

**HUDSON
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—EDITED TRANSCRIPT—

**IRAQ AFTER THE ELECTIONS:
PROSPECTS FOR DEMOCRACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

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PROCEEDINGS

[PROCEEDINGS ALREADY IN PROGRESS]

MEYRAV WURMSER: Carl Gershman is the president of the National Endowment for Democracy. In that capacity, he presided over the development of the Endowment's Green Program in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union and Latin America.

Under his leadership, the NED created the quarterly Journal of Democracy in 1990 and launched the International Forum for Democratic Studies in 1994.

Entifadh Qanbar is the spokesman for the Iraqi National Congress and a special envoy for the United Iraqi Alliance List 169. He was born in Baghdad, Iraq, and has a bachelor's degree in engineering. Entifadh served five years in the Iraqi Air Force during the Iraq-Iran War and was arrested by Iraqi military security in 1987 for suspected activities against the Saddam regime. Based on his arrest, a biography was written: chapter 3, titled "Omar," in the book *Cruelty and Silence*, authored by Kanan Makiya who's also here, by the way, and is the author of *Republic of Fear*.

Entifadh came to the United States and applied for political asylum in 1990.

Richard, do you want to go first?

RICHARD PERLE: Well, if you'd like. From here or there?

MS. WURMSER: Anywhere you want.

MR. PERLE: Thanks, Meyrav. Thanks for including me in this. This is really for Iraqis in my view, and that's the main point I want to make today.

We are now I believe embarked on the right policy for Iraq, which is to entrust and empower the Iraqis. It's the policy that I believe we should have pursued much sooner.

What we saw in this election—and no one could fail to be moved by what we saw on election day in Iraq—might well have happened a year ago. So we lost a year. Maybe we lost 18 months. But now it's happened, and I hesitate to use the overused term turning point. It seems to me rather a step on the ladder, but it's probably six steps on the ladder.

It's not the end of the violence, of course. The desperation of those who want to throttle this democracy in its crib is more evident everyday and so we will continue to see acts of terror, of course.

But what the Iraqis have done in the way they turned out for this election—and indeed in the way they handled the election campaign and are dealing with the immediate post-election situation—is displaying a degree of maturity that many people around the world find extraordinary. And if

they find it extraordinary, it's because they had failed to pay close attention to what Iraqis were saying long before this election day; and because they failed to appreciate the universal appeal of democratic institutions and the fundamental human desire not to be dictated to.

That's why democracy is so infectious. That's why what is happening now in Iraq does not meet with the approval of Iraq's neighbors. Whatever they may say for our cameras, they have deep misgivings about the transformation of Iraqi society from the brutal dictatorship it was into the democracy it is now in the process of becoming, because it is obvious that Jordanians and Egyptians and Saudis and Iranians and others observing what has happened in Iraq will ask themselves why can't we vote for our leaders.

This has been a process, a partnership, between the United States and those Iraqis who are now going to assume power. And there's been a little bit of help from some of our friends, not nearly enough.

Now I think we will see some countries who were not willing to take the risks involved in supporting this enterprise clamber on board after the train has left the station. And so no one should be surprised if now the French and the Germans and others find modest ways in which to make a modest contribution. But that should be seen for what it is.

The last point I want to make is that we've all become accustomed, particularly inside the Beltway, to descriptions of the policy divide over the question of Iraq and over the question of democracy, in which realists, self-appointed, self-proclaimed, are contrasted with Wilsonians or idealists or sometimes the term of choice is neoconservative. It's time for us to rethink who the realists are.

Are the realists those who believe that we are safer and the world is a better place if we leave dictatorships in place? Or is the right path to greater safety and security, is the right way to combat terrorism to do what we can to transform those societies in which people deprived of basic human rights and the blessings of democracy turn increasingly to extremism as a way of expressing their opposition to the situation that has been forced upon them.

And I think this President will turn out to be extraordinarily visionary. He's had some help from our friend, Nathan Sharansky, and for those of you who haven't read Nathan's book, it's had a profound influence on the President. It was his Christmas gift to his closest friends. Finally, his advisors are now reading it, which is a reversal of the usual order of things. I urge you to read Nathan's book, *The Case for Democracy*, because that is now the policy of the United States. And the so-called realists will do what they can to temper what they regard as an excess of zeal. But I believe the Iraqi electorate has demonstrated that what is dismissed as unrealistic and zealous in some places is not only realistic, but it's the future.

MS. WURMSER: Carl?

CARL GERSHMAN: Thanks very much. I'm going to say a few words about Iraq, but I also want to speak about the significance of Iraq and what happened in Iraq for democracy in the broader Middle East region. Let me first say that I think what took place on January 30th was

really one of, in my view, one of the great events in the history of democracy. To see the people turn out in such numbers and against such threats was as stirring an event as anything I have seen in my lifetime. And there's no way that an event of that kind and the courage that was demonstrated and the determination to fight for democracy cannot have a broader impact.

The newspaper *Al Kutz*, which is a regional newspaper published in London, did an Internet poll of its readers and the readers tend to be, I would say, not terribly enthusiastic about U.S. policy anywhere, let alone in the Middle East. And over 300,000 readers responded to the poll. The question was, "what did they think of the elections in Iraq?" Was it a good thing or was it a bad thing? And overwhelmingly, 96 percent of the over 300,000 readers who responded to this poll were enthusiastic about what happened in Iraq. And I just think that's an indication of what the ripple effect of this election was in the region.

Clearly though, you know, there are many, many difficult steps that lie ahead, but I have real faith and confidence that even though there are going to be immense difficulties that the Iraqi people are going to be able to content with these difficulties as they have contended with the challenges that they've been faced with so far.

The critical difficulties will obviously involve the drafting of a constitution; working out the compromises that are going to have to be worked out with the Kurds and their place in a new Iraq, with the Sunnis and their place in the new Iraq, with the place of religion in a new Iraq.

But as I say, I think that they are going to be successful, and the Iraqi people are growing with the experience of democracy. They're learning how to deal with each other. They're learning the give and take of democracy and compromise.

There are going to be, as I said, difficulties. The pilgrimage that's coming up in the next month is a time when there could be a lot of violence. When people come to Najaf on the pilgrimage, there could be terrorism as there was last year, and many people could be killed. This could stimulate wider violence, but I believe that they're going to be able to transcend these threats.

And I think the immediate impact of what has happened and is happening in Iraq is going to be felt most in neighboring Iran, not in a way that is going to threaten, at least in the immediate future, the Iranian government, but what is being created in Iraq is an alternative model of Shi'a rule, rule that will be not theocratic, but will be democratic.

And I think this kind of an alternative model will have an influence in Iran and also the center of Shi'ism is in the process of moving from Qom, where it was in exile really during the period of Saddam Hussein to Najaf. And I think this will have an impact over time in Iran and strengthen the forces that I think represent a majority of the Iranian people that want to see an end to the kind of theocratic rule they've had and the beginnings of something closer to what the Iraqi people have now achieved for themselves.

In terms of thinking about the broader influence in the region, I don't think you can separate what has happened in Iraq from also what is happening as we speak between Israel and the Palestinians. Taken together, these developments—the elections that took place in the West

Bank and Gaza on January the 9th, the incipient steps that are being taken now to work out a cease fire, and to begin a process that might lead to negotiations—could have a wider impact, first because of, again, a second model of elections and where people are striving for democracy, but also because the existence of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians has been the principal excuse by Arab dictators to try to resist any kind of change and to try to appeal to a kind of a militant Pan-Arabism that would weaken any efforts to try to achieve democracy within state borders.

Democracy can only be achieved within specific states, with borders that have populations that have rights granted by a constitution. It cannot be achieved through these kind of broad regional, ethnic, or religious identities.

But at the same time, I think that as democracy progresses in the Middle East and as people who live in particular countries are going to be able to focus more on the events in their particular countries, the very fact that there is a kind of a regional identity I think could work to spread the effect of what's happening in Iraq and between Israel and Palestine.

To the degree that you have a sense of regional identity, these events that take place in one part of the region can spread to other parts of the region. There is a kind of an infectiousness that can take place, and Pan-Arabism in a certain sense can be turned on its head and become a force for the spreading of democratic ideas, democratic efforts. What you may see in the Middle East—I think you're already seeing it—is something that we have seen at the NED in regions like eastern Europe, where people in one country will help people in another country because they realize they have the same stake in democracy. We call it cross border work, and I think you're going to see more of that cross-border democracy work where people in one country are trying to help people achieve democracy in another country.

The progress that has been made in democracy in the Middle East since 9/11 is really extraordinary. Before 9/11, there were some people who were interested in working on these issues. We were doing a good deal before 9/11. But since 9/11, this issue has been put on the map. It is now on the policy agenda, not just because of Iraq, but also because of what is being said, and I especially want to pay tribute to President Bush for the remarks that he made; one of the speeches was to the National Endowment for Democracy to really explain why democracy and the progress of democracy in the region is the principal way in which the extremism that produces Islamist terrorism can be defeated.

In the beginning, the message that he articulated there was resistance because of where it came from, but before long this message started to take hold. There was a meeting just two months after his speech to the NED in Sana'a, in which a meeting of Arab NGOs and also some government officials came together to basically endorse the values and principles of democracy and say they had to go forward. There were subsequent meetings in Alexandria, in Doha, in Beirut, in Tunis, and I believe these ideas are now gaining considerable momentum in the region, and there are forces now on the ground in many countries that are now pressing forward.

Ultimately, the key factor in the advance of democracy has to come from within, and even if activists in particular countries are looking for international support, that support will not be

forthcoming unless they themselves are on the front lines taking the risks. It's just that way. There wouldn't have been the kind of support there was for Solidarity in Poland in the 1980s if Solidarity didn't exist, similar for the Soviet dissidents. They have to step out front. They have to take the risks in terms of pressing for democracy, but then they have every right to assume that we're going to stand with them if they get into trouble with their governments; and this is what President Bush pledged in his inaugural and in his State of the Union. And not only the United States, but also Europe and everyone who believes in democracy are going to have to stand with people in the region if they really start a push now against entrenched autocratic forces for democracy.

So these two elements—the activists on the ground and international support—are two critical factors in determining whether or not democracy can go forward in the region.

In addition to that, unlike in the 1970s and the 1980s, when people were pressing for freedom in the Soviet bloc, there now exists a wide range of institutions and initiatives, mostly in the West, but also increasingly in the Middle East itself, which support these tendencies. I mean, we're one institution and increased funding has been advocated for the NED to support these elements in the democratic forces in the region. But there's much more than that. The MEPI Program, one of the initiatives that came out of the G-8 Summit, which took place in Sea Island, Georgia, in June was the democracy assistance dialogue, which is to try to draw together the democratic forces in the region and in the United States and Europe and to bring in the governments to try to create a process which might be parallel to the Helsinki process that existed in the communist world in the 1970s and 1980s, which ultimately led to increased pressure on the governments and ultimately led to the fall of communism.

This process is beginning in the region. There's also pressure on the governments to implement reforms, and that pressure has to continue. All these things together—the activists, the support for the activists in terms of human rights support, the programs that now exist in the West to try to give support to—practical support, technical support, financial support to these activists groups has to go forward, and the governments also have to be pressured to try to continue to reform.

In the post-communist world, at the NED, we have been looking at what it takes—what are the factors that may contribute to breakthroughs in particular countries. People haven't really looked at this in the Middle East yet. But I want to emphasize the complexity of the process, the diversity of the factors that one has to take account of in trying to assess whether or not there are opportunities for change in particular countries, and the fact that it's going to be a very long-term process.

But just to give you an idea of how one has to try to think about this, I want to get to a particular country that I have in mind when I speak about this.

You have to think about the degree to which there is a consensus in the country for change; the extent to which the leadership of a country has popularity or is unpopular; the extent to which it's prepared to use force or not to use force in putting down a democratic movement; the extent to which political and civil rights exist in a country; the extent to which the NGO sector is

developed; the extent to which there are political parties; and the extent to which the parties and the NGOs can cooperate with each other; the access they all have to the media; the extent to which the electoral commission is independent, and the degree to which international observers have access to elections when they take place in a country; and the extent to which the international community is alert to the problems going on in the country and is prepared to intervene to, express their concerns and to intervene on behalf of democracy.

And when we looked at these factors, we tried to account for why was it—what accounted for the success of some of the breakthroughs that took place in countries like Croatia, in Slovakia, in Serbia in 2000, and in Georgia in late 2002. And there was a kind of a numerical value almost that could be attached to all of these factors together, which would indicate which countries have the best chance of a breakthrough. And obviously, Ukraine was a country that recently scored very well and indeed did achieve a breakthrough.

Now I say this because I believe that the most important country in the Middle East, which is Egypt, is beginning to enter into a process in which the parallels cannot just be drawn to other countries in the Middle East, but where we can actually begin to try to understand parallels to some of the countries in the post-communist world that are trying to go through democratic transitions against governments that are either authoritarian or semi-authoritarian—where there are some political spaces. It's not strictly speaking a totalitarian dictatorship. But there are some political spaces which democratic forces can use to try to enlarge the democratic space.

And that's what's happening in Egypt today. You saw the piece in the *Washington Post* today by our friend Sajudini Rahim [ph] about the arrest of Ayman Nour, the head of the liberal party, Al-Ghad, in Egypt. And this arrest is just part of a much larger process that's going on in Egypt. There were demonstrations in early December and in early February. Three people were arrested for handing out leaflets advertising these demonstrations at the international book fair that took place in Cairo on January the 28th.

But people were defying the government. The government said you can't have demonstrations, and they were defying the government, and there's going to be a big demonstration that's coming up on February 21st on International Student Day. This is a day in Egypt which commemorates the deaths of a number of students who were protesting against the monarchy in 1946. And there's going to be a big demonstration, and there may be a lot of people arrested, and a process—I'm not saying democracy is around the corner—I'm saying a process is beginning.

There's a group now in Egypt called *kifaya*, which stands for "enough." Its other name is the Popular Movement for Change. But this movement, Enough, interestingly enough, is the very same name that was given to the key resistance movement in Georgia, which was *Kamaro*, which stands for enough. In Serbia, it was *Optor*, which was resistance; in Ukraine it was *Pora*, which is "time's up." It's remarkable. I don't know the extent to which there is a direct borrowing from Ukraine to Egypt in this particular case, but my feeling is that—and I've been told—that the Ukraine events have had as much effect on Egyptian thinking as the events in Iraq and the West Bank in Gaza.

And if Egypt is the decisive country in the region, I believe a process is beginning there. I think that the United States is committed to standing with the Egyptians now, given what the President has said. It's going to be more than just taking note when people are arrested. It's going to be significant pressure on the Egyptian government, which gets a lot of resources from the United States, to try to open up the political process.

Right now, I think, as you know, there is not a free election in Egypt. They have a process whereby the Assembly, which the government controls, simply nominates a candidate, and then they have a referendum. And the reason Ayman Nour was arrested was because he was insisting upon constitutional reform and a free election in the fall, and not a referendum whereby Mubarak will get a fifth term.

This is where the critical struggle is. And if the West—and the United States especially—can be united in standing with the democrats here, I don't say change is going to come about immediately, but I think the process of gradually expanding political space until there will be a breakthrough opening that will lead to the election of a democratic government which can begin the process of really significant reform, when that takes place, I think we'll have the decisive breakthrough that will ultimately pave the way I think for the entire region to move toward democracy. Thank you.

[Applause.]

MS. WURMSER: Entifadh?

ENTIFADH QANBAR: Thank you for having me here today. I would like to start by giving my deepest and sincerest condolences to the loss of two sons of our colleague and friend, Mithal al-Alusi. His two sons were gunned in Baghdad two days ago in a very terrible act by terrorists and Baathists. His new nickname now is the father of the martyrs.

First, we all watched the scenes of how Iraqis went to the polls and practiced this mythical courageous ways of casting their votes, and I've heard some amazing stories. A few women of my relatives who live about—on the outskirts of Baghdad—walked 25 miles to go vote that day. They walked about four hours each way, and they were happy and joyous.

That shows that for those who used to say the Arab street is not for democracy that I think defeats this argument.

Anyway, I think to move forward and I think the elections were a success. I think we must think also of the problem that faced us in Iraq. I came to the United States and I went to the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom to campaign on the Iraqi community for the United Iraqi Alliance, the so-called in the U.S. press the Sistani list. And I met many Iraqis and I saw how they were enthusiastic about it.

However, I think it's very important to point out the level of deterioration in security and the corruption that has faced the Iraqis during the past six months, which is when this current interim government took a role in leading Iraq.

Unfortunately, the current government or—I would say, to be specific—the security apparatus in Iraq, such as the Interior Ministry, did not only turn a blind eye to terrorism, they were actively working to help terrorists. And I have accounts of senior people within the Ministry of Interior who told me some and showed me some documents to prove that.

The new Iraqi intelligence has recruited top ranking Baathists in the old Iraqi intelligence to be—to take leading jobs in it. And what's more surprising to us is that it did not have appropriations from the Iraqi budget, so we don't know where the money is coming to this new Iraqi intelligence.

I saw a letter signed by the head of the new Iraqi intelligence saying no Shi'a is accepted in my organization unless with my personal approval. And the statistics say that the percent of the Shi'a in the new Iraqi intelligence is three percent, while it was five percent in Saddam's time.

I think the fundamental problem is the complete misunderstanding of what terrorism is in Iraq. People—and some of them are experts in Washington—thought that they could bring Baathists to power because Baathists are technically very capable in security problems, therefore, they can utilize their technical security capabilities and expertise to fight terrorism. Sure enough, the Baathists came back and took some very important positions in the Iraqi security forces and Iraqi police and National Guard. Instead of utilizing this in favor of the government and the Iraqi people, they utilize their expertise to help terrorists and conspire against the government and conduct many acts of corruption and mismanagement.

That definitely led to a very severe and rapid deterioration of security. In fact, for a person like me, who people in Iraq know my face well, it's my nightmare when I'm stuck by a police checkpoint if the police is a friend—or a fan, I should say—he will give me a comment—thank you for bashing the Baathists and Al-Jazeera—or if he's a foe, he may kill me. And I have some very serious encounters in that sense that has threatened my life.

I think people in Iraq went and the turnout in the elections was so high and people were courageous not only because they wanted to vote new people in, but because they wanted to vote this current government out. And I think the results will show there is a landslide victory for our list, which I'm happy to report, and there's also an embarrassment for the current government performance in the elections, and, thank God, this is what's good about democracy.

I think it is important to know that the Baathists are still running terrorism in Iraq, and they are functioning from Syria and Jordan specifically to fund terrorist actions, put together the strategic planning. Yes, there are Al-Qaeda people. There are Islamists. There are other types of elements of criminals who working, but they are all employees of the bigger corporation of the Baath.

I think also Arab countries or Arab dictators support the Baath in Iraq, not necessarily because there is admiration for the Baath ideology, but I think Baathists represent a very important asset for a return to dictatorship and stop the democratic movement in Iraq from proceeding and from succeeding.

I think, therefore, one of our most important tasks as I hope we are going to get a majority bloc in the new national assembly, the first elected national assembly, is to de-Baathify Iraq, because it has been re-Baathified and now we have to reverse this process quite fast.

This re-Baathification process did not only kill—caused the killing of Iraqis, but surely caused the death of American soldiers, and that was very unfortunate.

I think also one of our top priorities after the elections and the start besides forming the new government is to put together—go into negotiations with the U.S. and all multinational forces to establish a status of forces agreement, nicknamed ASOFA. And I think this agreement will be very, very important because it will put a legal framework or actions of the U.S. military, which I think it will benefit both Iraqis and Americans because there has been some abuses by bad informants, let's say, to American officers who were basically used for bad purposes to attack patriotic and honest Iraqi politicians and figures.

And I think such an agreement will put a limit to these actions, and I will—I think will protect the right of the Iraqis and the right of the Americans and other forces.

It's very important also to say that we are not in favor of an immediate withdrawal. We are in favor of a scheduled mutual agreed upon withdrawal, and that has to be between the new elected national assembly or whatever committee will be in charge of it and the American side.

I think it's also important to remind everybody that the formation of the United Iraqi Alliance Coalition was not an easy task. We faced many difficulties. One of the most important difficulties we were trying—the INC, at least—we were trying very hard to maximize the number of independents within the Alliance, because the major task for the new national assembly will be writing the constitution, and we believe that independents will do a better job writing the constitution than people who work for parties.

I think more than half of the [the individuals on the] list are independents. Also, we were able to convince and work a political—through a political ways to convince the Sadaries, followers of Muqtada al-Sadar, to throw their weapons and enter the political process and stop the violence, and I think that was an achievement, both for Iraqis and for Americans.

The other important issue which the Alliance was formed on the basis of is not accepting a theocratic state. To be clearer, not in favor of Velayat-e Faghih or a model like Iran or any other Islamic country. In fact, Dr. Ahmed Chalabi and Abdul Aziz Hakim went to Iran and they told the Iranians before the elections that this is the platform of the Alliance and Iraq will not be a theocratic state. Iraq will be a state that will respect Islam and consider it as a source of legislation, but it should not conflict with democracy. It's pretty much very close to what was mentioned in the transitional authority law that has been signed by the—and agreed upon—by the governing council.

It is very important to mention that the biggest favor has been done to us by President Bush and U.S. forces liberating Iraq and also in protecting the elections and protecting democracy in Iraq.

I was told by eyewitnesses in Baghdad while I was here only one day before the elections people were afraid to talk to American soldiers. On the day of the elections, people were handing candies in the streets to the American soldiers. There is a big lesson to be learned from this. American soldiers were protecting democracy while the day before were protecting occupation, unfortunately.

I think it is also important to know that in spite of the President Bush goodwill to establish democracy and give the Iraqis their freedom and help them to achieve their freedom, there are many sites within the U.S. Government, specifically the embassy in Baghdad, sometimes there are interferences in the outcome of these elections, and I think this is not helpful for the Americans or the Iraqis and I think it is a very dangerous thing because Iraqis have made their mind of what they want.

I also would like to let you know that Dr. Chalabi is a candidate for the prime ministership now, and I think he stands a good chance, and we'll see you next time hopefully when he's the prime minister. Thank you.

[Applause.]

MS. WURMSER: Thank you. I'd like to open the floor to questions. Please identify yourselves.

DAMIEN MCLEAN: Damien McLean, Lindberg News. Mr. Qanbar, you mentioned interferences in the outcome of the election and you mentioned, for example, the U.S. embassy. Could you elaborate a little bit on what you mean by that?

MR. QANBAR: Well, I don't want to get into too much details, but we heard some requests from some staff within the U.S. embassy about trying to accept some people within the interim government, within the new cabinet—and or some people made some comments that this elections are not as significant. There should be more—two or more cycles of elections before it has become significant. I think these kinds of comments are not necessary.

Even before the elections, I remember the U.S. embassy conducted a meeting with what is called the Sunni Council of Clerics, which in Iraq is nicknamed the Sunni Council of Kidnappers supposedly to convince them and to convince the Sunnis to come to the elections. I'm personally a Sunni and I found this very, very troubling that they will talk to people who have no—by all means representation of the Sunnis to convince them to come to the elections.

Beside the point, I dare think this is a job of the embassy. This is an Iraqi political process, and it's not a job of the embassy to bring any party to talk to them about what they should do about the elections, because I don't think they understand the Iraqi politics well.

MS. WURMSER: Yes.

BOB DREYFUSS: Hi. My name is Bob Dreyfuss. I'm writing for *Rolling Stone*. Mr Gershman mentioned that there's a shift in Shiite politics from Qom to Najaf. And I wondered if

Richard and Entifadh could comment on that a little bit, specifically about Shiite politics and whether—what they think about that notion of a shift. And I'm interested sort of specifically about people in Iran who might respond to that kind of a shift and also a sort of related question about Ayatollah Sistani and whether it's right for us to put so much faith in him as a quietist and as someone who won't ultimately try to press too hard to bring Islam into the center of Iraqi politics.

RICHARD PERLE: Well, I'm certainly not an expert on Shi'a organizations. I don't think we are putting an undue emphasis—an undue confidence in Sistani himself. While he has been extraordinarily patient and forbearing and statesman like, and has given wise counsel, I think our confidence is in the Shi'a tradition, which is a separation of political and religious institutions. It's a tradition that has not been honored in Iran, with the result, in part, that the clergy in Iran has been discredited, much to the dismay of much of the clergy, because the break with this tradition and the assumption of political power by a small number of mullahs is not only offensive to most Iranians; it is offensive to most Iranian clerics since that isn't their tradition. And they recognize that what has happened in their country the seizure of power by a corrupt group of dictators.

Iraq is achieving democratic legitimacy in a way that Iran cannot. And it would not be surprising if in the Shi'a world, respect paid to Najaf were to rise and respect paid to Qom were to fall in proportion to the legitimacy of the governments in Iraq and Iran.

One can't be sure that will happen, but it appears to be one of the preoccupations of the mullahs in Teheran.

MR. QANBAR: I think we do not believe there's something called political Shi'a. Shi'a act politically under oppression and pressure. In fact, the Baathists who are politicizing the Shi'a by expelling them from—for decades—from government positions and critical positions, I think when—once Shi'a becomes—take their fair share in power through a democratic process, I think people will work to serve their own regional or local agendas and make alliances. A Shi'a in Karkouk may make an alliance with a Kurd in Karkouk, and a Shi'a in Basra make some other types of alliances with other types of parties or political movement. There's no per se a political Shi'a in Iraq.

Sistani also is a person who fundamentally or his school do not believe in mixing between theocracy and politics. And I think he is working now as an honest broker; basically people go to Sistani and ask him for elections; ask him for democracy and what he's doing he's conveying this message to the politicians and he's leaving most of the details, if not all the details, to politicians, and that's what's good about Sistani. Thank you.

MS. WURMSER: Paul Marshal.

PAUL MARSHAL: Yeah. If I could just pick up on this—I'm sorry—Paul Marshal, Freedom House. Just on the question of Islam and government, I worry sometimes where using American categories of, you know, separation, theocracy, and so on, which don't illuminate things. As I would understand, Iran and Khomeini, what is very unusual and atypical there is the fact that the mullahs would try to control the executive branch of government. The fact that they have always

had a strong relationship with the juridical branch of government that's no unusual. I think it's important to make that distinction.

Sistani seems to have been very clear that he and those who listen to them have no intention of trying to fill executive offices. They'd say "What do I know about running an oil ministry?" But the question of what this means in terms of the constitution, the source of law, who will interpret the laws. I'm still not clear what Sistani and other groups think about this, and that's my major concern. The question of the executive functions I think is settled. But the question of the juridical functions is I think still open and especially as the people elected will be—have a major part in drafting the constitution. I know that's a big concern for me and for many others.

MS. WURMSER: Who wants to respond? Anybody?

MR. GERSHMAN: Is it a question or a comment?

MS. WURMSER: Comment. Okay.

MR. QANBAR: Well, I just want to say one thing. First of all, I think people who are in support of a theocratic state, I'm sure some of them will be elected. I don't know who they are, but I think there will be a minority in the national elected assembly. And I think if we look at the transition authority law, I think it was a very good document that showed clearly that Islam will be respected, and it will be a source of legislation, not the source of legislation. And we also added another sentence to it, and it shall not conflict with democratic principles. If somebody came in and said, "A woman cannot be a prime minister because that conflicts with Islam," we're going to tell him that conflicts with democracy; therefore, a woman can be a prime minister.

[END OF RECORDED SEGMENT.]