MERCATUS CENTER

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"AMERICA'S ROLE AS NATION BUILDER: LESSONS LEARNED AND APPLIED TO IRAQ"

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AFTERNOON PANEL SESSION

IRAQ: PHYSICAL AND POLITICAL SECURITY: TOWARD AN EXIT STRATEGY

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CLOSING REMARKS

TIM ROEMER, MERCATUS CENTER

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PAUL EDWARDS: (In progress) – who will introduce our final panel, which will focus on the political and security concerns in Iraq. Tim, back to you.

TIM ROEMER: Thank you very much, Paul. Delighted to have had Secretary Wolfowitz make that presentation for a very significant contribution the conference that the Mercatus Center has sponsored today, but also as a leadoff for some of our very distinguished and talented and skilled panelists to comment on.

I want to introduce our panelists so that we can get into – maybe starting with – maybe we will start with Retired Army Major General William Nash and his comments on Secretary Wolfowitz's recent speech. But let me introduce all three at this appropriate time.

We are delighted at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University to have Major General William Nash, who is the John W. Vessey Senior Fellow and Director of the Center for Preventive Action at the Council for Foreign Relations. He has extensive experience in peacekeeping operations, both as a military commander in Bosnia and as a civilian administrator for the United Nations in Kosovo. He served in the Army for 34 years and is a veteran of Vietnam and Operation Desert Storm in Iraq, where he commanded an armored brigade. Since his retirement in 1998, Nash has been a fellow and visiting lecturer at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. In April 2002, the U.N. secretary-general, Kofi Annan, appointed Nash to the U.N. fact-finding team to develop accurate information regarding events in the Jenin refugee camp. Nash is also a military consultant for ABC News.

We also have Bathsheba Crocker. Bathsheba Crocker is a 2002/2003 Council on Foreign Relations International Affairs Fellow with the Center for Strategic and International Studies International Security Program, where she is working with the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Program. She most recently worked as an attorney advisor in the Legal Adviser's Office at the U.S. Department of State, where she focused on foreign assistance and appropriations law issues. Prior to that, she served as a deputy U.S. special representative for Southeast Europe Initiative in Rome. She received a B.A. from Stanford University and a J.B. from Harvard Law School.

And finally, I want to introduce Frederick "Rick" Barton, the co-director of Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project, Center for Strategic and International Studies. Rick currently serves as a senior adviser in the International Security Program and co-director of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Concurrently, Mr. Barton teaches as a visiting lecturer at the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University. Prior to that, was U.N. deputy high commissioner for refugees in Geneva. He was also the first director of the Office of Transition Initiatives

at the U.S. Agency for International Development in Washington, D.C. He was president of a firm providing services in strategic planning, marketing, crisis management, organizational development to commercial, governmental, and not-for-profit clients. Finally, Mr. Barton earned his MBA from Boston University in 1982, with an emphasis on public management, and received an honorary doctor of humane letters from Wheaton College of Massachusetts in 2001.

You can see why we're so proud to have this panel here and why they're so highly regarded here in Washington, D.C. If I could, why don't I just start with – and I will call you major – Retired Army Major General William Nash one more time, and then as you told me before I will refer to you as Bill.

RET. ARMY MAJOR GENERAL WILLIAM NASH: All right, good.

MR. ROEMER: Why don't you – why don't you start off in commenting in just two minutes – again, we want to put high emphasis on the quality time for people in the audience asking some questions. How would you interpret the secretary's comments? Was he more specific on some of those milestones as he has been in the past? Were there some new things that he told us here today about nation building and the war in Iraq?

GEN. NASH: When I was in Iraq in September, I had a chance to visit with some friends of mine who are now the division commanders and the force commander and see what they were doing in places like Baghdad and Tikrit and Mosul and the like. Hillah the secretary talked about. I, too, visited the mass gravesites around Hillah.

And I told the division commanders that I spoke with there – I said, you know, just a couple of years ago because of my experience the Balkans, both with NATO in the Army and with the U.N. in Kosovo – that I was considered one of the experts on nation building, if you will, in the U.S. Army just a couple years ago. And I said, but I feel like – when I talk to you all, I feel like what I would imagine Orville and Wilbur Wright would have felt watching the Concorde take off. And that's exactly how I feel about what the work is that those guys are doing over there.

But this is not a question of dedication and sacrifice. If it were, I could take you across town and show you 50,000 names that displayed great dedication and sacrifice, but we would all ask the question to what end? The issue of end is one of leadership and wisdom in guiding the nation through this very difficult time.

On the larger scale, the thing that amazed me about the memo that was leaked several weeks ago was that two years after September 11th – two years after that – the question is asked, should we have a long-range plan? You know, if I had had the chance to ask the secretary a question today, I was dying to know what the answer was. Should we have a long-range plan? And that's the thing that concerns me about much of what the secretary said. Now, it's hard to discuss Iraq – it's hard to discuss postwar Iraq without impact of your prewar Iraq thoughts, but we are where we are. Regardless of how we felt a year ago and the like, and I think we have to deal with that.

The issue – the key issue that we face – he identified security and governance. I would tell you that there are issues, very serious issues, on both security and governance that have to be addressed, and I have less confidence than was displayed by the deputy secretary. One reason is the legitimacy of the development of the interim governance – council and the process by which a new constitution will be produced. I think the work at the local level is very good, and is reasonably representative. I think at the aggregate, I'm less confident.

The issue in the field of security is one of public security. We obviously are rightfully concerned with the issues of the security and welfare of the American forces that are in Iraq, but I would argue the measure of success will be that of public security, okay? And we grieve yesterday for the 15,16 Americans that were killed – excuse me, on Sunday. I would tell you thirty and forty a day are killed all too many days, of Iraqis being killed. That is a measurement of public security that we have to look at. I think the idea of creating Iraqi security forces is essential, but the quality control of that development – the numbers are escalating at such a rapid pace, I am concerned about quality control and I'm concerned of long-term legitimacy because that police/security forces must serve an Iraqi government, and it's the issue of legitimacy of that security element that I think we have to be very careful to pin our hopes on.

As quick as I can do it, sir.

MR. ROEMER: Excellent presentation. Bathsheba, if you could maybe comment as well on the secretary's remarks, but also taking into account what we heard this morning from Jim Dobbins, where he was commenting on the process by which the Governing Council produces its leaders, that is has been slow, that is has been cumbersome, and that he's worried that that same Governing Council may take even a lot more time in producing a constitution and other relevant documents?

BATHSHEBA CROCKER: Okay, thanks. I want to address first the question of the pace of progress in Iraq, which is one of the things that Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz talked about a lot. And I think it is true that in some areas we have seen progress on a fairly rapid scale, at least in comparison to some of the recent post-conflict efforts. And I think it is also important to point out at the outset that expectations on the part of the Iraqis and on the part of the Americans and on the part of the international community for how quickly the U.S. should and could be doing reconstruction in Iraq have been exceedingly high from the start. At the same time, the U.S. has been under a microscope, largely a microscope of our own making because we have been unwilling to engage the international community as much as we should have in this effort.

And that although it is fair, I think, to point out that some of those successes have occurred on a fairly rapid scale, it's also important to realize that we may be pushing certain things too quickly, which could come back to hurt us in the end. And getting to General Nash's point about the security forces perhaps being trained a little bit too quickly and some worry that they will not, in fact, be capable of carrying out the security

tasks that we would like them to. And at the same time, talking about a political transition process being sped up, I think, again too quickly in order, perhaps, to counter some of the criticism that the administration is facing about its plan for the political transition process. But I worry a lot about talk about drafting a constitution very quickly, which is one of the things that Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz was commenting on.

In his point about the individual soldiers and the heroes that we're seeing in this effort, we – when Rick and I were in Iraq in July – saw some of the same commanders probably that General Nash spoke to, and we were also I think similarly struck by the amazing work that the soldiers are doing out in the field, particularly throughout Iraq. But at the same time, it points out the need for systemic changes. And I think that's probably one of the things that Jim Dobbins was talking about this morning, the need for systemic changes in how the U.S. government does post-conflict reconstruction.

We have often been worried about mission creep. In Iraq, all notions of mission creep have been thrown out the window, and the soldiers are doing absolutely everything on the reconstruction front. And in order for us to get to a point where we have U.S. civilians that are prepared to do the reconstruction tasks quicker, we need to fix our ability to have surge capacity on the civilian side. I think we also need to take a good, hard look at what we do in the immediate post-conflict period with the military forces and the need for stabilization operations capacity that we do not at the moment have in the U.S. military.

And I would just comment finally on the question of the desire of the Iraqi people for the U.S. to stay and our commitment to stay for the long term. I hope that the deputy secretary is right when he says that the U.S. is committed to staying to see this through and to see through our promises to the Iraqi people. I am worried, though, by discussion we are already seeing of the need for an exit strategy, both on the military and on the political front. And I think that coming into an election year, it would be – both the administration and the Democratic presidential candidates are going to face a difficult time, particularly if polls continue to drop in support because we continue to see increased American casualties in Iraq, which we probably will. The successes that the deputy secretary talked about are positive, but we need to cement them. And in order to do that, we need to give time and space to the Iraqis, and this is important on the political transition process.

And with the question you raised about the governance council – the Governing Council, sorry. The Governing Council has had some delays in its opening month in things like deciding first of all on who would be the president of the Governing Council. And it in the end took them three weeks to decide that they couldn't decide who the president would be, so they decided instead on a nine-member rotating presidency. They have also significantly delayed the process of setting up a commission to draft the constitution, in part because of some very fundamental differences like those Secretary Wolfowitz mentioned in terms of what role religion should play in the government of Iraq.

And we continue to face these difficulties, and I think that's also why it will become more important for us to maybe rethink the U.S. plan on the political transition process, perhaps bring in the United Nations, but also maybe step away from the idea that we will maintain overall sovereignty and then try to speed things up too quickly on the Iraqi transition front. Thanks.

MR. ROEMER: Thanks, Sheba. Great job in three minutes. Rick, you were recently in Iraq, too. Your impressions, as they relate to the secretary's comments?

FREDERICK BARTON: I think in order not to really cover some of the same ground that Bill and Sheba have covered, I would like to just make a few very simple points and then just go right to the questions.

In terms of the milestones that the secretary mentioned, I think the very first issues is really the clarity of the United States' policy, and we have wavered somewhere between being – going in and just fighting the war to being euphoric about the neighborhood transformation. My feeling is that the role of the United States in these kinds of cases should be catalytic, and we really haven't defined that role, and that leads to an awful lot of the confusion that follows. And that confusion shows up in a number of issues that we continue to be troubled by.

For example, in the economic growth measurement or issue that the secretary mentioned, we have from the very beginning said that dealing with Iraq's debt had to be one of the priorities of the way the U.S. approached this because the overwhelming debt that Iraq faces is going to sink any eventual economic growth. That continues to be a point of divide within the U.S. government.

On the security issue, there really needs to be a full review of the concept of operations. We have reluctantly acknowledged that some of the early looting and some of the early sabotage might in fact have been acts of guerilla war. More recently, we have suggested that there has actually been central control of some of these actions. Neither of those choices were really that difficult to make, and the number of months that it has taken us to get there has been a surprising – has shown a surprising state of denial on the part of a number of people. General Abizaid really broke the ice on the guerilla question and another general in the field broke the ice in terms of the central command, but why have we been so slow to acknowledge it? And the bureaucratic response in terms of our concept of operations is really – has clearly been costing us lives.

On the governance issue, we have done, I think, extraordinary work, but again, as long as people remain somewhat intimidated, which they do at this point, then we're not getting close to the three basic freedoms that you have to have in place if you're going to succeed in these post-conflict or even conflict-prone places. The three basic freedoms of movement, of speech, and assembly do not exist in large parts of Iraq today. And until they do, much that follows will be a nice technocratic construct without any real grip.

Finally, on the message, how can a country that has managed to convince at least half of its populace that they have to have Starbucks or Krispy Kreme in the morning concede to one outlet – one Arabic outlet – in one part of the world, or to Iranian TV? It just boggles my mind. I cannot see how we cannot provide the tidal wave of communications that could overwhelm whatever is out there. We know how to do this better than anybody in the world, and we're going about it trying to set up one independent television station, a couple of little radio stations, and few newspapers.

This is not a neat and tidy universe that we're operating in. It is chaotic and this is management by chaos, and we can't go at it with a very kind of measured model that we have seen in Iraq. So as a result, we end up hearing some of the kinds of complaints that we just heard, which I just don't believe is fair. We haven't clarified our message. We haven't gotten the outlets. We don't know what the Iraqi people think. The only thing they know about us right now is we have a bounty on Saddam Hussein's head. That's not the only piece of information that should be universally shared.

So finally, for a $200 billion effort, we shouldn't be on the precipice. It's really – for those of us who have worked in this field, it's incredibly frustrating because we, too, believe in a free and peaceful Iraq, and we believe that many, many, many opportunities have been missed. This to a great extent deals with a lack of capacity that has existed within the U.S. government for at least the last 12 years. It is not unique to this particular circumstance, but we have got to address that if we're going to get on with it in the future.

MR. ROEMER: Thank you, Frederick. Let me come back as the microphones go out and we ask people to participate. Let me throw a question out your way, General Nash. I know we're on a time restriction as well. As this panel is supposed to look at the security issue, I would like your assessment of the composition of the resistance. How has that changed recently, where is that coming from, and are we going to get better at the intelligence of discovering when they're coming at us, especially as we try to enlist more Iraqis in that effort?

GEN. NASH: One of the things that folks have been concerned with, and it was in some of the prewar debate, was about the level of forces being assigned to the mission, and there was a lot of questioning about – by some as to the adequacy of the force. But in fact, most of the issues raised were not about the ability of the force to win the war. And in my personal case that was never in doubt. The question was what would happen after the war, and were there sufficient forces to stabilize the country? And as you know, there was a disbelief on the part of some senior members of the administration that it would take more folks to stabilize Iraq than it would to conquer Iraq. Well, that's exactly the case because in fact – it's especially the case if you believe you can win a war using speed, precision, and a transformed military.

Well, what I think we have seen happen – and I'm really, Tim, answering your question; I'm just trying to explain why it has come about – is that as a result of having insufficient forces to stabilize the country, a couple of phenomena took place that led to

the creation of some opposition forces that have caused issues that we will continue to deal with today. And this is at the very heart of some of the criticism with respect to postwar planning. And what happened was the elements that were loyal to the regime had the opportunity to withdraw and regroup because we did not have a plan or the forces to occupy the country quickly, to ensure that we had control of it all.

In talking to those same division commanders I told you about earlier, I asked them when did you find out that you were going to be in charge of this portion of Iraq, and the answer was the middle of April. After the statues came down of Saddam was when the American divisions were given their assigned postwar sectors. This allowed the former regime loyalists time to regroup, and at the same time it became – Iraq became a magnet for foreign fighters to come in because there was not adequate forces to secure the borders, okay?

So what we have seen in the last several weeks is reorganized regime loyalists, however you want to characterize it; foreign fighters; and then also during this period of chaos immediately following the war, the criminals – many of whom had been released by Saddam prior to the war – had time to act upon – to take advantage of the situation. That criminal activity then has billeted itself, and it seems that criminals and crime has become more and more organized in some parts, especially in the bigger cities like Baghdad have taken place.

So now we're facing former regime loyalists, foreign fighters, criminals, and the fourth factor – and I think we will see that a little bit more and more as the difficulties of public security continue – then there are just the folks who are just plain fed up with the situation. And they may not be organized, but they will take advantage of it. So we're being faced in a situation now where American and Iraqi and coalition forces are facing Saddam folks, outside guys that have come to town, criminals, and just from time to time the disgruntled, that may disrupt operations and if nothing else not help with countering the other three because they're not sure which way this is going to go.

MR. ROEMER: Yes, sir? Rob, can we get a microphone over there, and if you could please identify yourself and let us know who you're directing your question to? Thank you.

Q: Yeah. My name is Dane Van Breikenrokard (ph). I'm with the United States Bill of Rights Foundation, and my question goes to you, General. You actually answered a question I was going to ask you, so I get to ask you the second question. In what you just had to say, has the military changed its training in that we're fighting a completely different war, and it looks like wars in the future are going to be different? And it also – end of my question is that is it wise – would it be wiser and politically more valuable that you have sort of an offense team and then a defense team? You go in, you strike the country, you win, and then you bring in the defense team. This way, you take people out of harm's way and you shift gears and put other people in.

GEN. NASH: I think the answer is yes, they are changing. A very good piece in today's Washington Post about the challenges of Fallujah and the dynamics of the offensive versus defensive, the development versus the take the bad guys on type thing was worthwhile. What's really interesting is, in looking a the units up north, in the Mosul area, Tikrit area, and the like, and what tactics they have used since the beginning in dealing both with the fist and also the velvet glove over that fist at times in dealing with the issue. So I think – I think there has been an awareness of this guerilla or insurgency-type operation and the realization that you have to build as well as destroy.

The hard spot is in the Ba'athist triangle, or that piece of ground between Tikrit, Baghdad, and Al-Ramadi, in the middle of which is Fallujah. And that particular area has suffered from a number of issues, not the least of which is in the six, seven months we have been in Iraq, we have had at least three major units rotate as being responsible for the area, so there has been no consistency of policy. An article in the paper today discusses the positives and the negatives of the aggressive approach that is being taken in the area now, and I think it's one of great debate. Rick?

MR. BARTON: Yeah. I would just like to – I think that we have a large problem in these post-conflict settings in that we have a number of well-established industries that are reluctant to do something that's a little different from their normal mission, and in the case of the military, they don't really like policing. In a paper that Sheba and I did in January, we suggested that there would be – our very first recommendation for the post-conflict period in Iraq spoke to the vacuum that was likely to be produced in the immediate post-conflict period, and we said that there needed to be – and this was in consultation with our military fellows as CSIS. We asked: is it possible? What can we do?

There is unlikely to be a large coalition, so it's probably going to have to be the U.S. military that does it, and our recommendation was 15,000 non-combat forces that are immediately available to go into the urban areas, probably for a year and a half. It's going to cost $220,000 per – about $5 billion during that period, and that would at least give you a different feeling so that you wouldn't have the problem of soldiers cutting through an area and then leaving nothing behind, which is exactly what we saw when we visited the University of Basra in the south of Iraq. And the British forces had done a very methodical job, but all of the damage really happened after the fact.

But the finished part of this industry puzzle is that the U.S. military doesn't really like to do these things, and even though it might be making changes, it really has to dedicate itself to these kinds of challenges because, in essence, we have one and a half per year, as we have had for the last 10 years. So – but the diplomats are no better off, really, because they look at this thing and then we had the Future of Iraq Working Group put together 15 very good reports about how Iraq should look, but then when it came down to crunch time, where were the bodies to operationalize anything?

And so, if you have – if you're the president and you have two choices: 150,000 young people are willing to risk their lives on the border tomorrow, sir, or you have 15

good reports, which choice to you make? So the default becomes really the Defense Department, and that is not a good default. Where we saw the two coming together with highly-skilled Arabists there in the Shi'ite area, working with really bright lieutenant colonels in the United States Marine force – Corps – we saw something working quite well. The subtlety of interpretation, the understanding of the politics of an area, the clear direction as to what should happen with the great energy, the enthusiasm, the skill sets that the Marines brought to it, you had something quite positive. We didn't see that in enough places, and so it left us nervous.

The same kind of industry problem with the developers. They don't like going into a place that's unstable. The humanitarians don't like going into places that are political. So we have all of these industries here, many of them in the Reagan Building, but they don't fit the task. And if we don't dedicate ourselves to this, we're just not going to address it successfully. We're going to have a continued series of lessons learned and ad hoc approaches.

And then this is clearly one of our national security priorities. If you look at the last 10 or 12 years, these kinds of cases have taken over our national security apparatus. This – Iraq more so than ever, but if you look at Afghanistan, the same issue.

The final thing I would like to say on this is we're putting too much stock based on what we heard on Iraqi capacity. The people who we talked to in the field – mostly U.S. soldiers because that's really what the representation was – they were not very optimistic that the Iraqis were going to be able to deliver the kind of public safety that Bill has just mentioned within the two-year mark, and that was the optimistic range that heard.

Same problem in Afghanistan today. If you really want to send those newly-trained Afghan soldiers in against the warlords' forces that have been out there fighting for 20 years, it doesn't seem like a fair contest, even if we arm them well. So there's a – that's the convenient answer, we all like it, but it's not – it probably is not a very practical one, and we need to discount it.

MR. ROEMER: Sheba, did you have a quick comment? We have a question out here.

MS. CROCKER: I was actually going to comment on the Iraqification points, so we can just take the question first.

MR. ROEMER: Okay. Please?

Q: Two quick questions. Claudio Cioffi, Center for Social Complexity, George Mason University. Two quick questions that are mostly factual. Can you say what is happening at the University of Baghdad besides it's opened and so on? Beyond that, what is really happening? How is it operating? What parts of the university are not yet up to – up to par? The second question is when will Iraq resume a diplomatic mission

here in D.C.? They have a – I see there is a – well, very near Brookings and Dupont Circle, and it has been shut down under caretaker administration for the last years.

MR. ROEMER: General Nash, do you want to take one of those, and I will throw the other one to Sheba?

GENERAL NASH: I'm afraid I don't know them both.

MR. ROEMER: Sheba?

MS. CROCKER: I certainly don't know on the University of Baghdad question. And on the diplomatic representation question, I mean, I think that may depend on when we have a sovereign Iraqi government. The Iraqi Governing Council may get a seat at the U.N., but I don't know whether we will open up the diplomatic residence here in the States until we have a sovereign Iraqi government, but I could be wrong on that. I just don't know the answer.

MR. ROEMER: You get a prize for stepping down. (Laughter.) Very good. We will come to you later. Any more questions? Oh, back here. Can we get him a mike or something? All the way back here, with his hand up?

Q: I'm Matthew Metz (sp), a fellow with the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and I will put a question to the panel that I regret not having a chance to put to the deputy secretary. It seems that our biggest challenge, which has really only been addressed peripherally, is the credibility crisis that the United States is currently suffering from. And it's illustrated in the – which our general's response, that one of the big components of the security problem is the people that are very uncertain about the outcome of the situation in their country, in Iraq.

I think our credibility crisis is coming from two directions, and one is whether or not there is a plan, and if that plan exists why it isn't being shared. And we get very nebulous responses from the administration about how we will act according to the needs of any particular unpredictable situation that arises, we will act in the best interest of our nation.

And then the other component of the credibility crisis is the question as to our motives, and this really boils down to the problems we have with transparency. The deputy secretary said that we have restored electric power and that illustrates our good intentions, but I think the provision of services has only limited capacity to boost our credibility. And what we need is a transparency. Where are the reconstruction resources being channeled through? Where are Iraq's natural resources going to eventually provide benefits? How do we convince our administration that credibility is an important issue and it will require transparency and a clear plan of action? And we apparently don't have an exit strategy, and it's hard for us to define that we have an entry strategy, so I will put that question to the panel.

MR. ROEMER: Sheba, why don't you go first and address the credibility issue?

MS. CROCKER: Yeah. I think one important piece of the credibility issue is the question of the exit strategy, and I do think we have to – although it is crucial, as you say, that the administration needs to be more forthcoming or give us all – Iraqis and Americans and the international community – a light, a better articulation of the U.S. plan in Iraq, we do have to be very careful of early talk of an exit strategy because the minute we start talking about plans to leave, the Iraqi people are going to mistrust even more that we are in it for the long haul there.

And I think again, getting back to my earlier point about coming into a campaign year, there is going to be more and more pressure on candidates and the administration alike to start talking in terms of perhaps a precipitous withdrawal from Iraq, but I think that would only do more to damage the credibility of the United States. I think the credibility issue is coming back to hurt us in the question of commitments of troops from international – from other countries as well as commitment of resources. We did get more at the donors' conference than we had been expecting, but much of that actually came in the form of loans, which is actually not that great for Iraq at this time, and we didn't get very much in the form of grants.

But I think a lot of it does come down to the things we have been discussing here and the question that came to Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz before with what the U.S. is doing on the communications front. And again here, I would argue that it's not only important with respect to what we're doing in Iraq and in the Muslim and Arab world more broadly, but also what we're doing at home. One of the things that Rick and I like to talk about a lot is the fact that before the Marshall Plan, General Marshall went on a yearlong campaign that was almost like a presidential campaign to convince and persuade the American people of why we needed to do the Marshall Plan.

And I am not at all convinced that the Bush administration has done anything like that with respect to Iraq or even with respect to the question of nation building or post-conflict reconstruction more generally, which as Rick pointed out, has become such a national security imperative for the United States. And I think until we start to fix some of these problems on the communications and public diplomacy front, both here and in Iraq and to the broader international community, we will have trouble convincing the world of the goodness of our intentions in Iraq. Certainly the question of transparency over what we do with the oil is part of that. We haven't really faced those issues as much as we might have yet because we have been very – because of the slow, the delay in getting the oil production and the oil export back up, but it is obviously also a key piece of this.

MR. ROEMER: I know that we have some issues with time for our panel, that they have commitments at other places. Do we have time? Does the panel have time for one last question?

MR. : This woman back here has been waiting the whole time.

MR. ROEMER: Right here? One last question and then we're going to wrap up. Thank you for your question.

Q: Olivia McDonald, Regent University. My question is this. How reasonable is it to expect that you can impose democracy on a society? First question. Second question is this. What constitutes your ideological approach to the people of Iraq with regard to the use of their religious beliefs? Is there anything within their faith that would be supportive of what we consider to be tenets of democracy, and have you exploited those aspects? And by that, I'm speaking to issues of freedom, the nature of freedom and liberty, the ability to define oneself. Thank you.

MR. ROEMER: Thank you. Bill? Rick?

GEN. NASH: You got it. Go ahead.

MR. BARTON: Those are both yes or no questions, aren't they? (Laughter.)

MR. ROEMER: In the interest of time, one of them might be answered –

MR. BARTON: In the interest of time, I think in terms of imposing democracy in – my feeling all along has been that the least imperialistic view of these situations is to think about the international standards of human rights. They are well defined. They have been signed onto by virtually every country on Earth. They are rather clear. They parallel many of our freedoms. And so, we tend to think in terms of the Declaration of Rights, or I mean, if – you know, the Bill of Rights or the Declaration of Independence, but actually the international standards of human rights are well – have been well – have been passed by virtually all international bodies, and we should stick closer to those.

And I have never run into anybody in any country that I have worked in that prefers to have somebody's boot in their face as opposed to making their own choice, irrespective of their religious belief, irrespective of their social standing.

Q: (Off mike.)

MR. BARTON: Well, I think the people very definitely buy into that. For me, the real problem in Iraq is that we have a silenced majority. I happen to agree with the secretary that there is probably a majority view within Iraq that change and the kind of change that's being offered is for the better, but there's such an overlay of intimidation and so much fear still that the old regime is hanging around, is an active threat, is able to really violate the most secure places in the country that it doesn't leave the average Iraqi feeling as if this is a choice that they can make today.

Q: (Off mike.)

MR. ROEMER: Well, we don't have time for a follow-up question. I wish we did. We have been going since 9:30 this morning and we had a terrific presentation from Jim Dobbins. We have had a terrific panel that followed Ambassador Dobbins' comments. We had Secretary Wolfowitz make his presentation, and we have had this very talented panel here this afternoon.

I want to close by just quoting what Churchill wrote in the "Great Contemporaries" of 1937. "The morning was golden, the noontime bronze, and the evening lead, but all were sold and each was polished till it shone after its fashion." Unquote. I want to make sure that our morning and our afternoon are certainly golden and bronze, and that we don't get into the evening and get into a time period where the conference diminishes in terms of its contributions and its scope and its attendance.

We are very thankful at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University for your support and your participation here today. This is probably the most pressing question before the people of the United States, and we have had an opportunity and a forum to discuss in a very candid way some of these pressing issues. We hope that the Mercatus Center will continue to be involved in these types of issues, and provide forums and provide the people that can come forward and answer some of these tough questions. Thank you again for your time, your patience, and for your support for the Mercatus Center. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

(End of event.)