

The Future of Iraq:

U.S. Policy (full transcript)

Oct 5, 2002



In-Depth Reports

Note: Mr. Khalilzad's remarks represent his own views and not necessarily those of the U.S. government.

Bob Goldman: My name is Bob Goldman. I'm a member of the Executive Committee of the Institute.

One year ago when we met here the focus of our conference was the aftermath of September 11th. Thanks to the leadership of President Bush, we have acted swiftly and forcefully since then against both the perpetrators of September 11th and their state sponsor in Afghanistan.

Over the past year, as we continue the fight against Al-Qaida, the Bush Administration has turned its sights on a threat that may be even more dangerous, more threatening, more menacing to American citizens and American interests: The combination of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction in the hands of a state sponsor, Iraq.

Today there is a national debate over Iraq: How best can the United States rid the world of the threat that Saddam poses?

As early as 1996, the Washington Institute was proud to support a bipartisan presidential study group that offered the first major statement calling for regime change in Iraq as the right way to solve the Saddam problem.

Eventually this became the declared policy of the Clinton Administration, and today regime change appears to be at the heart of the Bush Administration's policy.

As confrontation with Iraq looms ahead, we are delighted to welcome an old friend of the Institute, who is one of the key architects of the president's strategy for Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad. It is up to Zal and his colleagues to translate that vision of change in Iraq into real, practical policy.

Zal Khalilzad wears three hats: special assistant to the president, senior director of Near East, South West Asian and North African Affairs on the National Security Council, and special presidential envoy to Afghanistan.

In that last job Zal showed just how indispensable he is. A native of Afghanistan, he has been President Bush's personal point man in putting together a new government in Kabul and in charting a strategy to build a new government.

On behalf of the Washington Institute, and on behalf of lovers of freedom of everywhere, thank you for that effort. (Applause.)

And, Zal, I hope you get a chance to apply the same lesson of that experience to post-Saddam Iraq.

We know the president is scheduled to deliver a major address on Monday, but just Thursday night, two days ago, the White House decided that it was important to dispatch a senior official to this conference to discuss its vision of the future of Iraq.

Zal, on behalf of all assembled, we are delighted to welcome you back to the Washington Institute to discuss the future of Iraq. Ladies and gentlemen, it's my pleasure to introduce Zalmay Khalilzad. (Applause.)

Mr. Khalilzad: Well, thank you very much for that very warm introduction.

Mr. Robert Satloff: Just one second, for the journalists, I do want to make a note that Zal's comments are on the record. So you can make sure you spell his name right in how you report what he has to say.

Mr. Khalilzad: And thanks for that, Robert.

I'm honored to be back at the Washington Institute. I think this is my second visit to the Institute during the past couple months. I was at the Institute in August talking about Iran, and I remember very fondly my participation in various Institute activities, including retreats like this, so I'm delighted to be back.

The subject that I want to talk about is, of course, something that's on everyone's mind these days. I want to give you our perspective, the administration's perspective, on where we are and what our vision is for Iraq.

As far as the situation currently is concerned, we are of the view that the Saddam Hussein regime is determined to retain, expand, and again use weapons of mass destruction, and that the regime is ready to employ such weapons, not only at home, but also abroad.

The administration is now determined to disarm Iraq one way or another. No decision for use of force has been made. We don't look forward to a war with Iraq. We have no desire for war. War is not inevitable, but action is.

We are working with Congress to secure an effective resolution that ensures that the president has the options possible to deal with the threat that Saddam Hussein poses. And, similarly, we are working with U.N. to secure an effective resolution that will end Saddam's defiance of the U.N. Security Council resolutions and to disarm the regime.

We believe that Saddam Hussein is in material breach of his commitments to the United Nations. We believe he threatens regional and global stability. He does that through terrorism, he does that through holding his country hostage and using the resources of his country for building weapons of mass destruction and missiles to deliver them.

In order to avoid the use of force, Saddam must take the actions necessary -- not words, but actions necessary to comply with all U.N. Security Council resolutions. But our position is -- and I want to repeat -- that one way or another, one way or another this threat will be dealt with, and dealt with in short order. (Applause.)

Should force be required, U.S. and coalition forces will liberate the Iraqi people from the tyranny of Saddam Hussein. We will not enter Iraq as conquerors. We will not treat the Iraqi people as a defeated nation. As President Bush has said, liberty for the Iraqi people is a great moral cause and a great strategic goal.

Our mission in Iraq will be to serve the interests and the hopes of the Iraqi people. We regard them as a gifted and great people, with ancient culture, and they, like people everywhere, deserve freedom.

Our objective for the long term in Iraq would be to establish a broad-based representative and democratic government, a government that will renounce terror and weapons of mass destruction, respect international laws and norms, give all religious and ethnic groups a voice, adhere to the rule of law, no weapons of mass destruction, and become an example of peace and tolerance for the region as a whole.

In the short term, however, we will reunify Iraq, because at the present time Iraq is not united, is not unified, and maintain its territorial integrity.

We will meet the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people. We will start immediately a major reconstruction program and put Iraq on the path to greater economic prosperity.

It's our desire, it's our objective, it's our plan to have plans in place before we use force, before the use of force

becomes necessary on each of these issues that I talked about.

We understand, however, that the challenge of building such an Iraq is a major one. The costs will be significant. We will work with the Iraqi people in developing detailed plans, and they will play a significant role in shaping those plans.

We are optimistic about the contribution that the Iraqi people can make. Iraq has an educated and industrious population. It is endowed with great natural wealth. It has a history of law, scholarship, and culture.

And we are, and we believe a significant portion of the international community is prepared to help.

With regard to future challenges, specifically we believe that three sets of challenges would lie ahead. First, there will be the political reconstruction of Iraq. This will involve thorough reform of the government, de-Baathizing Iraq, removing those elements used by Saddam to enforce his tyranny on the Iraqi people. Officials found guilty of crimes against humanity will be prosecuted.

The larger issue of transitional justice will be settled by the Iraqi people.

With regard to economic reconstruction, the economy, too, will need to be reformed to put Iraq on the path to prosperity. The U.S. is committed to ensuring the Iraqi people's oil patrimony will be used to meet the economic and reconstruction needs of the Iraqi people.

With regard to security reconstruction, Iraq's international borders will be protected and respected. Security inside Iraq will be critical. The violence inflicted by Saddam on Iraq's people have left serious scars. These problems need to be resolved by a reformed Iraqi judicial system, not by gun. Iraq after Saddam will have the rule of law, not the rule of gun.

Iraqis themselves are already working on these complex issues. The U.S. Government future of Iraq project has been working on these issues for some time. Mixed groups that represent the rich variety of the Iraqi people are participating in these efforts.

Sixteen groups are examining issues critical for Iraq's future after Saddam. They have been held back from participating -- many Iraqis have been held back from participating in such activities by Saddam's regime, a regime which has chosen to waste Iraq's resources on miscalculated military adventures, palaces, and paying the families of suicide bombers.

As I said before, transforming Iraq will not be easy. It will take time, and it will involve costs, costs for the United States as well. We believe, the president believes that this cost is worth paying.

If we succeed, as we are determined to, we would achieve a great deal. We would eliminate the WMD threat from Iraq. We would decrease the threat that Iraq poses to regional peace and stability, and in transforming Iraq, we would take a significant step in the direction of the longer term need to transform this functional region as a whole.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

Mr. Satloff: Zal, thank you very much. I think it is very important that the administration does what you're trying to do today, which is begin to lay out your objectives and how you will reach them in Iraq. And I thank you for coming here this morning and beginning this process.

I'd like to just open up a session. I see lots of hands, but I'm going to take my prerogative just to ask what I think is, at least the obvious logical question which emerges from the beginning of your presentation, where you said to avoid the use of force, Saddam Hussein must take action to comply with all UNSCR's, and then you went through a very important presentation about what our objectives would be if we do pursue the use of force.

If Saddam does begin to take action to implement -- to comply with the UNSCR's, does this obviate everything else

that you have been talking about? Does it obviate the need to liberate the Iraqi people? Does that become any less of an objective if there are measures taken on the UNSCR's?

Mr. Khalilzad: Let me say two things to that. One, we are very skeptical that he would -- not only in word, but in deed, would comply with all the U.N. Security Council resolutions. We're very skeptical that he would.

But should the miraculous, the unexpected, the unlikely happen, we would pursue these objectives, continue to pursue them, but it would not necessitate the immediate use of force, the near-term use of force. We would pursue those objectives by other means then.

Those objectives remain valid -- would remain valid, but I have to tell you our judgment is, our considered judgment is that he's unlikely to comply. He's unlikely to meet the standards of compliance that would be required by him as far as we are concerned.

Mr. Satloff: Thank you very much. I'm going to go around the room. I have a bunch of names on my list. Pat Clawson on my left from the Institute?

Patrick Clawson: Zal, you laid out a very important and positive vision of this reconstruction of Iraq and how much it's going to be in the Iraqi people's interests that the United States is going to be acting.

Let me push you, though, a little bit on one issue that you raised, which, if I understood you, you said that the Iraqi people's oil patrimony will be used to meet the reconstruction needs of the Iraqi people.

Right now a quarter of Iraqi oil export proceeds goes for compensation payments, and there remains \$160 billion in claims for compensation payments, which Iraq is obligated to pay.

Furthermore, there has been talk that, in part, to secure the cooperation of, let's say, the Russian or perhaps the French Government, that we may make some promises about the repayment to those countries of Iraq's debt to those countries. Iraq's total foreign debt totals at least \$80 billion.

Well, if we add this all together, that's some \$240 billion that Iraq could be on the hook to pay.

What is your vision of whether or not we're going to continue to insist that Iraq make these kind of payments, or are we going to push for some kind of new terms for the post-Saddam Iraq?

Mr. Khalilzad: The overarching objective governing our deliberations and discussions with others on this issue would be to have the maximum amount of resources possible available to help the Iraqi people. The humanitarian and reconstruction needs, the frozen assets would be -- primarily the focus would be to direct them toward that objective.

Now, there are those claims, as you said. There are various possibilities that we are considering, we're deliberating on. It is possible that as a gesture of good will towards this new Iraq, some debts would have to be forgiven, some claims would have to be reprioritized.

But the emphasis on our part would be to meet the needs of the people. That would be at the top of the list. And I'm not here to offer a blueprint on exactly what the percentages will be at this time, but we are very much focused on this, and we're working hard on this.

But I wanted to send the message out that that would be the priority, as far as we are concerned.

Mr. Satloff: Thank you. Trudy Rubin from the Philadelphia Inquirer on my right, right there.

Trudy Rubin: I wonder if you could expand a little bit on your comments about establishing a representative government in Iraq after -- in a post-Saddam era.

Does the United States believe that a transition government should be established in advance? As you know, some

opposition leaders are complaining that the U.S. doesn't want this. Should there be one Hamid Karzai? Should the leadership come from inside or outside? Is the Japan model correct or totally out of line?

And one other issue you raised was territorial integrity. Can you tell me what plans the United States has to prevent Turkish troops from going in en masse to prevent Kurds from coming into Kirkuk, and do you believe that there are clear understandings that the Kurds would not go into Kirkuk?

Mr. Satloff: Trudy, you just got in 19 questions. I was counting. (Applause.)

Mr. Satloff: Now, normally we have a ten-question rule. (Laughter.)

But let's try to keep it down to one or maybe two. Zal?

Mr. Khalilzad: Which ones? Will you tell me which of them --

Mr. Satloff: He gets to pick which one he wants to answer.

Mr. Khalilzad: You're sure you want me to do that? Well, as far as the government, I told that our long-term vision would be a representative democratic government. It may be that we will get to that through some phases, and there may be a role for a coalition to administer Iraq, to prepare for the subsequent phases that Iraq would have to go through to be ready in terms of security and other requirements for a democratically elected government.

We are working on this, we are deliberating on this, we are talking to others, we're talking to Iraqis. But we will move on this deliberately.

Iraq is different than Afghanistan, so the recipe of Afghanistan, what was done there -- there are lessons to be learned from it, clearly, from what was done in Afghanistan. But it doesn't mean we would have to follow -- it doesn't mean that we would follow exactly the same model.

If I had to pick one question, I'll do that. But with regard -- let me say one other thing on the territorial thing. The coalition will assume -- and the preferred option -- responsibility for the territorial defense and security of Iraq after liberation. So there is no room for any -- there would be no room for any of the scenarios that you have referred to. And, of course, there will be diplomatic and other steps that will be taken to make sure there is a broad understanding and agreement on that.

Mr. Satloff: Let me be more precise about one point, and the one question.

Mr. Khalilzad: Yes.

Mr. Satloff: Is the presumption that there will be a successor government, an alternative government, already waiting in the wings on the eve of any military action?

Mr. Khalilzad: Well, that's a possibility, but I think it's more likely that there would have to be liberation first, and then a government put in place, or put together of the Iraqis.

But we are deliberating, we're talking, we're considering. You know, there are pros and cons to these various options.

But the message that I want to give, and the president, more importantly, his commitment is that this will be a liberation. That our intent is not conquest and occupation of Iraq. But we will do what needs to be done to achieve the disarmament mission and to get Iraq ready for a democratic transition and then through democracy over time.

But as far as the exact steps, I don't want to go further than what I have said at this point.

Mr. Satloff: Okay, that's fair enough. Ze'ev, Max, and Barbara?

Ze'ev Schiff: To Zal, let me tell you that I am more confused now than ever before, because the signals which we get from the administration are really confusing. If I understood well your address, is that there were two major

sentences there, although you spoke later on about liberation. One sentence is that we are determined to get rid of, in one way or another, of the weapons of mass destruction. This is a key sentence.

Mr. Khalilzad: Right.

Ze'ev Schiff: One way or another means that also through the inspection. Let us say that the inspectors are going in and they will say, yes, as they said it in '91, that no nuclear plants anymore.

The second sentence was, actually, that war is not unavoidable.

I mean, if you are taking these two sentences, the meaning is that if the inspectors will go in and will say there's no reason for a way, that we are dismantling the weapons of mass destruction, how can you go and liberate them? From what?

And if Saddam will decide tomorrow to give in -- to dismantle the weapons of mass destruction, is he going to stay? What is your answer?

Mr. Khalilzad: Well, first of all, Ze'ev, it's nice to see you. (Laughter.)

Mr. Khalilzad: Second of all, I think you -- the way that we think this is, is that we are of the view that disarming Iraq is extremely unlikely without regime change.

We believe that Saddam Hussein, his whole history indicates that he's very attached to weapons of mass destruction. I think as he declares, that he will allow inspectors to come back unconditionally, he is planning how he will deceive them, how he'll hide weapons.

I was merely referring to a theoretical possibility, maybe with some probability -- and I'm sure people may have differing views -- that, yes, miraculously, he might change his spots. I'm not a believer in that myself, but that he would abandon what he has treasured for so long, and I assume if he does that, there is a way that one might proceed. But we are very skeptical of that.

But in order to be prepared for the more likely scenario, we are taking certain steps, and we are determined -- since we are determined to disarm Iraq, and we believe that liberation is the way to do it, because we think otherwise it isn't going to happen, I have said what I have said.

But it's possible that as we get these resolutions from Congress, and we hope from the U.N., and as we take some other steps, that that could help compel the regime to cooperate, or changes might come about in Iraq as a result of what people might perceive, the inevitability of liberation unless certain steps are taken.

With regard to Saddam staying in power and so on, I think I regard that as an unlikely outcome of where we are. I think it may be already too late.

But there is a way that war could be avoided, yes. There is a way that war could be avoided. But I think Saddam and the avoidance of war, I don't know whether that is -- whether we are not past that.

Mr. Satloff: Max Boot in the center, erstwhile of the Wall Street Journal, now of the Council on Foreign Relations?

Max Boot: Thank you, Rob. I, too, have a lot of questions. I will try to confine myself to one or two and let others handle the rest.

I, of course, applaud your plans announced for establishing representative government in Iraq. But I would be curious to --

Mr. Satloff: The audio's not on here? Speak right into it.

Mr. Boot: Okay. I, too, applaud -- I, of course, applaud your plan to establish democracy and representative government in Iraq. I would be curious to hear what the reaction of our so-called friends in the region, such as Saudi

Arabia, is to such a plan.

I would also be curious to hear your estimate of what size occupation, or, if you prefer, security force would be necessary, and for what period of time, to establish the secure environment that you outlined.

And the third optional question has to do with indicting Saddam Hussein for war crimes, and I'm curious why we haven't sought such an indictment up until now.

Mr. Khalilzad: We are in dialogue with friends about the future of Iraq, about Iraq. We believe that we will get the necessary assistance that we would need to do what needs to be done here.

We have the flexibility necessary. I think we will have it in time.

As far as the views on Iraq, how it ought to be, well, I'm sure different countries may have different views. I have expressed what our view is, and will, if it comes to that, will work very hard to convince our partners of the wisdom of this approach.

Again, we're of the view that we will have the support necessary to implement -- move forward with the kind of vision that I talk about.

Now, on the side of the force necessary to maintain security in Iraq should we come to that, I don't have any numbers to announce right now. But we will have what we would need to have. I mean, we would have the commitment of resources necessary, and we would have the will to stay for as long as necessary to do the job.

This will be a major strategic commitment, and we will see it through should it come to that.

Mr. Satloff: Thank you. Barbara Slavin of -- I'm sorry? Oh, Saddam war crimes.

Mr. Khalilzad: Yes, thank you. We have information collected and people have been generating names and lists with regard to people that would have to face justice, and there will be a judicial process to deal with those people.

Mr. Satloff: Barbara Slavin, U.S.A. Today?

Ms. Slavin: Good morning. Is your reluctance to promise that there would be a successor government ready to go in partly caused by your desire to hold out incentives for senior Iraqis to defect, perhaps, and look forward to positions in a post-Saddam government? Is that why you're being a little coy about this question?

And I also have an Iran-related question. There was a statement recently from one of the senior Iranian military leaders suggesting that if U.S. forces accidentally went into Iranian air space in pursuit of a campaign against Iraq, that would be okay with Iran.

And I wonder, once again, whether they're sending us any signals through other channels? I thought it was rather unusual that they would do this in a public way.

Thank you.

Mr. Khalilzad: I'm not going to comment on messages from Iran from other channels, but let me say that we regard that statement to be positive.

We think that --

Mr. Satloff: But you're not going to comment on it. (Laughter.)

Mr. Khalilzad: On the other channels.

Mr. Satloff: Oh, the other channels.

Mr. Khalilzad: Right. So the statement is positive. We think that the kind of Iraq that I talk about is in Iran's interest, in the region's interest. And we hope that Iran would take necessary steps to help the process, to be constructive in

its policies with regard to Iraq, and beyond. We continue to have other concerns with regard to Iran, as you know.

With regard to being coy on the government, actually, it's a tough issue. It's not easy. Putting a government now together, you know, would put emphasis on certain things, on certain groups, and it may create tensions, problems, because people fight over kind of chairs, desks, ministries, other positions and so on. And there may be others who we don't yet know enough about.

So it's not -- it's a really hard thing to do. But there may be tactical considerations of the kind that you talked about, but strategically we want to put a government together that represents Iraq, but the Iraqis have a process for that.

And we are not there now, we are not there yet. And I'm not saying exactly when we will get there. We will get there when we get there. But we're working on it.

But there is no desire for running Iraq indefinitely, or conquest or occupation. That's not what we're about. But we also want to do it right.

And as I said, you know, some of the lessons of Afghanistan are sort of forming the sort of issues of timing and so forth.

So I don't know how good an answer that is, but that's the best that I can do at this time.

Mr. Satloff: Nina Rosenwald, Jonathan Davidson, Bob Lieber, quickly -- brief questions, please. We'll try to get in as many as possible.

Nina Rosenwald: Thank you. As part of reconstruction effort in your areas, I was wondering if it would be at all possible for you to consider, for example, a presidential initiative in education in the Near East and North Africa as an answer to Madrasses which are there where they pay you to go, and really to upgrade literacy throughout the area, particularly for women.

Mr. Khalilzad: Absolutely, absolutely, absolutely. I mean, we've already talked about that. We will talk more about that. And with regard to Iraq specifically, of course, there would have to be an examination of the curriculum and the needs. There will be, I'm sure, educational reform, and there will be a significant -- if we go that route, a focus on education.

I have to say that in Iraq, one of the positive things about Iraq is the situation of women. It's been generally better than -- and, therefore, one of the hopeful things about Iraq is that women have done better. And we want to make sure that that's enhanced further, and there's no retreat.

But we are working on a broader vision and strategy for the region as a whole, and Iraq is a key element in a long-term strategy for the transformation of this region as a whole, because the way the things that have been have not been good, obviously. We all know that, having focused on this region for a long time.

But we understand the complexities and it's going to take a long time. But education certainly is key, and this is of particular interest to this president, as you know, given the campaign.

Mr. Satloff: Jonathan Davidson in the back from the European Union?

Mr. Davidson: Thank you. One question. The administration's made clear that you want the broadest possible and the strongest possible international support.

Mr. Khalilzad: Right.

Mr. Davidson: The president made a powerful speech on September the 12th.

Mr. Khalilzad: Right.

Mr. Davidson: Active diplomacy to get a union resolution.

Mr. Khalilzad: Right.

Mr. Davidson: One question with two parts. To what extent can you compromise to get a powerful resolution?

And failing a resolution -- which is clearly possible; it's possible that may not secure the necessary strong statement from the U.N. -- there are other ways of demonstrating broad international legitimacy. Kosovo is one clear example.

Mr. Khalilzad: Right.

Mr. Davidson: What will the administration do to demonstrate the broadest possible measure of international legitimacy for the action, failing a powerful and clear U.N. Security Council resolution?

Mr. Khalilzad: Well, we obviously -- a preferred option is to have a strong U.N. resolution and the broadest possible coalition to enforce it, should enforcement become necessary.

But we have said that, one way or another, we're going to deal with this, and we would seek a coalition -- we would have a coalition, a broad coalition, in my judgment, to do what needs to be done with or without the right resolution.

But I have to say that we want the right resolution. That's our very much -- we're working on that. You know, Secretary Powell and others are spending a lot of time on this. And that's the preferred course.

But we're not going to allow the situation to continue the way it has been for the past several years because we don't get the right resolution from the Security Council. That's just not on.

I think the determination is there to deal with this problem, and that we would have a coalition and work on a coalition. And I'm convinced, you know, focusing on this day in and day out, a significant large coalition in either case. Maybe the numbers will be slightly different, but we will have a major coalition, yes.

Mr. Lieber: Zal your message at the beginning of your talk to the Iraqi people is very important, and presumably it foreshadows what the president will say in a couple of days.

Mr. Khalilzad: At least we hope.

Mr. Lieber: Yeah. But my question specifically is, what is being done to communicate that message effectively to the Iraqi population as well as more widely within the region?

It seems to me a very important step, and the question is, what's being done in that regard?

Mr. Khalilzad: Well, the president has spoken on this before. I think if you go back to the State of the Union address and subsequent statements, with regard not only to Iraq, but to the region as a whole, Iran and so on, it's been a consistent theme of his, that -- you know, I said that, I think, in my previous appearance at the Washington Institute in August with regard to Iran, that those of us who remember the campaign, that, you know, when the president was talking about education at home, that, you know, everybody has to be sort of kept to the same standard.

And he believes this strongly, that, you know, we can't say, well, the Middle Easterners or X or Y because of religion, or because of culture or race, and so on, they can't become kind of democratic.

He really genuinely believes that, that everyone has that potential. So, therefore, he has been talking about this.

Now, regarding getting this message out to the Iraqis, I'm here today, and I hope this will get out. I don't know whether we have VOA and others here. But we will be more active in terms of, you know, getting the message out.

You know, everything in its time, so -- and we've done a lot of thinking, and it's taken time. These things are not easy. And now we feel, you know, that we're comfortable enough with where we are to be able to talk about it the way I have here, so -- and we will clearly communicate this increasingly to the Iraqi people, yes.

Mr. Satloff: In the center, Professor Lewis?

Mr. Khalilzad: Bernard Lewis?

Mr. Satloff: Yes.

Mr. Khalilzad: My God.

Mr. Satloff: The microphone is coming right behind you.

Mr. Khalilzad: I should leave the room now, I think.

Bernard Lewis: Is this working now?

Mr. Satloff: Yes, please.

Bernard Lewis: Thank you. I want to go off the question relating to the provisional arrangements, the transitional arrangements, perhaps.

Mr. Khalilzad: Right.

Bernard Lewis: And I wondered how much importance you would attach to the northern zone, the free zone in the north of Iraq, which has approximately one-fifth of the territory and one-fifth of the population of that country, and also the INC, the Iraqi National Congress, which could be the nucleus of a provisional government.

There was a proposal some years ago for a provisional government of Iraq in the north. Do you see any possibilities in this line? Thank you.

Mr. Khalilzad: Well, first of all, it's good to see you, Professor Lewis. I think clearly forces in northern Iraq, in Iraqi Kurdistan, and INC, the umbrella organization, are important elements of the scene in Iraq, and they will play an important role in Iraq's future.

As far as the formation of a provisional government, we're not -- you know, that's a possibility, but I'd say we're not there yet, for the reasons I talked about earlier, that there is an issue of, isn't it better to do it later once the liberation has taken place, and you've got conditions -- security conditions and other conditions appropriate for a group such as the ones that you've talked about and others representing Iraq to take over.

My own judgment is that it may be better to wait than to do it now. That would be my view.

But those are certainly options. And in any case, I think those groups will play an important role. The question is when and in what sort of a structure, and I'm not in a position to say we've got a formula that defines that in detail for the pre-liberation phase or in the immediate liberation period. I think it's best to engage those once liberation has occurred.

That's my own judgment.

Mr. Satloff: I have lots of questions that people want to ask. I'm not going to be able to get a chance to call on everybody. I'm very sorry about that.

Because our next panel, in fact, is going to be a panel that assesses precisely what you had to say.

Mr. Khalilzad: Right.

Mr. Satloff: So there will be a lot of opportunity to ask --

Mr. Khalilzad: Today or later?

Mr. Satloff: I would hope that you would stay --

Mr. Khalilzad: Okay.

Mr. Satloff: -- so you can be part of this discussion.

Mr. Khalilzad: All right.

Mr. Satloff: So I'm going to have to apologize to our other participants, and there's at least half a dozen other people on my list.

This is clearly, Zal -- I think you have clearly laid out a very important and provocative set of principles that it's important to get out there in the discussion now. And on behalf of all of us at the Institute, I want to thank you very much for coming out and doing this this morning. (Applause.)

Mr. Satloff: And we look forward to hearing the feedback of the questions in the president's remarks on Monday evening.

Mr. Khalilzad: Thank you. ❖

RECOMMENDED

BRIEF ANALYSIS

[Unpacking the UAE F-35 Negotiations](#)

Feb 15, 2022



Grant Rumley

(/policy-analysis/unpacking-uae-f-35-negotiations)



ARTICLES & TESTIMONY

[How to Make Russia Pay in Ukraine: Study Syria](#)

Feb 15, 2022



Anna Borshchevskaya

(/policy-analysis/how-make-russia-pay-ukraine-study-syria)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

[Bennett's Bahrain Visit Further Invigorates Israel-Gulf Diplomacy](#)

Feb 14, 2022



Simon Henderson

(/policy-analysis/bennetts-bahrain-visit-further-invigorates-israel-gulf-diplomacy)

TOPICS

U.S. Policy (/policy-analysis/us-policy)

REGIONS & COUNTRIES

Iraq (/policy-analysis/iraq)