MERIA

AFTER THE IRAQ WAR

A GLORIA Center Roundtable Discussion

From any direction one considers it, the war in Iraq is an extraordinarily important event in Middle East history. But how much has it changed and in what direction are the trends running? To discuss this issue, on May 27, 2003, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of State, the Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) Center held an international teleconferenced seminar on this question.

The seminar is part of the GLORIA Center's Experts' Roundtable Forum series, designed to allow scholars studying the region to think out loud and suggest ways of understanding these issues. It is hoped this edited transcript will inspire additional thought, debate, and ideas on the subject.

ANALYZING THE WAR'S MILITARY DIMENSIONS

MICHAEL EISENSTADT: The removal of Saddam Hussein's regime was a major military accomplishment done in record speed and with relatively low casualties on both sides. This outcome was due to the pace of the coalition advance, the effectiveness of combined and joint operations, information networking, the cumulative impact of a series of lopsided coalition tactical victories, and perhaps--more important than any other factor--the enemy's incompetence.

There is still much we don't know or understand about the war and the way it was conducted, especially on the Iraqi side. Therefore, any conclusions we draw right now are very tentative in nature.

The question of Iraqi strategy is especially interesting and likewise, here, much remains unknown. On this, I'd like to make several points:

First, Iraq's reliance on an urban, Baghdad-based strategy was a fatal flaw--though I am not sure the Iraqis had many other options. But by making the defense of Baghdad the lynchpin for their strategy, from the outset they ceded about 95 percent or more of the land area of the country to coalition forces. Of course, Iraqi irregulars harassed coalition forces all along the way to Baghdad, but basically the regime ceded most of the country to coalition forces, betting that the battle for Baghdad would be the decisive phase of combat. Iraq was pursuing a strategy similar to that pursued in 1991: prolong the war, inflict casualties on the coalition, and hope for international diplomatic intervention to save the regime.

Second, the regime did not trust the Republican Guard enough to allow them to operate within the capital, where they might have been more effective--but would have also been well placed to undertake a coup. By placing them along the main approaches to Baghdad, they were out in the open where they were most vulnerable to coalition air power. And the proximity of these units to major population centers facilitated large-scale desertions.

Third, the regime's failure to implement a scorched earth policy, blowing dams, destroying bridges and oilfields to slow the coalition advance, remains something of a mystery. The explanation offered by senior U.S. military officials--that this happened because the coalition advance was too swift to allow orders to be given or implemented--lacks credibility. Indeed,

the almost total lack of such sabotage even in places where it would have been possible, for example regarding the bridges over the Euphrates River, is notable.

Available information indicates that the Iraqi regime maintained a degree of command and control until the very end of the war. The fact that government officials disappeared and Republican Guard units were apparently ordered to go home on April 9 reinforces this impression. We also know that units of both the Fedayeen Saddam and Republican Guard were moved around during the fighting and given orders. So from that I draw the conclusion that the regime maintained a degree of command and control and had they wanted to blow the bridges and torch the wells they probably could have done so.

The reason why they didn't do so, I believe, is that the regime was confident of ultimate victory and thus had no desire to destroy resources that it thought would eventually come under its control again. In addition, such steps might loosen its control over the population and its ability to deal with a popular uprising, which I think was one of the regime's big fears. The same point applies with regard to creating large numbers of refugees. I am not completely satisfied with the explanations I am offering but this analysis seems to fit the data better than any of the alternatives.

In the event that the aforementioned "Plan A" failed, I believe that the regime had a fallback plan, which was to go to ground, using threats to the population and sabotage to discourage a long stay by coalition forces, prevent a new regime from being established, and thereby setting the stage for the comeback of the regime of Saddam Hussein and the Ba'th. It is important to remember that both Saddam Hussein and the Ba'th party spent many of their early years underground, and are used to operating in a clandestine manner. I think that what we may be seeing now is perhaps an implementation of this fallback plan.

History has taught us that you can't judge the outcome of a conflict from the status quo immediately afterward. This is the lesson of the 1967 and 1982 Arab-Israeli Wars, and the 1991 coalition war against Iraq. Every war unleashes social and political forces which are very difficult to control, and which often have a decisive impact on shaping the post-war status quo.

Finally, the United States is going to face a dilemma in the future between the pursuit of idealistic and realistic goals in Iraq. Achieving the stated objective of democracy in Iraq will require a long stay, but various factors relating to domestic American politics, the international environment, and Iraqi politics, may make such a long-term American presence in Iraq untenable, and the U.S. may have to settle for a less satisfying outcome there.

DAVID MACK: We certainly found out in the post-Saddam period that Iraqi nationalism remains very strong despite decades of really terrible misrule as well as the manipulation of ethnic and tribal conflicts within the Iraqi population by this regime. Nonetheless, among Shi'a and Sunni Iraqis and I would say certainly Ba'th party officials and Iraqi military officers for the most part, feelings of national pride may have been factors making the regime decide not to have a scorched earth policy.

DANIELLE PLETKA: Saddam and his henchmen may have been willing to embrace this scorched earth policy while those in the Republican Guard and the military did not want to carry out such a policy.

Also I do wonder whether or not the disappearance on April 9 proves there was command and control to the end. Why, up to that point did Republican Guards on the outskirts of Baghdad not seem to be responding to orders? Why did soldiers further away seem more in tune with the orders from Baghdad? That would suggest that the orders were

issued beforehand, that people who were out of touch with reality were responding to them and that others were responding to reality rather than to commands, saying, "We are losing so we will go home."

MICHAEL EISENSTADT: Apparently they did prepare to blow up the bridges and oil fields. Blowing the bridges, which could have been easily replaced, would have made military sense, but destroying the oilfields wouldn't make sense for those who thought they would go underground for a while and then return to power. So there is a lot we don't understand, but we do have indications that strategic considerations may have kept them from implementing aspects of a scorched earth policy.

With regard to command and control, inevitably the situation is going to vary from unit to unit. I suspect the Fedayeen Saddam, guys with minimal training, were probably given mission-type orders: resist the enemy wherever you see them. As for Republican Guard units, some took heavy losses and broke. The guys went home of their own volition. Other units apparently held together and did get an order to go home on April 9 and the top government people also disappeared on that day. So I believe they did retain at least some degree of command and control so that when U.S. forces were moving into Baghdad they said, "Okay it is over, go underground. We are going to husband our resources so that we can fight another day."

THE FATE OF IRAQ'S ARMY AND STABILITY

MARTIN KRAMER: What does this mean for the future in terms of an Iraqi military? The army, which might have served as the basis for some sort of reconstituted national institution is no longer there.

MICHAEL EISENSTADT: There were two schools of thought on this matter. Some said, "We need the army in order to help maintain stability in Iraq during the U.S. occupation and afterward" and the other said, "Absolutely not, this is the last thing we want to do because it is necessary to get the military out of the internal security business if there is going to be democracy and stability." In this context, the emphasis should be put first on developing a civilian police force functioning in accordance with the rule of law. This would be coupled with a longer-term program of building up a new military from the bottom up. There is a downside with this approach in that it means that the United States will probably have to stay longer in order to ensure the integrity of Iraq's borders and to keep predatory neighbors from interfering inside the country.

Another problem is the fact that the civil administrative institutions did not remain intact. Government ministries were looted and government employees went home and didn't return to their posts. Clearly we would want to get rid of a lot of these people--the Ba'thists among them. But it was important that the civilian administration, at least in the lower levels remained intact. Meanwhile, army officers are demonstrating for paychecks, so they haven't disappeared as a pressure group and they may yet emerge as some kind of opposition.

ELLEN LAIPSON: I think there is a danger in the total collapse of the Iraqi army for the stability of Iraq. Disestablishing the army makes unemployed more than a half million people with certain skills that you may not want to have distributed into the general population. Whether they go to opposition politics or to organized crime, this raises a serious practical issue of how to keep them employed and engaged in constructive things. It is also true that the army is one of the national institutions that builds national identity.

Looking at Afghanistan now, we can see the concern there that a strategy of

building up a national army slowly let former militias and sub-national groups retain their weapons with the idea they would be merged into a national army later. The Iraq case, of course, is different, because you are starting with a strong national army that had been a very powerful and strong institution. Nonetheless, there are already the Kurdish sub-national groups with an armed capacity and there soon may be more. Decisions do have to be made quickly about pulling all of that activity into
some kind of a disciplined national force, otherwise you are contributing to instability in the country.

DANIELLE PLETKA: An Iraq without a military would change the strategic equation of the Gulf. The idea of pulling Iraq out of the equation and creating some sort of a neutered state there is very dangerous, not only to Iraq, but to the entire region.

MICHAEL EISENSTADT: The bottom line is that while the melting away of the army during the war was not a bad thing, disestablishing the entire army by the U.S. occupation authorities may have been a mistake, though clearly the Saddamist institutions within the armed forces should unquestionably be dismantled. Instead, we should have tried to exploit the tensions between the Saddamist institutions as well as the Republican Guard, which was a regime militia, and the regular army, which was relatively professional.

EFFECTS ON THE ARAB WORLD

MARTIN KRAMER: Let me begin with an observation about the way in which the war of 2003 differed from the 1991 war over Kuwait. The 1991 war was waged to uphold and maintain a status quo. At the end of the war the Emir of Kuwait went back to his palace and even Saddam Hussein was left in power. The emphasis in the aftermath of that war was to bring about the completion of the status quo, by defining the final border between Israel and "Palestine." The Arab states, beneficiaries of the status quo, were very much behind that war, as members of the coalition. And there was no fear of domestic repercussions.

In contrast, the war of 2003 was a very different enterprise. The United States marched to war, not to uphold the status quo, but to change it. The symbol of the war is the removal from his palace of one of the longest-standing rulers in the Middle East, with an implication for other rulers. The United States is sending the message that it wants to use change in Iraq as leverage for change elsewhere in the region.

Now, you would have thought that this would have created a great opportunity for those elements in Arab societies that want change, to seize the opportunity to promote greater democratization and participation of the people in their own self-governance. Unfortunately, the regimes have very successfully managed to persuade their own publics that this was a new imperialist war; that it was not conducted with any element of altruistic intent but was simply to secure oil for the United States.

What struck me in the course of this war was the way in which the regimes and the "street" actually came together. If you study the slogans and signs from the demonstrations, the striking thing is that they were very carefully controlled by the state. For example, in Damascus one did not see pictures of Saddam Hussein but of Bashar al-Asad. There was no element in the demonstrations that was not completely in accord with the line of the Arab states.

So paradoxically the Arab states have managed to create among their own publics a sense of shared identification with the idea of resisting change. The war was interpreted not as a signal for a flourishing of civil society and opposition to dictatorships but as a kind of new imperialism, an American plan to re-divide and dominate the Arabs.

I think in the next phase the regimes' principal objective will be to contain the effects of what has happened in Iraq. They are not particularly eager to see successful democracies emerge in Iraq or among the Palestinians. They are more likely to look at the situation as they saw the Lebanese civil war in the mid-1970s as a danger that might overflow and affect them, requiring coordination and cooperation in order to contain it until it spends itself.

Aside from the regimes' efforts, when the Arab street looks at what has happened in Iraq after the war, there is also a great deal of room for concern. What they saw was disorder, and the disorder was frightening, even for those who want change. There is a Muslim juristic maxim that says, "Sixty years of tyranny is better than a day of civil strife," and that was certainly in the eyes of many exemplified by the images that came across to them from Iraq's situation after the war, with the wave of lawlessness that swept the country.

The only thing that might begin to drive a wedge between the regimes and the publics is for something to happen in Iraq which is attractive and compelling, for other Arabs to see that the Iraqis are now masters of their fate, that there is something like a functioning pluralistic system characterized by tolerance and, yes, even a dash of democracy.

DAVID MACK: I agree with a lot of what Martin said but I particularly agree with his comment that the Arab street is unfavorably impressed by what they see happening in Iraq, what the attitude of the Iraqi street is, and the kind of forces that are being unleashed. Ultimately whether this war is a success or a failure is going to be judged, as you indicated Martin, by what we are able to accomplish in Iraq, both over the short and long terms.

Over the short term, they are going to judge the success and what it means for them by whether the lives of ordinary Iraqis get better, not in terms of democracy and a free press, but whether it is better in terms of getting water, electricity and medical care. Whether their children are able to go to school safely is going to be a lot more important than whether Saddam Hussein's picture is in the textbooks. They want to be able to reopen their shops and do business without fear of looting and they want to be able to have jobs and earn money that they can use to buy things that their families need.

Over the long term we face a real dilemma. The Arab street and also various elites which are not necessarily part of the state--journalists, intellectuals, professors, and professionals of various kinds--do want to see full democracy provided it is not destabilizing, providing it doesn't lead to the kind of anarchy that in Afghanistan led people to welcome the Taliban coming back.

But they are also going to judge the United States and judge it very harshly if they feel we have stayed too long in the task and that argues for a greater internationalization of this process, not simply to relieve us from a bad press in the Arab world, but because the U.S. public is unlikely to tolerate a prolonged occupation where we are viewed by significant elements in Iraq as well as the rest of the region as the enemy.

It is also interesting to note that some of the states most supportive of the war in practice--like Saudi Arabia and Jordan--are also some of the most authoritarian. These states also want to see an Iraqi outcome that is not going to disturb a status quo of which such cooperative regimes remain a part.

So, I am not at all convinced that this very idealistic model of a well-functioning Iraqi democracy is going to be something for which we will have enough time. The necessary time is not going to be tolerated by the U.S. political system and I doubt it is going to have the same kind of resonance throughout the Arab world or in Iran that some people have postulated.

REUVEN PAZ: In considering the well-organized reaction or relative silence of the Arab street it should be remembered that this may be more a consequence of a kind of a shock caused by the rapid Iraqi collapse.

HILLEL FRISCH: One could say that there is a beginning of an interpretation of the Iraq war as a catastrophe (*nakba*) for the Arabs like that of their defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. But also there are more and more Arabs beginning to ask themselves, "Do we have to defend regimes challenged by foreign forces at all costs?" Did they err in supporting Saddam Hussein and in not calling for democratization? This development might become much stronger. In 1967 they emphasized the themes of military efficiency and public morals, this debate is focusing more on democratization. So I think there is promise and it is really too early to tell exactly in what direction the Arab street is going.

BARRY RUBIN: In discussing Arab responses we should also distinguish between two groups of societies. The non-Gulf states, including Jordan, Syria, Egypt, have not received any direct benefit from the war and so this development can be more easily portrayed there as a danger and humiliation. The Gulf states--despite the anger manifested in some cases in Saudi Arabia--no longer have to worry about aggression from Iraq. It is easier for many, though certainly not all, people there to think that the United States has saved them in a sense. In addition, there are signs of serious thinking about reform from above in these countries. This gap in reactions may grow. For example, if Jordan's army retrains the Iraqi army and trade with Iraq grows to the old levels and beyond, this is going to have an important effect on Jordanians to believe that they are left better off by the regime change in Iraq.

DANIELLE PLETKA: The judgment that is going to be made by the Arab street is going to relate mainly to whether Iraq will be a country to which they look and say, "I want that for me as well." That is obviously what our goal needs to be.

But given the decades of authoritarianism in Iraq, people there are also looking for a clearly expressed plan and goal from the United States. They want to know if there is an alternative to Ba'thism and Saddam -- what is it, and how it is going to affect them. It must be an alternative to the system that they had, and not just an alternate leader.

A transitional period with difficulties is not so bad if one is working hard to implement a clear plan. But the fact is that President George W. Bush and people underneath him, all the way down to the bottom of the ladder inside Iraq among our own personnel, have not articulated a goal and a plan. This has produced a massive feeling of uncertainty in Iraq and throughout the region.

IRAN

HILLEL FRISCH: One of the most striking phenomena in the post-war period is the change in the Iranian position regarding the future Iraqi state. Immediately after the war, Iranian statements proposed basically that Iraq should be a theocratic-ruled Islamist state. Over time there is a shift towards saying that Iraq should be a country representing all its confessions, in other words like Lebanon.

Why this shift? Because I think Iran is playing a realist policy, being the weaker side against the United States in an asymmetric conflict. The first tactic is to try developing a proxy war against the foreign power. As the Syrians backed Hizballah against Israel in Lebanon, the Iranians can try to use Iraqi Shi'a against the United States in Iraq. But the second element is to ensure that the neighboring state is very weak. This can be done by trying to make it decentralized, even slightly anarchic. And if you cannot control the neighboring state at least one has special relations with specific factions to influence what goes on there.

There's one more important factor for Iran and that is how Iraqi Shi'a regard it. There has been a classic rivalry between Iranian and Iraqi Shi'a clerics--between Kum and Mashad on one hand and Karballah and Najaf on the other--for supremacy. Iran's leaders do not want to lose this battle.

The Iraqi Shi'a realize that Iran wants to be the spoiler and they have basically been distancing themselves from Iran. Rather than acting as centrifugal actors in the reconstruction of Iraq, they are really quite interested in reconstructing Iraq and they are forming only a mild opposition to the United States. I think that behind the scenes they are still interested in working with the United States, preferring the United States to neighboring Iran. I have seen this in the fact that very important and well-connected Shi'a leaders have been participating directly in the consultative process with the United States. These are promising signs for Iraqi state building.

DAVID MACK: I would add to that something very important here is the incredible diversity among the Iraqi Shi'a. You really can't make generalizations about them that hold up. You can't even make generalizations about what I think is a minority of the Iraqi Shi'a who are really passionate about religious issues and will choose their political allegiance on that basis. There clearly is not a majority in support of Mohammad Bakr al-Hakim, who is the one closest to Tehran. The same applies to the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution which cannot manage to get even a consensus among the more religiously oriented Shi'a to say nothing of the majority who are most probably secular in their outlooks and identify in various other ways.

ELLEN LAIPSON: Let me just add to the list of things that must be on Iran's leaders' minds as they try to develop their own Iraq policy. First, having some influence over the new government of the new Iraq is extremely important. But even that is probably trumped by the need to consider the consequences of confrontation
between Iran and the United States over many potential issues--al-Qai'da, nuclear weapons, and so on. I think Iran's own Iraq policy could well be in a period of confusion as they try to calculate whether they can stay on good terms with the United States vis-à-vis Iraq.

As a precedent for an Iranian policy favoring a multi-confessional Iraq one might look at Iran's policy toward the Caucasus where Tehran came around to what looks like a fairly tolerant inclusive policy, not a policy of just supporting what are considered to be their spiritual brethren in the neighboring country. They have managed to develop these more sophisticated policies in some of their other neighbors as well.

REUVEN PAZ: I think we should remember that in June 1982 a very similar diversity among the Shi'a in Lebanon existed, too. We should look to what happened within a decade, even given the fact that the more secular Amal still enjoyed support among many Shi'a. I refer to the development of Hizballah.

DAVID MACK: You are right, we can mishandle this badly.

TERRORISM

REUVEN PAZ: I don't see any relevance between what happened in Iraq and Palestinian terrorism, either that of the Islamic or nationalist groups. I don't think that the Iraqi war influenced that.

As for al-Qa'ida, not only as an organization but as a phenomenon since there are so many like-minded or affiliated groups, it is too early to predict exactly what they are going to do and how the Iraqi war is going to affect them. We don't know their decision-making process at all. At the same time, though, it is important to remember that we are not dealing with groups carrying out intensive terrorism but terrorist operations every several weeks, sometimes every several months. There are no signs they are going to intensify

or reduce these intervals between operations.

Yet, I think that there are certain things that should be noted, following the war in Iraq. In Iraq itself there is no army but there is a lot of arms. I am afraid we are going to face a kind of Lebanon situation there not only by organized groups or Shi'a groups that might be affected by Iran but by all kinds of criminal gangs and private militias that will use arms.

Second, I think that we are at the start of the return of al-Qai'da and affiliated groups back home to their homeland, back home to the Arab world. The May terrorist attacks in Riyadh and Casablanca are signs of this trend. While the Arab world does not offer the kind of free activity and training camps that al-Qa'ida had in Afghanistan, it can offer recruits, support, and fewer countermeasures. In Saudi Arabia, especially, there has been a growing Islamist opposition.

Third, an important trend that is often not noted is the growing sense for millions of Islamists all over the Arab world, the Muslim world, and Muslim communities in Europe and North America of the start of a virtual Islamic nation, the Umma, in which radical forces are playing a disproportionately larger role backed by a lot of new Islamic rulings that are anti-American, anti-Jewish, and more and more strict about observance. Among the most recent such rulings were several judging the Riyadh and Casablanca attacks to be legitimate and even the first ruling about the legitimacy of the use of weapons of mass destruction by al-Qa'ida. This does not mean they will use such weapons but it does show the growing support by both clerics and the general Muslim public, for extremist measures, including suicide bombing in a growing number of places.

DANIELLE PLETKA: In terms of the war's influence on terror, many people asserted beforehand, including President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, that a war in Iraq would be followed by an exponential increase in terrorist acts. We have not seen that. I don't think this war is won but it is interesting to note that the dire predictions have not come true and to ask why not?

We don't have a lot of the answers. In Iraq itself and for would-be state sponsors of terrorism, one factor is the military presence on the ground and the shock of the rapid American victory. Another factor is the ineffectiveness of the few terrorist-style incidents we saw against American troops in Iraq. Yes, they killed a few people, but as a tactic of war, terror strikes are not very effective. Terrorism works best against civilian targets. Obviously, there was also a lot of hard counter-terrorism work, stepped-up alerts, and arrests, which also probably had some effect.

Also, we should not discount what I call the opposite of the 1990s effect. Throughout the 1990s, bin Ladin and others described the United States as a "paper tiger" retreating from places like Somalia with its tail between its legs. The opposite of that effect was the overwhelming force that went into Iraq notwithstanding great international pressure. I think that U.S. determination in and of itself presents a significant deterrent to terrorists. You can call it the "real tiger" phenomenon.

Now, you could say that the attacks in Riyadh and in Casablanca were a reaction to that; one can think of it as an attempt by the terrorists to prove they still exist and can strike at the West. But are bombings in the Middle East going to be as effective for al-Qa'ida and other like-minded groups as what happened on September 11th? So too, attacks inside the Arab world may have the unintended consequence of losing them support, resulting in Arab governments cutting off aid and stepping up counterterrorism controls.

Another effect of the Iraq war may be to make governments that want to sponsor terrorism create even stronger fire walls between themselves and their

proxies in order to avoid Saddam's fate. I think the Iranians see this very clearly. The key to success for the state sponsor of terror will be to play both sides, as Iran seems to be doing with al-Qa'ida. Officially, Iran opposes al-Qai'da, yet senior al- Qai'da officials appear to be conducting operations from Iranian territory. The past idea that a Sunni al-Qa'ida cannot work with a Shi'a Iranian government no longer applies. Iran may deal with other such groups that they have not been generally associated with in the past in order to have a plausible deniability of involvement with terrorism.

U.S. POLICY

ELLEN LAIPSON: Let me pull together some points regarding U.S. policy. This Iraq war is still controversial and the build-up to the decision to go to war in Iraq did not sit well either throughout the American foreign policy establishment or internationally.

Now we are at a moment that shows some promise of healing. It is no small achievement for President Bush that he has organized a meeting with the Israeli and Palestinian prime ministers. It also seems important that the president has visited French territory and met with the allies at the G8 Summit. Some of the disarray that occurred in the Western alliance over Iraq policy will now be relegated to the past.

In addition, the UN Security Council Resolution that endorsed the U.S. and British role in occupying Iraq until a new Iraqi government can be formed has a similar effect. The administration has accepted the idea of a UN coordinator who is a person respected by the United States. While he will be subordinate to American decision-makers on the ground in Iraq, this fact does augur well for the international community getting a piece of the action in the reconstruction of Iraq.

Obviously there are still areas for lots of friction and disagreement. But the trajectory here does seem to me to be worth noting that it is positive.

But the American debate over Iraq will continue as to whether the policy is an overall success or not. We also don't know how soon the North Korean situation might generate its own acute requirements and cause decision-makers to switch their focus.

The cost of the Iraq war is an issue that we have to be careful about. While the specific direct military costs might have turned out to be less than estimated because the war was short, the cost of reconstruction is going to turn out to be larger than had been planned. Whether that financial burden will be shared across the international community or borne principally by the United States has yet to be demonstrated.

We are at a moment where there is some restructuring of the American economy in terms of a tax cut. So I do worry that Congress will have a lot of trouble finding the funds for a robust reconstruction of Iraq. If we won't really know whether Iraq is a stable and more or less democratic, or at least on the path to democratic country for several years, then we have to build into that the assumption that we are looking at many billions of dollars per year for reconstruction. Will the Congress and Executive Branch find the funds to stick to that commitment, to make it a success?

In the case of Afghanistan we saw that there were pledges for reconstruction by many of our allies, including the Saudis, that were never fulfilled. The faltering of reconstruction and development in Afghanistan is not just a disappointment from a U.S. policy perspective but all our partners internationally didn't live up to their own commitments.

We are entering an election year cycle where the administration will want to show that both Afghanistan and Iraq were at least minimally acceptable in a success column. The American public will get to decide whether it agrees. But

maybe foreign policy won't be the issue of the election year. We don't know. Things can change very quickly and Americans are not known for staying with issues for a long period of time.

Regarding terrorism, I think the judgment that it will not increase is premature. The attacks in Saudi Arabia and Morocco suggest that we may be at the beginning of a post-war wave of retribution, revenge, and punishment against the American occupation.

Finally, it is indisputable that the Bush administration has a very ambitious agenda for the Middle East, including many noble objectives to change a stagnant status quo culture, to introduce more profoundly, ideas of reform, democratization and institution building. Clearly there will be many forces that will try to undermine that U.S. agenda. Whether the United States has the concentration and staying power to stick with it, I think, will be the test for us.

But the U.S. agenda in the region is large, perhaps more ambitious than the resources we will have to direct to it. It is not clear to me that we have a national or an international consensus to move towards all of those objectives.

MARTIN KRAMER: I think that when we look back at this war we will see it really was a twelve-year war that had three stages. It had the Kuwait phase, the sanctions phase and the regime change phase at the end. From Israel's point of view the strategic threat from Iraq was removed somewhere between the Kuwait War and the weapons' inspections in the sanctions regime. So the bottom line is that the day after the war we face the same threats that we faced the day before. The two major threats we face are Palestinian terror and Iranian WMD. Regarding the second one, if anything, the Iranians seem to have drawn the lesson from the Iraq crisis that they should accelerate their programs. So, the real question for now is this: Is there truly a window of opportunity here or have we only imagined one? My own sense is that something more will have to happen in the region for there to be such a window of opportunity. As for U.S. policy, is it the best investment to spend the U.S. prestige accrued as a consequence of this war on Arab-Israeli or Israeli-Palestinian diplomacy, as the United States did after the first Gulf War? I will leave that as a question mark.

MICHAEL EISENSTADT: Regarding the Iranian nuclear program and U.S. policy, while it is possible that the nuclear program might bear fruit within two to three years, the window for opportunity for acting to prevent it--if that is still possible--is probably a matter of months. There may not even be a window any more. And even if we succeed in Iran, which I don't think is likely, we would have to succeed in North Korea as well because if we succeed in Iran but don't turn off the North Korean program, that simply creates another means by which the Iranians and others could acquire a nuclear capability. So we have to succeed in both Iran and North Korea if we want to avoid additional nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. Finally, I want to remind everybody about the pitfalls of making snap judgments regarding the impact of this most recent war. Our assessment of the significance of wars often evolves with the passage of time. For example, after the 1973 war it seemed that, as a result of the oil price-rise windfall, many Arab countries were able to invest dramatically in their military capabilities and tip the strategic balance in their favor. But as a result of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty, and the Iran-Iraq War, it became clear by the 1982 war in Lebanon, that Israel had recovered its military advantage. With the rise of Hizballah after the war, this advantage became less pronounced. Likewise, after the U.S. victory over Iraq in 1991, there was a feeling in Israel that its strategic situation had never been so good. This period ended with the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, the outbreak

of the second intifada, and a period of profound pessimism in Israel. So this region often plays cruel tricks on analysts who make assessments based on the immediate outcomes of wars. Any comments we may offer are highly provisional and contingent on future developments, which may come six months or six years down the road.

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