When the Dust Settles:

After Iraq, What Next for the Middle East?

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In-Depth Reports

Brian Atwood: This is a moment for celebration, but it is also a moment for cogitation about what the United States should do with the power that it has so clearly demonstrated in the Middle East. What we have done is having an impact on people's lives. But, having demonstrated the stick, it is time to think about the carrot. It is time to remember Teddy Roosevelt and to begin the process of conducting some quiet diplomacy, which probably means that the secretary of defense will have to be quiet for a while. (Laughter.)

We need allies. I am a strong believer in American leadership, but there is a contradiction between American leadership and American dominance that needs to be understood. We look for a rational response to the exercise of power, but the Middle East is an irrational part of the world. We have to be careful.

Defeating Saddam Husayn took a lot of lives and a lot of effort. The U.S. armed forces performed wonderfully. They managed to keep civilian deaths to a minimum, and they deserve all the credit in the world -- I suppose we now can hail the Rumsfeld Doctrine versus the Powell Doctrine in terms of military force on the ground. But the fact of the matter is that trying to make this transition work -- preventing civil strife, delivering humanitarian relief, beginning the process of reconstruction, and then developing a society that will make a positive impact on other countries in the region -- is a tricky business.

I worry about the decision to keep an American administrator. I understand the need to do so in the short run. But I hope we can internationalize this process, because the goal ought to be democratic change in the Middle East. It cannot be done by Americans acting alone; it must be done in cooperation with others.

There are those in the Arab world -- probably not a lot -- who believe in democracy. We have to find out who they are. They are not necessarily people like Ahmed Chalabi, whom we brought back from Britain. He is now seen as being on America's payroll, which won't work in the long run in Iraq. I know Chalabi. I worked with him on one occasion. He went to M.I.T. and the University of Chicago; he is a bright fellow. But the Pentagon cannot use military aircraft to bring people into Iraq. We have to work the situation a lot more subtly than has been done heretofore.

This is a great moment, but it is on the cusp. It could go either way. There was wonderful news from Israel today, a statement by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon about settlements, which has not been given enough attention. It is a positive indication that perhaps the time is right to begin moving on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. That would be a significant way of taking advantage of what we have achieved in this military victory in Iraq.

William Kristol: This war is a big deal. It is the biggest war we have engaged in since Vietnam. It is bigger than the first Gulf War, not in terms of the number of troops we sent over, but in every other respect it is a bigger military enterprise -- certainly a much more ambitious one -- to remove a well-entrenched totalitarian regime.

The biggest war since Vietnam, it will be the most fundamentally successful American war since World War II. This is a big moment, and the question is what lessons we take from it.

Brian is right to warn against the over-interpretation that we can use military force anywhere, at any time, and cheerfully go around the world removing regimes. I would also warn against the opposite and greater temptation to heave a big sigh of relief and say, "Okay, we did that. The war is over."

Thank God the war went better than we expected. Iraq did not use chemical or biological weapons. Israel was not attacked. There was no massive instability elsewhere in the Arab world, whether or not that would be a bad thing. The Arab street was pretty quiet, quieter than the European street.

There was no terrorism. One of the great fears about this war was that it would lead to an upsurge of terrorism, whether here at home, against Americans elsewhere, or against people from other friendly nations. So there will be a strong temptation in the American body politic to be very grateful that the war went as well as it did -- to feel good as we should about liberating the people of Iraq from such a brutal and sadistic tyrant -- and that is it. This would be a big mistake.

It would be a big mistake because the truth is that even if Iraq goes well -- if we have a decent, somewhat democratic government there with no weapons of mass destruction -- if five years from now Iran has gone nuclear and North Korea has a nuclear weapons factory selling to terrorist groups, and other states in the Middle East still pay no price for harboring terrorist groups, then the war will not have begotten the kind of transformation that is needed to make the world safer for us and safer for decent people everywhere who want to live in peace and freedom.

So Iraq is a major battle in an ongoing war against terror and against dictators with weapons of mass destruction. We are entitled to take some pleasure in the outcome of this battle, to heave a certain sigh of relief that it went pretty well. We are entitled to take great pride in our armed services and in the leadership that was given to them on the military and civilian sides.

I say this as someone who was not a Bush supporter, particularly in 1999 and 2000. I preferred Senator John McCain in the primaries, and, believe me, the Bush White House remembers that fact very well. The administration has not yet insisted on regime change at the Weekly Standard, but at times I thought that if they could have, they might have. (Laughter.)

I have not always been a big supporter of George W. Bush, but I will say this: When historians look back at the last twelve months, although they can quibble with this or that diplomatic tactic, they will regard President Bush's successful prosecution of this war as a remarkable performance. He moved a quarter of a million troops over to the Gulf to wage an incredibly successful war, with no increase in terror, and he did this without a lot of international support. He was able to give British prime minister Tony Blair enough diplomatically to maintain power in Britain and got decent support from lots of other governments. He would have never won support from Germany or France, but he made a good-faith effort, which was not completely lost on other countries. He also got good congressional authorization and achieved solid support here at home. It's really quite remarkable.

But while we should be grateful for and proud of our leadership and the performance of the men and woman fighting in Iraq, this is only one battle in a much larger effort. It is part of the broader war on terror and on dictators with weapons of mass destruction, and an attempt to reform the Middle East in a fundamental way. We have no choice but to move ahead in this effort, though it is a daunting one. We should not kid ourselves. It is a big enterprise, but if we do not do it, no one will, and the lesson of September 11 is that we must.

Dennis Ross: This is a big moment. A lot of people who were in favor of this war argued that a successful war would create a set of object lessons, not only in the Middle East but beyond the region. I do not want to leap to conclusions at this point, but there are some interesting indicators that we need to watch.

North Korea, which has resisted the idea of multilateral talks with the United States and other Asian nations, has suddenly suggested that different formats for dialogue might be acceptable. The North Koreans have probably

conveyed this message because the Russians and the Chinese are behaving a little differently now than they were before. We have been urging them for some time to put pressure on the North Koreans, and I suspect that it only became acute as the war came to an end and they began to ask themselves what would come next. So we need to think about object lessons not only for the targets that we have in mind with regard to proliferation, but also for those that have influence on the proliferators.

The North Koreans are not alone. Now Hashemi Rafsanjani in Iran says it might be time to have a referendum to see if Iran should restore its relationship with the United States. The timing of this strikes me as interesting, as the Iranians are not exactly unknown for mixed messages. On the one hand, Rafsanjani says maybe it is time for a referendum on U.S.-Iranian relations, so that builds our interest in thinking about the possibility of a relationship. On the other hand, Iran begins to meddle on the ground in southern Iraq in a way that says, "Don't get any ideas. We can make life really difficult for you in Iraq."

And there may also be an object lesson here in terms of models. Brian raised the issue of what we have to do vis-Ã -vis reconstruction in Iraq. The task will be daunting. Anyone who thinks that there can be instant democracy is kidding themselves. So is anyone who thinks there is a row of dominoes that will fall over.

But if Iraq can become a model, it can potentially have an effect on others. Here I would raise what might be a larger issue in the Middle East right now. The war has been a shock to the Arab world. Precedent tells us that there are consequences when the Arab world experiences shocks.

In this case we have the fall of an Arab capital and something that, psychologically, was going to be a big deal anyway. The fact that it is Baghdad, which is linked to a glorious history, makes the shock even more profound. Saddam had claimed that this was going to be a Stalingrad, and yet we saw no effective resistance. This sends a message that something is fundamentally wrong with the Saddam regime, but most of the Arab world -- and certainly most of the Arab public -- see Saddam as an extreme version of many other regimes. If there is something profoundly wrong with Saddam's regime, there is probably something profoundly wrong with the other regimes.

In the past when the Arab world experienced these kinds of shocks -- looking at 1948 as an example -- we saw regimes swept away. Several Arab governments were replaced by very different kinds of regimes. Military leaderships replaced the 1948 leaderships. They were of a different social class. They were younger. I don't know that we will see this kind of sweeping change now, and I am not predicting it. But I do think we will see an acknowledgment that something has to change because it is profoundly wrong.

Who is likely to be emboldened by this? First, the Islamists, because their whole approach is based upon saying, "We have an explanation for what is wrong, and we have a very simple prescription for how to get it right."

But I would also argue that the Arab liberals, who are a small, hearty bunch, are also likely to be emboldened. They, too, are in a position to explain why things have gone so badly. Theirs are the arguments that were made in the UN's 2002 Arab Human Development Report about the deficits, the plagues of the Arab world that keep them lagging behind: a deficit in democracy, a deficit in education, and a deficit in terms of the exclusion of women from constructive activity. The liberals, too, have a case to make.

These liberals may well be operating from a disadvantage, but let us also look at the Arab regimes right now. It is hard to find Arab regimes that feel legitimate. In the past they have always tried to accommodate or appease those who present the greatest threat to them. Typically, this has meant that the regimes accommodate the Islamists. But if the Arab liberals are part of the competition now, and if we make it part of our policy to support those liberals, maybe the equation will look a little different. If this is the big moment -- and I think it is -- then we cannot be neutral in the competition between these forces. We have to get into the act. If we do not, then I fear that what Bill was saying will be true: We will look back and find that we did not take advantage of a historic moment.

Robert Satloff, The Washington Institute: Your opening comments reflect different thrusts of emphasis. Brian's most telegraphic line was, "We have used the stick; we now have to use the carrot and focus on democratization." Bill spoke of how the war with Iraq is just one battle in the continuing war on terror. Dennis emphasized a mix of the two and how we put them together.

How do you continue the war on terror while making political change your top priority? And how do you pursue political change while making the war on terror your top priority?

Atwood: It is important to stop debating some of these issues inside the administration and sending contradictory signals, although an interesting debate is occurring. Some of the hawks are pessimists. They think this democracy business is foolish, but Saddam needs to be defeated. Other hawks are optimists who believe that there is a larger, grand design. Then there are the pragmatists, probably at the State Department, who, as usual, wring their hands and worry about the consequences of all this in terms of relationships with people around the world. I find myself uncomfortably siding with the optimists in this case. There is little choice based on what has happened.

We have to do everything we possibly can to take advantage of this opportunity. We have to help the Arab liberals to the maximum extent possible. Is it all right to call someone a liberal in this town? Perhaps this is a disparaging way to refer to them.

Kristol: Arab liberals are fine; it's just American liberals who -- (Laughter.)

Atwood: In any case, I know them. They are out there. People like Rami Khoury, who edits the Daily Star newspaper in Beirut, who is truly a democrat, and Hanan Ashrawi, who does not like Israel much but clearly believes in Palestinian democracy. Those are the people that have to be helped to the maximum extent possible.

A great deal of pressure must be put on Yasir Arafat to allow his new prime minister to name his own cabinet and to ensure that the authority won in the struggle with Arafat's people is put in place. We could lose that gain in the process, however, and we have to be careful about our approach. Every time Rami Khoury refers to the development of the moderates, those who tend to believe in the development of Palestinian civil society, coming to the fore within the Palestinian movement, he always makes the point: this wasn't dictated to us by the Americans or the Israelis. We did this ourselves.

We must try to take advantage of this tremendous development without being too heavy-handed. We have to take advantage of the moment, and if the Bush administration can show as much interest and energy in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute as it did in building support for the war on Iraq, then we can get something important done. We have got to get movement on the Palestinian-Israeli situation and stop these attacks on Israel by isolating Hamas.

But we also have to isolate the Syrians in the region. Syria is a country as diverse as Iraq was, and it must be wondering what forces will now come into play that will have an impact on the regime. This is a moment when, as Dennis suggested, Middle Eastern leaders are wondering what geostrategic position they ought to take, but they are also worried about what the Arab street will say and do about their policies. Friends of the United States like Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak, King Abdullah II of Jordan, and others in the region will have to keep the strong feelings of their people under control. The war with Iraq is a shock to all the Arab nations. This is not just an attack on Iraq in their view; it is an attack on the Arab nation at large.

Some benefits may flow from having experienced the shock, and we must do everything in our power to make those benefits happen. It is also time to ask what role the international community can play. I realize that there is a great deal of feeling on both sides in Washington -- Democrat and Republican -- that this is the American moment. But there are a lot of things that we cannot do in the world alone. We need to have international cooperation.

Believe me, having sat across the table from the French, I have the same visceral feelings toward them as do a lot of

people in this room and in the United States at large today. But there is an old saying that countries do not have permanent friends or permanent enemies; rather, permanent interests. We must define our interests and then figure out the best possible way to achieve them. And the best way to get that job done is not putting emotionalism into diplomacy. You do not just get angry at a democratic leader because he was elected on a platform of opposition to the war in Iraq and refuse to answer his letters. That makes no sense. We cannot pursue our interests by allowing that sort of personalization of foreign policy to creep into our diplomacy.

Kristol: I am one of the optimistic hawks who thinks strength is important. As an underlying factor in American influence, there is no substitute for it. American power is terribly important to preserving stability in the parts of the world where we want stability and where our allies are threatened. But American power is also important where we have enemies, as we have learned in Afghanistan and Iraq. It is easy to take American strength for granted.

We should not take it for granted. We will probably have to increase the military budget considerably because the United States is spreading itself awfully thin. There will be no substitute for keeping some troops in Afghanistan and keeping some troops in Iraq, even if we internationalize. And we need to be ready to act elsewhere.

Having said that, I am also a strong promoter of democratization, and this is an area where the Bush administration has the right ideas -- although they have not proven yet how successful they will be in implementing them. I hope the administration puts a higher priority on the issue. Indeed, I hope the administration is willing to say that democracy is ultimately what is needed for real stability. We need to leave behind the false stability that the administrations of both parties have embraced over the last forty years, especially in the Middle East.

President Bush deserves a lot of credit for his fundamental judgment after September 11 that we could not go on assuming that we can work with all these dictators. We let those dictators buy off their extremist elements and handle that problem on the side, while we hoped that it would not all come back to hurt us. It did come back to hurt us on September 11.

This means rethinking an awful lot of policies, which gets to the question of allies, European and Arab. Should we think of the Saudi regime as fundamentally an ally or a problem? Well, probably, some of both. If the Saudis are a problem, do we seek regime change there immediately? No. Do we think much more seriously about encouraging the promising forces there and rewarding those who are trying to push that nation in the right direction? Do we think about not rewarding obstructionists and getting serious about punishing a regime that exports wahhabi Islam, fomenting instability and terror around the Islamic world? Yes. We have to get serious about these things.

A fundamental reconsideration of U.S. Saudi policy is absolutely in the cards. This is a case where the administration has been understandably cautious. You can only do so much at once. But a reconsideration is inevitable.

It is inconceivable that U.S. Saudi policy in four years will be what it has been for the last four decades. It is just not tenable. This means we are in a new world, and we will need a combination of carrots and sticks and a lot of creative diplomacy. It doesn't mean that we must always be more hawkish or more dovish; it just means that we need fresh thinking.

The same is true of Europe and the UN. People like me do not much like the UN, and we are perfectly happy to see it discredited a little, while those who think of themselves as committed multilaterals continue to defend it. But it is time to think in a fresh way about these institutions. Maybe the UN and the Security Council need to be fundamentally reformed. Maybe there are some things the UN can do well and other things we should not ask it to do at all. Maybe we should go to NATO to do security assistance in Iraq instead of the UN, given the UN's mixed record.

Maybe NATO itself, on the other hand, needs to be reformed. Maybe NATO cannot sustain its unanimity rule in terms of voting with twenty-six nations. Maybe we need to have closer relations with the nations of central and eastern Europe, or the nations of southern Europe, at the expense of our relations with Germany and France to some degree

-- not as a way of punishing Germany and France, but simply as a result of taking a hard-headed look at the world.

If France is genuinely committed, as I think it is, to frustrating America's exercise of power and influence around the world, it is foolish to pretend that we do not see what is right in front of us. It is foolish to say that we are committed to multilateral institutions, and that we will therefore work with the French as much as we work with the Spanish, the British, the Poles, or the Czechs. It doesn't mean we have to go around being mean or petty to the French -- although a little bit of that is useful. (Laughter.)

But it really does mean that we need fresh thinking about a lot of issues. Historically -- looking at the beginning of the Cold War in the late 1940s, for example -- all kinds of things change at moments like this. Generally in the world, as in life, things change less than you expect. When something big happens, at first there is a hubbub, but gradually it fades away. You look up six months later, and the world is the way that it was. Things seem much bigger at the time than they do six months later. But occasionally there are moments when the table really is kicked over, the cards are thrown in the air, and things are up for grabs. In those moments, history suggests that things can change more rapidly and more unpredictably than one would expect.

The one thing I can predict is that things will happen over the next twelve or eighteen months that none of us expect to happen. There will be a huge crisis somewhere that we had barely thought of previously. Will U.S. troops be fighting in one of those places? Before September 11, 2001, how many thought U.S. troops would ever be in Afghanistan? It was not exactly a centerpiece of the Gore-Bush presidential debates just a year before.

How many thought we would actually send a quarter of a million troops to remove Saddam Husayn from power in Iraq? There are a huge number of trouble spots around the world. Who knows -- it could be Syria, Iran, Korea, India-Pakistan, or even Colombia. I am not for using troops recklessly, and I am not saying that troops are the answer. But we are in a very fluid and unstable moment -- a moment of great danger and challenge. It is also a moment of great opportunity, but we should not kid ourselves into thinking that we can plan for all eventualities around the world.

What we can determine to do is be strong about promoting freedom and democracy, and be serious about promoting those values in the Middle East. The deal that American administrations have made for decades -- to work with the dictators and hope that the latter can take care of these other problems -- is no longer sustainable.

Satloff: Dennis, can you pick up on this and tell us what we should be avoiding? What land mines must we watch out for?

Ross: I accept the notion that we must expand our thinking. We have to expand our definitions without losing touch with certain basic realities that are not necessarily wrong. We know we cannot deal with the war on terror unilaterally. There is an intelligence dimension that has to be a function of international cooperation. There is also a law enforcement dimension. Cutting financial flows is a part of it. All of these require an international approach. If we create a posture that suggests that we are too unilateralist, we will find that it impedes what we have to do.

Point number two is that we do need to think afresh about existing institutions, which is not to say that we will somehow dispense with the UN because we will continue to need the UN. There will be a lot of issues and problems we will not want to have to deal with, and having the UN will be extremely convenient, if not necessary.

But regarding the notion that we must have Security Council endorsement before going to war, how often does this become an issue? It has almost never happened. The first Gulf War was the exception. The Korean War was an artifact.

NATO is being redefined by its expansion. We may be at a point where we work internationally, but we also realize that, increasingly, coalitions will be defined by the nature of the threat. They will in some cases be ad hoc. In many cases they will be a function of finding a convergence of interests among enough countries on a particular threat that

they can work together -- with some playing a role like that of the British in Iraq and others playing the role of the Spanish, doing nothing militarily but helping to create political legitimacy for what we do. We have to take a posture recognizing that there will be internationalization, but it may begin to take a different form than in the past -- which may not be the worst thing because some problems are different now.

My third point is that we will have to contend with those who represent a threat to reform. The Syrians right now are an interesting case. Brian, you talked about Palestinian reform and about what the Israelis can do. I agree that there are many things the Israelis can do to make Palestinian reformers more successful, and many things they can do that will make them less successful. But one thing that has made it difficult in the past to succeed at building reform or promoting peace -- and the two may go hand in hand, especially because a certain climate makes it easier to do both -- has been the behavior of the Syrians. Syria has allowed Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad to ensure that a suicide bombing occurs to disrupt or subvert the processes of reform and peace any time headway is made.

If there is one person that might be as much of a miscalculator as Saddam Husayn, it is Bashar al-Asad. Either because he believes al-Jazeera or because his own system of information is incredibly skewed, he made a judgment about a week into the war that the Iraq campaign would be difficult for the coalition. In fact, in an interview he gave, he equated what we were doing to what the Israelis did in Lebanon and how Israel got tied down there. I think that statement reflected what he actually thought. It was also designed to create an identity for him, and this war was going to be a platform for Bashar within Syria and beyond. He thought he could show that he would be the one Arab leader who would support the Iraqis. And as the war dragged on, this would be his special role.

We have a role to play in helping the Syrians understand what the reality really is. If we want the Palestinian reform process to work, if we want to build models of success in Iraq, we will have to make sure the message is conveyed to the Syrians that they have a choice to make. They can choose one way and find that they have a different kind of relationship with us; maybe there can be a peace process again with the Israelis. But there will be no real peace process as long as Hamas, Hizballah, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad have Syrian support. You cannot exploit those cards and at the same time say that you believe in peace.

We need to be publicly consistent with our values. We do not have a history of being blunt, even in private, with friendly regimes -- Saudi Arabia and Egypt, for example -- about how we see their situations. They do not have to accept our assessment, but they have to understand that from our standpoint, if they continue to forbid inclusion in their political and economic decisionmaking processes, and if they -- as in Saudi Arabia -- have a situation where 75 percent of the population is under the age of twenty-five, feels increasingly alienated, and has a declining percapita income, then there is a problem.

They have not heard us, and the Bush administration is quite cautious about this. The administration is not prepared, even in private, to begin to say, "Look, you will have to face up to a new reality. If you do not want to listen to us, okay, but at least recognize that we will publicly support those in your society who favor reform."

It has been conventional wisdom in Washington that Jimmy Carter is responsible for the revolution in Iran. Although I think he had a certain amount of influence, he did not have the power to create a popular social revolution. We have drawn a conclusion from Carter's Iran policy that we can never be honest about what we believe without paying a huge price. And it's time that we do learn that lesson. I do not suggest that we push friendly regimes over a cliff, but I do suggest that, at least in private, we be very clear on our position with no apologies.

I am reminded of when the foreign minister of Saudi Arabia described President Bush's approach to the peace process as "enough to drive a sane man mad." It was remarkable that the comment drew absolutely no response from our side. I said at the time that, if we were to say the same thing about the Saudi approach, they would have been driven to the point of near hysteria.

I am not suggesting that this be our approach, but we must at least be consistent. We will recognize certain limits, but within those limits we should let it be known that we believe in tolerance, rule of law, accountability, and women's rights -- and we will not apologize for it. That should be a consistent part of American policy, recognizing that one size does not fit all, and that we do not have a blueprint to impose on any region. But everyone at least has to know what to expect from us. This has not always been the case. (Applause.)

Orna Shulman, The Washington Institute: Mr. Kristol, what would be your plan for dealing with Syria and Iran, whether militarily, diplomatically, or strategically?

Kristol: I have no well-worked-out plan for dealing with Syria. I agree with Dennis. We need to be serious. Syria is one of the world's major state sponsors and harborers of terrorists, and there should be consequences for that. You can give them time to change their ways, but they have had a lot of time already, almost eighteen months since September 11. Syria does cooperate with us in certain ways. The U.S. government thought Syria was cooperative and helpful in stopping a couple of al-Qaeda plots in the Middle East. So we need to balance these things. But we have probably been too hesitant in this case, and I think the Bush administration was shocked, as Dennis said, by Syrian behavior in the last couple of weeks. Both the president and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld were very tough today. The one thing we have learned about President Bush is that he chooses his words pretty carefully. He does not throw threats around without anything to back them up. When President Bush says Asad should pay attention to the fact that we do not want more nations developing weapons of mass destruction or harboring Iraqi leaders, Asad should take that seriously.

With Iran we have a problem because we have the great hope of a popular revolution, which would be fantastic. Leaving aside the Arab-Israeli conflict -- which was bad for Israel and the Palestinians but was not actually a regional strategic problem -- what was the big strategic problem in the Middle East over the last twenty-five years? The Gulf. There we had two regimes, Iran and Iraq, smack in the middle of the Middle East, fighting each other and then threatening everyone else, each racing to get weapons of mass destruction. If we can take Iraq off the table as a problem and make it a reasonably decent regime that, in any case, does not threaten anyone, and then if we can bring something like that about in Iran with the right combination of pressure, rewards, and serious encouragement of the democrats there, it would be a huge transformation in the heart of the region.

The world is a funny place. Six weeks ago, if you had asked any of us what the next focus after Iraq would be, some would have said Iran, some would have said the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Some might have said Saudi Arabia -- let's leave aside the domestic policies, but the degree to which the Saudis felt the need to compete with Iran for leadership in the Islamic world led them to start exporting this incredibly extreme form of Islam around the world, destabilizing other more moderate regimes and fostering terror all over the place. I personally would have said we should focus on Iran and Saudi Arabia, not Syria.

But there Syria is, right in the middle of things. If the Syrians are harboring Iraqi leaders -- it is hard to know what is happening, but it seems that there is an awful lot of activity at the Iraqi-Syrian border right now -- we could have a crisis with Syria very soon.

I agree with Dennis. The key is a certain consistency in approach, a certain willingness to say, "These things are unacceptable," and then to hold people accountable. We also need a certain creativity in diplomacy, especially in the case of Iran. The upside of a democratic revolution in Iran is so big for the region, and we have been too passive in helping the democrats there.

Atwood: It is difficult when you do not have an embassy in Iran. It is hard to get into Tehran, but you have got to be on the ground in these places. It helps a lot just to know with whom we are dealing, which raises the issue of resources. We can no longer be pikers with respect to how much is available to the State Department, the U.S. Agency

for International Development, and all of the other agencies on the soft side of the equation. We have to be able to follow up if there are gains. We are looking at a world in which the gap between rich and poor is growing. There are seventy countries now that have lower GDPs than they had in 1980, and the situation is getting worse. We are looking at a world in which the population will increase by another billion people over the next fifteen years -- by conservative estimates. How do you deal with that?

And this raises another issue: the status of the UN Charter. I agree with Dennis that collective security is being decided on the basis of coalitions of the willing, NATO, or some other formulation, and that President Bush was not the first to go to war without a Security Council resolution. We went into Kosovo without one in the Clinton administration. But the status of international law has an impact, because a lot of the values Dennis talked about and that we hold dear -- democracy, human rights, and the rest -- are imbedded in the UN Charter. We put them there. It is difficult to hold people accountable if we push the UN aside.

We really need to have a debate on the question of our commitment to international law. A lot of it is very practical stuff, like how you handle patents, issues of interstate commerce, and the like. No one wants to throw all that out the window. But a lot of countries are beginning to wonder whether all we have in New York is a hollow institution that has no real meaning any more. Maybe the UN will not govern our use of force, but then what does it govern? Someone has said we have an "Ã la carte" foreign policy, that we pick and choose what we want to abide by. That is not the way to do business if you believe international cooperation is essential in defeating terrorism.

Stephen Breslauer, The Washington Institute: Ambassador Ross, you said that the Iraqi war has generated a moment of opportunity, and that the voices and perspectives of both the Islamists and the democrats will now present themselves. The media in the Arab countries are controlled by the governments. Likewise, the Islamists have the pulpit, the mosque, and the minaret to get their message out. How do the democrats get their message to the masses?

Ross: Even though many Arab liberals are finding their voices, they do not always have a platform from which to present it. You do find that some of the Arabic papers from outside the region, those published in London, give them more of a platform. One idea I have heard is that of putting together some kind of private-sector support for an al-Jazeera-type satellite station whose editorial agenda is different.

Al-Jazeera is an emblem; it has a lot of competitors. There are a lot of Arab satellite networks now. But they all basically compete from the same point of departure. It might be interesting to consider whether it is possible to invest in those Arab liberals who have an agenda for promoting their ideals within the media. I don't know if it is possible, but we have to stretch our own thinking and be creative. Al- Jazeera became a magnet for all sorts of reasons, not the least of which was that it was seen as independent. What if there was an independent network, but instead of being pan-Arabist it had a reformist agenda? Maybe it would develop a following.

We have to think about other ways to do all we can to encourage the reformers. We need to make it clear that they have support. They can gain a lot of confidence if they know they have our support. In the past, we have not treated them well. We certainly have not invested much in them, and we have never taken any political risks for them. Maybe this is the moment to do so, because we certainly do not want to be left out of this process.

Atwood: Just to make a pitch, Radio Free Europe is represented here tonight by Tom Dine. This network gives voice to some of the Arab moderates in the region.

Nina Rosenwald, The Washington Institute: I am a little startled to hear some worrying about U.S. pettiness toward countries such as France and Russia. Is there no political cost to be paid for countries that try to undermine America and thwart its purposes? If there are no costs, what keeps these countries from continuing this kind of behavior?

Atwood: The problem is that in the real world, while these countries might not be on our side this time, they could be

useful in some future endeavor. In any case, the cost is being paid internally by Jacques Chirac right now. The French live in a globalized world, and they cannot live without the United States. Neither can they live in the absence of relationships with other European countries. There are a lot of people in France unhappy with the Chirac policy. Chirac will eventually pay the price for a silly policy.

Kristol: He will pay a price if we make him pay, and I am for it. It is important, not petty, for this reason: we never asked France to contribute troops or to support this war in any serious way. We asked France and Germany to stand aside and, if they did not feel they could agree with our judgment that we had to go to war, to just stay out of it.

Plenty of countries did stay out. Russia expressed more of that attitude until the very end. China certainly did. Most of the Arab countries did, for God's sake. Some of them helped us. Some of them provided bases, some provided overflight permission. Some of the others just stood aside and kept quiet. But France tried to sabotage our diplomacy and then the war itself. France actually made it harder for Turkey to agree to basing rights, which it turns out we did not need, but which could have helped save American and Iraqi lives. That has to have real consequences.

I would take Kosovo as an example. I was for the intervention there, but Kosovo was not a vital interest of the United States. It was a vital interest of NATO, probably, and it was certainly a vital interest of our European allies. To President Clinton's credit -- and a lot of Republicans were against it -- we stepped up for those allies when they said, "This is important to us."

In Iraq we did not even need France and Germany to step up for us; we just asked them not to be positively troublemaking. There should be a price for making trouble for us. We do not have to go around being petulant or silly, but one way to make them pay a price is to bend over backward to help those who stuck their necks out to help us, including a lot of other European prime ministers.

If I ran the State Department, I would be looking for means to help other countries, quietly and in little ways. Maybe Spain needs help on oil spills, and Poland needs technical advice on something else. There are ways we can help other countries, and maybe not go out of our way to help France.

And then the bigger question goes to the status of our relationship. Can we treat Europe as Europe, or do we have to distinguish among the countries of Europe? This is not a theological question for me, but rather a practical one. France and Germany spent an awful lot of time trying to rally the rest of Europe to obstruct us, and then they spent their own capital punishing countries for helping us, or threatening to do so in Eastern Europe.

We cannot allow the countries that helped us to be punished by France. I am worried that the State Department in particular will be so eager to welcome France back with open arms that no one will pay a price.

Martin Gross, The Washington Institute: Mr. Atwood, I was a little concerned about your use of the term "internationalization." The crisis that we have now is not really a question of whether we should act internationally, because by and large we have done that. We went to the UN and tried to get a vote there. We had a coalition, although it did not include everyone we wanted. We are working with a Quartet on the peace process.

Right now certain international institutions are broken. The real challenge is to understand what our interests are and to develop a consensus among the other nations so that they will help us in ways that are both in our interests and theirs.

Atwood: My reference was, more than anything else, to the period we are entering now in Iraq. First of all, we must maintain a pervasive security presence in Iraq for some years to come. The United States and the United Kingdom are the only countries capable of maintaining the security umbrella.

I have been through these transitions in smaller and less complicated countries. Whoever is in charge becomes the lightning rod for every grievance. We can be more clever about the way we do this in Iraq, keeping in mind our goals

to accentuate those who take a moderate point of view and to introduce concepts of market economics and democracy. We would be more effective if an American administrator were not calling all the shots for the next five years.

The other point I would make is that we are not very good colonialists. There is something about our history that makes us feel uncomfortable in that role. We can be supportive, we can be robust in a lot of the things that we do in Iraq, but we do not necessarily have to be the lightning rod for every grievance that comes down the road. That is what I meant when I talked about internationalizing the transition period in Iraq.

Ross: I would reiterate Brian's point. We have not talked a lot about the process within Iraq itself. One of the critical things is to prove what President Bush has said, not only in fact but in appearance, because we are dealing with an Arab world that is extraordinarily suspicious. They will see the worst in everything we do. They will assume that this is, in fact, about occupation and getting the oil. We have an interest in proving that this is not the case, not only because we want to demonstrate that what we say is what we mean, but also because it will be easier to build a new Iraq if the response to what we do is supportive.

There is suspicion within Iraq itself about what our real purposes are. If you read the interviews that the embedded journalists are now conducting with Iraqis, several things come through very clearly. One is gratitude for what we have done, but that gratitude is coupled with "But don't stay here too long."

So the more we are not seen as the lightning rod, the more successful we are likely to be in Iraq.

Kristol: We are the lightning rod. The key is to make it work -- first of all to provide a serious security presence and, second, to create a transition of power to real Iraqis as soon as possible.

Rule by Iraqis is highly desirable. We can have chaotic elections with twenty-two parties that are split into Sunni, Shi'i, and Kurdish factions. Everyone will be clucking over here, "Ooh, this is very bad. There is ethnic voting," as if that does not occur in every country in the world. It will look like the first central European elections in 1990, 1991, and 1992. Some unpleasant people won those elections, but there is no substitute for this process in providing legitimacy.

I am for a strong U.S. presence followed by a quick power transition to Iraqis as opposed to internationalization -- if the latter means having a whole bunch of international bureaucrats running everything, which in any case we will be blamed and resented for.

If you want to see an example of something not working well, look at Kosovo. In Kosovo -- a Muslim nation that we intervened to save, incidentally -- the UN is not doing its job. The place is drowning under internationalization, and we are blamed for it, as we will be in Iraq.

Still, there is a lot that other nations can do in terms of starting up infrastructure, government ministries, and other government entities. But I would err on the side of getting real power to the Iraqis as soon as possible, at least getting the local elections started. The Bush administration is evidently on a good track. Town meetings will begin next week, which I am sure will be chaotic. There will be endless disputes about who is invited to which meeting and how it will all come together. But that's fine. A little chaos is a price worth paying for the reality of Iraqi selfgovernment, at least on the civil side. ❖

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