to solve the equation that Ike failed to solve, which is that he did manage to knit together an anti-Soviet Arab coalition.

And so I wanted to start, Martin, by asking you if you would reflect a little bit on that contrast.

MR. INDYK: Sure. But first I want to speak in praise of this book, which I thoroughly enjoyed. As we've all joked, it's been a long time in gestation, but it shows in terms of not just the care that Mike has taken to present a study of deep history and to provide us with a way to understand it differently to the conventional wisdom, which always is interesting.

But I hope you will read this book because I know that if you do you will enjoy it. It's beautifully written with a whole raft of similes and analogies which are delightful and it's just a really good read. It's also a short read, which is kind of amazing in itself.

MS. WITTES: If you'd written it more quickly it would have been longer.
(Laughter)

MR. INDYK: So I think, Mike, you've done a great job. And as somebody who is struggling with thousands of documents, dealing with a period soon after the period that you're dealing with, I really tip my hat to you.

MR. DORAN: Thanks.

MR. INDYK: I think it's well done. And the book reviews -- I don't know whether you've seen them -- the *New York Times* demonstrate that others also greatly appreciate it.

MR. DORAN: Thank you.

MR. INDYK: Mike draws five lessons at the end and he does it with a light touch. I'm sorry he didn't do it with a harder touch and maybe heavier touch, and maybe we'll get into this now, but it is I think designed to be provocative. And I respect the way in which he, as he says, did not yoke it with his own particular views about current policy. But one thing that is striking to me about reading the battle of ideas that went on in Ike's head that you present and of course in the meetings of the National Security Council, which you also presented in fascinating detail, is that American policy makers have to relearn this lesson over and over again. And you say well, Nixon understood it, but in fact Nixon didn't understand it. It took him two years to get to where you describe it.

The first go round, it was Secretary of State Rogers and the great Jose Cisco, pursuing a policy almost exactly what you described their predecessors in the State Department as promoting under Eisenhower, and Nixon going along with it. The first thing they did was to bring the Soviet Union into what they called two power talks to resolve the Arab-Israel conflict. This is the height of the Cold War. So the notion that somehow they figured that they needed to line up the Arabs against the Soviet Union, they were off talking to Bosco immediately, and so on and so forth. It proved in many ways just as disastrous for American diplomacy as what you describe. And Henry Kissinger used that to basically get control of the policy. But once he got control of the policy he pursued you could say the opposite. He embraced Israel, he embraced the

status quo, and we got the Yom Kippur War, which is a way of saying that this is a kind of eternal dilemma for U.S. foreign policy.

And even though I think your lesson -- I'll come to that in a moment -- I think the lessons you draw are the right ones. There is something about America's encounter with the Middle East that leads us not to be able to learn the lesson. We seem to just repeat it over and over again. So it is to the point you make about Max Weber's insight into the way that preconceptions or mental maps or your ideas lead to interpretations of the facts, that you end up with that same thing. What is it about America's engagement with the Middle East that leads to this? And I think it is -- Tammy referred to it -- is this believe that every problem has a solution. That's a very American approach. An inability to understand that the way in which the actors in the Middle East - - and I would include Israel in this, not separate from the Arabs, but the Israelis, the Iranians, they've all learned to play the game because they live in that dangerous neighborhood and we don't. and so to understand the cross currents and under currents is something that is just extremely difficult for American policy makers to do.

Now, for example, last week the Egyptians voted with the Russians in the Security Council against a resolution that condemned the Assad regime and the Russians for their activities in Syria. And the Saudis, who've been bankrolling the Egyptians, cut off the free oil that they're giving them. So you think, what the hell's going on. How can we possibly understand why Egypt is backing Assad against the Saudis? And how the hell can we figure out a policy that takes account of the fact that there are so many different games being played and interests being promoted. So in a way, as I read about Ike in that situation, I kind of felt sorry for him. How could he possibly understand the nature of the Arab cold war that was going on. He certainly -- the experts couldn't

give it to him. And so I think that's something that we need to ponder, whether there's something innate about the American approach to the region, that we can't get it right, no matter how good the history lessons are.

There's one other point that I -- well, let me just finish that point, which is you made -- one of your lessons is you need to test your assumptions. And I think that's very good. But I would add to that you need to have your radar trained to the horizon, so when things occur that don't fit your assumptions, you don't cling to your assumptions and simply stick with your policy, which is exactly what Eisenhower did between '56 and '58, and helped to compound the disaster that started with the Suez Crisis. That you need to pay attention when things occur that don't fit your assumptions and then adjust to it. Because that's I think one of the only ways to get over it.

Last point is about Israel, because I think you make a very good point there, but I felt that it didn't come out in your lessons in the way that the actual record that you show points to. That is to say that the idea that was advanced by Ike's advisors was that you needed to put some distance between the United States and Israel in order to curry favor with Arab nationalists. And that is the similar trope that we hear over and over again. The lesson that you draw is that solving the Arab-Israel conflict is not central to the interplay of politics in that region. And we shouldn't think that it is. But my lesson is a different one, which is that we shouldn't think that we can help to solve the Arab-Israeli problem by distancing the United States from Israel. Those are the argument and counter argument. And the problem with the latter proposition, that is to say we shouldn't distance ourselves from Israel if we want to help resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict, is that that way doesn't work very well either. (Laughter)

MS. WITTES: And which maybe goes back to where we started, that not

every problem has an American generated solution.

But I think that your point about keeping your eye on the horizon and adjusting to changes in the landscape is a key one when we get to the lessons your history has for modern times. And so I want to get into current policy and get your thoughts on this, because by my count the Obama administration actually took that lesson to heart because it's had at least four policies toward the Middle East over the last eight years. It started with a demilitarization and pivot to Asia, then the Arab Spring happened. Big shift, May 2011, announcing support for democratic change across the region as a key factor in U.S. policy. That lasted about a year, until the Arab Spring started to generate some very violent results. And there was a strong pushback from some of America's regional partners against that democratic change. So then it was a retreat to narrow interests, counterterrorism, counter proliferation, and yes, solving the Arab-Israeli conflict. And then that too was overthrown by the rise of ISIS and the need to recommit American forces to the Middle East in a fight against ISIS.

So I guess, Mike, how do you assess an Obama administration that did seem to understand that there was a degree of upheaval in the region that demanded radical change from Washington, and also that these are things Washington could not fix. And so going to your point about the limits of American power to shape the Middle East, it seems as though Obama has learned that lesson, or perhaps he's learned it too well?

MR. DORAN: I don't think he learned the key lesson. And this also speaks to what you were talking about, the lesson that I draw about the centrality or non-centrality of the Arab-Israeli conflict. To me the key lesson of the book is that the center of gravity in Middle Eastern politics is a struggle between status quo and -- well, let's call, right, status quo and anti-status quo powers, which are those powers that are

comfortable with an American dominated order and those that are opposed to the American dominated order. There's always an enormous amount of noise and other things going on. Egypt's tensions with Saudi Arabia, Egypt voting against us and so on, on Syria and all that, that is a secondary or tertiary issue. That's Egypt bargaining with us and the Saudis for greater -- on the Syrian question they've always been separating themselves from the Saudis for a number of reasons, but I think in the final analysis to get more out of the Saudis and make, you know, the greasy wheel is the one that gets the oil.

The real split in the region is between the Iranian alliance system and everybody else. The thing is, it's hard to see that because everybody else -- let's call it the golden triangle, Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia -- I'm talking about today's Middle East -- they cannot on their own organize themselves in order to counter the Iranians as a block. And they don't have an identical view of what a non-Iranian dominated order looks like. There are areas where they have real differences. So there are all kinds of tensions between them that keep them from organizing effectively. But if we step in and we assign roles and missions, we can do that. If we don't do that, then they all go in separate ways. But the Middle East reconstitute itself, it won't -- part of the problem of analysis is that they will not band together as a group and tell us that we need to be doing things completely differently. I mean if you're Benjamin Netanyahu now, and because we have pulled back from the region and the Russians have moved in, he has to negotiate with the Russians simultaneously with negotiating with us. If he stands up and says this Russian entry into Syria is a disaster for Israeli and for all of America's allies, he's then vastly complicated his relations with Putin and he's also insulted Obama. So they just adjust, right, they adjust publicly and privately so that you'll never hear criticism of Putin

coming out of Netanyahu, and you won't hear it out of the Saudis or the Turks either. The Turks tried to and it didn't work.

MS. WITTES: You're saying they're all triangulating, but because of their own fundamental uncertainty or disagreements with one another about what their preferred regional order is, they can't coalesce and have a united position toward us?

MR. DORAN: That's our job, that's our job.

MS. WITTES: And yet, if I remember right, in the book you ask the question, if the Eisenhower of 1958 had emerged earlier would he have been able to prevent the overthrow in Iraq, would he have been able to prevent the degree of regional upheaval. And you answer that question no. he might have made a marginal difference, but the region is --

MR. DORAN: No, it's unknowable, it's unknowable.

MS. WITTES: Okay.

MR. DORAN: It's unknowable. Because this is -- to your point about American's wanting to fix things, the Middle East is a mess, right. You can do everything -- and it's a mess and it's complex. You can do everything right and you'll get a very unpleasant result. (Laughter) So you can't assume that what I consider to be the right policy is going to bring about perfect stability. It's in the nature of the thing that it won't. That's part of the reason why it's difficult -- that if you don't see the world the way I do or the way Eisenhower did --

MR. INDYK: Eisenhower 2.

MR. DORAN: Eisenhower B, yes. If you don't see the world that way it's very hard to make an irrefutable case that will convince everybody that oh, yeah, this is obviously correct. But to sum it up in one phrase, the center of gravity of Middle East

politics is the struggle for power and authority among the Muslim states. I say that because one of the things that we do, you described one of our policies, ISIS, oh ISIS, we are the only actor in the Middle East right now that considers the defeat of ISIS the number one strategic priority. Lots of people don't like ISIS and would like to get of it, but they're all asking the question, after the dust settles, who's on top. And what our policy right now is offering the Israelis, the Turks, and the Saudis, is an Iranian dominated post ISIS order. That's what we're offering. And so they're not going to tell us that, they're going to say oh, we love your ISIS policy, we love, yeah, it's great. But then there will be no follow through. You always find in the Middle East there are the things where they say it's great and there's real follow through, and there are things where they say it's great and there's no follow through.

MS. WITTES: Okay. So, Martin, I want to ask you to weigh in on this question as well because I think that you were just in the region and one of the kind of constant themes that we hear from our regional interlocutors from the governments is a demand for greater American leadership to build that coalition that Mike was talking about.

So Mike's arguing that these intra Arab disputes and interstate disputes about regional order are a sideshow. And if the U.S. were exercising leadership we could build that coalition. Do you agree?

MR. INDYK: Yes and no. It's complicated, a Mike says. Yes, in the sense that Obama's determined pivot away from the Middle East has left a vacuum which they all have tried to fill in their own ways, as have the Iranians, as has ISIS, as has the Russians. And I think they're all traditional partners and allies, that is to say Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the lesser Gulf states, the Emirates, the Jordanians, and the

Moroccans. They've all come to recognize that they need the United States to reengage.

And so I think there is a real potential to reset the relationships, which have all become problematic. It's actually quite interesting to note that we have problematic relations with all of our traditional allies or partners, Israel, Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, and Jordan in particular.

So I think there is definitely an opportunity there. But then the question is what does that reset look like, what is the compact that we now want to strike with them, assuming that we have a president in January who actually wants to reengage in the Middle East. I think that that is likely to be Hillary Clinton's instinct. We don't know with Trump, but it doesn't seem to be his instinct. But, you know, what are the terms of endearment or engagement. And there we come back to it's complicated, because essentially your conclusion, Mike, from Ike's experience is that we should be building a coalition of status quo powers and backing them and supporting them. And that's the best way in these circumstances -- I don't want to put words in your mouth, but I assume in these circumstances that's the best way to restore order.

And I actually agree with you. I think you know I agree with you on that.

MR. DORAN: Yeah. You wrote a two piece --

MR. INDYK: Right.

MR. DORAN: If you disagreed with me I was all ready to (laughter)
quote Martin Indyk to Martin Indyk.

MR. INDYK: I do agree with you (inaudible), broad strategic terms. But when you actually look at what kind of compact are we going to make with each one of them you get down to the other question, which I didn't have to deal with that successive administrations have, from Clinton to Bush to Obama, which is what do you do about

status quo regimes that are actually taking actions which are going to destabilize their own countries by arresting their own people, denying them freedom of expression --

MS. WITTES: Or destabilize other countries.

MR. INDYK: -- failing to meet their basic needs, and so on. Or destabilize other countries. And so that's a different dilemma than one that Ike ever had to face, but it is a real dilemma now. And then there's the question, okay, we're going to reset our relationship with Netanyahu, but he heads up the most right wing government in Israel's history that's pursuing a settlement policy and de facto annexation of the C areas of the West Bank, which is against our policy and against what we consider our interests and what we consider Israel's interests. Then we get to Turkey. What the hell are we supposed to do with Erdoğan in these circumstances?

So, you know, it's very difficult to figure out how we're going to do this in specifics, but as long as we start with a clear basic proposition, which is what you're saying, I think we've got a better chance of getting it right than if we pursue some of the mythologies of earlier times.

MS. WITTES: Okay. So, yes --

MR. DORAN: Can I respond?

MS. WITTES: -- I want you to respond to it.

MR. DORAN: Pardon me. I drank Tammy's water (laughter) so I have to give her a new one. That's allowed.

MS. WITTES: Thank you, Mike. I want you to respond to it and I'd also like to bring in another point you make in the book, which really comes through in the archival material that you bring in, which is that Nasser was incredibly duplicitous in his dealings with Eisenhower.

MR. DORAN: He was great, wasn't he? (Laughter)

MS. WITTES: I mean you really portray him as a sort of master manipulator. And I think it raises the question, given what Martin said about how fractious our putative partners are and how much they mistrust our motives at this moment, you know, do we have that kind of problem, only perhaps magnified or multiplied several times?

MR. DORAN: So I can't say that I've done anthropological work on this, but there's something about Americans especially, but then northern Europeans -- I think it stops at France, so the British, the Scandinavians, and us, especially us, we believe that speech -- we just assume that it's an effort to express truth from one person to another. (Laughter) I've spent a good amount of time in Italy, this is not true among Italians, they don't assume. It's definitely not true among Middle Easterners. An Israeli told me a funny story. A friend of his was responsible for a company, George Schultz, when he was doing diplomacy in Lebanon in the '80s when he came to Israel -- and the guy's name is Eli Akim -- the guy who was accompanying Schultz -- and Schultz came from negotiations with the Lebanese one day and he was very upset and Eli Akim said to Schultz, you know, Mr. Secretary, you appear to be unhappy today. And he said, Eli Akim, the Lebanese are lying to me. (Laughter) which is funny because you guys didn't laugh that much, but to Israeli's this is really funny because they know why would you ever assume that they're telling you the truth. I think that's true. And by the way it's true of the Israelis. The Israelis don't tell us the truth either. Nobody is telling us the truth. Look, how honest is the receptionist in the company to the CEO when the CEO says, are you happy here. Oh, no, it's terrible, they're doing this and this and -- you know, there's a power relationship there. Everybody is dependent on us, even our enemies are

dependent on us to a certain extent. They're vulnerable to us. And so they have to tuck in certain ways to make sure that we don't take actions that are going to harm them.

And that's why as a president -- I noticed this when I was in the White House -- as a president you -- the Middle East is different from Europe or East Asia in that we have permanent alliances -- formal alliances in Europe and East Asia that represent the region to the president in a very particular way and we don't have those in the Middle East, it's much more fluid. And so if you have no experience in the Middle East and you're the president then you are confronted with -- you aren't confronted with friends and enemies, you're confronted with problematic friends and potential friends. When I was in the White House the Syrians and the Iranians, who I consider to be our enemies, were whispering to the Bush administration, we can solve all your problems, we can solve all your -- well, why are you so close to the Saudis? What's wrong with you, why are you doing? Why are you so close to the Jews? So that's your problem. If you move away from them, we'll solve all your problems for us. It was remarkable.

And if you know -- what they were whispering to us when I was in the White House, they're saying openly now -- I mean Zarif, the Iranian Foreign Minister, is writing on the op-ed page of the *New York Times* that we Iranians are the solution to this Saudi Wahhabi problem that you have, which is just nonsense as far as I'm concerned. But that's the way the Middle East represents itself to us.

And if we believe, as we often do -- this is another thing, it's a pathology of people in government, they believe that what they hear behind closed doors from other diplomats, or what they get in a document marked secret is somehow truer or deeper than what they can see with their own eyes. I mean Nasser was aligning with the Soviet Union and his propaganda machine -- which we gave him, the CIA gave him this

unbelievable state of the art propaganda machine to propagandize the whole Middle East in the expectation that he was going to use it to align the Arabs with the United States in the Cold War -- he's using all of this against us. We're totally aware of it, we're totally aware of it, but we decide that it doesn't really mean anything because behind closed doors he's telling us I'm on your side, I'm your guy. And it's amazing.

But in answer to your question, the other problem is there are so many conflicts going on, there's so much noise, right, and there's so much domestic political debate about all the noise, that it's very hard to prioritize and say what are the relationships that really matter, what are the conflicts that really matter. And for me it's this issue of the struggle for mastery. So in order to better engage with the region the first thing that we have to do is show everybody in the region that the United States is back and that it is going to oppose the Russians and the Iranians. Now, we can go in heavy in opposition to the Russians and the Iranians, or we can go in light, but we have to send a very clear message that that's what we're going to do and we're going to do it across the board. You said we don't know about Trump, we don't know about Clinton. I basically agree with what you're saying, but I think what we have been hearing from the Clinton Camp -- and there are some people here who probably know better than I do -- but what we've been hearing from them is oh, we're going to recalibrate in Syria. That's not going to work. That's a misrepresentation of the problem because if we recalibrate in Syria, we get tougher with the Iranians in Syria, we may find that the green zone is going to be overrun in Iraq or suddenly there will be hostages taken by shadowy Shiite militias that we've never heard of in southern Iraq, or maybe they'll stop cooperating on the inspections regime on the nuclear deal. And also they're making a distinction as if we can get tough with Iran and Syria, but not Russia, or get tough with Russia and Syria and

not have to worry about Russia and Ukraine. But Iran and Russia are like this. So if we're going to get tough with one of them we're going to get touch with both and it's going to be in Ukraine, it's going to be in Iraq. So you have to be ready for the global contest and I don't hear that from either one of them that there's going to be global contest.

MR. INDYK: Yes, I guess I'd put it --

MR. DORAN: Sorry, can I make one last -- I'm sorry, I know I'm going on, but it's my day, Martin.

MR. INDYK: Exactly.

MR. DORAN: It's my day. (Laughter)

MR. INDYK: Enjoy.

MR. DORAN: No, just one more quick point because you pointed out about regimes doing -- or allies doing things that we think are counterproductive.

MS. WITTES: That are destabilizing.

MR. DORAN: Two points on that. Number one, I think it's clear that the country -- and that's on left and right, not just the democrats -- doesn't agree with another George W. Bush style invasion of Iraq. There's a consensus that we need to pull back from the Middle East to a certain extent, right? That President Obama I think read and reflected 100 percent correctly. That has certain consequences. One of them is we get less influence over our friends. If we're going to have partners in the region that we're going to work with to stabilize the region we are going to have to put up with some of their priorities that we might not otherwise want to put up with. And as long as we're going to have to work with them as our cooperative partners, we have to take that on board. So that's just a fact of life.

Then the second thing is if we align -- we're falling between two stools

right now because we are the -- our enemies -- and I think we do have enemies, Americans have to learn to say the word enemy, enemy, enemy -- we have our enemies are contemptuous of us and our friends don't trust us. What I'm saying is if we start showing ourselves to be actual enemies to our enemies then our friends will be more cooperative --

MR. INDYK: On the things we care about.

MR. DORAN: -- with us. On the things that we care about. And if we don't --

MS. WITTES: But we should let go of some of the things that they care about?

MR. DORAN: Yes, absolutely. But there's another issue here too. If we don't do that and we leave them to fend for themselves, then they tend to react in ways that are much worse than if we don't embrace them. If we don't help the Saudis against their Iranian threat, are they going to say oh, that's not really a threat, I'm going to reform at home? No, they're going to use the elements of power that they have, which includes their ideology, which we don't like. So if we think that the application of that ideology, the spreading of that ideology is a problem, we have to offer them a solution that won't require them to do it.

MR. INDYK: Right.

MS. WITTES: Okay. Briefly, Martin, and then I want to open it up.

MR. INDYK: Sure. I think that's very well said and I it also takes into account a reality that before you said it, it's really unspoken, but needs to be out there, which is to say the reengagement, if it takes place, needs to be cognizant of the fact that it's not going to be the same kind of reengagement. Number one because I would argue

that our interests do not require the kind of boots on the ground engagement of George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq. Our interests are not vital in that way. They used to be. Because of the shale gas revolution and that has reduced the importance of that particular interest, the free flow of oil. It's still an interest, but we can maintain the free flow of oil with the deployment of forces that we have at the moment. We don't need to send forces in.

And we have shown that we can deal with ISIS like threats at a much lower level of engagement on the ground. And it's more sophisticated, it's more effective and so on. So I think, you know, the way we reengage is going to be different. And I take your point, which I think is a very good one, which is that as a consequence we're going to have to depend on our partners more and we're going to have to accept some things -- that's what I say is a new compact has to be worked out, that otherwise we couldn't -- we wouldn't be comfortable. With that it goes back to Ike, because if you go with your counter effectual, if he had decided that actually he needed the British capacity in the Middle East to help protect American interests, then he would have had to downgrade the importance which he placed on presenting the United States as an anti-Imperialist power, which was -- after the war that was really the driving view. Roosevelt, not just Eisenhower, it started with Roosevelt, Truman and then Eisenhower.

MS. WITTES: And that's something that would have had implications in other regions beyond the Middle East.

Great. I'm going to open it up at this point. Let me just remind you all, please wait for the microphone, tell us who you are, and ask one question. And we're going to start with Jon Alterman, right there, fourth row.

MR. ALTERMAN: Jon Alterman, CSIS. Let me take you back to the

1950s, get off all this present stuff. (Laughter)

MR. DORAN: Jon wrote a book about the 1950s.

MR. ALTERMAN: Which Mike Doran blurbed on the back, so you know it's good. So buy his book, buy my book. (Laughter)

You know, in 1955 Eisenhower sends Robert Anderson to the Middle East to try to work an Arab-Israeli peace deal and decides after Project Alpha didn't work out in the spring of '55, in the spring of '56, in April, that we're going to work with the British on Omega to depose Abdul Nasser. So the sense I get from you of Eisenhower coddling Abdul Nasser in '56, it seems to me that actually he was looking more broadly and decided by '56 that Abdul Nasser had become a problem and we were going to work with the British to push him out. Am I missing something about Alpha and Omega?

And then more broadly it seems to me the point that you're advocating is basically the John Foster Dulles point, that international law is lovely, but we have friends and we have to stand by our friends. And that was Dulles' approach to Suez all the way through. Eisenhower had a bigger point, which is if we don't have international law in everything, in other regions, in Northeast Asia, we're going to have to be fighting the Soviets everywhere. His point was more broadly we have to curb international law, whether it's on our friends' side or not. Is the point you're making that Eisenhower was wrong, Dulles was right, and Eisenhower came to believe that Dulles was right?

MS. WITTES: Or that there's no such thing as a principle in foreign policy.

MR. DORAN: You know, it's the latter there, yeah. (Laughter) Before I answer your question let me tell you, a friend of mine told me that Henry Kissinger -- it's a very Kissinger-ian book I think -- used to teach a course on international relations at

Harvard and when it came to the day every year when he was to lecture on international law, he had Stanley Hoffman give the lecture. (Laughter) Somebody went up to Kissinger and said how come you never give the lecture on international law, how come you always hand it over to Stanley Hoffman, and he said I refuse to lecture on something that doesn't exist. (Laughter)

So I'm answering your second question first. I put Eisenhower in that category. All the rule of law stuff and everything that Eisenhower came out with, I think that was an attractive wrapping to put around what was essentially a power political calculation that he made.

About your first question, no, I see it as exactly as you said it, the question about the switch in policy in March of '56 from Alpha to Omega and so on. I telescoped in my remarks, go buy several copies of the book and you should read one. You can read it and then give it to your friends as well. It's a two stage evolution that Eisenhower goes through. The first stage is he's finished with Nasser and that leads to the Omega policy, but then Nasser's response to Omega is to nationalize the Canal and turn the American policy of behavior change and pressure on Nasser, which was a good policy, but he quickly turned it cleverly into an Egyptian nationalism, Arab nationalism versus Western Imperialism. And once he did that it scared Eisenhower and then Eisenhower realized once the British and the Israelis and the French are going to take a military reaction to Nasser Eisenhower couldn't sign up for that. Because like I said because of this demonstration effect.

So to me that's the great iron of Suez, is that Eisenhower in his mind has turned anti Nasser. He said after this, he's the greatest blackmailer ever, I can't cut a deal with him, he'll just blackmail me over and over again. So I do see it very much the

way you do, except I don't think there's a distinction between Dulles and Eisenhower at all. Dulles is just the public face of what -- they're working very closely together.

MS. WITTES: They had a good copy/bad cop thing.

MR. DORAN: They had a good cop/bad copy thing, yeah.

MS. WITTES: Yes, right here.

MR. MITCHELL: Thanks very much. I'm Garrett Mitchell, I write the Mitchell Report. And, believe it or not, as I've been sitting here listening to all of this I've been thinking about two people. One is Mark Twain, the other is Tom Cotton. (Laughter)

MS. WITTES: That's interesting.

MR. DORAN: Like everybody else.

MR. MITCHELL: Yeah. To say the obvious. So Twain's notion of if you're only tool is a hammer you tend to look at all problems as nails, raises the question for me about whether our capacity to keep getting it wrong in the Middle East is about our inability to see problems as anything other than nails or whether it is that we only really have one tool, which is a hammer, and how that speaks to this sort of conundrum of the Middle East that you apparently make abundantly clear in your book. And in a world at a time when you have Tom Cottons who think it's perfectly appropriate to engage in foreign policy in the Middle East by getting X number of his colleagues to sign a letter to send to the leader of a foreign power, who I would argue is an enemy, and as a consequence makes cloudier than ever the notion that there is such a thing as a coherent American foreign policy.

MS. WITTES: Okay, a lot to take on there, Mike.

MR. DORAN: So on the Mark Twain point, I think it is very important to understand that the greatest thing that we have in the Middle East is our hammer. Not

that we should use toward every problem in the same way, but what Middle Easterners want from us first and foremost is our military capacity. We are there, this is a hard power game. Under the influence of people like Joe Nye we convinced ourselves, or a significant segment of our foreign policy elite, convinced itself for a few years that really it's all about selling our soft power to the world. That's not the game that's played in the Middle East. In the Middle East it's vicious, traditional power politics and that's where our analysis should begin. I don't mean to say that the game is only played with that, but that is --

MS. WITTES: But I think even vicious power politics is played with tools other than military capability.

MR. DORAN: True, true. But let's start with that. Let's start with that and then add the other stuff. Let's not start with the soft power nonsense and everything. (Laughter) Sorry, did I speak with a lack of nuance? The second point, I liked the Cotton letter in its spirit, but I thought it was badly executed because it opened them up to being, you know, to aligning with Iran. Of course as far as I'm concerned Obama has been aligning with Iran for years and we never got the outrage, (gasps), he's aligning with Iran. But when Cotton wrote a letter to Khamenei it was (gasps), he's aligning with Iran. But the idea that I liked about it was to say to the -- not so much to the Iranians, but to world businesses, that okay, Obama wants to open Iran for business but that's not a consensus in America and you better be very careful about how quickly you go in there because you may have the carpet pulled out from you once a new president comes in. I liked that message a lot.

MS. WITTES: Martin, I want to ask you about this because you made the point that in fact the United States can do more with less military presence and

capability.

MR. INDYK: Yes. But first of all, since you've introduced Mark Twain into this discussion I would just remind you that he wrote a book about this called, "Innocent Abroad", which is about his travels in the Middle East.

MR. DORAN: That would make a good title for a book.

MR. INDYK: Yeah, I stole it myself.

MS. WITTES: Yeah.

MR. INDYK: Because it captures it very well. So I would highly recommend that.

MS. WITTES: But did either Jon Alterman or Mike Doran blurb that book? (Laughter)

MR. INDYK: Secondly, it's ironic that you dismissed soft power when you made such a big deal about it in terms of what the CIA did for Nasser. And I thought that was actually a very interesting point that you made in the book about giving him the soft power capability to broadcast for the whole Arab world. And it's a footnote, but it's a very interesting observation in the context of the in which social media that we developed in the United States is being utilized now in much the same way as -- what was it called -- Radio Cairo in those day was being used --

MS. WITTES: Voice of the Arabs.

MR. INDYK: -- voice of the Arabs -- thank you -- is being used to project. And so, you know, in the region and in Russia and in China, they see these soft power tools as tools of American subversion, of authoritarian regimes.

MR. DORAN: No, totally true, totally true. I don't mean to say that communications, propaganda, and so on doesn't have its place in foreign policy, it's a

question of hierarchies, what the priority, and what is in service of what. I mean the Russians do this -- if we're talking about communications as soft power, the Russians do it better than us, but their communications is -- and the Iranians -- is all put to one purpose, which is to say we have a really big hammer and we're going to use it and we're going to use it against you. And, oh by the way, those Americans are nowhere to be seen and they're not going to help you, so don't go to them for a second.

MS. WITTES: Okay. We're going to go right here to the third row.

QUESTIONER: (Inaudible), University of Washington, and I'm also a columnist in Al-Masry Al-Youm, Egypt's independent leading newspaper. I was in the region for the past year and I agree with one aspect of the militarization of the region and how much there is hard power there. But I think what's missing of the analysis is how much statism has proved to be actually prevailing and here to stay, whereas the past few years, especially in the case of Syria, has shown that U.S. substitute for presence on the ground, boots on the ground, was by supporting or just allowing for competing orders of violence and non-state actors to be militarized and militia formed. And I think clashes between all these former allies that your describing, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, Israel, is at the crux of statism, a state that is a container that has a monopoly over violence or the -- legitimate monopoly over violence, very barbarian, and those competing orders of violence.

So if you can address that right on maybe that would be a way to get to a conversation with your allies.

MS. WITTES: Great. I think it's also another dimension of the historical analogy, is that the 1950s and '60s also represented a set of arguments about the parameters and shape of the states and what they were for and what defined them and

why they mattered. And here we are again having those debates.

MR. DORAN: It's something in our nature that we go immediately to the values question. And I don't want to sound like I'm saying values don't matter at all, but I'm saying there is this struggle for mastery going on, which is a state to state game. And as you mentioned, the militarization of non-state actors as well. But those are being manipulated --

MS. WITTES: By states.

MR. DORAN: -- by states. And that is where we have to start. If we don't get that right, the struggle for mastery, if we don't focus on that first and then have everything else come in behind that, we'll get everything else wrong, because of the state actors, they're always there to ready to manipulate.

If what I said is true, I mean there's a huge critique of the way we debate the Middle East in the United States. We're talking about it's extremist versus -- I don't think it's Islam. Islam is out there, it's part of the problem, the radical Islam, but it's being manipulated by states. We have to think about the order first and then everything else second.

MR. INDYK: Can I talk about this?

MS. WITTES: Yes, go ahead.

MR. INDYK: So the last sentence I think is the crux of the matter here. We have to think about the order first.

MS. WITTES: The geopolitical order.

MR. INDYK: If we think about the order first in the Middle East, which is now characterized by disorder, failing states, ungoverned areas, non-state actors, six simultaneous crises, the only way that American strategists can approach this has to be

in terms of restoring order. The only way that we can restore order is to work with the states. So it's an argument that goes around, but you end up on the same place.

And I come back to it. Then the question is what is the nature of the relationships that we have with the states that we're going to have to rely on. And in that context I just, you know, I just had this trip out there which I spent a long time talking to three new leaders in the Arab world, or relatively new leaders, the Crown Prince of the Emirates, the Deputy Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, and the President of Egypt. So those are three of our partners that we need to work with, capable states, and so on. And you would think they all have the same basic approach. But it's not true. Yeah, several of them, the Saudis and the Emirates, will applaud your idea that we should label Iran as the enemy and work with them to combat Iran. But the Egyptian position is also kind of state based, but it's different, it's a nuance, it's important. So Sisi's view is that the Middle East needs to be divided into theocratic states or would be theocratic states and secular states. And his view is that what we have to do is build up the secular states. The theocratic states --

MS. WITTES: Sounds familiar.

MR. INDYK: -- that he defines as the theocratic states -- ISIS would be caliphate -- Turkey, Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah, ISIS. And he doesn't include Saudi Arabia in there, but he does believe that it's essential to turn down the flames of sectarian violence. That is to say to reduce degree to which Saudi Arabia and Iran view themselves as enemies, adversaries in this game. He actually wants to see a reduction of sectarian violence so that he can promote the secular alternative, and the secular alternative is based on a strategic relationship between the United States, Egypt, and Israel.

MR. DORAN: So my answer to that would be that if we start from the assumption that the struggle for mastery is the crux, then the next question is where's the center of gravity in that struggle for mastery? And the center of gravity is in Syria. That's where the Iranian alliance system and everybody else are fighting it out. And once you start with that then you have to say how valuable are the Egyptians. I'm not saying that they're not valued allies in certain regards, but how valuable are the Egyptians in the Syria arena. And the answer is not that valuable when compared to Turkey, Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and so on. So the problem of bringing order to the region is Jihadistan from Baghdad to Aleppo, that's the first problem that we have to solve, and we have to say who are the states in the region that can help us bring order to that area. And Egypt is going to be of secondary use there.

MS. WITTES: Okay. We have 15 minutes left and a lot of questioners. So I'm going to take a few at a time, starting right here.

QUESTIONER: What do you think the consequences --

MS. WITTES: Can you introduce yourself please?

QUESTIONER: -- would be -- I'm a nothing diplomatically -- (laughter) -- the consequences --

MR. DORAN: How many books have you bought? (Laughter)

QUESTIONER: I can tell you I'm a former dean of public health who had lots of Arab and Muslim faculty and I have a very different view than most Americans about this. They always supported me as a dean, since you insisted on who I am. What would be the consequences, politically, militarily, diplomatically, "alliancely" -- which I guess I learned from you today -- if as soon as the Russians started the buildup of their air forces in Syria, if we had warned them and very quickly shot down some of their

planes?

MS. WITTES: Okay. And before you answer that we're going to take a question from the fourth row here, Maury Amitai.

QUESTIONER: Actually, Jon Alterman took the first part of my question. I was wondering, what was the influence of the Dulles brothers, John foster and Allen, on Eisenhower, who was not particularly known for his knowledge of the Middle East? I wonder whether you address that in your book?

MS. WITTES: All right. So, could we have confronted the Russians early on?

MR. DORAN: We could have. I wrote an article, which I was hoping would get some traction and it didn't really, about the entry of the Russians into Syria, because I have it on pretty good authority that we knew well in advance of their move that they were going to do it. I mean the whole story afterwards was, gosh, how did that happen, what a surprise. And I wanted to make two points. One is it's not a surprise, we knew it, and if we didn't know it it's the greatest intelligence failure, you know, of my lifetime, worse than anything else.

MR. INDYK: There were a few others.

MR. DORAN: There were a few others, but this one -- because this is our near peer competitor making a big military muscle movement into the Middle East. We should be aware that that's going on. I think we were. All we had to do -- we didn't to shoot down anything, all we had to do was proclaim a no fly zone, which is not nothing. I mean that's a significant step, but once we did that that would have kept them out. And keeping them at, for all that proclaiming a no fly zone would have been a significant step and a significant escalation of our role, it would have been infinitely better than what has

resulted from them going in. There's an assumption, an unspoken assumption -- and I guarantee we'll find this in the papers of the administration when the documents open up -- an unspoken assumption that the Iranians and the Russians share some fundamental interest with the United States in Syria and in Iraq and that they are partners for stability. I believe that the President thinks this.

Now, whether he does or he doesn't, maybe if I'm wrong and it doesn't appear in the documents, he has decided that it's still okay, that we can live with their presence there and it's not going to be any threat to us. And that to me is one of the two worst assumptions that he's made about the whole region, the other one being that traditional deterrence, military deterrence is a tool that always works to your disadvantage. I can't think of the words -- works against you.

MS. WITTES: The Dulles brothers.

MR. DORAN: Oh, the Dulles brothers. Eisenhower was in charge. The view in the 1950s was that Eisenhower is a dolt. Schlesinger, the famous Harvard historian did a poll of American historians about two years after Eisenhower left office, and rating all presidents on a scale of effective to ineffective, and Eisenhower barely, barely, barely made it into the mediocre category. He was almost totally ineffective. He was seen as a figurehead and the real guy behind the diplomacy in the United States was Dulles. In fact, Eisenhower pushed John Foster Dulles out front, but he was giving Dulles the big arrows of which way to go. Sure it's exactly what we'll find out about Obama and John Kerry. We'll find out that Obama put Kerry in a very, very narrow arena and Kerry had to go out and try do the best he could on that.

MS. WITTES: In fact on Syria I think Kerry has more or less aid that at this point, hasn't he?

MR. DORAN: Yeah, I think it's pretty obvious.

MS. WITTES: Martin, you want to add on that?

MR. INDYK: I know that you think that Obama's desire to normalize relations with Iran and use Iran in the region as the way to protect our interests is a central tenet of your world view and you know that I don't agree with that.

MR. DORAN: I now regard it as established fact.

MR. INDYK: What you just said I think is over determined of what happened. Definitely, and Obama has said this, in particular in his Jeff Goldberg interviews, he started from the viewpoint that Syria was not as you describe it, the fulcrum point, was not the place where the United States had to take a stand to protect its interests.

Number two, when the Russians came in he thought, and he said this, that they were getting involved in a quagmire and good luck to them. They discovered the folly of their ways. It was not that they were to be partners with us, he wasn't interested in playing the game there. And when it comes to the Iranians I think we just have to be fair, they were there long before the Russians, they were there on your watch in Syria.

MR. DORAN: I would love to argue this with you (laughter), but we'll bore all them. I'll just say one thing, even if it is as you say -- and it's not (stage whisper) (laughter) -- it's still the case that Obama does not -- and you were just agreeing with what I'm saying -- that Obama does not see the Iranians and the Russians as a serious rival to the United States. If they're engaged in a rivalry, then he thinks it's a rivalry that's not --

MR. INDYK: Correct. And that's because he talks about strategic

patience. His agenda is not going to be driven by geopolitical rivalries, it's going to be driven by the need to address global threats. Those are the immediate concerns, that includes proliferation of nuclear weapons. That how he comes at Iran, as a threat to the nonproliferation regime. And that's why he did the agreement to take away their nuclear weapons potential. It's terrorism, counterterrorism. That's why he's fighting ISIS. It's pandemics and it's climate change. And those are the dominant things in his foreign policy.

MR. DORAN: And I say that's crazy, that is crazy.

MS. WITTES: Okay. So this is another event, one that we've had once or twice. (Laughter) But I do want to let you all know that if you're interested in Mike's explication of his view of the Obama administration and Iran he has a long article that came out in *Mosaic Magazine* two year ago I think where you'll find that played out in detail.

We have just a few minutes left. I'm going to take three last questions in a group and then come back to you for closing comments. Starting in the very back, Rafi Danziger.

MR. DANIZIGER: Thank you. I'm Rafi Danziger, a consultant to AIPAC. And I definitely will buy at least one copy of your book; very interesting.

MS. WITTES: Five. (Laughter) You want your question answered, it's five copies.

MR. DANZIGER: My question is going back to the period that you discuss in your book, I think that the main play of the Eisenhower administration at the time was the Baghdad Pact. Can you discuss how it fits into the whole picture?

Thank you.

MS. WITTES: Great. And before you answer that --

MR. DORAN: Be here for hours.

MS. WITTES: Yeah, we could be here. Although I think the Turkey case today raises some similar conundrums.

So the center on the aisle, sir, in the yellow tie. Yes.

MR. MCGINNIS: Thank you. I'm Sherwood McGinnis, retired Foreign Service Officer and Adjunct up at Dickinson College and the War College in Carlisle. Coming back to this issue of soft power doesn't count. My recent discussions with Arabs in the region -- I live there and in Kabul for the last two years -- they care about having a job, having education, getting rid of corruption. These are the same issues that are being raised here in the United States. There is a portion there -- and I don't think that you can ignore that. And that's very important. I was walking in Iman, stopped to get a glass of water, and the father and son were there and the father said I'm teaching my child how to fight Israel. This morning on NPR there was a blurb from Mosul and basically this individual says, all I want is to live my life. And if we don't stand by the values, life, liberty, pursuit of happiness, and what we profess to be, and we're seen as the world's hammer, then I think we're going to lose this battle. And I don't think you're going to be able to bring about security and stability.

MS. WITTES: Thank you. And if you would just turn around and give the microphone to the gentleman behind you.

QUESTIONER: Thank you. Rob Tobias, compliance consultant. How do you assess President Eisenhower's background as General Eisenhower in explaining the framework he held for the Middle East that you described in your opening comments?

MS. WITTES: Okay. So we've got a question on the Baghdad Pact and

Turkey, one on bottom up politics, and the sort of socioeconomic dimension, and then the military and politics.

MR. DORAN: Can I take that last one first? I just had a conversation recently with Rob Satloff of a rival institution.

MS. WITTES: Friendly rival.

MR. INDYK: Partner institution.

MR. DORAN: Yeah, partner institution. There's no rivalry.

MS. WITTES: They were both founded by the same guy.

MR. DORAN: He told me that he believes -- I spelled out in two second my thesis and he said he believes that Eisenhower's attitude toward the Middle East and the elite around him were developed in North Africa during the Torch campaign in World War II. And he's investigating that, going to come out with it. I'm very interested to see it. I was kind of jealous when he said it because I wished I had thought of that and looked into it a little bit more, because I know a couple of little details that suggest that there may be something to that, but it's also much bigger. I mean the entire foreign policy elite in 1948, '47-'48, though the recognition of Israel was a disaster. And they thought that they were returning balance to U.S. policy by moving away from Israel.

So Eisenhower as just like every -- just like Marshall, just like Dulles, just like every other member of the foreign policy elite in that regard. So I don't think there's anything specific to Eisenhower.

What's really interesting to me is why Eisenhower is able to think himself out of it so much faster than all of the others. And I have theories about that, but I won't trouble you with them now because they are theories.

The other thing was back to the soft power thing. Look, I believe that we

have to be mindful of our values, we have to be working toward them, but we can talk about values all we want, but everybody in Syria right now is just trying to stay alive. If we're not in that game, that's the game that matters the most, if we're not in that game then all of our discussion about values is meaningless. That's how I feel.

MR. INDYK: Or even looks hypocritical.

MR. DORAN: Or looks hypocritical. And it in fact is hypocritical. If I see another Tweet from Samantha Power about how horrible the situation is in Syria, it's going to kill me. (Laughter) The fact of the matter is security comes first and it's a security game in the Middle East.

And then I forgot the first?

MS. WITTES: Baghdad Pact.

MR. DORAN: Oh, Baghdad Pact. I'll have lunch with you and we can talk about that. That's a huge topic.

MS. WITTES: Okay. But just a sentence on Turkey, okay. Ultimately Nasser could not abide the idea of that Northern Tier as a rival for regional influence. Is the United States again going to be, you know, unable to knit together that golden triangle you described and be forced to choose one side of that?

MR. DORAN: Well, I mean this is an interesting thing, where they didn't see the game on the ground, the power game on the ground at all. The Baghdad Pact was originally a Dulles idea of putting together the -- the Baghdad Pact was a so called indigenous organization of countries in the Northern Middle East who put together to contain the Soviet Union. They organized with each other. It's Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. And the Turks were the prime movers behind the Baghdad Pact. They were worried about being flanked by the Soviet Union in the Arab world.

The rivalry that's going on -- I didn't get into this at all in the book because it was like too academic, but the way academics remember the rivalry in the region at the time is Egypt versus Iraq. And that's not in my view what was actually going on. That's Egyptian propaganda that was depicting it that way because the Egyptians were trying to influence Arabs, so they were describing it as an inter-Arab conflict. In geopolitical terms it was Turkey and Britain against Egypt. The funny thing is that the Americans created the Baghdad Pact and then they didn't realize it was going to antagonize Nasser. They were still on the make friends with Nasser attack. When they saw it antagonize Nasser they pulled away from it and they attributed the antagonism to Nasser because it was an imperialist thing, because it involved Britain. So they didn't understand that their own action had antagonized Nasser.

MS. WITTES: Martin, any final thoughts? Okay. Folks --

MR. INDYK: Oh, well one. One quick thought, which is --

MS. WITTES: Okay. (Laughter) I knew you wouldn't be able to let it go. Please.

MR. INDYK: Just to repeat again, it's a great book. I congratulate you on it. I think you've done a great job and I hope you all will read it.

MR. DORAN: Thank you so much. And I share that sentiment. (Laughter) Sorry, if I can just say, thank you for having this wonderful event. I really appreciate it. It's fantastic.

MS. WITTES: Thank you both. (Applause)

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