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Geopolitical Dynamics: Iraq

Chair:

Dr. Kenneth B. Katzman – Specialist in Middle East Affairs in the Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress

Speakers:

Dr. Eric Davis – Professor of Political Science and former Director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Rutgers University; author of “Memories of State: Politics, History and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq” and the forthcoming “Taking Democracy Seriously in Iraq”

Dr. Juan Cole – Richard P. Mitchell Collegiate Professor of History, University of Michigan; author of “Engaging the Muslim World” and “Napoleon’s Egypt: Invading the Middle East”; former President, Middle East Studies Association of North America

Dr. Paul Sullivan – Professor of Economics, Industrial College of Armed Forces National Defense University; Adjunct Professor of Security Studies and Science, Technology and International affairs, Georgetown University

Ms. Shameem Rassam – Media Expert and Analyst, Alhurra Television-Iraq

National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations
1730 M St NW, Ste 503, Washington, DC 20036
ncusar.org

Remarks as delivered

[Dr. John Duke Anthony] This next session is probably as contentious and controversial, at the same time and interest and value, as any in the entire two-day conference. We're focusing on Iraq, which after Afghanistan has become the longest war in American history. America has multiple interests in the country, and these interests have implications for American policies. And American policies have implications for America's relations with their friends, partners, and allies in the Arab world.

To chair this session, we have Dr. Kenneth Katzman, who's no stranger to many of you. He's had a background in the intelligence community. He is a leading Middle East specialist at the Congressional Research Service, which is the think-tank for members of Congress. And those who were beside him are among the unsung heroes and heroines of writing analyses, non-partisan, for the advice of members of both houses of Congress. He's written and published widely in this area, especially on Iran, but also on Iraq, and the kind of job he holds is one of atrocious deadlines, but no matter how articulate or even eloquent or inventive any English speakers in this city can be, their influence is next to zero after about seventy-two hours, when peoples' members begin to fade until or unless their thoughts are reduced to paper. This is his specialty. He is one of the few who are great at it. Ken Katzman.

[Dr. Kenneth B. Katzman] Thank you very much, and let's roll. So yeah, I'm Kenneth Katzman. I work at the CRS. We have an absolutely august panel. Everybody's bio is in the brochure. We have, we're going in the order now basically alphabetical order. Dr. Juan Cole, Richard Mitchell Collegiate Professor of History at the University of Michigan; Dr. Eric Davis, professor of political science at Rutgers, past director of the University Center for Middle East Studies. Then we have Shameem Rassam, she's an expert on the Iraqi media with al-Hurra, which is the U.S.-funded sort of, some say it's trying to be a competitor to Al Jazerra, but it's the U.S.-funded broadcasting to the Middle East, served with the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq. Dr. Paul Sullivan, professor of economics at the National Defense University, the defense think-tank here in Washington.

Just to throw out, it's very timely that we're holding this panel. Just last week, President Obama announced that, indeed, in line with the strict interpretation of the security agreement with Iraq, we are indeed leaving. U.S. troops are going to zero troops about eight weeks from now, by Christmas I believe he said, in accordance with the 2011 deadline.

So we're going to have an Iraq on it's own. So, just to get us started I'm going to throw out a few questions that the panel may address, may not, but just some questions that I think are on the policymakers minds.

What will Iraq look like after the U.S. withdrawal? What are the range of possibilities from a best-case scenario to a worse-case? If we get the worst-case outcome, how damaged are U.S. interests? What policies should the United States pursue to bring about the best case, or at least avoid the worst-case scenario? What resources are required? What are some of

the indicators? How are we going to know whether we're getting a best case or headed towards a worst-case outcome? Who are the main personalities and factions that are crucial to the outcome? How does the U.S. relate to these persons and factions? What does the U.S. need to do to steer these factions in a way that we think brings about a positive outcome? How much influence do Iraq's neighbors have over the outcomes in Iraq? What should, what can the United States do to get the regional actors to promote the outcomes in Iraq that the United States wants? How is Iraqi foreign policy likely to evolve? It was certainly hoped going in in 2003 that Iraq would come out an ally of the United States – is that going to happen? What are Iraq's foreign policies going to be when it's no longer under the U.S. tutelage, or umbrella?

So these are some questions, and they may or may not get answered, and I think maybe most of them will, and we're going to start off then with Dr. Cole.

[Dr. Juan Cole] Thank you very much Ken. The panel is entitled Geo-Political Dynamics and then colon, Iraq, so I will address political dynamics with regard to Iraq. And here I wanted to underline of the events of the Arab Spring, including part of the Arab Spring that hasn't gotten as much attention in the American press, that is Bahrain, and its impact on Iraq and on the region. And I think what happened in Bahrain ultimately benefited Iran, and especially with regard to Iraq.

So, as you all know, there were a number of countries in the Arab world where there were popular demonstrations last spring. Bahrain was a little different from some of the others because for the most part, the demonstrations did not demand that the ruler depart. You know, in Tunisia and Egypt, the slogan was [Arabic], "get out." And directed at Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia, and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt.

On the whole, by and large, that wasn't the demand in Bahrain. The demand in Bahrain was a constitutional monarchy. The current ruler of Bahrain instituted a constitution at the beginning of this decade, which specifies that the lower house of parliament is elected, the upper house is appointed, appointed by the King. The appointed upper house can overrule anything passed by the elected lower house, and then the King can overrule both of them. So you couldn't call it a democratic system. And the demographic problem in Bahrain is that roughly 58 percent of the population is Shiite. The districts in Bahrain were gerrymandered to ensure that the Shiites got 18 out of the 40 seats in the lower house. So they couldn't get a majority in the lower house. Even if they had one, everything they passed could be overruled by the Senate, and if it chose not to overrule it, the King could just overrule.

So that was their big demand, was that they wanted a more democratic legislature. They wanted constitutional reforms. They also, the Shiites in Bahrain felt discriminated against in various ways, and they wanted a better position in Bahrain society. I think there was some thinking among the circles of the Crown Prince in Bahrain they might try to negotiate with these demonstrators, but in the end the hardliners, including the Prime Minister who's the uncle of the King, has been Prime Minister since the country became independent in 1971, prevailed and they crushed the movement. Not only did they crush the movement,

but the Gulf Cooperation Council, to which Bahrain belongs, sent in troops. The Saudis sent in about one thousand troops, the U.A.E. is said to have sent in troops, although I've never seen any visual evidence of that, and in any case this is I think a pretty big thing. Because Saudi Arabia, in this instance, acted like a regional hegemon, and it's the first time that I can think that it did so. Yes, it did bomb the Houthis in Yemen when there were incursions across the Saudi border, but that's from the air. But to actually put in troops to a neighbor, that's a different order of things. The action of the Saudis in supporting the Sunni monarchy in Bahrain against the, the protestors were not entirely Shiite, there was the al-Wad party, which is Sunni, joined in, and in Bahrain the people demanding that this movement be crushed were also mixed, because they were the big merchants of Manama, which include both Sunnis and Shiites.

From the outside, it looks like a Sunni monarchy crushing a Shiite popular movement. It was more complex than that inside Bahrain. From the outside, that's what it looked like, and that's how it was interpreted in Iran, where Speaker of the House Ali Larijani threatened the Saudis. He said there will be a price to be paid for what was done in Bahrain. The Iranian Parliament passed resolutions, Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader denounced the Saudis, and so forth. In Iraq, the Sadr movement in particular, sponsored a number of big demonstrations against what was done in Bahrain. And they interpreted again as a Sunni monarchy crushing a Shiite popular movement, so for them it looked like 1991 all over again when the largely, or predominately Sunni government of Iraq crushed the Shiite uprising in the south. And in Iraq, this event in Bahrain has been seen as a sectarian issue. The Iraqis, the Iraqi Shiites in their press had long accused the Saudis of supporting the insurgency in Iraq, the Sunni insurgency in Iraq. I think unjustly. I'm quite sure that the Saudi Royal Family was as afraid of those insurgents as anybody else, but that's what was said in Iraq, and therefore the idea of Saudi troops in a Shia majority country helping to maintain Sunni predominance really jangled the nerves of Iraqi Shiites. And on the contrary, the Sunnis in large Sunni cities in the north like Mosul were pretty happy about it. So the Bahrain issue played as a sectarian issue, and I think that it pushed Prime Minister Nouri Al-Malaki, who's the head of the Dawa, or the Islamic Call Party, closer to Iraq. Inside Iraq, the Shiites are a majority, the Shiite parties dominate the politics for the most part, but they have varying relationships to Iran.

The Sadr movement is Iraqi nationalists who don't like Iran very much, but their leader Muqtada al-Sadr, has kind of become captive to Iran, because he was forced into exile there. The Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq was hosted by Iran, and really was founded at the insistence of Ayatollah Khomeini, so they're very close to Tehran. The Dawa Party is lay, it is you know physicians, and attorneys, and professionals are the leaders of it. And it hadn't been traditionally that close to Iran, and it hadn't been very happy about Iran's doctrine that the clergy should rule. And so President Jalal Talabani has joked that as a Kurd, he was closer to Tehran than Prime Minister Nouri Al-Malaki was, even though Malaki was a Shiite. But I'll argue that as of this year that started to change, and that the Bahrain issue began pushing Al-Malaki closer to Iran.

Another factor in this cozying up of Al-Malaki to Iran, in my view, was the way his current government was formed. Iraq has a naturally hung parliament. That is to say that

nowadays, because the Shiite split in two, there are four factions that would come to power typically in any Iraqi election. There would be a faction supported by the Sunnis, the Kurds, and then two Shiite factions. And they all dislike each other. So it's impossible to form a government under ordinary circumstances. It's kind of like Belgium. And what happened this term was that after the March 2010 elections, there was six months of negotiating and back and forth and Belgium-like situations, and then the Iranians appear to have twisted the arm of Muqtada al-Sadr, the fiery, younger Shiite Ayatollah who leads this other movement, who hates Al-Malaki, but made him join Al-Malaki's coalition, and as a result you get a reformation of the Shiite coalition that has ruled Iraq since 2005. This is a direct Iranian intervention in Iraqi politics. So Al-Malaki started to owe his position to the Iranians in a way that he hadn't ever before. Then the Saudis went into Bahrain, and then the final piece of the puzzle geo-politically is that Syria is also undergoing this continued uprising. And again, it's not – if you're down on the ground in Syria – it doesn't look so sectarian. The regime, the Baathist regime in Syria, is a secular regime. And it's afraid of Muslim fundamentalism of any sort. And nevertheless, ethnically the upper echelons of the Baath party in Syria are dominated by the Alawi sect, which is nominally a Shiite sect. They're not like the ones in Iraq and Iran for the most part. They have a lot of mythology. I sort of think of them as the Santa Monica Shiites. So it's not a natural alliance of the orthodox Shiites of Iraq with the Alawites of Syria, who have this sort of folk-Shiite mythological approach to religion. And then the people who are rising up against the regime are all kinds of people. There have been some Alawite demonstrations, and in Dara in the south near Jordan, where there's been a lot of demonstrations, at one point the regime said the Salafis were causing all of this trouble, the hard-line, Sunni fundamentalists. So the next day there was a big demonstration in which the people, they're all like twenty year olds, these are the people making these uprisings, and they chanted that [Arabic], we're not Salafis, we're just youth.

But as I said, you get away from the grassroots in Syria, look at it from thirty thousand feet, it looks like Sunni fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood and its potential constituencies in these small, Sunni-dominated towns of Hamad, Homs, and so forth, rising up against Shiite-dominated Baath government. Al-Malaki had always hated the Baath of Syria, he actually had lived in Damascus for about twenty years, he was the Dawa bureau chief in Damascus when they were trying to overthrow Saddam from the outside, and I don't know exactly what the Baathists did to him in that period, but apparently he came away from it with very raw feelings. So you go back two, three, four years, all the bombs going off in Baghdad, Al-Malaki would blame those on Bashar al-Assad personally. He thought the Syrians were blowing up Iraq. So all of a sudden in late August, Al-Malaki comes out, and he warns against the turmoil in Syria, supporting the al-Assad government. And he says that Israel might take advantage of it. Wasn't that where we came in? I mean, wasn't the neo-con argument for getting rid of Saddam was that he said things like that? So this is not typical of mainstream Iraqi political discourse in the past few years. Yes, Muqtada al-Sadr might have said something like that. But for Nouri Al-Malaki, the Prime Minister of Iraq, to come out and say we should support the Bashar al-Assad government and avoid turmoil in Syria, because the Israelis might take advantage of it. That's a different discourse. I mean this speech seems to me must have been written for him in Tehran. So I see Syria and Bahrain and the way they have developed, and the way that they're interpreted in the region on

sectarian issues as having pushed Al-Malaki into a warm embrace of Tehran. And this has happened at a time when the U.S. is essentially being forced out militarily from Iraq.

Those people who worry that Iranian influence might grow in Iraq if the U.S. leaves, it seems to me, are way out of date. That cow is out of the barn. Thank you.

[Dr. Eric Davis] Good afternoon everyone. First of all, I want to thank John and the Council for inviting me to present here today, and despite the topic or the title of my presentation today, "What Is the Future of Democracy in Iraq," I want to emphasize that I'm not a futurologist. I first went to Iraq over thirty years ago to conduct two months of research in May and June of 1980, and Iraq is far too complex of a society to reduce to simplistic predictions. But basically the takeaway from my talk today is kind of three points. First of all, there is strong support for democracy, which I want to try to explicate. Secondly, there is a dysfunctional and increasingly neo-authoritarian government. And third, very bad neighborhood effects, particularly as Juan just pointed out, and I would underscore that on the part of Iran.

I want to first present a kind of historical memory, because I think had the United States adopted a very different policy after the invasion of Iraq, I think this panel would have a very different tone and structure to it today.

Dissolving the conscript army, getting rid of the National Police, the process of de-Baathification, allowing the looting that took place, which really undermined any confidence that Iraqis had and what the Americans said they were there to do – namely bring democracy. And also the CPA's elimination of agricultural subsidies in August 2003, which made Iraqi farmers much less competitive with Iranian and Syrian imports, and led many young farmers to go to urban areas, where they joined insurgent movements, was definitely very bad policy.

So I'm going to move rather quickly through the first group of slides as time is short. And I want to talk a little bit about the statistics that I'm going to present at the end of the presentation. But I just want to quickly kind of dispel with the kind of argument that is often made that Islam is somehow incompatible with democracy. And I choose Ayatollah Ali Sistani, I don't agree with all of his positions, but I think as you can see from these bullet points here that he plays a very important role in promoting democracy, and I'll bring some other factors into the mix later on.

The elections of 2005 were flawed in the sense that Iraqis largely voted along sectarian lines. Still, there was almost a sixty percent turn out, and how many American Presidential elections have sixty percent turnouts? I think one of the last I can remember was Humphrey/Nixon in '68. That was a sixty point three percent turnout. But a constitution was written, despite the fact that it was done in haste under American pressure. And one of the good things about that I think was it required the parliament to have twenty-five percent of seats given to women, certainly a higher percentage than in many western democracies.

These images here are shown not for propaganda purposes, but really to point to the fact that Iraqis were quite thrilled as Tunisians were recently to have the opportunity to vote. In 2009, we had Arab provincial legislative elections, kind of the equivalent of our state legislative elections. Sectarian parties lost votes. People demonstrated, now that some security had been brought to the country in 2008, that they wanted services not sectarianism. There were many parties, not all of them of course really viable, civic in orientation, but many new candidates and many new parties that were. I think what was very, very interesting in the Kurdish region, which we often lose sight of, was the rise of the Goran Party, which despite intimidations and threats and firings from government jobs was able to win 25 percent of the vote. And what's interesting here, if you look at the Goran emblem, you'll see not only does it have Goran in Kurdish, but it has tahrir, or change in Arabic, which is sending a message to the Arab population that the Goran is not inherently antagonistic to potential alliances with Arabs in the south. And what I think is very interesting is to look increasingly, and I'll try to talk about this in terms of the research that I've conducted with Iraqi youth, that were an alliance of young people, and given the fact that 25 percent of the Iraqi population is under the age of 25, that brought Kurds and Arabs together, that could have a very significant impact on Iraqi politics.

The March 2010 elections were I think, contrary to what many people argued, largely won over by secular forces, despite the fact that Malaki's State of Law coalition and the National Iraq Alliance won a lot of seats, but still the [unintelligible] list did bring together a lot of Kurds to vote for that, and Shia, and what was very interesting again was that two clerics here, [unintelligible] the Grand Mufti, the Sunni Grand Mufti, and Al Sistani prevented Malaki from postponing the elections, which he wanted to do, because he saw that his support was declining, and forced them to use an open list system. So that you could see who you were voting for, and that was very important in terms of women voters, because in the closed list, many of the women voters were chosen by the various parties, and they really were not in any sense independent.

The elections were interesting because many sectarian politicians were forced to form cross-ethnic coalitions, and again a very high turnout, and both the Iraqi High Election Commission and foreign observers indicated that the election was fair. And here are some images from the electioneering of that parliamentary vote. And here, what's very interesting, if you look at the posters for Fiduz Hattan [phonetic] of the most sectarian alliance, the one that's really under the control of the Sadrist, and the Majlis [unintelligible] of the Higher Islamic Council. What was interesting, that in certain areas where they knew people had a kind of secular bent, their candidates were not wearing the hijab and were wearing makeup, where as if you look at the lower right hand of the lower center photo, in poorer areas there the candidate appears in a very different garb.

So let's talk about politics since 2010. We have an intense internal conflict. The United States tried to help overcome that by offering to broker the development of a National Council for Strategic Affairs, that would be a kind of booby prize for Ayad Allawi, because he was basically prevented from forming the government, and having really any say in the new government that was put together. And as a result of the kind of stalemate that's existed, there have been no real policies that have dealt with some important problems like

creating jobs and improving government services. The Kurds at first were kind of happy with this, because they saw themselves as power brokers, but now they've changed their views, and if you looked at the Hayat newspaper a few days ago, Talabani's party met and said the biggest problem facing the country from their point of view now is this inability of Malaki and Allawi to really reconcile

In this whole process, as nothing has really been done about jobs, about the economic factor, and with all our emphasis in Iraq, and looking at it through the prism of Shiites, Kurds, and Sunnis, often times the political economy is totally neglected, and we continue to see that there's an absent state in the south, and with the withdrawal of British and U.S. forces, and Iran getting involved in the mix, we continue to see the growth of militias in the south, and with the severe water shortage that's affecting Iraq, the continued migration from rural to urban areas, this continues to present a major problem.

In terms of the Arab Spring, it's kind of a misnomer to apply that because Iraq reportedly has a democratic system, so it's not that demonstrators are asking for democracy, but rather that democracy actually have some meaning. And young Arabs and Kurds have been killed in some of these demonstrations, including journalists who have written critical articles, and what this shows is that the Arab youth in particular, but Iraqis in general, I would argue, want more personal freedoms and a more responsive government.

The most serious problem in Iraq, I would argue, is lack of jobs, substandard government services, and massive corruption, not sectarianism. Iraq's political parties divide up the spoils, all ministries are basically patronage networks, and Iraqis, the public at large, resent the lack of jobs and services, despite the country's extensive oil and natural gas wealth. And of course we know that Iraq is 175 and 180 on the NGO Transparency International's list of most corrupt countries.

Here we see the point that I was making at the beginning that there is strong support for democracy. Now we also see that democracy is very different than the democracy envisioned by the Bush Administration, which is going to be a kind of a night watchman state, in which there was no involvement in the economy on the part of the government, because you can see here that jobs and unemployment, and these statistics come from a National Democratic Institute poll from last November.

Here I want to talk and end up with some research I did last year with six hundred Iraqi youth focus groups throughout the country in the Kurdish and Arab regions. This is preparatory to a much larger national family survey and a much deeper study that I'm going to be engaged in over the next three years. And if you look at the first question that I'm putting up here, and I'm just giving you a kind of taste of what we found in our results. How many times per week do you attend a Friday [unintelligible] in the last month? You see that 72 percent of the respondents, and these are youth from the ages of 12 through 30, say they never go. And many of the youth when they were asked an open-ended question said if they do go, they often go because they're forced to by their parents. The kind of sad thing here is that increasingly for many young people Islam is becoming associated with sectarianism and political opportunism.

How would you identify yourself religiously? Certainly we don't see among this large demographic, 65 percent of the population, actually 70 percent if we talk about the demographic under thirty, that 73 percent characterize themselves as either moderates or liberals. So the idea of Iraq moving towards kind of radical Islam is certainly not borne out by generational data. Eighty-nine percent here say they would not join a political party, and when we asked all 600 respondents what were their role models, not a single one mentioned a political figure, but then when they actually thought about that in terms of the United States, we asked American students would any of them really say the same thing about any American politician.

If you look at how young peoples' lives have improved, what's interesting is to look at the group that was not affected by the sanctions of the 1990's, the 12 through 18 group, they see their life as improving very much, which goes down dramatically if you look at the 25 to 30 year olds. And there 65 percent of them feel that their lives have not improved.

What sources do Iraqi youth trust for news? Again, they certainly don't trust Iran. They trust the most Arab, non-Iraqi media, and Western-based media. And the thing that's very disturbing when we think about the dysfunctional government and the continued sectarianism, and I just came back from a conference, had the opportunity to talk to a lot of Iraqi intellectuals, professors at Iraqi universities, and sectarianism is increasingly becoming a problem on campus. If you're not associated with a particular political party, you have a very hard time kind of maintaining your research status and your position in the university. Sixty-eight percent of the 12 through 18 year olds would not leave, but again 36 percent of those from 25 to 30 would leave. So even though 55 percent overall say they don't want to leave, the very fact that you have 31 percent saying that they would, and 12 percent maybe, this could point again to another problem in the future – the brain drain. And we know one of the problems with the Iraqi bureaucracy today, with the de-Baathification, is that many people in bureaucratic positions have used doctored degrees to get those positions, and actually are not providing good services.

Now, to think of kind of Iraqi youth as pro-western I think is very simplistic, because if you look carefully at this particular graph, you'll see that 43 percent feel that we can find a balance, or think that perhaps we can find a balance between Western and Middle Eastern cultural views. So this shows, I think, a lot of ambiguity in terms of identity, where young people think they are going, and I think it points very strongly for the need of active involvement, and I don't mean active involvement in a kind of a top down, patronizing, we know better than you approach; quite the opposite – much more from a bottom up approach that the international community's very much needed, and I'm not just talking about states, but also NGOs, to become involved in Iraq at all sorts of different levels.

So from a citizen's perspective – I'm going to wrap up now, go on to a couple more slides – I think Iraq is well-placed to make a transition to democracy if we use as indicators voter turnout, political participation, and public opinion polls. And voting patterns suggest support for sectarianism is on the decline. However, if we look at it from the elite perspective – and this is another problem in terms of analysis, we don't make a distinction

between elites and mass publics, between the citizenry and the people who are running the country – that the government remains dysfunctional and corrupt. And if corruption continues, and key services are not forthcoming, support for democracy could be undermined. And I draw attention to those of us who know Iraqi history, the period between 1958 and 1968 was one of great instability.

So the worst case scenario, to try to address one of the questions that Ken raised before, is that Iraq is paralyzed by ethnic conflict as the corruption and lack of services continue. Iran and radical Sunni elements in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf, who are very actively involved in trying to stir up sectarian tensions of the '90s, paying Sunnis to pray five times a day and women to wear the hijab, that again this could undermine and stall the transition to democracy. Armed militias challenge the Iraqi government's authority in rural areas and poor urban quarters. Insufficient stability in turn undermines foreign investment. And progress fails to be made in the oil and gas sectors, both in terms of exploration and their modernization.

So are we moving towards a new authoritarianism? I would argue that since 2010, in particular Nouri Malaki's undermined the process of democratization. He sought to control the independent Higher Electoral Commission, the Central Bank, and influence the ways in which the judiciary adjudicates cases. He's created special military units that only report to him. He recently threatened the parliamentarian Sabah Al Sadi with seven years imprisonment for criticizing him, and has arrested journalists who criticize the Iraqi government.

Will U.S. influence decline? Yes and no. Certainly our troops are going to be out, but I think Iraq is going to still need the United States to help it build its air force and train its army, and something we often don't talk about is navy as well, and its security services. We're going to continue to play an important role in promoting Iraqi interests in international financial institutions and conferences, and paying down its debt to Kuwait.

The U.S., of course, will also play a key role in facilitating relations with Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf states, and provide an important counterweight to Iran. So the United States needs to use its influence not to get sucked back into what we did in the past, get in bed with dictators in the region, because we've seen that whole policy exploding around the world, but it needs to really take democracy seriously in Iraq.

And if we look at this final slide, the final slide here, we see these protests. The three, the two on the left, the one in the upper right-hand quadrant. Arab demonstrations, the one in the lower right in the Kurdish region, which actually is suffering in many ways more brutal treatment by the [unintelligible] and the local intelligence agencies. The international community needs to support the democratic aspirations of the Iraqi people, which means that just sitting on our hands and asking academics like myself to make prognostications about the future is not enough.

So I would just end by saying Iraqi democracy is not a spectator sport. Thank you very much.

[Ms Shameem Rassam] [First few minutes inaudible – off mic]

... What is the message? What is going on? Political parties also. And then you have the NGOs, you have the middle class, and you have all the Arab satellites also beaming to the Arab world. You have the international media outlets that have opened also venues. And you have the Turks, you have the Chinese, you have so many messages, everything now the consumer is receiving. Satellites, I remember 2003, the first satellites were made in China, they were sold for one hundred fifty dollars, everybody had a satellite, yes it's great, Dish. But really, what do the Iraqis say after all these years?

All right, I go back to Dr. Katzman, and those questions were beautiful. I've been following this, I'm sure everybody's been following this – what is happening? How is that message that President Obama stood and delivered? I was fascinated by how this message travels overseas, across the ocean, in different media.

I look first of all at American media of course. Media here then I look European and look at that. How did that message discriminate? What was the reaction of the Iraqi government starting from the President, Prime Minister, deputies, and all the way down to the religious leaders and the community leaders. It was fascinating. And then as Dr. Eric pointed out, I have my own focus group. I don't know them. There are about eight hundred people all over Iraq and abroad. We blog, we do everything, and I ask some of these questions Dr. Katzman broached, and I said how do you look at this, the withdrawal of the troops? There will be no more troops, and so on. And then you've got the, of course, the Secretary of Defense coming out with the messages, and everybody said. And the response was very fascinating.

The first one says actually, we don't know yet how things will turn out, most of them said. And by the way, the focus group, they could be working for al-Sadr or Hakim or Dawa or anything, I don't know really their affiliation one-hundred percent, but that's how I feel about them. Really, we don't know anything. Then many of them said we don't understand what President Obama said, it was incomplete. What does he mean? Then we hear other messages coming out from the Secretary of Defense saying oh no, no, no, we might keep some on the bases. Yes, there's a reduction of bases. Well we might keep some in Kuwait. We might keep some in here. Then the other thing, and I think was touched on by Dr. Eric also, how about the arms deals? What is going on? And then of course Moqtada al-Sadr comes out through his outlet saying hey, okay, so they're pulling out? How about the largest embassy, U.S. Embassy in the world? Legitimate questions really, incomplete sentences, incomplete approach, what is going on?

So if you look at all these messages and then you say okay, so everybody's talking to their own target audience. Then you've got Prime Minister Maliki after the announcement of President Obama, he comes out and says this is great, it's a victory for Iraqi diplomacy. Nothing else. Lost.

So the Iraqi people really don't know it, don't understand what is going on. Now there's another reaction came from the Iraqi journalists. And they said really, we're all disappointed. Now even if the U.S. military pulls out, what have they been doing lately? Besides the arms deals, and besides maybe staying the bases, but I'm sure some of them will stay protecting the Embassy. Anyways, all these things really, so it's contradictory messages. Coming out of the, I'm talking about Iraqi press coming out of the Prime Minister's office coming out of, the Prime Minister coming out from the [unintelligible] Today for instance, and I'm sure you followed it up, there was a big conflict. There was really, an announcement came out from the deputy, Dr. Mukluk, a deputy to the Prime Minister, saying that the Prime Minister and Commander in Chief of the Iraqi forces Al-Malaki is approving the, or sort of endorsing, the latest thing that was two days ago, Salahadin Province. They voted that they should have their own semi-independence. And I said okay, here we go again, so something is going on. And especially after the continuation or the de-Baathification for the last few days that we've been hearing about, even transferring professors or academics from Baghdad University and other universities.

So all of a sudden, then they came out, of course I'm talking again about the media, saying oops, okay, here we go again to the game of the Prime Minister diplomacy is not to talk about what's the outcome of, if as President Obama announced, the pulling out of the withdrawal of the U.S. forces, but let's switch and always attack, put things on the blame on the Baathists, put blame on so and so, so we cannot put blame anymore on Al Qaeda or other militia groups, so let's switch around. And again, what is going on if this is inside the government itself. And also, we tackled, there was talk about the Arab Spring. Arab Spring, Iraqis, the youth that participated in Tahrir Square, they feel disappointed with the U.S. press. None of the U.S. press really covered.

They're still going, yes, in smaller numbers, but there as Dr. Eric also pointed out, okay, what was it, they were oppressed, they were harassed by the government forces, the security forces of Baghdad, and they felt hey, we are the youth, the youth kept saying democracy, the youth, we are here, we are here, but nobody is supporting us, we don't even hear somebody, except as you know yesterday the journalist Daniel Smith who was detained for four days by Prime Minister Al-Malaki's secret forces was released yesterday under the pretext that he was supporting those youth demonstrators in Tahrir Square. That was for the first time I hear that something has come up again about Tahrir Square. And again as Dr. Cole pointed out, even the youth in Tahrir Square after the Arab Spring, they weren't calling for toppling the government, they were asking for infrastructure and so on, yet they were neglected. And also one final world, I know Dr. [unintelligible] pointed out to me, still speaking about Arab Spring, I'm sure many of you knew that as the Arab Spring started and there was some coverage, and of course there was jamming on several satellites, I heard from journalists who participated there that the government of Iraq, Dr. Malaki's office, issued a censorship committee that would feed the major outlets with messages that they would like to tell the world. That's what the media says in Iraq. Do they play a big role? Yes they do. And a very important role. I think my time is out, thank you.

[Dr. Paul Sullivan] Good afternoon, Salam alaykum. Before my talks, I have to give the usual caveats, that these opinions are my own, and do not represent those of the National

Defense University, Georgetown, or any other organization I might be associated with. Okay, so now I can speak my mind. Let's see how much trouble I can get myself into.

The American troops look to leave at the end of the year. Most questions have been directed at this event. However, there will be many other events, and very fluid, changeable, and often unpredictable events in the region, and within Iraq.

Iraq cannot be considered in a vacuum – no country can. Some people like to see the world as nation-states, that can be individually studied and analyzed, but most in this room likely understand that this is not the case. Any policy options with regard to Iraq need to consider the internal dynamics of the country, as well as the external dynamics of its region and beyond. Some of the most important dynamics to consider are the further developing of the Sunni-Shia tensions within Iraq, in the region, and globally. Sunni-Shia tensions have become increasingly acidic and explosive in the region. Iraq has been severely damaged, and likely changed for the worst in the medium to long runs from the Sunni-Shia conflicts within it. The growing tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran are getting to a fever pitch. The growing Sunni-Shia tensions within Iraq are in a very bad state. The problems in Bahrain are far from over, and these are in large part due to Sunni-Shia economic, political, cultural, and other tensions. The Sunni-Shia tensions are a big part of the ongoing ruination of the Syrian economy and society. Sunni-Shia tensions are a big part of the problems in Lebanon. These tensions can also be found in Yemen, and in many other places in the region, Pakistan, Afghanistan also have them. It is a sad fact that possibly the biggest threat to the region might be found in these Sunni-Shia tensions going critical.

Iran is a big part of feeding these tensions in all of the countries I have mentioned. One cannot separate out policy recommendations on Iraq from policy recommendations on Iran. These two countries have been intertwined in many ways over the years, especially since March 2003.

Now who really won the war? Who is really in charge here? Iran's influence in Iraq is vast. Many of the most important positions in Iraq today were guests in Iran, Lebanon, south Beirut, Syria, and elsewhere. Iran's influence in the policy decisions of the Iraqi leadership are well know and well documented. It also seems clear that Iran on its own and via the Sadr group and others pushed for the U.S. troops to go at the end of the year, even though there may have been some hope for some to remain for training and other non-combat purposes. Iran and their proxy groups in Iraq and in the region would of course want the U.S. influence to weaken. This will further open up more vacuums for the Iranians and their proxies to fill. Less U.S. influence will open up for the Iranians more opportunities for seeding their hegemony in Iraq and other areas.

Think of the Iran-Iraq-Syria-Lebanon nexus, should also lead one to further get away from linear thinking on this idea. Syria is in the midst of a revolution, a nasty one at that, and it's hard to tell how this will turn out. If a Sunni leadership takes over, then Iran may lose one of its largest bases -- bases for mischief in the region. This could also change many of the dynamics in Iraq, especially along the border with Syria. This loss of Syria could also

weaken Iran's hold on Lebanon. Iran could then look to increase its powerbase in Iraq and become more aggressive in its influence in that country.

Iran may focus more on Yemen, in Saudi Arabia, particularly in the eastern part of Saudi Arabia, and we know what sort of problems have been occurring there. But the real prize for Iran is Iraq. It has historical, cultural, and religious hold on the Iranian psyche. It's also a place with a pile of oil, and natural gas, other minerals, in a powerful, strategic location, that would lend depth and breadth to the possible Iranian policies in the future. Iraq is also a place of significant investment and trade wealth that could be developed across the countries, which could be good for both countries. Eastern Saudi Arabia may be a bigger oil and strategic prize, but if we get realistic, it's unlikely they will make headway there.

Policy recommendations. Given how many countries in the region are in the midst of the Sunni-Shia tensions, and how many of these countries could leverage U.S. policies in the region, we should be developing better relations with some of our natural allies in the GCC region, such as the U.A.E. and Qatar. I suggest we get a lot closer to Saudi Arabia. Recent events in this country lend more credence to that idea. We have become more distant from the Saudis since 9/11. It is time to be more effectively and seriously looking to change that. Our relations with Qatar are complex at times, but this is an increasingly important country that could also help in the overall easing of the tensions between the Shia and the Sunni. Qatar's relations with Iran are complex, especially since they share the largest natural gas field in the world, but also because of proximity and historical complexities. We also have a major air base in Qatar, and Qatar is an increasingly powerful voice in the region and beyond, even for such a small country.

The U.A.E. clearly sees Iran as a threat in many ways. The U.S. has a special relationship with the U.A.E. that is not particularly well known in the U.S. The U.A.E. is one of our closest relations in the region, and that relationship should be improved. In my own way, I am putting efforts in that direction. The U.S. also needs to carefully weave its policy ways through the complexities of Bahrain, with our Navy base there, and Kuwait, with our assistance advice and advice to each other.

Our relations with the GCC states are not perfect, and they have some tensions within them, such as the Palestinian issue. Another recommendation point -- deal with that issue. Deal with it quickly, because the Arab Spring, once it calms down, will begin to focus on the Palestinian issue, big time. In order to improve our relations with many of these countries, we have to be seen as a more evenhanded interlocutor on that issue.

No two countries have perfect relations, but if we are to somehow counter Iran's hegemonic activities in the region, we need to develop coalitions. Coalitions are important, if not more important in peacemaking and hegemony-mitigation as they are in war and investments.

Then let's take a look at the nuclear issue in Iran. When we consider the Israeli side of the Iraq geo-political equation, we cannot rule out the Iranian nuclear issue. Israel may just think of an effective strike on an Iranian nuclear facility. And if that happens, the gates of

hell will be open, and Iraq will be walked right into it. This would also seriously foul up U.S. relations with everyone in the region. If anyone in power in this city and beyond are thinking about a gunpowder solution to the Iranian problems, I am willing to brief them for a few hours about the rather devastating reverberations and effects that may come from this. Let's not kid ourselves. This could take off on its own.

Now, let's just take a look at the oil markets if such things were going to happen. If there is an attack on Iran, and Iraq will be right in the middle of it, and right off the coast of Iraq is a facility called the Al Basra Oil Terminal. Dr. Davis mentioned the Iraqi Navy. What happens when the U.S. troops leave? Who will protect ABOT, which is essentially eighty percent of the economy of Iraq? It's terrorism target number one in Iraq. If this conflagration with Iran happens, and if certain events happen in the major oil facilities in the region, then we could expect the price of oil to go to about three hundred to three hundred and fifty dollars, conservatively, and then I will invest in bicycles.

Remember the tanker wars of the 1980s? Some of this room may have been involved in watching that happen, studying it, analyzing it. Now there are far more important oil facilities in the Gulf, far more important for world oil markets and the world economy, which we know is fragile as it is. Think Ras Tanura, Abqaiq, and the shoreline facilities in Kuwait, U.A.E., and so forth.

There was some mention of economic diversification of Iraq. Getting beyond the apocalyptic vision of World War Four in Iran, and that's not exactly an exaggeration, ladies and gentlemen. A policy goal for the United States in any coalition looking to stabilize Iraq has to look at diversifying economies far too beholden to oil. With good labor markets, good economic development, good diversity, the Iraqi economy will have much greater stability. Overseas investments within Iraq, technical assistance, and so forth will be needed. Iraq is in a very difficult and brittle place in its future. Its history has been difficult. It would be best if its future were better, more peaceful, and more prosperous for everyone.

The most prosperous region in Iraq is the north. And a lot of that has to do with another geo-political player, Turkey, who was investing a great deal in the north of Iraq to try to assuage some of the animosities and try to pacify the north of Iraq, but also part of its own southeastern region. But of course, this is the Middle East, and you will find contradictions in complexity. Turkey has recently been on the attack against the PKK, Iran has been going against the PJAK. Oddly enough, with the difficulties Turkey has had with Iran, especially in Syria, the Turks in Iran are now working together to go after these two Kurdish organizations. Turkey is a member of NATO, it is a long-standing ally of the United States. Its policies with regard to Israel have changed. Its on again, off again relations with Iran are often quite complex and unpredictable, however the U.S. will be severely limited in the short-, medium-, and long-term if we start to turn our backs even slightly on Turkey.

Turkey and the U.S. can work together on any efforts to help stabilize Iraq and other relations in the region. I disagree wholeheartedly with some people in this city who think we should back away from Turkey – big mistake. We need Turkey in so many ways and in so many places, and Iraq is just one of them. Turkey is also vital for another source of

stability and prosperity in Iraq -- water. The rivers start in Turkey. Some sort of agreement has to be established between Turkey and Iraq and Syria. And I'm being told to please conclude.

Will there be an Arab Spring in Iraq? I wouldn't rule that out, because we've heard that the characteristics that drove the Arab Spring exist in Iraq and are building. But we also might see a Persian Spring, because Iran has those characteristics building as well. If you think this is going to be simple folks, look out.

We also have to deal with the strategic contraction of the United States -- we have a massive debt. We have gigantic deficits, and the budget-cutting in DoD will be severe. I can see that at my own employer. We will not be able to get into these discretionary wars as we did previously, and spend a trillion dollars, and wonder what the end result was. Not only because of the money problem and the debt and the deficit, but also because we have lost massive credibility because of this war. And we have lost it outside and within our own nation. Indeed, to remind me of the difficult times I had when this was starting up, and some at this table know about that, and some in this room know about that. Iraq was far from a cakewalk and a slam dunk, and the next time we think about such actions, we need to vet the data.

Thank you.

[Katzman] Thank you very much. We have some time for questions. Some in the audience have sent some cards up, and I think we sort of covered Turkish influence, Iranian influence, Syrian influence. There was one question, such that if things sort of deteriorated in Iraq, would the U.S. go back into Iraq militarily -- the answer is no -- so I'm going to start taking some questions from the audience, and I guess, have at it. Sir.

[Questioner] [Inaudible]

[Rassam] Thank you. Yeah, I agree with you. As I said, all of a sudden, this massive technology was just dumped, I think, dumped. Everybody could acquire it. I'm speaking about my experience with the journalists, for instance. Hey, don't bring it in, let's train them, let's do it slowly. And also again if you're dumping all of that on people, yes, they will take advantage of it. It's great, but then I think what we had was the U.S., also what I learned, we have the regulations, we have journalist ethics of journalism.

We never had that in Iraq or in the Middle East, we had instructions. Don't do that, do this, don't show this, shoot that, and that's it -- otherwise you would be punished. Okay. I'm speaking on, as I said I'm a graduate of the... is familiar with that, so we memorized those things. All of a sudden, hey, you have freedom. You have the vehicles even to express yourselves. Wait a minute, wait a minute, let's take it easy. I agree with you. Introduce it. Teach them what it is. What can you do with it, and how do you really deliver, what's your message, who's your target audience, what is going on?

And also I think what is not only the mass media influx or the explosion of that is that there is not really regulations about anyone can have a license right now, can start a satellite from their kitchen. Honestly, this is how it is. The only thing is that the government might interfere if any of those outlets are criticizing the government. But really, there are no regulations. And I think that this is what we're missing is that it had to be introduced.

Again, I would like to say well we're done training and NGOs of different US agencies, so many programs, European. Yes they did that, but it wasn't sustainable. It was one week, then see you, goodbye. Write me a report. You did well in the report. Excellent. You know what democracy is. You know what freedom of expression. I don't know, I just one thing about democracy, when I was there they kept hampering me, you have to talk about democracy, democracy, just one second, and I did a show. I sent all my crew to the streets and everywhere. Tell me about democracy, what does democracy mean? They didn't know. Iraqis didn't know that. I mean these are some of the things that I think we should've taken step by step. We can still do it by the way, it can still be done.

[Katzman] Thank you. Mr. Steinberg.

[Questioner] Thank you. In Iraq, many, many, many years ago, the Iraq Study Group had proposed a framework for tackling some of these problems in regional security, and suggested there might be an option for a regional forum type of growth, to which Turkey, Iran, Russia, the United States, other neighboring countries would be brought in for some kind of framework discussions. It's kind of an unoptioned past, and if so, how do we deal with this Iran problem, which people seem to broadly agree is kind of the nine hundred pound gorilla on the table here, whether it's Iraq or anywhere else in the region?

[Katzman] Okay, I need to repeat the question. The question is the Iraq Study Group recommendations on a regional framework for Iraq. Who wants to take it? Dr. Cole?

[Cole] Personally, I think that there's.., while I have made the argument that Iranian political influence in Iraq is actually increasing, at least at the top, and Professor Davis is correct that what goes on at the grassroots may be somewhat different. I think it's also important to keep a sense of balance. So far, the Iraqi elite has seemed interested in balancing, and so you'll note that it's done a deal with China to develop, I think it's north [unintelligible], and it's done deals with other European firms, for instance. Seems to want to not have all of its eggs in the U.S. basket.

Iran really doesn't have very much to offer, with regard to the petroleum and gas industry I don't think. And so the behavior of the Iraqi elite so far is to avoid being captured by anyone outside power, including the United States, which was hegemonic militarily at the time that it was making these deals. So I suspect that what the Iraq Study Group recommended will happen, willy-nilly. That is to say the Iraqis themselves, as they get the petroleum industry back on its feet, as they start to export more, have more money to play with, address some of their infrastructural problems, will want to go out and do bids with Russian and Turkish and other firms, and of course as Paul Sullivan mentioned, Turkey is already a very, very major investor in Iraq, and I expect that investment actually to

increase, perhaps exponentially, over the coming years. So I think that's what's going to happen. I don't think Iran has that much to offer Iraq economically or socially, and therefore the Iraqis will tend to go elsewhere for those needs.

[Katzman] Yeah.

[Davis] Yeah, I just want to add that again I think there's a domestic, social dimension that has to be brought into this mix, too. Malaki has been continuously under vicious attacks from the Sadrists, largely I would argue prompted by the Iranians. And that has kind of constrained him from adjusting the SOFA, and it has constrained him from really taking any serious policies that would anger the Iranians. So as long as you continue to have a situation in which groups like the Sadrists and there are other that are now, like the League of the Righteous and others, that are all open up to Iranian influence, as long as you don't kind of address this kind of underlying policy where you have kind of this endless stream of recruits, and you have support from Iran, Malaki is going to have certain freedom of action – certainly he wants to balance – but he's going to be in a sense tied to the Iranians, because otherwise he's going to be open to this populous critique that he's trying to turn to the West.

[Katzman] Thank you. Yes, and please, can we have questions on Iraq? Because a lot of the questions we're getting are sort of on other issues. Please.

[Questioner] I'd just like to address my question to Eric Davis. [unintelligible]

[Katzman] Okay, repeating the question. The question is about poor people in Iraq, orphans, and what is that the situation and what can be done? Dr. Davis.

[Davis] Well, I think, when I make an argument in a larger discussion of Iraq, I talk about the two Iraqs. Because to the extent that you have six thousand civil society organizations, many of which are not quote unquote real civil society, but those that are, are largely populated by youth, and youth have been involved in a lot of conflict resolution, often time sub rosa, because they don't want to be attacked by sectarian organizations. But there's another side to this coin, the fact that the sectarian militias are also populated by young people who don't have jobs, and they've been involved in some very horrendous activity, and a lot of them come from families – because the other issue, putting aside what you talked about, is female headed households. It's a huge number where mothers reluctantly send their youth, their children to join terrorist organizations and criminal organizations, not because they want to, it's a question of basically staying alive. So the sample that I presented certainly underrepresented the type of folks that you would like us to get that, even though in the south, in Hilla for example, we're able to tap into them. And these were focus groups, so the focus groups are preparatory as I said to a much larger study, which is going to be a national family survey, hopefully. And there we're going to try to make the effort to really be more representative in terms of social stratification.

[Katzman] Thank you. You're up.

[Questioner] [Inaudible]

[Katzman] First up Davis, then Sullivan, on youth, and then Sullivan on the broader.

[Davis] Well first of all, we signed an agreement. We take the rule of law seriously, and international law, we have to leave by December, which I mean we, the United States, has to leave. So it's not really a question, Rick Perry and other candidates on the Republican side have been criticizing President Obama. We don't really have a choice unless we want to suddenly say we're an imperialist power, and the document that we signed in 2008 has no meaning, then that's the only way the troops could remain.

As far as the youth, and again I didn't have enough time to explicate things. I'm not trying to create a binary between secular and religious. What I'm talking about is a distinction between religion as I suspect you and I think of it, which is a personal quality. You have no idea if I'm religious. I have no idea if you're religious. What they call in Arabic [Arabic phrase], which is politicized religion. That's how I think youth are reacting. Because youth are saying they are against religion does not mean they don't take religious values seriously, what it really means is they don't like politicized religion. I would argue.

[Katzman] Dr. Sullivan.

[Sullivan] Well I agree, it's the Status of Forces Agreement, it's a political issue within Iraq. My sense is if we had a full choice to keep people there, we would do that, but that was not to be, and my sense is Iran was behind pushing for that.

With regard to the strategic partnership, that is the way I would look at it, not sending orders out. This region is a complex one. We really don't have a real regional policy, let's get real about it. We don't have a grand strategy that fits into our national interests, full stop. And there should be a reconfiguring of those national interests to look towards more effective calculations for our own future. My main interest in my employment at the National Defense University, is the national security and the national interests of the United States, full stop. And from there we can make better decisions. Thank you.

[Katzman] Dr. Cole, just two seconds.

[Cole] Just to say that the Status of Forces Agreement was negotiated by the Bush Administration with the Iraqi Parliament, and it was the stance of the Obama Administration that a change in it, or an extension in it, would have also to be negotiated with the Iraqi Parliament. There was not support in the Iraqi Parliament for a continued U.S. troop presence. And I don't think it's just a matter of Iran, I just know Iraqis didn't like foreign troops dominating their country. And the United States has a long history of bilateral such agreements. When the Philippine Senate asked the U.S. to close the bases at Subic Bay, they closed them. I can't tell you how much the Navy didn't want to do that, but these are bilateral agreements.

[Katzman] Thank you. Sir.

[Questioner] [Inaudible]

[Katzman] Okay, well the question was, are the AQI attacks on Sunnis, could that have an effect of reducing sectarian conflict between Sunni and Shia? Dr. Rassam.

[Rassam] I mean, again, media. Okay. This has been tackled by media. I mean, Iraqi media in the neighboring countries, media. By it's surface a little bit then dismissed. They say no matter what, what is the fact? Nobody tackles the fact, so there is no factual reality of really who's doing the attack, and it's already dismissed. And I think, I believe from reading in the media, it's dismissed by the political parties themselves and the religious parties who are ruling the country themselves. They don't want to see this as an inspiration or something that would lead to dismantle the idea of sectarian conflict. That's what I read, again, from even my focus group, this is how they explain it.

[Katzman] Thank you. Two seconds.

[Davis] Yeah, I just wanted to say I think we have to be very careful about kind of boiling everything in Iraq down to a kind of sectarian dynamic. There are considerable tensions, as we know within the Sunni community. The [unintelligible] movement, the Anbaris. We see now tremendous struggles going on among the Shia, among the Sadrists and al Haq, this League of the Righteous, and other groups that have come up.

So again, this idea that everybody kind of thinks together with this communal mind, Sunnis think one way, I think that's somewhat problematic. But certainly I think that the dynamic you're talking about is precisely the dynamic that led Anbaris to sort of turn against Al Qaeda, because they saw that they were not in their interest. And I think most Iraqis don't see kind of instability, constant sectarianism, bombing, having to worry about every time you go to the market are you going to get blown up? I mean it's nothing to do with Iraqis or Sunnis, Shiites, or Kurds. You want some predictability in life, and you want a stable environment.

[Katzman] Okay, last question. Ken Audre.

[Questioner] This will be simple. Yesterday, ... conversation with an Iraqi gentleman. I explained to him that I opposed the invasion of Iraq ..., and that today I felt that his country had an opportunity, a moment in history. He was very, extremely pessimistic. He didn't see any hope for the future, ... Iraq needed was another strongman.

[Katzman] The question is, is Iraq going to fall apart unless another strongman emerges. Who wants it?

[Several Panelists] We're going to do this as a duo and say it's already happened.

[Sullivan] But also we have to add in something that Dr. Davis mentioned, and that's the economy of Iraq with the unemployment issue, sometimes devastating unemployment

issues in some parts of it, a lack of hope amongst the youth, and all those Arab awakening characteristics.

The sectarian divide feeds off of that, and even intra-sectarian divides feed off of that. The more time kids have to get angry, they'll get angry, and they'll talk about the loss of hope that they have. And this is throughout the Arab world now. It's the kids in Tahrir Square with the [unintelligible] in Cairo. Or the people in Benghazi, or the young boy in Tunisia who torched himself. This is hopelessness. And if you have hopelessness, you want to grasp onto something. And that's where the difficulties may lie.

[Katzman] Thank you very much.

Dr. Kenneth Katzman

As a specialist with the Congressional Research Service, Dr. Katzman serves as Senior Middle East Analyst for the U.S. Congress, with special emphasis on Iran, Iraq, the Persian Gulf states, Afghanistan, and extremist groups operating in the Middle East and South Asia. He provides reports and briefings to Members of Congress and their staffs on U.S. policy and legislation on these countries and issues. He has also written numerous articles in various outside publications, including the "Warriors of Islam: Iran's Revolutionary Guard", and given numerous official presentations and briefings at conferences and in bilateral meetings throughout the Islamic world. During 1996 and July 2001-March 2002, he was assigned to the Majority Staff of the House International Relations Committee to work on Middle East issues, including hearings and legislation.

Among other major publications, Dr. Katzman wrote working papers on the ballistic missile capabilities of Iran and Iraq for the Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States ("Rumsfeld Commission") in 1988. In late 1999, the Atlantic Council published his study, "U.S.-Iran Relations: An Analytic Compendium of U.S. Policies, Laws, and Regulations". Dr. Katzman is quoted frequently on the Gulf Region in the U.S. press and he appears frequently on Middle Eastern news stations including Alam TV, Al Hurra, Al Arabiyya, LBC, and Al Akhbariya. During 2004, he was a consultant to CBS News on al-Qaeda and related extremist groups.

Dr. Katzman holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from New York University. His dissertation focused on "Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps: Radical Ideology Despite Institutionalization in the Islamic Republic". From 1989 to 1991, he was an analyst for Defense Systems, Inc., in McLean, Virginia, where he wrote analyses for clients in the defense and policy analysis community. Among these projects were ones focused on military and security forces in Afghanistan, Saddam Hussein's intentions, and the combat effectiveness of several Middle Eastern military forces. During 1985-1989, he served as an analyst for the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, where he was tasked with preparing written reports for U.S. Middle East policymakers on leadership dynamics in Iran, Iraq, and the Persian Gulf states, and with briefing senior U.S. officials.

Dr. Eric Davis

Dr. Davis is a Professor of Political Science at Rutgers University and past Director of the University's Center for Middle Eastern Studies. His research has included the study of the relationship between state power and historical memory in modern Iraq, the political economy of Egyptian industrialization, the ideology and social bases of radical religious movements in Egypt and Israel, and the impact of oil wealth on the state and culture in Arab oil-producing countries. Dr. Davis has been a Fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University; the Institute for Advanced Study Berlin; the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies, Princeton University; the Center for the Critical Analysis of Contemporary Culture, Rutgers University; and the Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis.

Dr. Davis was a Carnegie Scholar for 2007-2008 for research on "Islam and the Formation of Political Identities in Post Baathist Iraq: Implications for a Democratic Transition." He was also a Fellow at the American Academic Research Institute in Iraq and received a grant from the United States Institute of Peace for 2008-2009 to study the relationship between sectarian identities and civil society in Iraq. Dr. Davis is a member of an eight-nation study group on "Democracy and Development in the Arab World" under the auspices of the World Bank and the American University in Beirut.

Dr. Davis's publications include "Memories of State: Politics, History and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq" (California, 2005); "Challenging Colonialism: Bank Misr and Egyptian Industrialization", 1920-1941 (Princeton, 1983) (Arabic translation: Institute of Arab Development, 1986); and "Statecraft in the Middle East: Oil, Historical Memory and Popular Culture" (with Nicolas Gavrielides, Florida, 1991). He is currently completing a book on post-Baathist Iraq, "Taking Democracy Seriously in Iraq", which is scheduled for publication by Cambridge University Press in late 2010.

Dr. Davis received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago.

For more information: new-middle-east.blogspot.com

Dr. Juan Cole

Dr. Cole is the Richard P. Mitchell Collegiate Professor of History at the University of Michigan. For three decades, he has sought to put the relationship of the West and the Muslim world in historical context. His most recent book is "Engaging the Muslim World" (Palgrave Macmillan, March, 2008) following his authoring "Napoleon's Egypt: Invading the Middle East" (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

Dr. Cole has been a regular guest on PBS's Lehrer News Hour, and has also appeared on ABC Nightly News, Nightline, the Today Show, Charlie Rose, Anderson Cooper 360, Countdown with Keith Olberman, Rachel Maddow, the Colbert Report, Democracy Now, and many others.

Dr. Cole has written widely about Egypt, Iran, Iraq, and South Asia. He has commented extensively on al-Qaeda and the Taliban, the Iraq War, the politics of Pakistan and Afghanistan, and Iranian domestic struggles and foreign affairs. He has a regular column at Truthdig. He continues to study and write about contemporary Islamic movements, whether mainstream or radical, and whether Sunni and Salafi or Shi'ite.

Dr. Cole commands Arabic, Persian, and Urdu and reads some Turkish. He has lived in various parts of the Muslim world for nearly 10 years and continues to travel widely there.

For more information: www.juancole.com

Dr. Paul Sullivan

Dr. Sullivan is Professor of Economics at the National Defense University (NDU) and an Adjunct Professor of Security Studies and Science, Technology and International Affairs at Georgetown University. He was a Senior Fellow at the East West Institute and a Vice President at the UN Association in Washington. He is a member of the Royal Institute of International Affairs at Chatham House. Dr. Sullivan taught at the American University in Cairo, Egypt for six years. Before he moved to Egypt, Dr. Sullivan was a consultant to major law firms and others on energy, environment, and business due-diligence issues, and an international energy economist at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

Dr. Sullivan is widely published and a frequent commentator on such topics as, among others, energy security, water security, economic security, agricultural development and food security, international economic development, U.S.-Canadian energy issues, the "Arab Spring," extremism, U.S.-Middle East relations, GCC political and economic issues, and the militaries of North Africa. He recently briefed senior U.S. Senate staffers on the evolving Middle East and energy issues, and testified before Congress on U.S. energy security.

He obtained his Bachelor's Degree, Summa Cum Laude, from Brandeis University and has a Ph.D. (with highest honors), Master of Philosophy, and Master of Arts degrees from Yale University. He also is a graduate of the Seminar XXI program at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

For more information: energy.nationaljournal.com/contributors/paul-sullivan.php

Ms. Shameem Rassam

Ms. Rassam is currently a consultant for Alhurra-Iraq, producing new programs for their current affairs department. Since 2003, she has worked as a senior analyst and instructor at SAIC where she focuses on propaganda analysis and issues involving women, youth, and civil society in conflict zones in the Arab world. From 2003-2004, she worked in Iraq managing two national radio stations and the Al-Iraqiyah satellite television station. In this capacity, she was responsible for all editorial content and served as a liaison to the Coalition Provisional Authority, the Iraqi Governing Council, cabinet members, and local ethno-religious bodies.

From 1998-2003, Ms. Rassam worked as a translator and host at IBB WorldNet, and as a reporter, producer, and broadcaster for Voice of America. From 1990-1998, Ms. Rassam was a manager and journalist for the Arab Network of America where she served as a host, a news and variety producer, a special events coordinator, and hosted coverage of cultural and community events in Washington D.C. and across the U.S. Prior to coming to the United States, Ms. Rassam spent 20 years working for Iraq's Ministry of information, which established her reputation as first-rate journalist who, in addition to founding Iraq's first FM radio station and serving as television anchor, producer, and host, was the first female Iraqi journalist to cover the Iran-Iraq War.

In addition to her professional work, Ms. Rassam served as a member of the board for the Pledge for Iraq and has also been actively involved with the Middle East Breast Cancer Initiative. For her efforts, she has received awards from the Arab-International TV Festival, UNICEF, the Arab Network of America, the Detroit Youth Organization, and the Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace.

For more information: www.alhurra.com