



**WAR AND DECISION:
INSIDE THE PENTAGON AT THE DAWN
OF THE WAR ON TERRORISM**

**DOUGLAS FEITH, AUTHOR OF “WAR AND DECISION:
INSIDE THE PENTAGON AT THE DAWN
OF THE WAR ON TERRORISM**

PANELISTS:

**PAUL WOLFOWITZ, VISITING SCHOLAR WITH AEI,
FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE WORLD BANK,
AND FORMER DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE**

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**DAN SENOR, FORMER SENIOR ADVISOR TO PRESIDENTIAL ENVOY L.
PAUL BREMER III, ADMINISTRATOR OF THE COALITION PROVISIONAL
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KENNETH WEINSTEIN: –We would like to welcome everyone to today’s discussion of Douglas Feith’s new book “War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism.” I’m Kenneth Weinstein, CEO of Hudson Institute. I am delighted you could be here today with us. I’d also like to welcome our viewers on C-SPAN, as well as our distinguished panel of experts.

Hudson Institute is a future oriented policy research organization focused primarily on global affairs. The core of our work is independent policy research – our willingness to examine critical and complex issues from many different perspectives. To better understand the future, it is essential to get a better understanding of the past, even though we know that the past will never be perfectly understood and the questions raised by the study of the past will never be totally settled.

Today our discussion is devoted to examining the major decisions related to the U.S. reaction to the 9/11 terror attacks. No American foreign policy decision since the Vietnam War has been subject to as much discussion as the decision surrounding the war in Iraq. Like all decisions about war, these decisions are immensely difficult, especially because they ultimately involve ultimate questions about life and death. In this case, the decision and the way it was implemented has fueled an intense public debate. As those in the audience who know anything about Hudson Institute know, we here at Hudson Institute had a significant internal debate over the merits of the war in Iraq, both prior to and after its commencement – a division reminiscent in some ways of our internal debate over Vietnam policy in the late 1960s.

Today we will examine post 9/11 policy through examining former Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith’s gripping new book “War and Decision.” I just finished the book over the weekend and I find it a very well documented and dispassionate account of the period, written by an active policymaker. “War and Decision” lays out the internal administration debate following the 9/11 terror attacks through to the first years of the war in Iraq. The book, which I personally recommend to each of you, will be available for purchase after the event. All proceeds are being donated by Doug Feith to a foundation he has established to care for wounded war veterans.

Rather than the standard Washington book forum where the author speaks at length about his or her book, we thought that another useful way to promote public debate would be to have other former officials join us and offer their insights on what happened during this critical time. Accordingly, we will first hear from our distinguished panelists and later former Undersecretary Feith will join us following initial discussion of the question and answer period.

Our panelists today are Paul Wolfowitz, Dan Senor, and Peter Rodman. I will introduce each of them before they speak.

First, we will have the honor of hearing from Dr. Paul Wolfowitz. Paul Wolfowitz, the former deputy secretary of defense and former president of the World

Bank, served in key defense and diplomatic positions dating to 1973 under six different presidents, Democrat and Republican, including assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, ambassador to Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim country; and undersecretary of defense for policy, the position that our author, Douglas Feith, held in the George W. Bush administration. In addition to Dr. Wolfowitz's public service, he taught political science at Yale University and served as dean and professor of international relations at the Paul Nitze School of Advanced International Studies at the Johns Hopkins University. He's currently a visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, where he focuses on international development.

I should note that Dr. Wolfowitz needs to leave by 1:30, but we're fortunate to have his remarks here from the podium.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

PAUL WOLFOWITZ: Good afternoon. I welcome this opportunity to talk about Doug Feith's book and most of all to encourage you to read it, even to buy it, but if you have to borrow it or steal it or otherwise get at it, I really encourage you to read it because it's an exceptional book. It's exceptional for its point of view. There've been a lot of books written about Iraq and I'm sure there'll be many more still to come, but most of them tend to come from points of view that are quite radically different from Doug's, and I think it's very important to have this position laid out in such a clear way.

Secondly, I believe it's unusually fair. Obviously it has a point of view, but the author goes out of his way to try to present the different sides of different arguments. And I think it's informed by a fundamental perception that policy is not about picking the perfect alternative or even the good alternative, but more often than not picking the least bad of the various bad choices that confront you. And so no decisions are really that clear cut. But finally it's, I think, truly unique in the fact that he documents what he says and documents it with extraordinarily extensive footnotes and documents that you can even go and look up on a website. I just heard that this could be a threat to professors all over the world that students could actually go on a website and check out the footnotes in academic research, but if so that's a very good precedent.

And finally, I found it very interesting for the color that is in there. By virtue of our two jobs, more often than not, if Doug was in a meeting, I was not. And if I was in a meeting, often he wasn't. So I learned a lot about meetings that were taking place that I had been informed about at the time but never in quite the same level of detail and, as I say, with scrupulous attention to contemporaneous notes that he took at the time.

I wanted just to give you – I am going to confess, too: I haven't read the whole book yet. It's a very deep read. It's very detailed. I think it repays very close reading, but I've read a lot of it. I think one of the things on which it's very important is the fundamental understanding that this struggle that we're in, or conflict, war against terrorism or terror or there're other terms and the terminology is at issue and that's a difficult question, but that it is fundamentally a war and not a law enforcement activity.

To quote from his book, “The 9/11 attack was a new phenomenon, and not just because it hit Americans on American soil. It was not an active political theater. Rather it was the first successful case of terrorism of mass destruction.” He goes on elsewhere to say, “We recognized that identifying the perpetrators was not the same as deciding how to define the enemy. If the priority of action was to prevent the next attack, then the enemy was not just a particular group responsible for the 9/11 hijackings. It was,” he said, “the wider network of terrorists and their backers who might organize additional large scale strikes, no doubt inspired and energized by what they saw on 9/11.” He discusses this at great length and I can’t attempt to capture the fullness of it, but I think it’s an important part of the book.

One of his important points is that this is not simply about protecting the physical – our physical security. It’s about genuinely protecting our way of life. As he says, “To preserve civil liberties, the president had to adopt a strategy of disrupting terrorist networks abroad, where they do much of their planning, recruiting, and training. He had to adopt a strategy of initiative, an offense as well as defense. As I saw it” – this is Doug – “the president decided that in dealing with the terrorists he had the choice of changing the way we live or changing the way they live. Our national security policy must go beyond simply protecting people or territory. It must include securing our constitutional system, our civil liberties, and the open nature of our society, our way of life, as President Bush expressed it.” Those are all passages from Doug’s book.

For those of us engaged in the beltway wars, and I suppose if you’re here you’re probably at least a front row observer, for me it was not only interesting but valuable to see a number of well-nurtured myths demolished in this book. One of them is the myth that everything would have been fine if only those idiots in the Pentagon had followed the brilliant plan that was developed by the Department of State. I’m sorry. That’s me talking. This is Doug speaking now. “Numerous news articles and books have presented a distorted history of the Future of Iraq Project, claiming that it produced the plan for administering postwar Iraq and that the Pentagon civilian leaders, who were supposedly hostile to the project for ideological and bureaucratic reasons, ordered Jay Garner, the head of ORHA, and ORHA to ignore it. John Kerry used that in the 2004 presidential debates and it eventually became so well established a piece of conventional wisdom that journalists and members of Congress could invoke it without feeling obliged to cite sources or seek confirmation.” But he says, “The Future of Iraq Project did not produce a plan. It produced concept papers.” Bremer makes this point in his book, citing Ambassador Ryan Crocker, who is now our ambassador in Iraq, who had served as deputy assistant secretary of state in the State Department bureau responsible for the Future of Iraq Project.”

“Ryan Crocker confirmed that” – this is Doug – “when we met in my Pentagon office in early 2005, he emphasized that not even the State Department’s Near East Bureau, let alone the entire State Department, had adopted the Future of Iraq papers. Although State shared the reports around the government, no State official ever presented

them to the deputies, principals, or National Security Council as a State Department proposal or plan for postwar Iraq.”

Indeed it goes much further and I’ll get into that in closing here because if there was a distinctive feature of those Future of Iraq papers, it was a paper written by Kanan Makiya that talked about the early and immediate establishment of sovereign Iraqi authority. And as Doug recounts at very great length in his book, that was an issue that was argued out both in the interagency and in Baghdad, and it was very much State Department on the other side of that view.

Another myth that Doug takes on is the myth about Ahmed Chalabi, who was constantly portrayed – is still constantly portrayed as somehow the Karzai of the Pentagon, I suppose you could say – the person that Pentagon wanted to install as the leader of Iraq. But he says correctly, “For Donald Rumsfeld, it was a consistent principle that U.S. officials should not try to pick specific leaders for other countries. That principle governed Rumsfeld’s attitude toward Afghanistan as well as Iraq, but State and CIA officials stand not to share this principle and did not even recognize that Rumsfeld was applying it. To them, Rumsfeld’s insistence that the U.S. government should not discriminate for or against any of the friendly pro-democratic groups was seen merely as camouflage for a campaign to anoint Chalabi.”

But he goes on at some length about the documents that show conversations and memos to and from Jay Garner, who was the first American civilian authority in Iraq, and then Jerry Bremer, and he concludes that “neither Garner nor Bremer was ever asked to help Chalabi, let alone anoint him, should it dispose at the allegation of the Pentagon’s leadership team was working on a pro-Chalabi plot. If Garner and Bremer were not in on such a plot, and never saw one, then there was none.”

I think more important, though, in the long run than this issue of beltway mess is his comment on more fundamental subjects. And to me the most important discussion in the book is the discussion about – this very debate about whether we should have had, as we did, an occupation administration in the first – as what turned out the first 14 months of our presence there, or whether we should have started out immediately with some kind of Iraqi authority. And one of the objections – again I’m going to quote from his book: “Before and during Operation Iraqi Freedom, the work that the Policy Office did on postwar political planning was intended to keep the United States out of the role of military occupier. The capstone of this effort was our plan for the Iraqi interim authority, which became official U.S. policy when it received President Bush’s formal endorsement. In the political dimension, the story of post Saddam Iraq is a painful” – in Doug’s words tale – “a painful tale of a missed opportunity to empower an Iraqi authority.”

One of the objections to doing so was the objection that such an authority, which would of necessity have to be initially, to some degree, handpicked by the coalition partners, would lack legitimacy, would lack a mandate, would not be representative. But as Doug says and I agree, it’s hard to follow that logic. “If the Iraqi selected by us

weren't sufficiently representative of the Iraqi people, should Iraq be run by someone even less representative? If the Iraqi leaders lacked a mandate, did we have that mandate? If the problem with an appointed interim government was that it might look like a U.S. creature, was the solution to have the United States continue to govern Iraq?"

The fact is, however, that we did end up with an occupation authority for a full nine months and I'm afraid that the label "occupation" sticks to us even to this day, although the occupation ended in June of 2004.

Doug considers that the biggest mistake we made. To quote from his book, "The chief mistake," he says, "was maintaining an occupation government in Iraq for over a year, even though the dangers of occupation had been recognized throughout the Bush administration and even though the president's policy had called for the early creation of an Iraqi interim authority. The central task of liberation was to bring about political transition in Iraq," he says, "but this was impeded beginning months before Saddam's overthrow by self induced anxieties at State and CIA about the presumed lack of legitimacy of the Iraqi opposition."

He says, "The protected occupation did strategic, long lasting harm. It helped the insurgents win popular support. It seemed to confirm their incendiary propaganda about American domination and exploitation. It demoralized and damaged the standing of the Iraqi democratic opposition, the very people to whom we eventually handed the government. And it turned all the domestic, social, political, and other problems of Iraq into American problems."

I largely agree with that, although if you ask me about – there's always this effort to find. Well, what were the mistakes; I wish there was an equal effort to find out all the things that went right. The truth of the matter is that while I think without any question this has been a more costly and difficult war than anyone I know anticipated, it's also true that we all anticipated a much more difficult and costly initial phase of the war. And a great deal of the planning was, in fact, directed for that phase because that was where it was felt the main danger lay.

I think if you were looking for maybe even more important questions of the occupation, was something where I think no one got it right. As Doug does write, "What was not anticipated by any office, as far as I know, was the Iraqi regime's ability to conduct a sustained campaign against coalition forces after it was overthrown. When the CIA in August, 2002, analyzed how Saddam might attack, surprise, or otherwise foil us in a war, its analysis dealt only with actions Saddam might take while still in power. "I never saw," Doug says, and I never saw either, "a CIA assessment of the Ba'athists after their ouster would be able to organize, recruit for, finance, supply, command, and control an insurgency, let alone an alliance with foreign Jihadists."

I do think that is why this has been so much more difficult than anyone anticipated. The enemy did not leave the field after his capital was captured. In that respect, I guess Saddam may have been following an old historic Russian model.

And I think to judge any of these issues, such as whether an occupation authority would have been more or less effective than a early Iraqi sovereign authority, to me the most crucial test is how would have it done against this very determined effort to defeat us by killing people – killing Americans, but also killing Iraqi civilians. I think every insurgency depends on terror to some extent, but I don't know of any insurgency that depends to this extent on terror, or any that actually brought in foreigners to kill natives of the country. If someone knows an example, I'd love to hear it, but this one was unique.

I think fortunately today we have a much better appreciation of who the enemy is and how the enemy fights, and most importantly, how to fight a counterinsurgency and hopefully it will produce a much better result.

Thank you. (Applause.)

PETER RODMAN: Ken, thank you very much. I don't want to pile on for Dan Senor –

DAN SENOR: I'm used to it – (laughter) –

MR. RODMAN: I wanted to say a few words myself about the issue that Paul raised about occupation. And if there's a fundamental thought I would like to leave with this audience it' that there were two sides to this issue as there were two sides to most of the other issues out there, and it's a compliment to Doug's books that he has aired a number of these issues in a way that I think a lot of readers will not have heard the two sides of the story.

I wanted to raise – say a few more words about the issue of should there have been an occupation or not because I think it is one of the fundamental questions, one of the fundamental decisions that was made and in my view had very large – a very large impact on how events unfolded in Iraq after the war. The issue, as Paul stated, is should we go in there with the expectation of a prolonged American occupation or should we concentrate on the task of helping moderate Iraqis fill the vacuum as soon as possible after liberation. The latter, of course, is what we in fact had done in Afghanistan at the end of 2001.

Now, one reason I want to dwell on this is I guess a little bit of an exercise in ego. There's a memo of mine that is featured in Doug's book. It's reprinted as an appendix, appendix 7. And for those of you who haven't memorized the book or this appendix, I'm going to go over some of the reasoning.

Now this – because I think this reflected the thinking in the Department of Defense long before the war, long before Ambassador Bremer got out there and wrestled with the problems on the ground. It was a philosophical issue and an historical analysis that I did my best to lay out in this memorandum, which again, as I said, reflected the

views of Secretary Rumsfeld and other of our colleagues. This is August, 2002, and the basic point is everybody was talking about occupation. And people thought of the analogies of Germany and Japan after World War II. And my point was, if one is looking for historical analogies, maybe the most relevant analogy was not Germany and Japan after the Second World War, but France after the Second World War.

Now, if you read de Gaulle's memoirs, you see that Churchill and Roosevelt had a plan to have an occupation government of France. They didn't take de Gaulle seriously. They didn't take the free France seriously as a political force, and so they had a plan to have an allied military government of France just like the allied military government of Germany and Japan.

Now, what I was suggesting is that if we're going to do this, we ran a huge risk. If you remember postwar France, the communists were the dominant force in the resistance in the countryside. And if we had come in there with an allied occupation, we would have to neutered the Gaullists. We would have blocked their ability to organize and fill the vacuum. And as I wrote in the memo, we'd be sitting in Paris imagining that we were running the country, while the communists would have taken over in the countryside, and we would have – as I said – been living with an illusion in Paris. And it would have produced a totally disastrous outcome.

Now, as it turned out, after D-Day, when de Gaulle landed, and millions of people turned out to greet him as the symbol of free France and Roosevelt and Churchill relented, they understood that indeed de Gaulle represented free France, the France that had not surrendered. And so de Gaulle organized de Gaullists into a powerful political force able to be a counterweight to the communists. De Gaulle was in power from '44 to '46. As I said, he built up his own movement, co-opted the communists, and neutralized the communists, and indeed he saved France, I would say – saved France from the communists, in a sense saved France from us.

Now, my memorandum went on to say, look, there's no de Gaulle in Iraq. In fact this confirms exactly what Paul said and what Doug says in his book. The Pentagon was not peddling some individual. On the contrary, what I was recommending was a group of six – a group of seven – in the summer of 2002, there was an interagency consensus on a grouping of several different groups of Iraqi forces, the two Kurdish parties; certainly Chalabi's INC was one of them, the INA, which had its supporters elsewhere in the U.S. government, SCIRI (ph) – the group formerly known as SCIRI, which is a major moderate Shiite bloc. The Turkmen were added. I think I'm forgetting somebody. But there had been an interagency consensus on this group. And so I was suggesting that this group could be the consensus vehicle for the United States government to say to help these moderate Iraqis fill the vacuum themselves after the liberation of their country. And the argument was that – if we went in there in a way that blocked the ability of these people to organize, to get their feet on the ground, to be the basis of a free Iraq, we were just delaying and impeding the moderate Iraqis from the very necessary task of filling this vacuum. And that's what this memorandum argued.

Now, as I said and I'll say again, there're two – certainly two sides of this debate. And Ambassador Bremer, when he got out there, had a different perspective. And I hope Dan will reflect that point of view.

There was a debate in the administration before the war, as Paul has mentioned. State Department and CIA argued that these external forces that we were dealing with weren't very representative. They weren't capable. Obviously, we all know there were serious suspicions about the Iraqi National Congress. So there was a debate in the government. And part of the debate was, "well, we want to find indigenous forces in the country." And I think that, in principle, makes perfect sense, but we don't know in advance who these indigenous folks are. And it turns out as a historical fact that since liberation most of the political leaders of the country have indeed come from those external groups, the so-called external groups that we were dealing with beforehand.

Now, there were some bureaucratic battles going on here. You'll see some of that in Doug's book. That's part of the conventional narrative. The president made a decision in favor of some kind of Iraqi – what we call an Iraqi interim authority. That story is told in Doug's book. And the president said, "Well, we should do this as soon as possible after liberation." But after the war, after liberation, when Ambassador Bremer came into the picture, he felt he had different marching orders and makes a case – and again nobody can dispute him or what he felt were his instructions, but he went out there with a different perspective, which was to delay the process of – in fact to halt, bring a halt to the process that had begun of organizing the Iraqis. He felt that a multiyear occupation was necessary. And then after a period of time passed, Washington reversed course again and the president decided to shorten the timetable. And the occupation ended formally on June – the end of June, 2004.

So we can argue and there'd be different versions about who said what and what the president really wanted, but I think the bureaucratic issue is the secondary issue. The more important issue and an issue that I hope historians will pay attention to is what was the right policy. As I said, all the leaders that we did – that did come to the floor, or leaders that we were working with before the war. And one can make an argument that what happened in Iraq does follow the pattern of what some might have predicted for France after World War II if we had had an occupation.

While the occupation government was in place in Baghdad, all sorts of radical sources, political forces were at work filling the political vacuum in the country and the process of helping Iraqi moderates was delayed.

Now, I admit here we're in the realm of intangibles. This is political theory. Nobody can prove what predictions might have been true or would not have come true. And there are two sides of this debate, as I will say yet again, but the value of Doug's book is that it's the first I have seen to lay out this debate, this discussion in some detail. Let alone being the first book to describe how the Department of Defense was thinking about this issue during – before, during, and after the war.

It is a serious, substantive issue which I think is worthy of serious attention, serious thought, especially from historians, but I would say it should be of interest to anyone interested in analyzing what the problems were that we encountered in Iraq.

Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. WEINSTEIN: Thank you, Peter, for your comments and for your unique perspective. Like Paul Wolfowitz's, it is absolutely invaluable to us as we look at these events of the past.

Our last panelist this morning is Dan Senor. Dan Senor served in the Bush administration in a number of roles in the lead up to the Iraq war and during the war he was based Qatar at the U.S. Central Command Forward. He was then in Kuwait, working with General Jay Garner, during the final days of the war and was in southern Iraq on April 9th, 2003, the day the regime fell. He moved to Baghdad later that month, where he served as an advisor to both ORHA and the Coalition Provisional Authority. For the Coalition Provisional Authority, Dan was chief spokesman and senior advisor to Presidential Envoy Paul Bremer, who was administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority, someone whose actions are subject of significant analysis –

MR. SENOR: Small, small – this is a small part.

MR. WEINSTEIN: Dan? (Applause.)

MR. SENOR: Thank you. Thank you, Ken, for hosting this event. Thank you to Hudson and thank you to Paul and Peter and Doug, all for participating in the event.

I would say a couple of things. First of all, this book was, as Ken and Peter alluded to, there is – there is much I agree with in this book and there is much that I disagree with in this book, but I think the book serves, if nothing else – it serves many useful purposes, but if nothing else, the degree of research and documentation in this book is valuable for people who want to have a real discussion, not a silly sort of cartoonish version of events in Iraq, but a serious discussion about some of the debates that led up to Iraq in the postwar period.

I myself found and even in the parts that I was disagreeing with Doug in the book, I was able to actually – it was quite useful – thank you to use the documents in the book to help sort of reinforce my own view or case on this, even where I disagreed with them.

I say that and that it is a very sort of unvarnished and honest collection of information that you don't find. I'd say that one other book that has served a similar purpose is the book called "The Occupation of Iraq" by Ali Allawi, who was a figure in two of the Iraqi governments. And he also writes a similar book, which as Paul said, is a deep read, but nonetheless if you can take the time to get through it, has important real source information in there. As for the book – and I really want to zero in on what I disagree with because I think that's important for the purposes of this discussion.

Doug basically argues, as you've heard this afternoon, that the single biggest mistake vis-à-vis Iraq, if you sort of push everything aside, was that we elected to have an occupation, and by electing in those immediate 14 months after the end of major combat operations, by electing to govern by occupation or serve in Iraq or be present in Iraq by occupation, is ultimately what was the impetus for the insurgency, nurtured the insurgency, prevented an effort to counter the insurgency. You can characterize it any way, but that is why the insurgency either existed or grew to what it was when we left.

And I have a few observations on that. I would start by saying the following. I think – and I thought a lot about this since I've returned from Iraq, and I've been back a couple of times since I was there for the 15 month period that Ken cited, having some distance from it all, I have been struck by the degree to which we here in Washington tend to over think how Iraqis perceive occupation. And we have these very strong views about – and I was guilty of this while I was there. I think Ambassador Bremer was guilty of it. And I think Doug is – I think we're all guilty of it.

The reality is there was a series of political efforts, and Doug thinks that they did not move quick enough. Others thought they were moving right on track, but there was a series of political efforts and negotiations going on between the U.S. government, at times the UN, the Coalition, the broader coalition members, and Iraqi political leaders. It was going on primarily inside the Green Zone. Those were important discussions and important debates and important dialogue for the long-term future, if you will, of Iraq in laying the groundwork for a democratic sovereign nation.

But my sense is for the vast majority of Iraqis what was going on in the Green Zone in those discussions and these debates was irrelevant. To them occupation was the fact that virtually every interaction they had with any official providing them a government service, whether it was the dispensing of basic essential services like electricity and water and gasoline, or providing basic security in those early months, was conducted by American men and women in uniform and our coalition forces. That is the fact.

To them, that was occupation. It's almost irrelevant what we were doing, these negotiations about whether we go for a quick transition or short transition, whether we give – you put an Iraqi minister in charge of the Department of Agriculture, versus an American official who's in charge of the Ministry of Finance. For most Iraqis, occupation existed in their daily lives when they walked out their front door and there was a Humvee sitting around the corner and they had to drive through checkpoints that were manned by American military. Anywhere they need to go; anywhere those checkpoints were clogging up Baghdad. That to them is occupation.

I remember vividly, shortly after the Iraqi Governing Council appointed the Iraqi ministers, I went to a meeting with Minister Bahr al-Ulum, who was the Iraqi minister of oil. And I purposely – I would from time to time violate the rules about traveling in groups and traveling security just to break out of the daily bubble, if you will, that was

what I'm describing. So I took not one of our cars, which were these American SUVs, but I took a car that was a former Iraqi government car. It was indistinguishable from the cars that Iraqis were driving around Baghdad. And I just drove to the Iraqi ministry of oil by myself. And the number of times I was pulled over, interacting with checkpoints – these were from American soldiers. I don't blame them. They were doing their job. Or American contractors yelling at me to move over the road, guns pointed out of windows – you just see this – you just saw the U.S. military infrastructure everywhere. And the idea that we could have been tinkering with position papers and memos about how we define occupation and that would somehow change the perception of Iraqis' sense of occupation day to day I think is somewhat disconnected from reality. And by the way, Doug I think captures some of this in his book.

On page 450 of the book, he describes a trip that he took to Iraq. I think it was in July of 2003. Or August? August, 2003. And he talks about a trip he took with General Marty Dempsey, who at the time was commanding the 1st Armored Division, took him to a neighborhood of – a slum, an underserved neighborhood in East Baghdad. And he talks and he captures quite well this young army major reservist from Connecticut who was showing him around. And these were the sorts of people who were really on the front lines and are the true heroes and people we interacted with everyday and I hope are the future leaders of this country.

And he talks – he captures quite well the way this army major was sort of juggling – he was presumably providing – there to provide some security. He was also dispensing water. He describes the scene where these trucks pull up with water and all these Iraqis come around and he's the one in charge of getting them clean water. And then he reassures them that he's going to build an underground tank for their neighborhood and then they're going to build – the American military is going to build - pipes from the tanks – from the underground tank to their homes. And they were all thrilled. And here was an American man in uniform, doing his job quite well, by the way Doug describes it, but the notion that an American in uniform is dispensing one of the most basic services our government provides, which is providing clean water, that somehow that is the interaction that an Iraqi has on their daily life, and we back here or we in the Green Zone are having these philosophical, theoretical debates about how you define occupation, that that somehow is going to have any connection to the Iraqi who gets that water from that American major. We use occupation.

And by the way, it's the good and the bad of occupation. I'm not suggesting that this American major was not making a favorable impression on some people by providing the service. Of course he was, but the notion was we had 140-150,000 troops in Iraq. We were very present. And we're providing myriad roles for regular Iraqis and their regular daily life. And we can call it many things. We can try to characterize it as many things, but for most Iraqis it was an occupation.

The second point I would make is Doug lays out in appendix, for all of you that are referencing your books – appendix nine, he lays out the Iraq interim authority administration plan, which is this plan that is a big part of the book, which he basically

argues that OSD had developed a plan for a quick transition to sovereignty that would have ended the occupation and therefore either averted slowdown or preempted the insurgency. A couple of observations on that.

My first is, having read over the plan quite extensively and the commentary on it, I do not believe that this solution, this proposed solution matched the problem. The problem we had in Iraq was a Sunni problem. As Doug himself says in the book, we really didn't have a true Sunni problem or a true Shiite problem or a true Shiite crisis until February of 2006, during the Samarra bombing – the bombing on the Shiite mosque in Samarra.

At that point, that triggered a true crisis of the Shiites, but we were primarily dominated – preoccupied in those first couple of years with a real Sunni problem, which in retrospect wasn't obvious when we first went in. In retrospect has been obvious. That is you have a community that represented some 20 percent of the population that for the entire modern life of Iraq, at least its modern state life, had been in control of the country, had been in control of the country in every possible way. And even beyond the – before the sort of birth, if you will, of the modern state of Iraq, the Sunni community dominated that part of the region.

And the notion that we were going to go into Iraq, in a society that had deep and visceral inter-communal tensions and dislocate or disenfranchise or at least take this community and have their influence represent their proportionate representation in the population. And for that not to be the problem, is something – at best we may not have seen it coming, but at worse, it was something we were grappling with from the moment we arrived. And incidentally people like Kanan Makiya, who has said what he – in reflecting on why Iraq has been so complicated, he has said that he himself did not predict how deep these sectarian tensions would be and how difficult it would be to get Shiites and Sunnis and Kurds to work together.

He believed that there was sort of a – some sense of national unity among these groups just based on the sort of communal repression they were all subjected to and that he himself didn't predict how difficult it would be the challenge of breaking down the legacy of those tensions.

Ali Allawi, in the book I talked about, in “The Occupation of Iraq,” himself said many of the Iraqis who were extremely talented, who returned to Iraq from being gone for years or decades, made the same observation that Iraq was a fundamentally different place from when they had left. And when they had left, this tension I'm describing did not exist, at least in the depth and breadth and degree that was there in April of 2003, when Saddam fell.

And so the idea that we would have moved with this plan that Doug outlines in his book, given that we had a Sunni problem, this would have – we would have effectively created a sovereign government that would have been dominated by Shiite Islamists and we would have had very little control because they would have been a

sovereign government. And the idea that that would have tamped down our Sunni problem rather than intensified it, I simply disagree. Just think of some of the things they did early on. And let me say, I am wholeheartedly against the demonization of the people who have served in the Iraqi government, whether they were externals or internals. I think it's an unfair, superficial, and surfaced characterization of people's talents and contributions and patriotism.

That said, if you simply look at some of the actions they did take when they were given authority, when we handed authority for de-Ba'athification over to the Iraqi Governing Council, they took the implementation of de-Ba'athification in a far more extreme direction than anybody envisioned. And I – and Doug says this as even Secretary Rumsfeld had deep concerns about where the Iraqi Governing Council would take de-Ba'athification.

Ali Allawi says that de-Ba'athification – the wheels of de-Ba'athification completely came off the moment the Iraqis were in charge of it. And the idea that we were going to take this group or the group that Peter cites that was the London Group – or by the way, there was basically no Sunni representation at this London Group. The idea that we were going to take these authorities at a broad level and give them to this interim Iraqi authority and just hand them sovereignty and they would have – de-Ba'athification is one case study.

One of the leaders who would have served in that government has said that one of the things he would have done is brought Moqtada al-Sadr into the government right away, but that – this is a man who just killed one of his rival clerics and shall we say has a far less inclusive view of Sunni participation in modern Iraqi life that I think many Sunnis, even moderate Sunnis would hope for. And the idea that this was the solution to our problem, I don't agree with.

If you believe, even if you accept that this was the solution, even if you accept that this solution did match the problem, I would say in reading over this proposal that – it wasn't a proposal. As Doug said, on March 10th the National Security Council agreed to make it policy. So this was the policy of our government. On page 554, he walks through the key outstanding questions. And I just would add that this memo was written on April 29th, 2003. So our government agreed to make this policy on March 10th and on April 29th, so some seven weeks later, which was an eternity as Paul can attest to in the speed with which decisions are being made vis-à-vis the war in the postwar period, these were some of the still key outstanding questions about this interim authority that we would have handed sovereignty over to or the path to sovereignty to prevent an occupation.

Outstanding issues for this body. What decision making powers should this body have, the IIA? Should the IIA have a legislative assembly? Who chooses its leadership council? How, if at all, should existing Iraqi opposition structures or organizations be utilized in selecting the IIA? How should the coalition ensure that religious ethnic

minorities and women are represented in the IIA? Should the coalition have veto power over individuals selected by Iraqis to join the IIA?

In other words, there still seven weeks after this had become the policy of our government. We still couldn't answer the question of whether or not the IIA should have the power to make laws, whether we should have some kind of veto power over what they should do. This to me – I am, by the way, a fierce critic of the Future of Iraq's Project, which I agree with Paul and Doug, was not a plan. It was a sort of series of papers and a series of different approaches to different issues, but it wasn't a recommended plan, sort of a recommended set of steps. But if you were going to accept that, then you also have to accept that if this was the policy of our government, as Doug says, it leaves open some of the most basic and fundamental questions that we were wrestling with for months and was slowing us down for months. And I – this was not a plan. This was not black and white. It left open ended some basic, very difficult challenges that in many respects are still being resolved, but took us a long time to resolve and working with the interagency back here trying to resolve. But the idea that this was fully baked before we – Ambassador Bremer came to Iraq in the middle of May, so he was returned to government. In the end of April, was handed this document, briefed on it, and here were some of the most basic fundamental questions unanswered.

This was not a plan. Finally, I would say, if we want to discuss what was the largest – biggest mistake in Iraq that we made, and there are many that we could cite, but I come back to what I said earlier. We had a Sunni problem and it was a Sunni insurgency problem, as we discovered from documents that were uncovered from the Mukabarat headquarters. There was a paper trail inside the Mukabarat, which was basically instructing leader of Saddam's regime to organize some version of an insurgency in the event that the regime fell. These documents are drafted before the war. There were al Qaeda or al Qaeda affiliates that had a deep interest in stoking chaos inside Iraq. There was a full-blown insurgency, as Doug says, that really kicked off in his view in August 29th, 2003, after two bombings, one at the UN on August 19th, and then one, which is basically an assassination of a prominent Shiite leader in southern Iraq on April 29th. And we didn't have a counterinsurgency strategy.

We did not have a strategy to provide basic security for the Iraqi civilian population. And without a basic effort to provide basic security for regular Iraqis, we were asking to cooperate with us day in, day out, I don't think all the political plans and memos and programs in the world could have mitigated what we dealt with. We were asking Iraqis to risk their lives and step up and cooperate with us, and we had no plan to provide them basic security. And that is something, fortunately, that we have rectified over the last year, but it certainly was something we were wrestling with in those couple of years and didn't really deal with. And if I had to list the order of mistakes, challenges, problems – I don't want to do finger pointing, but I want to say that was front and center: the lack of a counterinsurgency strategy and the troops, the number of troops necessary to implement it.

Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. WEINSTEIN: Dan, thank you for your insights and for your unique perspective this afternoon.

I'd like to ask Douglas Feith to join us here on the podium as we get to the second part of our program. First, let me ask, Doug, if you have any – first of all, I want to thank all of our panelists for staying within the time period for their comments. And I would like to ask, Doug, if you have any brief remarks and reflections on what's been said so far this afternoon?

DOUGLAS FEITH: I guess, first of all, I thank the Hudson Institute for hosting this and I think all of these comments have been very serious, and I'm glad that they've all called attention to one of the main purposes that I had in writing the book which is to present information about these debates that were extremely important for our country, and to present it in a way that showed respect for the various sides in the debates.

And one of the points that I make in the book is I was part of those debates, and I was on this side or on that side of the various issues that were being discussed in the government about the justification for the war, about how to handle the post-Saddam period and the like. But I found while I was in those debates that the arguments that were being made by the other side had merit. And I tried to present throughout the book the fact that this was not a debate between people who were smart and people who were dumb. This was not a debate between people who were well motivated and poorly motivated. These were extremely difficult debates dealing with very hard problems. And what I tried to do in the book is to show respect for the main arguments being made all around.

Something that I particularly want to comment on – and then I'll be happy to stop talking now and let the questions and comments begin – is there are a lot of people who simply assumed – and this includes some people who've written for major newspapers – who simply assumed that whenever a book like this comes out, it has to be government officials engaged in finger-pointing and blame-laying. And I was conscious of that when I wrote the book. And I went out of my way to write a book that I do not believe that anybody who actually bothers to read even just a substantial piece of it would find is a blame-laying and finger-pointing book.

What I have tried to do is be critical of all of the work being done in the government on this subject, from the work done by other agencies, the work done by the Defense Department and the work done by my office. And I think the people who actually bother to read the book will see that. And it's important because – and I think Paul Wolfowitz called attention to this – it's extremely important, because we have to realize how difficult these questions were, and understanding that there was good faith on the part of serious people trying to help the country dealing with extremely difficult problems. It's important for the public.

And I don't try to justify every decision that was made, even positions taken by my office, but I do think it's important for people to understand the actual nature of the debates, and that's what I try to do and that's why I put so much emphasis on documentation and allowing people to come to their judgments, allowing readers to come to their own judgments about these matters.

Thank you.

MR. WEINSTEIN: Great. Okay. Well, thank you, Doug.

We'll now take questions and answers from the floor. We really want to hear from our panelists, so I want to ask everyone to limit your questions to no more than 30 seconds. Please, do not present commentary or statements. I assure you, as moderator, I will cut you off. Please stand and identify yourself and your affiliation when presenting questions. The first question is from Eli Lake of the New York Sun. I'll present –

Q: Eli Lake of the New York Sun. This is really a question I guess for the whole panel, but in light of the experience of the independent elected Iraqi government in 2004 – well, 2005, 2006 up to, really the beginning of 2007, where you see a legacy of extraordinary graft, torture rooms in the basement of the Interior Ministry, infiltration of the Iraqi security services. How does that experience augur for the argument at the center of your book, Mr. Feith, and for not having an occupation, wouldn't – and in some ways, isn't the successful counterinsurgency now in some ways a reintegration of American forces in the daily lives of Iraqis to prevent all these other abuses?

MR. FEITH: You call attention to real problems. I don't think that the solution to that problem was having the Coalition Provisional Authority run Iraq as the occupation government for 14 months. At some point – even if you think that that tenure of the United States as the occupation power was a good thing, at some point, that was going to end, and when that was going to end, you were going to have all of the state building problems that include the types of abuses that you've talked about. I think you've identified a real problem, but I don't think that the solution to that is that the United States colonizes Iraq. And I think that in some ways, our forfeiture of the moment when we could have consolidated our position as the liberators of Iraq, and when we set ourselves up as the occupiers, our forfeiture of that moment made all of the problems of Iraq, including of the type that you're talking about, more difficult to deal with.

MR. WEINSTEIN: Peter?

MR. RODMAN: I think what we're talking about is not an issue of public administration and the quality thereof. It's an issue of political legitimacy, political authority. When a regime collapses, especially a totalitarian regime, you get a huge vacuum of political authority, and so the issue was who's going to fill it and how do you fill it.

One option is to say, well, we'll take charge for a couple of years. But that assumes that somehow we're able to anesthetize political life in the society, and that's what I was skeptical of. The alternative is to say these people have to run their own affairs. If the moderate Iraqis don't get their feet on the ground in some way soon, then there are going to a lot of other forces at work. And that I think was a tougher question. You pay a price either way, and there are risks in either way. And obviously, we wanted the risk of letting them run their own affairs as you get a lot of regional phenomena in the quality of their public administration. But the alternative is – Doug said – is we're going to sit there for how many years, or we're going to try to run it according to our standards.

MR. SENOR: You know, listening to your question, Eli, I thought of something that an Iraqi Shiite military official in the new Iraqi army said to me – it was about two years ago, when he was watching the debates here in the U.S. Congress about us withdrawing, and he said, the message you need to convey back to Washington is we are fighting an insurgency, predominantly a Sunni insurgency, and you need to help us fight that fight and win that fight, because you get to leave at some point. We all have to live with each other, we Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds have to live with one another. And to ask us, put us in the position of waging this war, or this counter – or whatever you want to call it – will only deepen and intensify the already very deep and intense sectarian tensions in this country. So you need to be standing with us, because you get to go home. We have to live with each other.

And in many respects, I think that's a metaphor for a lot of the issues we're dealing with. Of course, the Coalition Provisional Authority should not have existed through eternity, and the idea that we should have been governing Iraq forever is crazy. On the other hand, I think we've set up sort of a strong – those weren't our only choices. That doesn't mean that the plan to hand over sovereignty to a Shiite Islamist-dominated government immediately after the regime fell, when a community that represents 20 percent of the population feels isolated, alienated and antagonized, that that was the solution, and that would somehow be better than what we have, simply because it was more Iraqi. In the eyes of those Sunnis who are antagonized, I'm not convinced they viewed as more Iraqi. And as much as they hate us, they hated that other alternative more.

And I think as Paul said in his comments, these decisions are often ones that are sort the least of the bad options. It's never black and white. It's never clear. But that is my view, that the insurgency, the problem the Sunni communities were dealing with would not have been solved by what has been proposed as the alternative to the CPA. And I don't only think it would have been better either.

MR. WEINSTEIN: Paul?

MR. WOLFOWITZ: Just a few comments. First of all, I think the debate that you've heard here is a very thoughtful one, and it demonstrates that it's not black and white either way. And I found Dan's comments very informative and instructive. And as

I was listening, too, it seems to me, and I need to go back and read those parts of Doug's book again, or maybe Doug should do it.

There's a lot of stress there, and I think correctly that the people who are inclined to an occupation arrangement didn't trust the externals. But another part of it was the reluctance to give up control, and I don't know how much that's in the documents, but I think it was in the body language of every cabinet officer.

And the trouble with that is it's an illusion to think that we control the country in my view. I certainly understand, and I think Dan's used the terms now, to turnover things to a sovereign Iraqi government. Well, neither we nor a sovereign Iraqi government would control most – a very large percentage of what was going on. On the other hand, even today we have an enormous amount of control even with a sovereign government, even with a government that can go and send its army to Basra on its own now, which is something that frankly, I think, is a very good thing, and yet we have a lot of leverage.

So I think to understand this debate and to look at, as Dan correctly says, the interim Iraqi authority was not – you didn't say it this way. Anyway, it left huge blanks to be filled in, but that's precisely the point. They were to be filled in in a negotiation between us with all of our money and weapons and other influence, and a group of Iraqis who would negotiate how much they would actually control. And one of the items to be negotiated would have been who they include and who they don't include.

And I think in that respect, I was re-reading Peter's memo. I don't think for the first time, but you get old. It's a brilliant memo. And the part that really caught me was he says there are bad guys all over Iraq who will strive to fill the political vacuum. An occupation government will only delay the process of unifying the moderate forces. And I do think again, it's not black and white, but I think the fact that for the first 14 months, they were really disempowered. They were encouraged to squabble with each other. They didn't have any responsibility for any decisions which is a formula for being irresponsible, and they never spoke for the authority at all. So the constant face on everything was an American. Even when we captured Saddam Hussein, it was Ambassador Bremer who announced it.

But finally, I'd say one more thing: There's a lot going on besides security, but I think security is the underpinning of everything that was going on, both good and bad. And in my view, one of the mistakes that the occupation authority made was to delay, significantly, the creation of an Iraqi Army that could do internal security. And the Iraqi Army we focused on constructing was three divisions oriented toward external defense, and in fact, exclusively to external defense. So when the crisis in Fallujah happened in the spring of 2004, and when the first of those brigades was ordered to Fallujah, they said, wait a minute, we didn't sign up to do internal security, and they were gone. By the way, we also called back one brigade of the old Iraqi Army, the Fallujah Brigade, and it was not only gone, it went over to the other side.

So building a reliable, politically reliable army that's dedicated in a vague way — because it's not a precise way — to the new Iraq, I believe was crucial to everything else, and we started very late on that. Now, would a sovereign Iraqi government have moved it along faster? I think so. But that's like so many other things here, it's the road not taken, and one doesn't know what lay down that road.

MR. SENOR: Can I just respond to just one thing? On the issue of moderate forces, the idea that handing over sovereignty would have empowered the moderate forces, the challenge of the problem of handing — one of them — of handing over sovereignty immediately was, I think, that it would put the moderate forces at a great disadvantage. Who were the best politically organized constituencies or leaders in Iraq after the fall of the regime? They were the Ba'athists and the Shiite Islamists. Those were the two best — the moderates were not the best organized.

And I actually think that giving them time, as Vice President Cheney said at a National Security Council principals meeting on May 8th, 2003 — he said, we are not at the point yet where the people we want to emerge can emerge. And he was actually right. The moderates that Peter cited were not ready and were not organized, and the idea that handing over sovereignty immediately would have helped them, I disagree with. I think it would have given the upper hand to the people who we were and should have been most concerned about.

MR. WEINSTEIN: We turn it over to Ali Alyami for a question.

Q: Can you hear me?

MR. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

Q: Is this working? No? Okay. My name is Ali Alyami, of Center for Democracy and Human Rights in Saudi Arabia and Washington, D.C. The last time I said this, somebody who was sitting next to me said, you must be kidding. I'm not kidding. I am fighting for democracy in Saudi Arabia. My question is actually based on a proposition I had with an officer that served in the US Army whom I know very well. And during our discussions I asked you are 23 years old, what would you do if you had to plan all this?. And I was actually amazed at his observations. He said, knowing that Iraq is surrounded by the most anti-democratic systems in the world: Saudi Arabia, Iran and Syria. And naturally, people liked Saddam Hussein, because he made them look good even though they are very bad — they were mad that he was gone because they would have to be themselves and be scrutinized. My question was, and Mr. Wolfowitz, I read that you made a passionate appeal and Camp David at one time to go into Iraq . Why wasn't somebody in the administration, have someone within who said to the Saudis, the Iranians and the Syrian directly or indirectly and tell them, if any of your people cross your borders to interfere with our efforts in Iraq, you will pay a very high price. Why wasn't that done?

MR. WOLFOWITZ : You mean after the liberation.

Q: And I said hindsight is 20/20.

MR. WEINSTEIN: Sure. I'll repeat the question. The question essentially is why no one from the U.S. was sent before the war in Iraq to Iraq's neighboring countries to warn them about interfering as the U.S. forces came to ground there?

MR. WOLFOWITZ: I don't know if Doug has anymore record on this than I do, but my impression is that we did do that with Syria, we did do that with Iran. I don't know whether we did with Saudi Arabia, but I know I was told that the Saudis were supposedly trying hard to control that flow. And I can't tell you more than that. Maybe Doug can.

MR. FEITH: No. I think that's essentially right. And it was – as the questioner points out, it was not enormously effective.

MR. WEINSTEIN: Okay. Great. The fellow with the moustache. And please identify yourself.

Q: Tammam alBarazi from the Al-Watan Al-Arabi magazine. I want to ask, the last book published about Iraq, they said that the meeting of Kanan Makiya as you mentioned – Kanan Makiya, all of you mentioned him – the meeting of November 2003 was President Bush was really critical when he said that the Iraqi people will welcome you with candy and flowers. And they said that President Bush's really final decision was really made at that point. Secondly, why couldn't you convince your allies that there was no occupation after 2004? For example, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia last year in 2007 at the Arab Summit he said this was an illegal occupation of Iraq. Why did you fail with your neighbors, your allies?

MR. FEITH: On the question of when the president made his decision to go to war, that's something that I look at quite a bit in my book, and my sense was that the president had launched what he hoped would be a diplomatic resolution of the problem when he launched his UN diplomacy with his first famous speech to the UN General Assembly in September, 2002. That diplomacy culminated with the UN Resolution 1441, and that resolution said there was a final opportunity for Saddam Hussein to resolve the problem without war, if he were willing to cooperate with the United Nations in implementing its various UN resolutions. It became clear in early December of 2002 that Saddam Hussein was not cooperating. He gave a false WMD declaration which Hans Blix immediately identified as inadequate and not cooperative.

And it was at that point – a meeting occurred a few days later that I talk about at some length in the book, where the president said, given that Saddam Hussein has not cooperated with all these United Nations diplomacy efforts, the president said that he thought that war was inevitable. Now, even then, the president had one final initiative which everybody considered a very long shot, and it didn't bear fruit, and that was the ultimatum to Saddam Hussein to leave which the president issued 48 hours before the

war started. I think that's where the decision was made, and I think that hinging it on the meeting with Kanan Makiya is not correct.

MR. WEINSTEIN: A brief comment. Yes. Dan?

MR. SENOR: I would just say – something you said in the previous question said it which was the challenges we faced and continue to face with the neighbors of Iraq, the neighboring governments of Iraq are enormously frustrating. It's amazing to me that the vast majority of governments in the region still do not have diplomats in Baghdad, still do not have ambassadors in Baghdad. And I think this challenge relates to, or is important to consider in light of what Peter talked about earlier about the Karzai model in Afghanistan and the sort of post-war period that we had in Afghanistan transition, immediate transition to a sovereign Afghan government under the leadership of Karzai, and why didn't we try something similar in Iraq. And I can't tell you how many times I would hear from American officials, from Western press, where's Karzai, where's our Iraqi Karzai?

I think there's a tendency to analogize Iraq and Afghanistan, and point out what worked in Afghanistan, and why didn't work in Iraq, and we should have done what we've done in Afghanistan, and I think you can over-analogize it. Afghanistan was fundamentally different for a whole host of reasons. We had the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan that worked with us and gave us credibility when Karzai was selected, and gave him credibility. He had broad base support – the Northern Alliance had broad-based support within Afghanistan; there was nothing comparable in Iraq.

But even more significantly, it comes back to these two questions. The neighboring governments around Afghanistan had a far different attitude to our war in Afghanistan than neighboring governments had towards our war in Iraq. I, by the way, was a believer and still am a believer about the idea of building a democracy in Iraq that could stimulate democratic reform throughout the region. I know it's out of fashion to say that, but I believed it then, I believed it while I was in Iraq, and I still believe it today. But there's no doubt that our rhetoric in that regard, our rhetoric in talking about Iraq as a democracy as a model for the region threatened all these governments in the region, which today still have in their minds and interests in slowing down the sort of – the effort to legitimize an Iraqi democracy, particularly a Shiite-led Iraqi democracy.

In Afghanistan, we never talked about a postwar Afghanistan being a model for the region. And if we did, if we started asking questions, would we have gotten basing in Tajikistan or Uzbekistan would have Pakistan given us overflight rights? Would have the Russians or the Iranians helped us at that time in trying to build some sort of coalition of these different factions inside of Afghanistan?

By the way, to the extent that the Iranians were helpful to us then, I believe the help ended then. I do not believe that that was the beginning of a process whereby we could have had continued cooperation with the Iranians.

But my point is had we used the “democracy model for the region” rhetoric in Afghanistan, I do not think we would have gotten the regional support that was important in not only winning in Afghanistan, but transitioning to come modicum of a stable sovereign government under Karzai, so I don’t think the analogy to Iraq is clear cut.

MR. WEINSTEIN: Okay. Why don’t we turn to the back row over there?

Q: Stephen Morris, John’s Hopkins SAIS. I just want to preface my question to you by pointing out that I supported the decision to go to war on the pages of two major Australian newspapers, and I continue to support the surge, and the desire to see the job done and success achieved in Iraq. But I also happen to believe that what has happened in the intervening years has been a disaster for the United States and some of you on this platform bear some responsibility through decisions you’ve made. And I’d like to ask – give you the chance to reconsider some of these decisions, which are different from the concession made by Doug Feith in his book, which reflects a lawyer’s perspectives on things, I think. Four things— one has already been mentioned by Dan. I’ll just run through them –

MR. WEINSTEIN: But briefly, please.

Q: – and you can please answer. Number one, you went to war without enough troops. General Shinseki predicted that, and General Petraeus seems to have proved it. Number two, you allowed the looting to occur, thereby showing that this occupation was a feeble occupation, that the bad guys in Iraq had nothing to fear from us and the majority of the population or large segments of it believed that we went to Iraq to destroy the country, because we did not create a new authority.

Thirdly, most important of all, you decided to dissolve the entire army, therefore sending hundreds of thousands of men without jobs but with guns to think about what they might do next. And fourthly, which Dan has already mentioned, you were clueless of counterinsurgency. That problem was not necessarily confined to you, gentlemen. It ran from the Secretary of Defense down to General Sanchez in the Army command. But nevertheless, these were four critical factors which led me to conclude that whilst this was the right war, it was at the wrong time. Would you concede any of these points, please?

MR. WEINSTEIN: I think I need to repeat the question. The question was – Professor Morris at Johns Hopkins University he had four questions for the panelists if there were any things they wish to reconsider in the war strategy with regard to troop levels, the looting that occurred, the decision to dissolve the Iraqi Army, and the inability to fight the insurgency. And let me begin by returning to our author first, and remind everyone that we’re running low on time.

MR. FEITH: I’ll try to do this very quickly because of the shortness of time. I can’t do justice to your question. It’s a serious question. On the issue of troops, there clearly was a problem on troop levels. There was a debate though about where do you

get the extra troops that are needed for security after the overthrow of Saddam? And I recount in the book the nature of that debate. Do you get more troops from the United States? Do you try to get them from coalition partners? Do you try to get them by building up the Iraqis? Paul Wolfowitz alluded to the problem that we had where there were disagreements within the U.S. government over how to increase the troops after the overthrow of Saddam. There were also intelligence issues where CENTCOM had been told in advance of the war that troops would be usable. It's a very serious question. I address it to some extent in the book, obviously not the last word on this very large and difficult question.

On looting, I agree with you. Looting was a disaster, and I also discuss in the book some of the work that we did to try to call attention to that. And one of my biggest personal regrets is that the work that my office did in that subject, which highlighted looting as a potentially extremely serious problem—which we said before the war was something that could result in winning the war and losing the peace—was a matter that we didn't make as much of as we should have.

On the dissolution of the army, there – even though in the book I criticize Ambassador Bremer for various things, I defend him on this issue of the dissolution of the army, where I think he's gotten a lot of unfair criticism. And there's a complex issue that I just can't, in five seconds, deal with, but I would refer people to the book for the discussion of the merits of the dissolution of the army issue. I happen to think that under the circumstances, given that the army had essentially dissolved itself, it was easier to start from scratch at the point that Ambassador Bremer got there than it would have been to try to reassemble the army and then reform it.

And lastly, on the counterinsurgency issue, that's an extremely complex question I can't even begin to address here, but if anybody else wants to jump in on that, it's clearly an important point, but you could spend another hour and a half just scratching the surface of that.

MR. WOLFOWITZ: It's a huge question. It's a very good question and requires another forum to really try to answer it. I guess I'd make a couple of observations. There were two issues about enough troops. One was enough troops for the major combat, and a lot of people said we didn't have it, and obviously we did. And there was a very difficult balance that had to be struck between surprise, which meant a smaller force, and enough troops, or a lot of troops, which meant a much slower pace, and with the potential of many disastrous consequences. And I don't know whether things would have happened or not, things like the destruction of the oil field, but also things that probably wouldn't have happened but we feared like the use of chemical weapons.

The other enough-troops issue was enough troops for the afterwards, and I think on that point, yes, we were clueless on counterinsurgency. I think I said in my comments quoting Doug's book, no one anticipated this insurgency. A lot of people were very slow to recognize it once it had started. And I do think that a real failure – and you can assign responsibility all over the place – was not having enough reliable Iraqi troops early

enough and fast enough, because I think a sensible counterinsurgency strategy wouldn't have been to flood the country with 300,000 Americans, but rather to build up the Iraqi forces to be able to protect the population much more quicker.

MR. SENOR: I would just say two things. One, what you addressed and what Doug and Paul have spoken to was really the central question, the central tension we're dealing with all the time. If troops represent in some way a symbol of occupation, how many do you have and do you recognize that on the one hand, you don't want too big a footprint of occupation, and on the other hand, you need a big footprint of occupation because it's only once we provide basic security that we have a pathway to leave. And that, I remember Ambassador Bremer sending a note back to Washington, saying to the White House – saying, I fear we have the worst of both worlds: we have an ineffective occupation, we have a significant enough occupation that we represent humiliation and indignity in the eyes of many Iraqis, but not enough troops, not a big enough occupation if you will – not his words, mine – to provide them the basic security that they needed to cooperate with us.

On the issue of training up Iraqi security forces to do internal security, that may have been the path to go. We don't know. The service and the performance of these Iraqi troops, particularly early on, were very uneven. The operations recently in Basra have been enormously impressive however. But they were very uneven, and the idea that we could have quickly built up a domestic internal Iraqi security force, and hope that that could effectively be the basis of our counterinsurgency strategy, I think would have been very risky, rather than just having the sufficient U.S. troops there to prevent the looting, to provide basic security for the Iraqis. That was in my mind much less of a risk vis-à-vis promoting security in that very short period after the end of major combat operations, which was an extremely important period, and I think the lack of law and order and authority during that period had repercussions that we are still dealing with today in Iraq.

MR. WEINSTEIN: I want to thank Paul Wolfowitz for his extraordinary contribution this afternoon. He needs to go. We'll now turn it over to Diana West for the next question. Thanks. (Applause.) Great. And again, I want to remind all of our questioners to keep it brief, because we are running low on time.

Q: Yes. Hello. My name is Diana West. I'm a syndicated columnist appearing locally in the Washington Times. My question is for all the panelists. I was wondering, all of you, what you think we can reasonably expect to get out of our expenditure of blood and treasure in Iraq at this point, and whether you've learned anything over these past years to make you doubt or question whether we will truly get an ally in the war on terror as the president has very often promised us?

MR. WEINSTEIN: Great. Okay.

MR. RODMAN: Well, I'll start. A stable, moderate Iraq would be, and will be, a tremendous geopolitical improvement in this situation in the Middle East. And that I think now, particularly after the success of surge, this possibility looks like it is within

reach. I think 10 years ago, we had an Iran problem and an Iraq problem, and Iraq seemed to be the most urgent, the most menacing, a hegemonic tyrant with hegemonic ambitions in the Gulf, and we felt that we had to deal with it, and if George Bush didn't deal with it in 2003, we would have had to deal with it in 2004, 2005. If we hadn't done it, we'd be having the same debate now about WMD, probably. So if Iraq stabilizes and you have a moderate democratic, stable Iraq, that is a great success, a strategic success for the United States that improves the situation in the Middle East, and I think it was inescapable.

MR. SENOR: I think the recent operations in Basra in part begin to answer the question. What we had in the spring of 2004 when I was in Iraq, when we were confronting both the uprising in Fallujah at the same time we were confronting Muqtada al-Sadr in Sadr City in southern Iraq, we had Iraqi political leadership that was truly unwilling to confront Muqtada al-Sadr politically. We had Iraqi security forces that to say did not perform is an understatement. We had a real mess.

Fast forward to the recent operations in Basra where you have an Iraqi prime minister who not only made the decision to confront Muqtada al-Sadr, a Shiite prime minister who, by the way, is in power in many respects because of Sadr, because of Sadr's support for him during those negotiations over the formation of the current government when Jafri was rejected. You had an Iraqi prime minister, a Shiite Iraqi prime minister confronting an extremist in his own community without advance coordination with the U.S. government. In 2004, we were begging the Iraqis to take the lead. In 2008, Prime Minister Maliki let General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker know at the 11th hour that he was about to conduct this operation. There was a scattershot and haphazard approach the way the operation was conducted, but the point was it was done under the leadership and the direction of an Iraqi prime minister.

And in so doing, I think it answered an important question, whether or not the Iraqi government was going to become closer to Iran or the United States. And there has been a sense and a debate in this country for some time about who the Iraqi leadership, the Shiite leadership, will depend on more and work with more closely. And by confronting Muqtada al-Sadr the way Prime Minister Maliki did, he sent a signal that he was, in so doing, also confronting Iran and its support for mayhem and terror and bloodshed inside Iraq. And I think that is enormously important.

MR. WEINSTEIN: Great. Okay. Over here.

Q: I'm Bill Steerman. I was an NSC staffer under four presidents. I've long been curious as to why the administration later justified going into Iraq based on the fact that Saddam Hussein wanted us to believe that he had weapons of mass destruction. More importantly, his own generals believed he had weapons of mass destruction right after the eve of the war and the government has been silent, and it was a pretty good argument I think the government was pretty consistently silent on that. The RAND Corporation report had a brief mention of the generals but that's the only one I have ever seen.

MR. WEINSTEIN: An excellent question and one that Dough Feith deals with at length in the book.

MR. FEITH: Right.

MR. WEINSTEIN: The question is why the United States never – why the administration never talked about the fact that we believed the Iraqis had WMD. More importantly, their generals believed they had WMD at their disposal and that Saddam's regime was willing to use these as a justification for the war.

MR. FEITH: Part of the conventional wisdom that's developed in recent years is that there was no WMD threat in Iraq. And that basically results from the fact that the administration did make a gigantic error in relying on erroneous intelligence that said that we would find chemical and biological stockpiles in Iraq.

One of the things I look at in my book is, first of all, the results of the Iraqi Survey Group work that was done after Saddam was overthrown and that looked into the question of what Iraq's WMD capabilities were, the results of that were that we actually found in Iraq Saddam's WMD programs. We found chemical and biological weapons programs. We found that he had put his nuclear program in a kind of suspended animation, which our intelligence community had said he had an active program before the war. That was a mistake. It was a kind of dormant program. But he had kept the long lead item in place, which was his team of technicians.

What we found after the war, while we did not find the stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons, we found facilities, we found personnel, we found material, we found capabilities, and we found that Saddam had put himself in a position where in three to five weeks, he could have manufactured the chemical and biological weapons stockpiles that we thought we would find.

This question that Mr. Steerman raises is an extremely interesting one of the game that Saddam Hussein seemed to be playing, where he wanted on the one hand not to retain the stockpiles because he wanted to get out from the under the economic sanctions, and he was apparently expecting that he was going to someday have to be inspected in order to get out from those economic sanctions, and he didn't want to inspectors to find stockpiles. On the other hand, he did want the people against whom he had used chemical weapons in the past – the Iranians, and his own Kurds and Shiites – to believe that he had chemical weapons.

And so he basically persuaded every intelligence service around the world that he had these chemical and biological weapons stockpiles. He persuaded his own generals that he had it. He persuaded everybody in the U.S. government that he had it. It was a very strange policy that Saddam Hussein was pursuing, that – one of the best studies on that subject by the way, and I draw on it in my book was a study called the "Iraqi Perspectives Project" which is based on the interrogations of Saddam Hussein, Tareq

Aziz, “Chemical Ali,” all the top military and civilian officials in the Iraqi government. And a bunch of historians went and reviewed the interrogation records and the documents that we found after Saddam was overthrown, and wrote up this whole issue of Saddam’s policy toward WMD from the Iraqi perspective. And it’s a tremendously interesting piece of work. I draw on it extensively in my book, but I would refer people to the “Iraqi Perspectives Project,” which you could download for free on the internet.

MR. WEINSTEIN: Let me turn to Charles Horner from Hudson.

Q: I’m Charles Horner, of the Hudson Institute. First off, I’d like to thank Doug for writing this book and for two reasons, not only for the enormous amount of information that it conveys, but I think for the larger single and most important bit of information it conveys is to the manner in which this system of our works, its frenetic pace, its operation on the brink of exhaustion, its endless meetings and all of its potential for innovation of both mind and body, which leads me to the question that I’d like to ask, and I’m sorry really that Paul isn’t here.

The president of the United States once said rather famously that he was the decider. And therefore, one, I suppose, can divide the executive branch into the decider and everyone else in it. And the purpose of the rest of the executive branch is to help the president of the United States make his decision. Now, the president of the United States makes a decision from which other decisions flow. And in this case he made let’s call it the master decision which was to remove the regime of Saddam Hussein.

And my question to you folks, who’ve been working in these particular vineyards is this: do you have the impression that at the time he made the master decision he had a good grasp, a full grasp, an adequate grasp of the nature and the complexity of all the subsidiary decisions which were implicit in the master decision that he made? And do you think that the system in that respect is good at doing that?

I’m struck by the discussion of all the things that arose after – in other words, after the master decision was made, the number of things which had to be addressed, and quite logically so and quite necessarily so.

I ask this question not in any way being critical, but as someone who did a little bit of this in the government and understanding the difficulties and having the workings of the analysis, the papers, the meetings, the process, the reports coming in and out, plus all the other things people had to do in order to present all of this information to the president in some useful way. So do you have the impression that this system helped him do this, at least understand what he was doing, and if not, is there any conceivable way in which that could be improved?

MR. FEITH: I’ll take the first part. You’re well set up to do the second part. The question in essence was did the president have a grasp of all of the difficult decisions that were going to have to be made after the president made the master decision that we had

to remove Saddam Hussein from power by force? And then secondly, does our system of government help the president, as it should, to make all those decisions?

What I would say is that one part of my book that has probably gotten more attention than any other part is the exercise that Secretary Rumsfeld went through in October, 2002, when he wanted to make it clear – exactly along the lines of what Charles Horner just mentioned – he wanted to make it clear that his role, that Secretary Rumsfeld’s role in the government was not as an advocate, but as adviser to the president. And so he put together a memorandum that listed all of the risks of war. There were basically all the arguments against going to war, all the things that could go wrong in the event of war that he could think of at the strategic level.

And he started off with a list, then he called Paul Wolfowitz and me and General Myers and General Pace into his office, and we went through this, and we changed it, expanded it. And it’s an extremely serious, and as I say in the book, grim document, many of the elements of which were things that emphasized that whatever we now, in October of 2002, thought might happen in the event of war, things could be a lot worse than we anticipate. The war could be bloodier, the war could costlier, and the war could be more protracted than anybody at the time anticipated. It turns out of course that turned out to be true. He even raised the point, which was not something that we believed, but it showed the skepticism that he brought to all of the intelligence that we were getting on all subjects. He said, we may not find WMD in Iraq, and it will destroy our credibility.

This was an extremely serious effort to give the president the downsides of war because, as I said, Secretary Rumsfeld wanted to make sure that he was not being viewed as an advocate, and he wanted to make sure that the president, when he was weighing this enormous decision, had the best advice possible on the risks of action, because it was clear we had also discussed at length the risks of leaving Saddam Hussein in power.

So I think that on the fundamental question, the first question that you asked, did the president had a grasp of it, I think he had some grasp of it, and I think that this exercise that Secretary Rumsfeld went through – it’s also interesting by the way that even though the State Department leadership and the CIA leadership is often referred to in the press as having been the voices of caution on Iraq, the most serious caution brought forward to the president, and this was – Secretary Rumsfeld took this to a National Security Council meeting and walked everybody through this paragraph by paragraph – the most serious assessments of the downsides of war came not from the people who are generally credited with having been voices of caution, but came from Secretary Rumsfeld and his team.

On the question of whether the system works well, I know that Peter Rodman is working on a book which I’ve gotten a peek at, and it’s an extremely interesting and incisive book about how the system works. You might want to comment on that.

MR. RODMAN: Not everything that goes wrong is a process problem. I think in Iraq there were some mistaken assumptions and policy judgments that might have been

made differently. Let me say on the decision to go to war, as Doug said, this was a decision that the president deliberated over for over a year, and I think he had the benefit of whatever wisdom there was in the U.S. government, such as it was. He had – I mean, every agency had plenty of opportunity to express its view. He knew what everybody's views were, he knew what everybody's assessment was, and he made that decision. I don't think there's any different procedure which would have led to a different decision. Implementation is a different problem, and as I said, some of the things that went wrong were, again, not bureaucratic problems, but mistaken assumptions. But there were definitely a lot of bureaucratic issues and rivalries in the administration that were not decisively handled. And that's – you can wait for my book. (Laughter.)

MR. WEINSTEIN: We have time for Natan's question and one more after that.

Q: Hi. I'm Natan Guttman with the Forward Newspaper. Ever since the Bush administration came to power, there was criticism aimed at you, Mr. Feith, and others in the Pentagon, supporting the war against Iraq out of ulterior motives, mainly out of the support of Israel more than out of the interest of the – the best interest of the United States. There was talk about a Jewish cabal. I wanted to know how much of a distraction that was to you in your work. Was it significant? Did you ever feel the need to relate to these problems, to make an extra effort to make sure that this criticism is answered?

MR. FEITH: There are certain seamy aspects of political debate in America, and you've just highlighted one of them. But the reasons that I and my colleagues thought that Iraq was a threat, thought that all reasonable measures short of war had been tried ultimately without success, and the reason that we supported the president's decision that it was necessary to remove Saddam Hussein from power are laid out in great detail in my book, and what I do in the book is I quote from the actual documents that we used at the time. So if people want to know what the motivations were, what the analysis was, they can see it in the book, and they will see that those kinds of allegations are false.

And one of the things that I think is an interesting irony is, there've been a lot of articles written about how the people who supported the war, the neo-cons operated as a conspiracy in the government. And one of the points that I make is, in some ways the most remarkable thing about the way Secretary Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, I and others within the Pentagon operated was that it was precisely the opposite of conspiracy. We wrote memoranda, we wrote down every thought that we believed was relevant to a government decision on these matters. We put them down in writing. And we put them down in writing for a number of reasons, partly because it was much more effective within the bureaucracy to lay things out, it was more precise, it disciplined the debate, it was good for the internal deliberations of the government.

And we also thought it was important that when people looked back, they could clearly see what did we think we were trying to accomplish at the time, because history books are full of people looking back and remembering themselves as (passionate?) and brilliant. And I think it's much more interesting to find out what did the people advocate and why, and what did they expect, and what assumptions did they use at the time when

the decisions were actually being deliberated on. So that's what I strove to do in the book, and anybody who raises questions of the type that you raised can look in the book what our actual analysis and motivations were.

MR. WEINSTEIN: Last question over here.

Q: Richard Speier, an independent consultant on proliferation. In your wonderful book, you began with a scene setter of 9/11 and the discussions immediately thereafter addressing the question of how to protect us from another similar attack, especially one using weapons of mass destruction. Well, shortly after 9/11 there was another incident using weapons of mass destruction, and they were the anthrax attacks a month later. Your book only deals with it in two sentences. And of course, for the last six and a half years the FBI has been looking at it as a law enforcement matter, but can you elaborate on what, at the time the international security people in the government, were thinking about the anthrax attacks?

MR. FEITH: It's a very good question. One of the things that those anthrax attacks demonstrated was that it was possible for somebody to deploy in an attack a weapon of mass destruction, anthrax, and not have any return address. And to this day, as you rightly point out, six and a half years later, we don't know where that anthrax came from.

And one of the things that that did drive home to us and we thought about it at the time, was that the deterrence policies that we had had in place throughout the Cold War to deal with major threats were all based on the idea that if we got attacked, we would know where the attack came from, we'd be able to take action, and we could say in advance that whoever was responsible for an attack like that would be punished severely, and that could have a deterrent effect.

If people could launch attacks with substances like anthrax, or possibly even a nuclear weapon that would not allow us to trace back the origin of the weapon, it could completely defeat any kind of deterrence policy. And it was one of the things that highlighted that the kinds of threats that we were concerned about were unique challenges, and challenges that we really hadn't dealt with in our history before. One of the things that Paul Wolfowitz read from my book is where I described the 9/11 attack as the first successful act of terrorism of mass destruction.

And what that attack focused us on was a problem that in previous decades was not a major thought, even for the people who tended to specialize in the study of terrorism, which was the danger the terrorists would use weapons of mass destruction. And that was not a major thought in the past because terrorism was viewed generally as a more limited phenomenon, but the idea that terrorists might be launching attacks not for political theater, not to get just attention called to a cause, not to turn that attention into sympathy, but actually to cause mass destruction, was something that 9/11 drove home, and it's part of the reason that it focused the president on the coincidence of the list of

leading states supporters of terrorism and the leading states of proliferation concern in the world. And that's what gave rise to his Axis of Evil speech in January 2002.

MR. WEINSTEIN: On that note I'd like to thank our panelists for the extraordinary discussion this afternoon. (Applause.) Also I'd like to thank Doug Feith as well for his remarks. I want to remind everyone here that Doug Feith's book "War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism" is available for sale outside, in our Hudson Institute lobby, also available for sale online and at leading bookstores.

I should note it is, as everyone noted today, a remarkable book, whether you agree or disagree with it, simply for the documentation that it provides. It is a very useful contribution to our national debate over this critical issue. I want to thank C-SPAN and my colleagues here at Hudson Institute for producing this fine event today.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

(END)