

CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT

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NEW VISION PROGRAM

**IS THERE STILL A POLITICAL REFORM AGENDA
IN THE MIDDLE EAST?**

**PARTICIPANTS:
GHANIM AL NAJJAR,
KUWAIT UNIVERSITY**

**KHALID EL-HARIRY,
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, MOROCCO**

**AMR HAMZAWY,
SENIOR ASSOCIATE, CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR
INTERNATIONAL PEACE**

**PAUL SALEM, DIRECTOR,
CARNEGIE MIDDLE EAST CENTER**

**MODERATOR:
THOMAS CAROTHERS, CARNEGIE VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDIES
– INTERNATIONAL POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE**

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THOMAS CAROTHERS: Good morning, everyone. I'm Thomas Carothers, vice president for international politics and governance here at the Carnegie Endowment. I had promised a couple of our guests who traveled from the Middle East a warm welcome when they came to Washington. Unfortunately, we've provided them with the coldest weather in a long time, but I want to thank all of you for braving the cold and coming out here.

Our session this morning is entitled "Is There Still a Political Reform Agenda in the Middle East?" I think it is known to all of you that in the last four years – really, I would say in 2003 – when the U.S. government began really openly talking about and pushing on the issue of political change or democratic change in the Middle East, the subject quickly became very politicized here in Washington. And I was really struck in 2004 and 5 and really every since, assessments by analysts in Washington or commentators and journalists about the state of political change in the Middle East often reflects people's feelings about the Bush administration or the war in Iraq. So those who didn't like the war tended to be very skeptical about change and to say that they don't really see change occurring; those who tended to favor the war have analyzed particular political developments and said, well, this is really a sign that something good is happening and that is the result of positive developments elsewhere. And so it's been hard in some ways in the last three or four years just to have a very direct and honest discussion about what really is or isn't happening with respect to this reform agenda in different parts of the region.

And so that's what we'd literally like to do here today. We're trying to step back in two different ways. First, in the sense of, in 2005 and 6, there was a sense of urgency about this debate that I think read so much into developments into the region that often – in 2005, some positive things occurred and pretty soon you were reading in columns that the Berlin Wall has fallen in the Arab world, as Tom Friedman put it in 2005. In 2006, there were some less positive developments, and pretty soon it was the Berlin Wall has been reconstructed in the Arab world. And it was hard to know sometimes really what were the realities. And so, we're trying to step back temporally by sort of trying to take a somewhat longer-term view here, and not focus just on individual events of the past couple of years, but try to look at the broader trend.

And secondly, we're trying to take the view from people who live in the region, work in the region. I have here with me four political commentators, three of whom live in the region, and one of whom travels there frequently and is from the region, who are really going to give us this perspective of not how it looks here from Washington, but how it actually looks there from the Middle East. This is part of what Carnegie is trying to do in this launch of the new vision, which we are putting forward today, is we are really trying to emphasize that we are becoming a think tank that is trying to develop

parallel centers of knowledge in different parts of the world, and the interchange of knowledge across regions rather than simply radiating out from Washington to the world.

Let me introduce our panelists and then tell you the structure of how we are going to proceed. Let me just go from left to right. We have with us Paul Salem from Lebanon who is the new director of Carnegie's Middle East Center in Beirut, which is a regional research center which we just started late last year. Paul came to the Center from the Ferris Foundation, and he'd also worked at the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies and is a distinguished political analyst and has also been a political candidate in Lebanon and active there in many different ways. So Paul, welcome.

Next we have Khalid El-Hariry from Morocco. He is a member of parliament and vice president of the Finance Committee of the Moroccan parliament, representing the Socialist Party. He is a relatively new parliamentarian in Morocco, the last four years, and was active in new media technologies before that in the Moroccan business community. So Khalid, welcome as well.

Then on my immediate right we have Ghanim Al Najjar who is a professor at Kuwait University, a professor, a political scientist, and I think known to many of you. He's active in many different policy circles. He's also served – and currently serving – as the representative of the secretary general of the United Nations with respect to events in Somalia on the human rights field. And he's also done that with respect to Iraq as well. He's been active with a number of other multi-lateral assignments of this type. So Ghanim, welcome.

And then finally, we have Amr Hamzaqy who is the senior associate here in the Washington Middle East Program of the Carnegie Endowment. Amr is Egyptian and has taught both at Cairo University and the Free University in Berlin, but been with us at Carnegie for a little while now, couple of years. And Amr is suffering a bit from a cold and has been saving his voice for this event, so he is going to use it all up at this event. But we're looking forward to hearing your comments as well.

Let me just tell you the structure of how we're going to proceed. Basically, this is an informal conversation. We're not going to have formal presentations. But I'm going to start by asking different panelists a series of questions. We're going to talk first to try to take the temperature of reform in the region and talk about some specific countries and about developments in them. Some of the strengths and weaknesses of reform processes. Next, I am going to turn to sort of stepping back from that to a sort of broader sort of reflections on what really is happening with this sort of question of political reform in the region, so we'll reflect on that a bit. Third, I'd like them to talk a little about some of the broader influences, particularly the rising tensions between Iran and the United States, the Iraq war, continuing problems with the Palestinian issue, and particularly the Israeli-Palestinian relationship, as well as Palestinian domestic politics and its effect on the region. And then fourth, we're going to try to touch on the U.S. role. By that point, I'm sure a lot of you will have questions; I'm going to turn to you, the audience, and you can direct questions and comments at particular members of the panel or generally.

Let's start by taking the temperature of reform by just looking at a few specific countries. Now, I know there some people in the room who are fairly familiar with the minutiae of particular events in particular countries. And other of you have really a broader interest and less directed interest in the region. So let's just sort of take a quick tour of a couple of different countries and get a sense of what we think is happening.

Ghanim, I thought we might start with you and talk a little bit about – first of all – Kuwait, the country you probably know the best. Kuwait is a bit of a puzzle to those who watch it from the outside. It's sometimes held out as a country which is really a leading reformer in the Gulf in the sense that it has very competitive politics. Last year, it had elections in which there was some real competition. Although you don't have parties that are legalized, there was some real competition. There were gains by an opposition coalition. You have really clearly some changes that are going on in political life there – greater inclusion of women, for example, which has been notable. But if you were to characterize Kuwaiti politics today, what are the strengths of the reform process? What are the weaknesses? Is this a country really in the state of change or is this a country trying to decide about change? Where are we?

GHANIM AL NAJJAR: Okay, first let me thank you and thank you for starting about the temperature of reforms, as we are in a good temperature here. And thank you for the warm welcome. I'm a regular visitor of DC and I can tell you that this is the warmest welcome I ever had. So again, Tom reminded us that with this way of seating that we should be aware of our socks. So please, if you have any problem with the socks, just point the finger.

MR. CAROTHERS: There will be no Wolfowitz incidents here today.

MR. AL NAJJAR: I hope so. Well, you know, first of all, I mean, Kuwait has its own internal dynamics. It has no relationship with the so-called reform agenda. It's been like this for a long time, and it's been – I would say – since 1921. So there is nothing new of the changes and the political discourse that we are having in Kuwait. I don't think we look for outside sources to push reform. Even women inclusion in political rights, I've never seen it as an outside within the reform agenda. Many analysts, many people want to put it in this perspective; I think they are really missing the point.

We have had so many developments – 1938 there was an elected parliament with full power and it was dissolved. And the whole thing has to do with the way the Kuwaiti community was established 300 years ago. It was established with an accord. I mean, even the emir, the ruling family wasn't just imposed. They just came as immigrants. And the founder of the ruling family was chosen, and it was an agreement that he will be supported financially and he will be ruling. So that kind of understanding went on until this day; 1952, 1953 – things have changed because of the oil. The oil prices rose so we have a ruling family, which is a bit freer from the pressure of the merchants to carry on.

It's always being linked to the reform, while if you go deeper, you will see major structural changes. I published an article, Middle East Journal, I think that was 2000. The title was "Challenges Facing Kuwaiti Democracy." And it was funny that when I looked at the challenges and looking at the 2006, about 70 percent of these challenges were just gone, just disappeared. And that was not because of the reform agenda; it had a lot to do with the internal dynamics. So I always try to differentiate – and this is the point about reform in general – talking about the reform. The issue of reform, we have no reference point. We are talking about reform as a general term.

MR. CAROTHERS: By reference point, you mean a country in which you might be saying this is an example of what we'd like to do?

MR. AL NAJJAR: Possible. But I would say that what are the criteria of the reform that we have in mind? Do we have respect for human rights, which are already pushed for? Are we talking about full political participation? What about if women don't drive? When they drive, is that reform? I mean, it's just something that we have really to kill this point before going and launching the issue of reform as it exists.

In 1961, '62, Kuwait got independent and then, constitution was put there. Why? Because it was a good emir, good head of state at that time who thought that he was confident of himself and there was a very vibrant and strong political elite. They worked together and they produced a constitution, which was later on taken by Bahrain just to move to Bahrain in 1973 after Bahrain got independent. They copied the Kuwaiti constitution, but they could not do with that constitution for two years, and then it was –

MR. CAROTHERS: So you really are emphasizing the idea that Kuwait moves to its own rhythm in a way, and that the reform agenda in the region and of broader international issues or pressures. Is that partly that the oil that you have allows you to be so independent in the sense that the ruling family feels, look, we're in a fairly strong position economically?

MR. AL NAJJAR: No, no. I think it has a lot to do – and if you want to compare with other Gulf countries – it has a lot to do with the position of the ruling family within society. I mean, if you come to Kuwait, you will see that ruling family members don't have palaces. Maybe we have just two palaces in the country. They live just next door, so you can just go. And if I talk and I'm a person who is very critical of the government; I say everything I want. And if a ruling family comes in, a minister, prime minister, I will not change the subject; I'll just carry on. So this you don't find – I mean, this is not imposed and that's the way; it's not pretending; it's the natural behavior.

MR. CAROTHERS: In the elections that took place in the middle of last year with the new- some people have talked about an opposition majority in the parliament – this is somewhat new at least in recent years in Kuwait. Is this significant?

MR. AL NAJJAR: No, I don't think it is significant. I don't even want to call it opposition – opposition for the issue at that time, which was the constituencies. And the

prime minister for the first time, a ruling family member – now we have another ruling family member who is being grilled and maybe next week is going to be coming. So the prime minister was called in to be grilled and questioned, and then an – (inaudible) – election was called and that doesn't mean that the ruling family.

I mean, we have the Kuwaiti syndrome and we have the Dubai syndrome and we have the Saudi syndrome. So you have two examples. Now, the Kuwaiti syndrome, well, it's always been not acceptable in regional politics. This is embarrassing to others and you have to hush it down. And I think even the U.S. is accepting that. So they really try to inflate what happened in Qatar or in Bahrain and praise the things there, and they know that it's just cosmetic changes. They know that the full power is in the ruling family hands and they just are not giving in. So what I see is always, if I want to analyze, and just to compare, to see the position of ruling family within society. That's the source of change. If you see it more relaxed, if you see it more acceptable – they accept criticism; no problem with that – I think that you could see –

MR. CAROTHERS: Do you see a fundamental difference between Kuwait and Bahrain in this instance? Bahrain also had elections last year and there seems to be considerably more socio-political tension in the society.

MR. AL NAJJAR: You know, in Kuwait, we always say that the 2nd of August 1990, where were you at that day? So that's just always say that; I think Americans, they will always ask where were you on September 11th. So it's something that – so September 11th, I was in Bahrain. And I conducted the first human rights workshop in Bahrain that was at that time. And I could see change. It was major change, because I follow Bahraini politics very closely; I have very good relationship with the political elite. And I could see that we said everything that we never dreamt of saying in Bahrain.

But I see this as on the political side, not the structural side. You need to do more of a structural side. The current Bahraini constitution far weighed less than the Bahraini Constitution of 1973. You have two chambers – and one chamber which is appointed and the other chamber is elected. And then you have the top – they have to agree on everything. So the structural changes are not far enough. And where you have political changes, yes, you have political changes. Maybe you have two, three women as ministers. Those things could be reversed any minute. Any time you could.

But in Kuwait, you have a constitution. The government, our ruling family, tried to follow the Saudi syndrome several times. It's not just rosy all the way – 1976, 1986, the ruling family dissolved the parliament and they decided to do without it and then they just didn't succeed; they went back to the constitution. So the institution of the constitution is strong and well entrenched in the society. And then we go back and things have improved. The last succession issue problem in Kuwait was called on the parliament. The parliament – where else you would imagine a ruling family would go the people to decide who will come as the head of state. So this is something which I watch with interest. I think it shows some kind of a puzzle; sometimes I see it as a puzzle. But you know, we try to shed some light to understand it.

MR. CAROTHERS: Okay, we'll come back to some of these issues. Amr, let me turn to you with Egypt. I mean, Egypt is a country obviously of fundamental interest and importance here in Washington. Many people had – I'd say – fairly high expectations in 2005 about the electoral process – first direct presidential elections, legislative elections. And since then, there seems to have been just sort of a series of discouraging events or discouraging news about the state of political reform in Egypt. Recently, we've seen a new crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood, Ayman Nour is still in jail. There is a sense of reforms that have been proposed, but it really seems – is it really that the government in particular, the people around the president are just planning a succession and not interested in any real political opening? Or is the news as bad as it looks or is there something that we're not seeing in this picture?

AMR HAMZAWY: Well, yes and no. I mean, it depends on where you look. I mean, if you look at the major structuring realities of Egyptian politics, the dominance of institutional authoritarianism with security services and the military establishment, the lack of rule-of-law, lack of respect for human rights, power distribution, quite to the contrary of what Ghanim just said. Egypt's power is quite concentrated in very few hands, Egyptian elites still quite dominant in terms of its power and control and its hegemonian stance in societies. If you look at these structuring realities of Egyptian politics, really nothing has changed. So it's still very much the Egypt of the 1990s, the Egypt of the 1980s with very slight modification.

But if you move beyond this level and look at sort of what we tend to call the outer edges of the political space, you will see some positive developments. Definitely, there has been a greater freedom of expression in Egypt. I mean, when I compare Egypt 2006, 2007 to Egypt in the 1990s, in the 1990s definitely there has been an expansion with regard to freedom of expression. There is a better competition in the political space.

And this better competition materializes in two ways. One, you have new actors like Kifaya and other protest movements, which entered the scene in 2004 and 2005. And you have a greater contestation of parliamentary seats, to an extent, elected boards of professional associations and Egyptianized – in an Egyptian way – trade unions and what have you. So you have a better contestation within limits, and you have a greater expansion when it comes to freedom of expression. And the story of Egypt in 2005 and 2006 is really how the government, how the ruling establishment moved from letting greater freedoms in the margins grow and letting them materialize in a way which added to our political dynamism that in fact not the ruling establishment injected, but opposition movements – the Muslim Brotherhood on the one hand, and Kifaya on the other hand, and even to an extent liberal leftist parties – have been moved from managing – sort of letting them act and letting dynamism exist in 2005 – into a crackdown in 2006.

MR. CAROTHERS: Is this crackdown a sign of strength or a sign of weakness, a sign of fear or a sign of confidence?

MR. HAMZAWY: I would say it's a sign of fear. It's a sign of fear out of two reasons. One, which is hardly discussed in the U.S., but intensively discussed in Egypt – it's a sign of fear because of the upcoming crisis of succession, which the regime will face. The regime has been – the ruling establishment has been trying to push forward this scenario of Gamal Mubarak Jr. following or succeeding Mubarak Sr. And they have been in a way engineering, even constitutional reform, to enable Gamal to follow and succeed his father. But Gamal lacks credibility. He is very unpopular in Egypt. There is definitely regards of how they are going to do it, whether they will play by the rules and do it in a constitutional way, or whether they will do it in a different way. This is going to be a succession crisis, because he is very unpopular.

And the second, there is a degree of fear when it comes to what will happen when Mubarak disappears. And the second source of fear basically takes us back to the role of the Muslim Brotherhood and the very strong showing of the Brotherhood in 2005 – not in the presidential elections; they could not run – in the parliamentary elections of 2005, especially in the first phase. Even if you compare in numbers, MB, Muslim Brotherhood's candidates won more seats than the candidates of the ruling parties and the National Democratic Party, the NDP. So it's more a sign of fear.

But to sort of complete the Egyptian story, the regime knows very well that its repressive measures still function. So he knows that he can crack down on the Muslim Brotherhood, that he can –

MR. CAROTHERS: So there is some underlying confidence that their structure is holding.

MR. HAMZAWY: They know that the structure is still very much holding as you say. They can use the security services in a very efficient way to track down the Muslim Brotherhood. As a quantitative new feature of the current wave of arrests, which is going on since two weeks at least is the fact that the target is the economic power base of the Brotherhood – those who are arrested this time are not simply parliamentarians; those are Muslim Brothers, members who are strong as businessmen. Basically, who is being arrested is an Islamized section of the Egyptian business community. And these people financed the election campaign of the Brotherhood in 2005. So in a way, the objective of what is going on is to track down on the Brotherhood economically, to disable the Brotherhood to run as effective as it did in 2005 in the upcoming elections. You have municipal elections in 2008; you have parliamentary elections in 2010 and presidential elections in 2011.

MR. CAROTHERS: Okay, thank you. All right, let's turn to Morocco. And Khalid, I mean, many people here in Washington hold out Morocco as, in a sense, this is as good as it gets – people will often say – in terms of top-down reform that comes from the king who really has helped Morocco move forward this decade towards certainly greater political openness. There is a lot of multi-party competition in Morocco. There clearly is a reform process of some type. Yet at the same time, it's also possible to ask some fundamental questions about this process, in particular to say, is this really just

continued liberalization and opening, but no underlying movement, social change in the basic monarchical structure of Moroccan political powers. So it's been a very positive reform process, do you see it continuing to move forward? Can it move to these basic structures or is it likely just to sort of stay short of fundamental change?

KHALID EL-HARIRY: Let me first thank the Carnegie Endowment, and you, Tom, particularly, for inviting me in addressing such a high-level audience. And thank you for the true privilege, not because I am a parliamentarian, but because my English is not so good as my colleagues – the first one is allowing me to have some note, and the second one is giving me a little bit more time.

The process of political reforms in Morocco really accelerated in the mid-90s during the late years of the reign of the late king, Hassan – (unintelligible). And this process has also related, and somewhat extended, with the King Mohammed VI. But to be clear, from the beginning, there have been a lot of positive reforms. I will speak about some of these reforms. But all these reforms are not aimed to the change of the balance of power in the country. The balance of power has slightly changed with these reforms.

What are the most important reforms during these 15 years? I think the most impressive one is reforms related to the human resource record.

MR. CAROTHERS: Human rights record?

MR. EL-HARIRY: Human rights, I said human resource. Human rights record. Morocco has dozens of political prisoners have been released during the '90s and the beginning of 2000, 2002. But the most important thing is that Morocco has been the first, I think, Arab country who officially recognized the government responsibility in human rights abuses during the '60s, '70s, and '80s. More than 20,000 cases have been investigated and documented, and victims or their families had the chance to testify in public hearings broadcasted on TV, on radio, on the Internet, and a process of financial compensation has been launched and is taking place today.

The second most important reform is the reform of the family code, which I think puts Morocco ahead of many countries in this region concerning the woman's right. This reform has been pushed by progressive parties and the association, but this reform also has been fiercely opposed by Islamist parties. This is important to note.

Third reform is reforms concerning the freedom of the press – freedom of speech in general and the freedom of the press. There has been a very impressive improvement in the freedom of the press. There are less and less doubles – two or three doubles – we can discuss about these doubles. And we have new independent press. In the last year, we have 10 new radios, one new TV channel, and this is giving more open space for political, social, and cultural debate.

In the political field, Morocco has launched – and we can say – an inclusion process that allowed, for example, USFP, the party I am belonging to, after 40 years of

opposition, to enter the government and to help the government. It allows the Islamist party to participate in the parliament and to be in the first opposition party in the parliament. And they are very active in this parliament. And we will have elections in summer. And we expect that new political groups will enter the political arena.

So we have also a lot of socioeconomic reforms, and I think time is too short to talk about these reforms. So are these political reforms – because this is a way of answering the question, are they changing the balance of power? I think that these reforms are laying the ground, the human institutional ground, for more democratic reforms that have to come. But there are obstacles. We can talk about the obstacles. There are obstacles to going further in this process.

MR. CAROTHERS: You've given a very diplomatic answer, because I know you're a very diplomatic kind of person. In other words, I'm driving on this path of reform in Morocco and I keep looking ahead of me on the horizon for something called a change in the balance of power, which is a polite way I guess of saying that the king and the associated institutions with the monarchy would have fundamentally less power and it would become a true constitutional monarchy, as opposed to a rather vague constitutional monarchy. Are the main political actors in Morocco imagining such a scenario today? Are they looking ahead to such a moment or is this just – they're just still on this road saying we hope this will appear on the horizon?

MR. EL-HARIRY: There are different levels. For those who know the political scene in Morocco, we have two main parties who are in the majority now – the Istiqlal and USFP. Istiqlal is 65-year old party. USFP is 50 years old party. And these parties used to be the opposition until 1998. It seems that these parties, with the Islamist party officially, are the three actors that can have a real impact on going further in the political reforms. But if you look at the first two parties – USFP and Istiqlal – they give the impression to be less dynamic and less innovative than what they were in the '80s and '90s. The leadership seems tired. The head of Istiqlal – just to quote something that has been said, I think, two or three weeks ago – the head of the Istiqlal party told the press that we don't need to have more powers in parliament and in the prime minister because political parties are not prepared yet to use wisely this parliamentary power. So what can you expect from a party that says this kind of things?

But there are other obstacles, to be frank. I think that the reforms I talked about have been made possible – we have to recognize it – by the role that the king played in pushing ahead these reforms, plus the role of progressive parts of the society. We have to say also that the Moroccan society is not yet very democratic-prone. People are more concentrated on their day-to-day problems – unemployment, corruption, education, and so on. And constitutional reforms are not in the top priority of these.

And we have also some bad examples of democratic result. We had elections since 1960 in Morocco. And the main cities and local council are managed by elected bodies. And they are doing so bad that people turn, if this is democracy, we don't like democracy. There are other factors, but –

MR. CAROTHERS: All right, well, that's interesting. Paul, let's turn to you. I mean, Lebanon, obviously, is a country that is very much on everyone's mind today with the political situation there. But if we could step back just a little bit and say that after the events of early 2005 – the Cedar Revolution – the elections in early 2005, there was really a strong sense in Lebanon that this was a not necessarily unique, but a powerful and important moment in Lebanese political history. And there was suddenly talk about a reform agenda in Lebanon, and really people began saying what are the sort of types of fundamental or structural reforms to the Lebanese political system that would now be possible as well as necessary to take Lebanon to a different sort of political future – away from the past, away from perhaps even the confessional system itself, but towards something, a more truly representative democracy.

Today, two years later, is the current confrontation and conflict in Lebanon simply something that has blocked and negated the possibility of such a reform process, or should we view the current conflict as a result of the fact that that reform process didn't really take form and so we're back to confrontational politics? I mean, is what's happening today something completely different from the opening up that occurred in 2005? Is it sort of something that has impeded itself on Lebanese politics? Or is it an expression of these very tensions?

PAUL SALEM: Well, I mean, Lebanon in many ways is a bit sort of like the Kuwaiti story in that the Lebanese political system – Lebanese democracy with its faults, but with its democratic aspects – has been around since the '20s. And it has to do with the nature of Lebanese society and balances of power, particularly like similar balances of power in different ways in Kuwait that make this the nature of the society. And it was a country that functioned as a democracy and as an independent state for three decades fairly well. It succumbed to essentially regional tensions in the mid-70s and collapsed as a state for – you know – political and military reasons, not necessarily issues directly related to reform. Reform is always part of the story. And it remains sort of occupied by regional conflict for three decades, from '75 to 2005. And so, if you look at Kuwait, which was occupied for all of – less than a year –

MR. AL NAJJAR: Six months.

MR. SALEM: Six months. Lebanon, between Israel's occupation, Syria's occupation, conflicts with the Palestinian – in addition to the Lebanese conflict, which one must acknowledge – is the basic factor which perhaps allowed all of this to take place. But this went on for a full three decades. So really, the mood in Lebanon at the time of 2005 – jubilation, sort of excitement, the enthusiasm – was a regaining of sovereignty and a lifting of foreign domination. The Israelis had been pushed out, essentially, by Hezbollah in 2000, so that had sort of ended in 2000. And the Syrians were pushed out in 2005 essentially by the United States and the combination of other forces. So it wasn't so much talk about reforming the system as getting back to the system.

Of course, the system has faults and can be improved and refined, but it was really going back to the Lebanese political system, which is democratic and which has a fairly unique way of sharing power among communities, which – after the Paris Agreement of '89 – is a pretty fair sharing of power, although it's not perfect. And the problems that sort of impeded this were numerous. One, that sort of the leaders of the Cedar Revolution, rather than implementing essentially the fair Lebanese way of doing democracy, they ran with an election law which was unfair and which had been designed by the Syrians specifically not to be fair, in order to come out with certain outcomes. And they kind of – they stole the election in a way. And that was kind of – well, that was a major turning point and a major mistake. Instead of sort of taking advantage of the mood of the time, they sort of tried to take advantage of their power and run on an election law that would give them an unfair advantage.

At the same time, during the election, they allied with their opponents at the time, which was Hezbollah and Amal who were allied with Syria, in order to get a majority in parliament. And then after that, they changed their politics. So the problem in Lebanon today, partly, is the internal anger among the different communities as to who did what to whom and when, and hence a dissatisfaction with the current representativity of the Lebanese parliament, which is problematic.

But much more serious is the external aspect of what is going on in Lebanon, which is essentially the presence of a very large armed group, which is Hezbollah, which backed by Syria and Iran, is allied openly with Syria and Iran. And that is perhaps is a legitimate alliance, but from the year 2000 up until today – from the year 2000 when the Israelis left Lebanon – Hezbollah has not really proposed a way for itself to integrate into the Lebanese state other than having a few deputies in parliament and a minister or two in the government, and hence, has represented a fundamental challenge to the Lebanese state. And while the Syrians were in Lebanon, up until 2005, they managed this complex situation because they were the boss. When they left, all these contradictions came out into the open.

And currently, they are out in the open at a time when the United States is essentially in an escalating conflict with Iran, and a fairly tight conflict with Syria, as well at a time when there is serious Sunni-Shiite tension in the region in general, which is reflecting on Lebanon as well. It is also coming at a time a few months after the war in Lebanon, which started with an operation launched by Hezbollah, but turned into a major Israeli attempt backed by the United States to destroy Hezbollah. So what is going on in Lebanon is largely – it's not about reform – it's essentially about politics, conflict, part of it communal, but essentially being exacerbated by very serious regional and very serious international tension.

I think the case of Lebanon, similar to the cases of Palestine or Iraq – I mean, Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine all have democratic constitutions at the time being. But none of them is functioning properly because of security or political or regional or international tension. And that too is something that should make us step back. I mean,

the Berlin Wall, yes, maybe fell, but it sort of fell on the people and they're suffering the consequences of a very cataclysmic set of events.

MR. CAROTHERS: Thank you. Let me just try to sum up where we are, but let me just ask a question, which I suspect is on some people's mind of say, just the next six months, what are you most worried about in Lebanon? What do you see as a scenario that could really lead to significant domestic armed conflict?

MR. SALEM: Well, I think what's happened in Lebanon over the last two, three weeks has hopefully – perhaps – been we've turned the corner in Lebanon and perhaps the region. And the corner I'm referring to is the very, very serious fear of the spreading of sectarian warfare – Sunni-Shiite conflict, which is ongoing in Iraq and has been so for a couple of years, but was contained in Iraq. And although people were worried about it and we heard statements about it, there wasn't an immediate fear that it's going to jump immediately from Iraq elsewhere.

Whereas the events of November and December and January in Lebanon really indicated to players in the region that Sunni-Shiite conflict could erupt in Lebanon, if it erupted in Lebanon, there is not much to stop it spreading to Syria and then perhaps to other areas – obviously, Saudi Arabia has a large Shiite minority in the oil-rich area, Bahrain, Kuwait and others smaller communities. And what has happened, I believe, is that in particular, Iran and Saudi Arabia, obviously – we'll talk perhaps about that later – but at loggerheads on these two issues, at the same time very dramatically realized that a spreading of this kind of conflict from Lebanon elsewhere would be a disaster for all, and indeed it would be.

And we see very vigorous talks between the Saudis and the Iranians at a time when the Americans certainly are not talking to the Iranians, yet their main ally, the Saudis, are doing so very vigorously, in order to try, despite their difference, to put a cap on the possibility of such an outbreak. Now, that's very significant for the region. I think it's a very important sort of security issue for the region. For Lebanon, I think and I hope that we have moved back significantly from the brink of sectarian civil war, which we were at – we were two hours away from civil war two weeks ago – Tuesday two weeks ago. I think we've pulled significantly back, so I hope that in the next six months to a year that is not my primary fear. What I expect to happen is continued deadlock over the tribunal and the assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri, which Syria is very vehemently against, and a continued stalemate in the country with one side – the government – backed by the Americans, the Saudis and so on, and the opposition, maybe Hezbollah and others backed by Syria and Iran. I see a continued stalemate, continued paralysis.

MR. CAROTHERS: What is the view when I go back to this general question of is there a – in a sense what is the state of the political reform agenda in the region – is I'm sort of left still with the question, what I hear from you in a sense is that the underlying structures are holding. Yet around those structures and on top of them and on the sides of them, a lot of interesting things have been happening – significant developments in

Morocco, interesting developments in Kuwait, Egypt as you say there was a process of change around the margins or around the edges, Amr, but nonetheless the structure is holding.

So you're telling me in some sense that yes, there is a reform agenda, but it's not yet one which is getting at the underlying structures of power and really fundamentally changing them. And secondly, you're also telling me that this is a historical process in each of these societies. It's very different in each society, and sort of painting it with a broad brush and saying it's something of this decade, and it's something that is kind of a regional way – it may be the wrong way to understand it, in a sense, that it's both more historical and relates to changes that have occurred for decades in some cases, and it's very specific to individual countries and the influence among and between them – (audio break, tape flip) – in a number of Arab societies that – no, the old structures of power, yes, they're still there; yes, they have a certain legitimacy, but times need to change. There really is a need for fundamental change over time. We'll do it in our own way, in our own rhythms, but there really is some kind of breakthrough psychologically that people are pushing for. So were we just imagining this or has something really occurred? Amr, what is your thought? And I'll come to you.

MR. HAMZAWY: Once again, yes and no. I mean, to an extent it was not simply imagined, because if you look at the Middle East and North Africa – (cross talk) – if you look at the Middle East and North Africa over the last three to four years, qualitatively different things have been taking place and they are important to note. One, to my mind, our region never before 2003, 2002 discussed political reform as such – democratization, processes of democratization. We never discussed the prospects of political reform as intensively before 2003 as we have been discussing it over the last three years. If you look at the public space, the public debates, they are very much driven by the search for democratic transition. This was not the case in the 1980s and 1990s.

A second point – in the 1980s and 1990s and I would say up until 2001, 2002, it was not simply about the liberal democratic order. There were different competing visions of how to organize state-society relationships. You had an Islamist vision, referring back to Islamic ideals. You had competing visions – pan-Arab, socialist. And if you look at the Arab public in general, Middle East and North Africa over the last three, four years, there is a clear hegemony in the intellectual sense of the liberal democratic order. Even Islamist movements have positioned themselves in a way which does not sort of contradict the liberal democratic order.

A third quality which is important to note in mind is the fact that although Arab political spaces remain limited, the different structural limitations, underlying structures of power, but we have seen in different places – be it Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Yemen – leave Kuwait aside – but look at Bahrain, even other countries like the UAE – we have seen an expansion of competition, greater competition in the political space. Within limits, yes, I mean, it's difficult to me to look at the UAE elections, which took place a few weeks ago and to describe them as sort of leading to a democratic transition. I mean, these were elections where the rulers basically decided about how to choose

among their populace; it was not the other way around. But still, you have a greater competition going on in different political spaces.

So these are three qualities which are important to keep in mind. And so it was not totally imagined.

What was imagined was sort of the projection that this is the only trajectory going on there. This was not the case. Because if you go back to 2002 and 2003, we had two additional trajectories which have been relevant since then. One is what Paul mentioned – sort of the upcoming wave of sectarian warfare and sectarian tensions currently portrayed right now in the Sunni-Shi'a language. So – and this is not simply used by government. There are some popular feelings out there in different societies that this might be coming. And this has been the case.

And the second or third trajectory which has been going on and very relevant as well is sort of a ruling establishment's reintroducing and upgrading their authoritarian instruments in a way which to an extent matches the rhetoric about reform, but basically keeps the dynamism and the great confrontation and the greater expression and the greater view of expression within limits. So authoritarian ruling establishments have updated and upgraded their instruments as well. So how they manage elections today is not as they used to manage elections in the 1990s. But the outcomes are still very much the same.

I mean, here the case of Yemen is very important. Yemen had – and Paul and I observed the elections; we were in Yemen. Basically, what happened in Yemen was a very competitive build-up to the elections, a very competitive scene, and a real opposition candidate. But it was managed basically in a way which ensured the same outcome as in the 1980s and 1990s – less irregularities, less interventions by security forces, but targeted interventions to secure the same outcome, which is the dominance of the president and of the ruling party.

MR. CAROTHERS: So your observer report on the Yemeni election was also called "Yes and No." (Laughter, cross talk.) No, but your yes and no answer reflects the subtleties and complexity of what is happening. So, Ghanim, when I ask you whether you agree or disagree, you can of course say yes and no. But let me ask whether you agree with Amr's first general statement that he does think there was in this decade a sort of opening of political space and a new focus on democratic discourse and a liberal-democratic agenda. And that this was really a significant change at least in the intellectual circles and how people talked about – thought about – politics. Do you see this in the Gulf as well?

MR. AL NAJJAR: Yeah, I think – I mean, when you see the change coming through since the fall of the Berlin Wall, there was an international movement toward changes, much far greater than just the Arab region. So I think it wasn't imagined; I think there was some hope. Then you come to the concept of humanitarian intervention.

I mean, these are concepts which have been developed and came as a result of changes that happened far larger than the region.

What happened, all the governing bodies in each of the countries of the region felt threatened. So exactly, they invested a lot in the reform business. So now they are inventing new reforms, so you have an election which is not an election; you have parliaments, which are not parliaments; you have freedom of the press, which is not free; you have everything. All the foundations and the structures – you have it – you have there but they don't really function.

MR. CAROTHERS: That's sort of the third of what Amr is talking about – the regimes have become more sophisticated in how they use – what about his first idea that the public within the amount of political space that there is that there has been a greater attention to the idea of fundamental political change? Do you feel that that is true?

MR. AL NAJJAR: Yeah. I think first information technology and how information is being passed and how easy you could get connected – I'm sure this had an effect. But then you had the power structure is still – the balance is completely within the governing bodies that they can manipulate anything, and they can play with that. And as I said in the beginning, people look for models. So the model in the Gulf, the Kuwaiti model is being besieged by all the countries in the region. They don't want it to spread. So they're now –

MR. CAROTHERS: They probably see Kuwait as having gone farther than they want to go.

MR. AL NAJJAR: It's too far, too far for them. You have ruling family members, ministers being ejected from government, government being forced to add and change constituencies from 25 to 5, even better than what the people are asking. So this is too much for them. And the emir himself issued decisions that are not respected and accepted by parliament – these are things which will not be tolerated. So then you have the Dubai model, which is quite attractive, and even people in Kuwait say that why do we have Dubai – why Dubai is like this?

MR. CAROTHERS: In other words, why not just ignore the political changes? Focus on economic reform.

MR. AL NAJJAR: Exactly. Thirty, 40 years ago, the Dubai television was Kuwait television, was funded by Kuwait. Educational missions were all from Kuwait. They say, look, we invested there and now they are far. And they say that, let's have dictatorship. This is – people talk about it in Kuwait. If that dictatorship would lead us to that type of model, that everything is so huge, so beautiful, so businesslike. And then you have a problem with the irresponsible parliamentarians who are really, very bad and corrupt. And these are bad models.

Yet then you go to Bahrain, UAE, Qatar – going into how to appeal to the U.S. politics – hiring PR firms to market their brand to say we are the best. We have democracy. We have whatever. It's all I think a lot of contradiction. But the main thing is that you have government bodies investing and learning how to reproduce themselves and get into the bandwagon of the reform business. And then they sell themselves.

MR. CAROTHERS: Turning to North Africa, actually, and I know Khalid, as a member of the Moroccan parliament, you may be in some ways cautious about speaking about politics in Algeria or Tunisia, but when Amr describes the kind of an opening in thinking about reform and democracy, do you feel it in North Africa, in Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco? When you listen to that, do you think that's different from what I have experienced or watched in my neighborhood? Or do you feel that you share with a sort of an Egyptian-plus vision, I would say – starting in Egypt and out. How familiar does this sound to you when you hear Amr kind of describe that?

MR EL-HARIRY: I think, leave Tunisia aside.

MR. CAROTHERS: Well, that says something if we have to leave Tunisia aside. (Cross talk.)

MR. EL-HARIRY: Actually, it's a couple of exact – Tunisia was more interesting in the 1980s and '90s.

MR. CAROTHERS: But that's called political scientists controlling their sample. (Cross talk.) Well, we'll let Khalid choose his cases.

MR. EL-HARIRY: I think that from my point of view, from a Moroccan point of view, I think that each country has its own path to political reforms. The Moroccan case is, when I discuss with friends from the Middle East – it seems that Moroccan case is a model apart, because Morocco has never been, for example, part of the Ottoman Empire. Morocco has always had its – the state was established in the 18th century.

MR. CAROTHERS: This is the lecture on Moroccan uniqueness –

(Cross talk, laughter.)

MR. EL-HARIRY: Yes, and the first time the political reforms in the New Vision of political reforms – Constitution, political parties, elections – has been discussed is just after the end of the French Protectorate in 1956, we had five years of fighting between – fighting – soft fighting and hard fighting also between the monarchy and the political parties that have been part of the independence. We had different visions of organizing the states fighting in the end of the '50s and beginning of the '60s. Then the vision of the monarchy won and we have more than 30 years of autocratic regime, and this regime has begun to open in the '90s.

So it's difficult to say that Morocco is part of a wave of reforms that came in the –

MR. CAROTHERS: Yeah, you're returning to the idea there are national processes. They're historical –

(Cross talk.)

MR. EL-HARIRY: Historic – national historical process.

MR. CAROTHERS: So when you hear – I'm going describe this and say, you know, there was an opening up different from the '80s and '90s – that doesn't – you don't – that's now how you think about – I mean, Morocco is on its own reform path but you don't see it as part of a regional – no, that's doesn't –

MR. EL-HARIRY: No, I don't think.

MR. CAROTHERS: And you don't see that in Algeria or Tunisia either. They're obviously in very different –

MR. EL-HARIRY: Tunisia is a very specific case. Amr talked about some kind of regulation, but –

MR. CAROTHERS: Right. Regression, you said, yeah.

MR. EL-HARIRY: Regression.

MR. CAROTHERS: Yeah.

MR. EL-HARIRY: Algeria had this problem of the – (cross talk) – election, and the 10 years of civil war, and now Algeria is just recovering from the civil war. And I don't know which path Algeria will go through.

MR. CAROTHERS: Okay. I'm going to just ask one more question, then turn to the audience.

Another issue which of course people talk a lot about here in Washington and think about and study is this question of Islamist participation in competitive politics in the region. Looking at all of the countries we've been talking about, it's a varied landscape. The Kuwaiti elections last year – the Islamic Constitutional Movement in Kuwait was an active and fairly successful participant, Egypt struggling – and there's currently a crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood. Morocco has an Islamist party that many people feel is positioned to do fairly well in the next election. Lebanon is struggling, as you say, with an Islamist militia that's not integrated in some ways into the state. Very hard to generalize here about the question of Islamist politics through that, but in the Gulf at least, you know, there is, you know, some tradition in Kuwait of allowing participation of at least associations or groups who have an Islamist character.

Is this changing now? Is this just, again, a line that's been developing for a while? Is this something that you feel is a significant sort of potential new sort of development that will have a lot of effect on Kuwaiti politics?

MR. EL-HARIRY: I think it was – it was started as an alliance between Islamists and the government to check the left Arab nationalists. And that started, I would say, in the '70s. And then they got included more and they were, you know, part of the process. And that came also with the rise of Islamists after 1967 war. So just you have the Arab nationalists pushed aside and then Islamists coming into the political scene.

So far they have to adhere to the constitutional norms, and they are doing that. And I think you have to have a political culture. You have to have a political process. So far they are well into that and you don't have Islamists who are outside the political process. And they are – the main part of them, they are really very hard working on corruption and they do – and they are forming alliances with other groups – liberals and – like, you know, the last election. Liberals and Islamists worked side to side against the government, and they got very good results.

There is a problem of who is Islamist because then you see – you read and then you – somebody say, I am an Islamist. He is not. He is not a – maybe he's a tribalist who wants just to have an Islamist hat on his political brow. Yeah. I mean, you have few Islamists as such. And the main thing in the Kuwaiti experiment here, that Islamists are running in the election and losing. They are not – they are no more saints, and they are being, you know, attacked and brutalized in the press, and – I mean, there are so many issues raised against the Islamists. And corruption is raised against them. And so this is the way that -- when you (leave ?) them in, and people will decide.

But the issue that mostly Islamists are being feared from the governments and that I pushed, you know, back maybe a situation which is far much more problematic like Saudi Arabia. But then, I mean, it's -- I see it's better to include them rather than exclude them because then you will have disasters.

MR. CAROTHERS: Amr, how does that sound from a different perspective? And in particular, I mean, you describe and you've written about Islamist movements in this decade starting to make a transformation in their thinking about multi-party competition and (imposed ?) competition. Yet the Egyptian government is back to cracking down on them -- you know, not hearing that message and not following it.

Is this -- is Egypt just stuck on this issue?

MR. HAMZANY: Well, very much so. I think the Kuwaiti, and I mean, if we act a little beyond the Kuwaiti case, you have a Jordanian case, which -- and you have a Moroccan case, and three cases are cases of inclusion -- how to include estimates within limits. There are clear limitations to estimates -- participation in legal politics in Morocco, in Kuwait and in Jordan. The Egyptian model here is, in fact, different in nature and quality. It's a model of controlled confrontation. The story of Egypt, of the

relationship between the ruling establishment and the Muslim Brotherhood, is not the story of inclusion, but the story of how to manage a controlled confrontation in a polarized scene.

So they let them in and then they push them out. So while you have basically ways of letting them in, allowing them a degree of participation in the system and stakes in the system, and then pushing them aside. So Egypt is less about inclusion and more about how effective the government is in managing the controlled confrontation.

And on the other side, if we move away from the ruling establishment perspective and look at the Muslim Brotherhood, it's a story of how the Muslim Brotherhood has come to, one, prioritize participation in legal politics without its limitations. This is really what we have been doing in the last two decades. I mean, any sort of government propaganda basically saying that the Muslim Brotherhood might still be a secretive organization trying to take over the government -- this is really nonsense. This movement has come to prioritize participation in legal politics, with all its limitations. So this is the only way ahead.

And this prioritization which took place has had impact on the thinking of the brotherhood as well, moving beyond, if you wish, sort of the model of an Islamic state into even in an indirect way prioritizing the liberal democratic order. This is what we have been arguing for. If you look at their platform in 2004, their electoral platform in 2005, you can hardly differentiate or find any differences between them and any liberal political party in Egypt.

So it's more a story of a controlled confrontation within the context of a very strong ruling establishment and a movement striving to find a way to participate in a constant way and being faced with pushbacks, systematic pushbacks of an oppressive nature.

MR. CAROTHERS: I'm going to turn to the audience now. I'm sure you have a lot of questions. You are welcome to direct them to the particular person or just pose the question to the panel. And if you could identify yourself. I think we have microphones coming around, so, Hattie, if you'd just wait -- right here in the front.

Q: Thank you. My name is Hattie Babbitt, and I want to follow up on the Islam discussion. None of you have really mentioned the role of Islam or the Koran and if there are any actors in these processes using Ishtahad or using Islam as a mechanism, as discussion, as a tool for reform. All the discussion has been, are Islamists included or not? But the role of Islam -- are there positive uses being made of Islam or Ishtahad in any of your experiences?

MR. CAROTHERS: Who would like to comment on that?

MR. AL NAJJAR: Yeah.

MR. CAROTHERS: Thank you. Would you comment on that?

MR. AL NAJJAR: Yeah. Let's take the issue of women participation. That was a very sticky issue. Some Islamists, they thought that this was a completely unacceptable start -- you know, based on Islamic teaching, and other groups said no. So I mean, you had that.

And then when the decision in the parliament, like, you know, the example of Kuwait, passed the bill and women were included, all of those people who were against, they just jump in.

So it's -- I mean, there always been a flexibility, so to speak, when it comes to politics, that -- and it's always been the case. It's never stopped. You have some small group of extremists who think that parliaments is anti-God, so -- because it's a majority rule. I mean, we are following God's rule, so I mean, if a decision is coming out of parliament of majority that is anti-God's teaching, then that's not acceptable. So this is the basic -- that's -- you will see more of that in places like Saudi Arabia. This is completely -- you don't see many sayings against that.

But in the case of Kuwait, in the case of Bahrain, this has completely been transformed and accepted. The Salafis of Kuwait had a lot of hesitation in 1981 to enter the political sphere, and then they -- at the end of the day, they decided -- they said, "Ah, okay. Let's do something about it, because then it's not the majority rule anymore." So this has been all along the case.

MR. CAROTHERS: I don't know if -- I think Khalid has a comment, and then --

MR. EL-HARIRY: Yeah. We have a very clear example in Morocco on the use of Islam as a tool for reform. Back in 1999, the socialist government proposed a reform of the family code, which concerns the role of the woman in the family and in the society. As soon as this code has been proposed, there have been very huge demonstrations in Casablanca organized by Islamists against this family code. So the government has to go back and ask for the arbitration of the king, not only ask the king, but also ask the faithful.

After two or three years of commission and discussion, the king came to the Parliament and he announced the major point of this new family code. But each time he announced one disposition or one point, he justified it by either a verse of the Koran or a hadith of the prophet. And the same code that had been fought -- fiercely fought by Islamists, has been voted unanimously by the Parliament, with the vote of the Islamist party opposing it two or three years ago. So this is one example of how Islam can be used, how the enlightened Islam can be used, in pushing ahead the reforms.

MR. CAROTHERS: Khalid, thank you. That's very interesting -- (inaudible) --

MR. : It's very unfortunate that we do not have a commander of the faithful in Egypt. It would have been much easier.

(Cross talk, laughter.)

MR. : Well, it's better not to have a commander of the armed forces --

MR. HAMZAWY: Right. So we have -- since -- (inaudible) -- have been having a commander of the armed forces.

No, but coming back to your question. Of course we are -- I mean regionalized to a great extent. I mean, the Islamist extremists are a very heterogeneous spectrum. But what we have been talking about is basically -- reflects priorities and programs of Islamist movements which have come to commit themselves to participation in legal politics. You have radical militant movement. This picture which we have produced really does not apply to them. But sticking to moderate sort of Islamist movements which participate in legal politics, yes, there have been very interesting, very interesting shifts in their thinking, which indicate how they have creatively used Islam to justify political reform or a platform based on political reform.

Why? Because these are ideological movements which take their ideology very seriously. I mean, these are not simply movements which are simply flexible or pragmatic. They have ideological underpinnings which we have to respect.

So if you look at Egypt, for example, the Muslim Brotherhood, instead -- since the second half of the 1990s and increasingly in the last three, four years -- instead of referring back to the idealized period of Islam, which is the period of the prophet and the four commanders and the faithful which followed them, instead of referring to this idealized period of Islam as indicating a significantly and in principle a different model from the liberal democratic order, they shifted gradually into using this same period to push forward benchmarks which are really benchmarks for the liberal democratic order. So no, the prophet did not sort of manage the society in Medina and Mecca based on the shura principle, but you have a shift from the shura principle into democracy. The real values were about participation, freedom of expression. And so yes, there are different ways how they have used their thinking to push forward democratic reform.

Khalid's example of the Mudawana, of the family code in Morocco -- what's very interesting about the PJD -- I mean, Khalid referred to the enlightened use of Islam. I mean, I would put --

MR. CAROTHERS: Quotes. Quotes.

MR. HAMZAWY: -- quotes on "enlightened." But he refers to enlightened use by the monarchy. If you go to the PJD, which is the major Islamist party in Morocco, they have come up with a very interesting way of justifying what took place. The outcome of the Mudawana, of the family code reform, was not in accordance to their

platform, yet they accepted it, and what they said -- and Marina (?) did write about that -- they accepted it because it was the outcome of democratic deliberations.

So once again he used the religious rhetoric, the religious ideology to push for an outcome which was not in accordance with what they put forward, but because it was democratically contested and democratically reached.

MR. AL NAJJAR: I want to --

MR. CAROTHERS: No, we have a lot of questions --

MR. AL NAJJAR: No, it's not a question. I just want --

MR. CAROTHERS: No, I'm not asking you for questions! (Laughter.)

MR. AL NAJJAR: Sorry!

MR. CAROTHERS: We've answered that.

MR. AL NAJJAR: No, I'll just --

MR. CAROTHERS: Briefly.

MR. AL NAJJAR: There are two major areas of the Islamic Ishtahad where you have to deal with politics -- blasphemy and family laws. All other aspects are not really mostly dealt with as political issues. So how blasphemous is blasphemy and what that will take on freedom of expression; and family law in practice -- these are the main issues that you look for.

MR. CAROTHERS: Thanks.

MR. AL NAJJAR: The other issues are left to the political side.

MR. CAROTHERS: Yeah, I'd like to take -- we have lots of questions here. Let me just -- yes, please.

I think we have a microphone coming.

Q: Thank you. My name is Fatima Asrar. I have a question for Amr and Paul. What's your forecast for Egypt and Yemen's presidential elections, you know, coming presidential elections? Thanks.

MR. HAMZAWY (?): Hm. Paul is running for the election. (Laughter.)

MR. : Shall we take a few questions?

MR. CAROTHERS: Right. Yeah, we have sir, and then -- yes, please.

Q: (Name inaudible) -- Foreign Policy Association. You haven't talked about the banned political organizations in Egypt, Morocco and Kuwait, why they were banned and what is the reason for each country.

MR. : What are you -- could you be more specific when you refer to banned?

Q: There are political parties which have been banned. We would like to know why? Sometimes are they radical parties as from the point of view of the constitution of each country? And why they have been banned?

MR. CAROTHERS: Okay. All right.

Q: Because we, as -- as a matter of fact, delaying actions on the spread of democracy in the Middle East.

MR. CAROTHERS: Well, I think Amr has been referring to what he referred to as almost constant confrontation between the Egyptian government and the Muslim Brotherhood, which is banned as operating as a political party.

MR. HAMZAWAY: Right.

MR. CAROTHERS: So there has been some reference there. But we'll come to that.

Yeah, Mr. Debs.

Q: Thank you.

MR. CAROTHERS: Could you just introduce yourself to --

Q: Richard Debs. I'm a member of the board of the Carnegie Endowment.

I found this a very excellent review of this whole question of reform and the continuum of where it has come from and where it's going. But I see one element that's missing, and maybe that's because of time. And that is, in my view, a very important element in what has happened over the last several years. And that is the impact of U.S. policy since the present administration and since September 11th, and what the impact -- what impact it has had in the Middle East in general and particularly on any question of reform or democracy or whatever words have been used in this respect.

When we look at what happened in Iraq, for example, beyond the destruction and so forth, and the creation of enemies, more enemies that we started out with, and the fact that in many -- in my view, at least, it has created this schism -- a new division between Shi'as and Sunnis. We put the Shi'as basically in power there.

And when you look at Lebanon, looking back over the last two years, it seems to me one of the most important impacts has been Israeli but particularly U.S. -- the U.S. role in the war and the impact it's had on Lebanon, and the enhancement, in my view, of Hezbollah, and the creation of more anti-Americanism in that country, and in a sense, having the support of America for the march -- the Siniora government, in sense, has been very -- sort of like the kiss of death. In other words, it has empowered -- it has empowered -- those who are anti-democratic or who would see a different road.

The same goes for our policy in Israel and Palestine, where this administration has been, unlike its previous administrations -- U.S. administrations, not what you can call even-handed -- it's been very supportive of Israel -- and not very helpful in seeking peace there.

It's also had the opposite effect in other areas. In Egypt, for example, I would think that because of the anti-Americanism that has been grown from this, the U.S. policy has been to slow down on any push against the Mubarak government to create more reform within the country. Same goes for Saudi Arabia.

So this, I think -- I'd like to hear what you have to say on what you see as the impact of American policy on what we're talking about today.

MR. CAROTHERS: Thanks. I want to take one more question. Thanks, Dick. We were planning to come to U.S. policy.

You're right. Time is short.

Bill Bradley in the back here. Time --

Q: Could you give us an idea of other moments in history where Sunni-Shi'a conflict erupted in violence?

MR. CAROTHERS: Okay. We've got just five minutes left, which really just leaves one minute for each panelist, which is a challenge. (Laughter.) So those of you who haven't had a chance -- but you can pick and choose here. There have been several different issues raised, and let's just go down in this order. So, Paul --

MR. SALEM: Yeah. I just wanted -- a quick sort of reflection of sort of what we're talking about -- that the states in this part of the world are not -- and they're powerful states, and they've remained powerful. The expectation that they would be seriously enfeebled in the '80s and '90s and go the way of sort of the Soviet Union, the Soviet bloc did not come to pass. The states in general are powerful. They're powerful because of their control of security apparatus. They also have generally dominance in the economies of the countries. They have strong alliances within the class structures of their societies.

In addition, there is a kind of -- I'll use the word "hegemonic." Yes, to some degree there is, you know, an acceptance of the democratic discourse, but there's also a kind of -- over the several decades, these states have been able, through their control of civil society and so on, to also have a kind of a hegemonic hold the political culture and the political imagination that is still rather significant. These are not states that are completely alienated from their people. This is not the shahist Iran or things of that nature. So we have to --

MR. CAROTHERS: (Off mike.)

MR. SALEM: Yeah. I mean, my point is that these are, except where they have failed for military reasons, like the Palestinian state, Lebanese state or the Iraqi state, these are powerful states who will remain powerful into the immediate future. They have absorbed and co-opted the necessity of the democratic discourse for their own domestic reasons and for Western consumption, are making concessions and will continue to make concessions.

But, you know, the U.S. perspective on this -- first of all, the U.S. effect is limited. These are powerful states not because the U.S. allied with them. They have their own domestic reasons of their power. And the idea that the U.S. made them strong and hence overnight can make them weak is not accurate. These will remain strong into the future.

The U.S. perspective on democratization were very much affected by the World War II example and by the Cold War example, both of which apply very poorly to the Arab world. I mean, the Cold War example and the World War II example are you remove the state and you establish a democracy in its place, whether it's Germany or, you know, Central Europe or things of that nature. That would not happen in that way, and Iraq is the perfect example.

MR. CAROTHERS: (Off mike) -- finish up.

MR. SALEM: So I think what the U.S. can do, and I think that the U.S. should continue to push for democratization in the region, but it has to understand that you can't have democracy and collapsed state at the same time. You have to have states, these states are strong, and to push towards democratization you have to deal with these states as they are and have a gradual process in a peaceful environment. You can't have an open Iraq war, an open Arab-Israeli war, a war with Iran, and expect, as if it were World War II, that in the wake of all these wars, you're going to have democracy springing up. We will have more wars in the wake of these wars.

MR. CAROTHERS: Thank you.

Khalid, would you like to just -- any final comments?

MR. EL-HARIRY: Just three remarks about the effects of what's happening in Iraq and Palestine. Even if Morocco is far from these conflicts, but these conflicts have, I think, have three main effects, negative effects.

They are damaging the image of democracy promotion -- of democracy promoters, the United States and Europe. They are reinforcing the most radical and non-rational groups in the society. And they are developing an anti-democracy feeling in the mind of the other citizens because they witness the double standards, double language by countries that -- by democratic countries in the situation.

So although I think that the Iraqi state, for example, can have an important role in democracy promotion, when talking about the United States, I make a distinction between the administration and organizations that are not government organizations.

Do we have a minute?

MR. CAROTHERS: Short of time, yeah.

MR. EL-HARIRY: Supporting a solution for the Palestine and Iraq conflicts, supporting economically countries that are embarking on a democratic reform process, and understanding that each country is specific and act in accordance with that. The NGOs can help political parties to renew themselves, to reform, to transform. They can help also in launching programs for democracy promotion to (youth ?) people, who are now influenced by radical thought.

MR. CAROTHERS: Okay, good. Thank you. That's a very good summary.

Now Ghanim, just briefly. We're short, really past time.

MR. AL NAJJAR: Okay. I think the U.S. policy in the region is an example of how to be able to create an enemy in one week. So you could get that quite easy. Well, if you can create an enemy in one week, you can have a friend, also, in one week. You just change your policies.

The American image in the region, it's not really hated as per se, it's hated because of the policies. It's not hated because -- I mean people love the United States -- everything coming from the United States. But the policies are deeply hated, and if these policies are changed, I think a lot of good things could happen in basically Palestine, Iraq and other places. I mean, I work on Somalia, and I've been begging the U.S. officials to do something about it, and they just left it like that, until we have -- still have destruction. And also the same thing about Iraq. You know, in the interest of time, I just can't say more.

MR. CAROTHERS: (Off mike.) Yes, Amr?

MR. HAMZAWY: Two quick points. One, yes, I agree with what Paul said; ruling establishments, regimes, are still very much well-entrenched and they haven't lost their legitimacy and the respect of society.

Yet we should not ignore two possibilities. One, there are crises which are under way in the region, and these are not only regional crises, and certainly about sectarian warfare, warfare of any kind, but there are upcoming domestic crises in different places -- Egypt is one of them. And crises or shocks can open the way into unexpected democratic breakthroughs.

The second possibility which we should not ignore is the fact that this hegemonic or intellectual dominance of the idea of democracy is quite relevant. I mean, this is pushing everyone in the direction, even in terms of -- (inaudible) -- to position itself as a political actor, be it ruling establishment or opposition movement, to come to terms with benchmarks of democratic transition. There is no way that I can imagine that a place -- a country like Egypt will basically imitate what happened in Tunisia in the 1990s, moving from the semi-liberal to the clearly authoritarian pattern of the 1990s -- from the 1980s through the 1990s. So setbacks or regression a la Ben Ali in Tunisia I guess is not going to happen in the region. One of the reasons why it will not happen is basically due to this intellectual hegemony of the idea of democracy. Yes, they will go on and manage their societies in an authoritarian way, but they will not exaggerate in bringing back the institutions of authoritarianism.

MR. CAROTHERS: Thank you.

It's clear that we could continue this discussion for quite a while; we've just gotten going really. But I want to thank our four panelists -- Amr and Ghanim and Khalid and Paul for joining us. Khalid and Ghanim flew all the way to Washington just for this, so we're really grateful --

MR. : And flying -- flying back tonight! (Laughs.)

MR. CAROTHERS: Flying back tonight. So we appreciate it.

But I want to thank all of you as well for coming. I think it's been a good discussion and a good basis. (Applause.)

(END)