

Center for American Progress



“IRAQ: NEXT STEPS FOR U.S. POLICY”

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MR. PODESTA: Welcome back, everyone. I want to once again thank all of this morning's speakers for their remarks, for their insight, and for their wisdom. We had, I think, two terrific panels. As I mentioned this morning, the president's new national security strategy was released. The national security advisor, Stephen Hadley, just finished his briefing to reporters. One of the leading television pundits described this updated strategy as, quote, "full speed ahead," unquote. Quite frankly it reminded me a little less of Admiral Farragut and a little bit more about Captain Ahab.

I'm sure our keynote speaker will have something more substantive to say about where the president's been and where he's going in terms of the strategic options. It's my pleasure to introduce our keynote speaker, Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski. Dr. Brzezinski holds a special place in this organization's history. In 2003, when the Center was really just launching, he graciously agreed to keynote our first conference called "New American Strategies for Security and Peace." In his address then, Dr. Brzezinski said about Iraq, "I think we want to understand the dynamics of the resistance to grapple with what is becoming an increasingly painful and difficult challenge for us, a challenge which we will be more successful in meeting if we have more friends engaged in meeting it and if more Iraqis begin to feel that they are responsible for the key decisions pertaining to their country."

Given those prescient observations, it's only appropriate and with very great appreciation that we welcome him back here today to conclude our program and to lend us his insight on the current situation in Iraq and where U.S. foreign policy should go from here. Dr. Brzezinski is currently a trustee and counselor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. He's also a professor of American foreign policy at Johns Hopkins University of Advanced International Studies, and he serves as the co-chair of the American Committee for Peace in Chechnya.

With over 40 years of experience, Dr. Brzezinski has served at all levels of government and he's advised numerous presidents, cabinet secretaries, senators, members of Congress, foreign governments, and I think perhaps most importantly the American people.

From 1977 to 1981 he serves as national security advisor to President Jimmy Carter, and in 1981 he was awarded our country's highest civilian award, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, for his role in the normalization of U.S.-Chinese relations and for his contributions to human rights and national security policies of the United States. He is, of course, a renowned scholar and author and his latest book, entitled *The Choice: Global Domination or Global Leadership*, argues that America is now faced with an historic decision, and delves into what the outcome of this decision will mean for the future of our foreign policy.

And while Dr. Brzezinski has been an honest and vocal critic of this administration's approach to foreign policy, he is not just, of course, in the business of criticism: he's used his experience, his insight, and his intellect in ways that always aim

to provide a constructive, practical alternative. And ever since he spoke at our first conference, we at the Center have tried to follow in his footsteps and have attempted to do the same.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski.

(Applause.)

DR. ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI: Thank you very much, John [Podesta]. I'm delighted to be back at the Center, though I'm sorry that we're still addressing the same issue I addressed during the Center's inaugural conference.

Three years ago, almost to a day, just as the war was beginning, I appeared on the Jim Lehrer show, and at the end of the show, Lehrer, as his last question asked me, "What do you think is riding on this war?" And my response was as follows: *Ultimately, American global leadership is at stake in this war.* It's not Saddam who is the issue, it's whether America can lead, lead constructively, and in a way that others respect. Three years later, I think it's appropriate to ask: Where are we? Where are we headed? And what should we do?

First, *where are we?* The answers to this are easy, and on this I can be quick. The war has proven to be prohibitively costly. American leadership, in all of its dimensions, has been damaged. American *morality* has been stained – in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo. American *legitimacy* has been undermined – by unilateral decisions. American *credibility* – particularly the case for the war, has been shattered. Leadership depends on morality, legitimacy, credibility. The economic costs of the war are escalating into hundreds of billions of dollars. More importantly, American casualties are in the thousands, with more than tens of thousands maimed. We are not even counting Iraqi casualties; we prefer not to know what they are.

But we know that the country is devastated, three years after, quote, "liberation," end quote. Regional and global hostility to the United States is rising. I recently read a book that was quite revealing in an unintended fashion. It was Jerry Bremer's memoir of his stewardship as the governor general of Iraq. At the end of the book he says something that is very true. He says, "Ours is a failed occupation." A failed occupation, that's his definition of it, and I agree.

It is a failed occupation as a consequence of a decision-making process that compounds errors, that involves a very narrow group of true believers, and that evades responsibility and accountability – for errors and even crimes. No one responsible for wrong judgments has been fired. No one responsible for setting in motion a chain of events that produced extraordinarily embarrassing crimes has been put on trial. The [administration's] resistance to the International Criminal Court is perhaps more understandable under these circumstances.

The book is also quite revealing, incidentally, on the decision-making process itself. The discussion of NSC [National Security Council] sessions, based apparently on actual minutes, is very revealing regarding the decision-making process. The commander in chief appears largely as a cheerleader, and tough issues are hardly discussed.

That brings me to a more difficult question: *Where are we headed?* We know where we are. At least I think I know where we are, and I've just told you where I think we are: we are in a mess. But where are we headed, that's more difficult. That requires somewhat contingent judgments.

First of all, are we prevailing? There was recently a very incisive report published by the International Crisis Group, and I believe one of its participants spoke here this morning. Their report studied the insurgency and its conclusion was that the insurgency is both consolidating and more and more widespread; that it is at an advantage because it is engaged in a war of attrition. In a war of attrition a foreign occupier is always at a disadvantage.

In fact, I think one can argue that under the porous U.S. military umbrella which suffers from very poor intelligence because it is an external occupation army, there are two wars going on at the same time, but one feeds and stimulates the other. One war is the insurgency against the occupier, and that seems to be gaining more sympathy from the public as time passes, which is an ominous sign. More sympathy – not necessarily more engagement – but more sympathy, more vocal emotional support. And the other war that's ongoing is of course a sectarian conflict between the Shiites and the Sunnis. And the U.S. umbrella, which in effect is designed to stifle these wars but is so poor that it perpetuates them, in a sense keeps these wars alive.

We could, I think, probably put an end to it, to both wars, if we were to put in enough troops. Theoretically, if we were prepared to put in – and I'm pulling these figures literally out of a hat not as a result of any serious study – if we could put in 500,000 troops, we probably could crush the insurgency; we probably could stifle some of the sectarian conflict. But we can't put in 500,000 troops. We've recently made a difficult decision to increase our force presence in Iraq. We are putting in 700 more troops, and that is not an accident.

We are not in a position to really increase the occupation force, unless we declare some state of national emergency and engage in actions which are simply politically not being seriously considered. So we are not able to crush these two conflicts, but our presence is perpetuating them and probably unintentionally actually intensifying them.

My judgment is that this is not yet a civil war. And in that respect I happen to agree with the administration. It is not yet a civil war in the sense it is not a comprehensive nationwide collision between the Shiites and the Sunnis. But I do think, as I have already stated, that we are stimulating it, unintentionally, by an occupation that is resented and, as Bremer has said correctly, it is a failed occupation. It is ineffective.

There is of course a great deal of thought about creating, in the course of the next year or so, a national Iraqi Army which will relieve us of the undertakings that the occupation forces are pursuing. Let us think of what that – those two words – actually mean: “national army.” A national army in Iraq – first of all, Iraq is composed of Kurds and Arabs. The Kurds have an army, and a rather good one actually, and are not going to be part of any Iraqi “national army,” so that is already a pitfall.

But beyond that there is, alas, the reality of the increasing split between the Sunnis and the Shiites and their reliance on militias that are sectarian as well as tribally based. They are not going to be a part of a “national army” either. To speak of a national army as a serious political prospect is to engage in self denial.

There is not going to be a national army in a country in which there are armed forces that are anything but national in outlook, discipline, command and, above all, loyalty.

The British recently discovered in Basra what it means to have a loyal, local, police force – for when push came to shove, it turned out they were totally infiltrated by tribal and sectarian loyalties.

This is a war of attrition and it is a war that I do not see us as winning. The question is, are we losing? In the longer historical run, we probably are actually not improving but rather deteriorating. But it is admittedly a judgment that it is difficult to make. It is also a judgment that – unintentionally, but very revealingly – the president himself shares somewhat. More recently, he has not been talking so much about a “mission accomplished,” but about the choice being between victory or defeat. Victory or defeat. Something which seemed inconceivable two years ago, and certainly nearly three years ago when we occupied Baghdad and “mission accomplished” seemed to be a reality.

I know that one of the speakers who was supposed to be with you this morning but who could not come was George Packer. I think his book [The Assassins’ Gate] provides the best eyewitness account of the ongoing, ambiguous but disturbing Iraqi realities.

And that brings me to the third part of what I wish to say to you: *What should we do?* Admittedly we face difficult choices. I have been a policymaker and most policy decisions that are important are difficult to make. They always involve contingent judgments. There is rarely certainty about outcome. There are always risks.

But in a situation of this sort it, is important not to let ourselves become the prisoners of uncertainty. Prisoners of uncertainty in the sense that, because there is uncertainty, we become its prisoners by saying we cannot change course because the course we’re on is familiar, and what might follow – a change of course – is unfamiliar, and therefore even more perplexing than the reality we confront.

The judgments that we make will be based on uncertainty and derived from uncertainty. They will be contingent. But we must confront contingency. *That* is a task of leadership: uncertainty and confronting contingency.

We must also make certain that we are not prisoners of slogans. And it's easy to succumb to slogans, especially in a decision-making setting that is self-reinforcing, composed of true believers, and then articulated to the public in a manner that accentuates the elements of fear and anxiety, and therefore makes the public more inclined to join the decision-makers in being prisoners of uncertainty.

In my judgment, quote end quote "victory" is unlikely. I think that's a judgment that, if I were a decision-maker today, I feel I would have to reach. And I certainly realize that the consequences of the absence of what we would have liked to have happened, namely victory, are uncertain.

There could be problems, and grave problems. And thus we need to make a cold judgment, a really cold judgment, about whether prolonged staying of the course is likely to be more or less damaging to overall U.S. interests. In other words, if we were not to stay on course – and I'll speak more fully of what that means – would a civil war between the Shiites and the Kurds on one side and the Sunnis on the other be more destructive than the consequences of staying on course? That's a contingent judgment one needs to make.

I have already hinted to you that in my view this is not yet a civil war, in the sense that most of what we see as sectarian violence occurs in areas in which there is overlap between Shiites and Sunnis, particularly Baghdad and a few other places nearby. Most of the anti-American insurgency is in purely Sunni areas. There is less violence in Shiite areas.

It is not yet a civil war – and if that is correct, if the judgment is that this is not yet a civil war, but rather incipient stages perhaps of a civil war – then how certain are we in the judgment that if we were to desist, the Shiites and the Kurds would not be capable of compelling an arrangement with the Sunnis. The Shiites and the Kurds together account for about 75 percent of the population and they have an overwhelming advantage. The Shiites then would be faced with a difficult decision and the Sunnis then would be faced with a difficult decision: whether to accommodate or to resist, to challenge. And I think a reasonable judgment is they will probably be divided.

Some will choose the path of accommodation and we know even some Sunni leaders who advocate that. And some will choose the path of resistance. But the outcome, I think, of such a confrontation is also predicable: namely, that the Kurds and the Shiites will prevail. Is that an outcome necessarily worse than staying on course if one makes the judgment that staying on course involves a more and more difficult war of attrition, not to speak of its international consequences, but focusing purely on the Iraqi context?

These are the kinds of questions that need to be addressed seriously by decision-makers, who then look carefully at actual options and timetables and steps to be taken if a particular choice is made that cannot be undertaken in a setting in which the decision-makers are the very same people who initiated the war itself and are responsible for some

of the major tactical and strategic errors involved. They are not capable of making a cold judgment. They are not able to look at alternative options because of their stake in past misjudgments – and in some cases lies, and in some cases perhaps crimes. And thus there's a real problem with the decision-making apparatus.

And yet if the president is serious in saying that our choices have become more difficult, I think it behooves him to widen the circle of decision-makers. It is in his own interest as well as in the country's interest. This does not necessarily mean reaching out to the opposition, but even reaching out even to members of his own party who have, in different ways, some subtly, some more directly, expressed an uneasiness about the course on which we have embarked.

I think it is clear to you by now, I hope, that I favor a decision by the United States to leave Iraq. And the way I would go about it would be as follows:

1. I would ask the Iraqi leaders to ask us to leave. I would not announce it arbitrarily, but I would talk to the Iraqi leaders about our decision, our inclination, and I would encourage them to ask us to leave. And I think there would be Iraqi leaders who would ask us to leave. Some of them are openly opposed to the occupation. And others may be more ambivalent now that their own political positions would be strengthened if they identified themselves with the hostility of the Iraqi people to the occupation. And some of course would not wish to ask us to leave. And they would be the ones who would leave when we leave, which tells us something about the depth of their capacity for leadership. I think we should ask them to ask us to leave and to treat them as adults, and not as colonial wards, which is what we are doing.

We are teaching them democracy while at the same time arresting them, bombing them, humiliating them – and also helping them. It's an ambivalent course in democracy – and one not likely to foster it.

2. I think we should set a date for the termination of the occupation. I've recently written publicly in an op-ed piece that I think roughly at the end of this year should be the target date. I am not dogmatic about that particular date. It could be somewhat later, perhaps even somewhat sooner. I do not know. But I would think that within a year we should be able to complete an orderly disengagement and the process would be extremely useful in concentrating Iraqi minds on what will follow and encourage them to assume responsibility.

I do not believe for a minute the argument that setting a date somehow or other would help the insurgency, that somehow or other the insurgents would go into their hiding caves or wherever and wait until the moment we leave and then suddenly they will surface and pounce. It's not that kind of an insurgency. It's an insurgency that is much more dispersed, spontaneous, expressing itself in the crevices of Iraqi society, also sometimes on the basis of monetary opportunity.

The assumption of responsibility by Iraqi leaders who know that they are now going to be responsible for the future of the country is more likely to produce leaders that are prepared to lead and have the capacity to lead.

3. I would also encourage the Iraqi government – not have the U.S. do it – to call for a regional conference. I would have the Iraqi government call for a regional conference of Muslim states, some immediately adjoining Iraq, others more distant. By way of example, one might mention Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, perhaps also Turkey (although that is sensitive because of Kurdistan), Algeria, Tunisia, and maybe even Iran.

I noted in the news today the Iranian willingness to talk to us about more stability in Iraq, to deal with the issue of post-disengagement stabilization, something which is in their own interest, and so therefore it is not a plea, a desperate plea for help. It is not a plea to replace one occupier with another set of occupiers, but it is to ask them to be engaged with the Iraqis on an Iraqi initiative regarding stabilization after the United States has left.

4. Of course we could also separately on our own then ask the Europeans, the Japanese, and others, maybe even the Chinese, to become more directly involved in doing what can be helpful to consolidate the post-departure Iraqi conditions. But all of that has to take place in a setting in which we also face up to the increasing risk that our policy in Iraq is in many respects a symptom of the wider regional blindness and increasing global self-isolation.

I think we have to recognize – and this is why such a decision has wider strategic ramifications – that what is happening in Iraq is dangerously part of a wider, developing collision between America and the world of Islam, a collision which could, if it widens and becomes truly intense, be devastating to America's global position. And America in a conflict with the world of Islam will be an America that will find it more difficult to ensure our national security and to promote our leading position in the world.

And that means that in addition to thinking about Iraq, regarding which we have some difficult choices to make – and I repeat, in contingent and uncertain conditions – we have to take a critical look at two other unresolved issues that interact with the consequences of our involvement in Iraq.

First, our policy towards Iran. Why is it so different from our policy towards North Korea? North Korea is perhaps doing more of what we don't want the Iranians to be doing. Yet with North Korea we are engaged in direct multilateral negotiations with the North Koreans in which other parties participate – Chinese, Japanese, South Koreans, and Russians. We refuse to do that in the case of Iran. We refuse to negotiate with Iran. We are negotiating, yes, all the time with the British, the Germans, and the French – asking them to make certain decisions, to make certain demands. We are not negotiating with the Iranians. Why not? Because we have said that that will bestow legitimacy on the Iranian government. Are we deliberately legitimating the North Korean government?

What is the issue? There is an issue: namely, the apparent Iranian quest for nuclear weaponry. That is the issue. Not the issue of the legitimacy of the Iranian government, which incidentally has been elected to a far greater extent than is the case of the North Korean government. We are not only participating in multilateral negotiations – we are participating in bilateral negotiations with the North Koreans.

We will not touch the Iranians. Why not? Are we perhaps trying to prevent a compromise? Do we really want Iran to desist, or do we want to drive it into extremism? It surely cannot be our deliberate intention to fuse Iranian nationalism with Iranian fundamentalism. But that is precisely what we are doing.

As a general proposition, without going into any further detail on Iran, in international affairs, sometimes delaying something undesirable is far more effective than seeking directly to prevent it.

And I believe that in the long run, time is on our side with Iran, and therefore engaging in a process that encourages accommodation and has the effect of significantly delaying what is undesirable may be more effective than marching towards confrontation that certainly would affect the stability of the region.

Secondly, we also need to provide serious evidence that we are committed to a lasting and equitable Israeli-Palestinian peace. Not a one-sided imposed solution. Regardless of how much more conciliatory it may be as compared to previous formulas, a solution that would be viewed as imposed by one of the two parties to the conflict is therefore ultimately less legitimate.

An imposed solution, even if more fair than what was discussed in the past, will still be viewed by the weaker side – the Palestinians – as illegitimate and thus the conflict will fester. I think it is important – especially now when the prospects for the peace process moving forward have somewhat receded, for understandable reasons – to make clear what in our view, and in the view of our closest allies, represents an equitable ultimate solution.

At least we should outline its fundamental principles, by codifying the various individual statements on that subject made at the highest American level. Such as territorial swaps for changes in the 1967 lines. Such as some formula for sharing Jerusalem, regarding which more than 55 percent of Israelis are prepared to accept a compromise. That would certainly help at least give credence to the notion that we do have a long-term solution that is viewed as legitimate by both parties actively in mind. Because without it we will contribute to a situation in the Middle East that enhances the prospects of an American-Islamic collision on a much wider front.

And that brings me to my last and concluding points: ultimately at stake in all of this is, how do we define, today, America's relationship with the world.?

The president in releasing this morning the new National Security Strategy started off by saying, “America is at war. This is a war time national security strategy.” Let me just say this to you: words have consequences. And the deliberate misuse of words can be very dangerous. Fanning a fearful, but fundamentally misleading definition of reality, contributes to the emergence of a fear-driven nation, a self-isolating nation.

The president experienced that in the last two weeks on the Dubai issue, when he himself reacted to excessive national fears. And yet just yesterday the International Relations Committee of the House voted 37-3 to impose punitive embargos on any country that invests in increased Iranian oil production. If that is not a self-defeating policy, then I don’t know what it is.

But it is a part of this atmosphere of Manichean polarization which is being bred by a phony definition of reality. Neither President Truman nor Eisenhower – Democrat and Republican – ever spoke of America being a “nation at war” during the Korean War. Neither President Johnson nor Nixon ever spoke of America being a “nation at war” during the Vietnam War. Yes we have a serious challenge from the potential threat of terrorism and we have to wage an unrelenting struggle against it. But to describe America repeatedly as a nation at war – implicitly of course with a commander and chief in charge – is to contribute to a view of the world by America that stimulates fear and isolates us from others. Other nations have suffered more from terrorism than America. None of them has embraced that definition of reality.

What troubles me the most is not that which that I have criticized, but that which hasn’t happened. That is to say: a serious and comprehensive Democratic challenge on this subject. Democratic leaders have been silent or evasive. They have not offered an alternative to the war in Iraq. It’s easy to criticize – that was the first part of my speech. That is easy to do, although some of us did it sooner than others.

But they haven’t offered an alternative. Also they have not seriously challenged the view of the world that is being propagated from the top. At a time of a deepening and widening crisis in Iraq, and a widening gap between America and the world, that to me is a form of political desertion.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. PODESTA: Well, given the precision and insightfulness and comprehensiveness of that, I’m tempted to think there’s little that needs to be said, but Dr. Brzezinski has agreed to take one or two questions. I ask if there are reporters in the room that could raise their hands first and identify yourselves and wait for a mike.

Q: James Rosen, McClatchy Newspapers. President Carter, at least in some circles and among some historians, is viewed as a president who was indecisive, who didn’t respond – to name just two major foreign policy crises of his tenure – who didn’t

respond decisively and quickly to either the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan or to the Iranian hostage crisis.

Did he not listen to your advice at the time – the sorts of advice that you’re offering today or how did all of that come to be because it seems like there were some serious misjudgments made, especially vis-à-vis Afghanistan that have come back to haunt us.

DR. BRZEZINSKI: Well, I really am baffled by your comments about Afghanistan, but I’ll deal with that in a second.

On Iran, there was a difference of views between the president and myself. The president felt his primary responsibility was to bring back the hostages, and this was a political and a moral responsibility, and unless vital American interests were at stake, he ought to persist in that course. My view was a little different. I felt that the Iranian act of taking American diplomats as hostages was a more direct threat to us and that, therefore, we ought to pursue a more assertive policy. He was elected, not I. He made the decisions, not I. And in the end, the hostages – every single one of them did come back. And I don’t know what the course of the events might have been like if an alternative course of action had been pursued.

On Afghanistan, you’re just flat wrong. The president, in fact, adopted the most stringent and decisive steps ever taken by any American president in the course of the entire Cold War in response to a Soviet act of aggression. He authorized direct assistance to the resistance, and that resistance was provided help by the United States, by Great Britain, and we recruited by several other countries as well as China, incidentally, and that then forced the Soviets out of Afghanistan.

He also adopted boycotts of the Olympics, the agricultural boycott, and so forth. Some people didn’t like some of these policies. That’s a different issue, but he certainly cannot be accused of not responding to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Q: (Off mike.)

MR. PODESTA: No. No debates. The lady in the red.

DR. BRZEZINSKI: That’s what you said.

Q: I’m Justine Redman with CNN. Could you give us your views on the newly updated national security strategy, in particular the preemptive strike doctrine? And a second question, if I may: do you see within that updated strategy evidence of any lessons learned from Iraq which could inform the U.S.’s dealings in the future with Iran, for example?

DR. BRZEZINSKI: I think there is apparently – I’ve not read the entire document yet – there is apparently acknowledgement that our position on Iraq suffered

from inadequate intelligence, and that is very relevant to the whole issue of preemption or even prevention. Namely, these two principles can only be pursued seriously if you have a very high level of confidence in your intelligence. And I think there is an implicit acknowledgement of that in the document. And that is actually a step forward because obviously if you are ever going to preempt or even prevent, you have to have an extremely high level of confidence in your intelligence, so in that sense I think there is some indication of, quote, unquote, “a learning curve.”

The document apparently also goes into more other issues that in the past have been slighted: the whole question of genocide, the whole question of globalization, of what you might call the sort of socioeconomic stability of the world is also addressed.

What bothers me, however, is the packaging of the document and I had that in mind at the conclusion of my opening remarks. Namely, it is good to have a realistic, hard-nosed doctrine, even if necessary of preemption and prevention, which is not new incidentally in our strategic thinking. But it is important not to package it in a fashion which induces a fundamentally erroneous vision of the world and of our own society. If anyone really seriously means that we are a nation at war, then surely we have to ask ourselves why we are reducing taxes for the rich. Why don't we have a war tax? Why don't we have national mobilization? Why don't we have a draft? Why don't we fire commanders that don't perform well in war or dismiss war planners that make fundamental errors? Those are kind of basic consequences of a serious engagement. I'm troubled by the packaging of this doctrine even more than the specifics. And I repeat, I've not read the document in full. It just came out this morning.

MR. PODESTA: I'm thinking we have time for maybe one more question. If you could wait for the mike.

Q: My name is Adnel Qutb (ph). I am an Iraqi-American journalist. Mr. Brzezinski, I enjoyed your presentation. I am, however, very deeply concerned and puzzled by the lack of harmony in two points that you made in that excellent presentation.

One is you expressed concerned that the Iraqis embark potentially on a civil war and then later on in your presentation you said that it is time for the United States to ask the Iraqi government to ask the U.S. to leave. There is a considerable and substantial body of opinion in Iraq which strongly holds that one of the reasons why the country is not swiftly falling into a civil war is because of the continued presence of the American forces as a deterrent. Can you enlighten me on that lack of harmony?

DR. BRZEZINSKI: There's no doubt that you're right that there are many Iraqis who feel that American forces are an impediment to civil war. There are also many Iraqis, in fact a majority, that dislike the occupation and would like us to leave. There is a conflict between these two positions. The question is, can you really create civic peace through a military presence that produces a war of attrition, which is actually escalating in intensity.

I have much higher confidence in the maturity of the Iraqi people who over the years actually have developed an elite that's quite modern and they're advanced more so than many others Muslim countries. And I happen to believe that there is a residual Iraqi nationalism, but which is being splintered aside by this progression of conflict under a porous umbrella that is incapable of ending that conflict. If I really had confidence that we can squelch the resistance, stop the sectarian war, and put together a pastiche of Iraqi politicians in a government called, quote, unquote, "of national unity," I would say by all means stay. But I don't see any evidence that this is becoming more likely. I see growing evidence that it is not, and therefore I think it is more correct, more intelligent to make the judgment that the Iraqis themselves still have the capacity to resolve that problem, especially if I am right – and I emphasize "if;" these are contingent judgments – that we are not yet in a civil war, but the propensities for it are intensifying. And hence, that contingent judgment in my view now calls for a timely decision.

MR. PODESTA: We have lots of questions, but no time, so please join me in thanking again Dr. Brzezinski.

(Applause.)

(END)