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Brookings Institution

“Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan: U.S. Foreign Policy Challenges This Fall and Beyond”

1775 Massachusetts Ave, N.W., Falk Auditorium, Washington, DC

Wednesday, August 06, 2008 11am

The Brookings Institution hosted foreign policy experts **Kenneth Pollack**, **Bruce Riedel** and **Jeremy Shapiro** for a discussion on the state of Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as U.S. efforts to partner with Pakistan in confronting al Qaeda. Kenneth Pollack is a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, Bruce Riedel is Director of Research at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy, and Jeremy Shapiro is a Senior Fellow at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy and Director of Research at the Center on the United States and Europe. **Michael O’Hanlon** of the Brookings Institution moderated the event.

Michael O’Hanlon began the event lamenting the recent death of fellow Brookings colleague **Peter Rodman**, who died over the weekend due to complications of leukemia.

Kenneth Pollack argued that Iraq has made tremendous progress, but still faces serious problems. Pollack reviewed his recent article in *Foreign Affairs* (co-authored with Michael O’Hanlon and **Steven Biddle**), which argues that **Iraq is currently facing 2nd order problems that have the potential to reignite 1st order problems**. For example, the incorporation of the Sons of Iraq into the Iraqi army may reignite major problems if handled poorly. Pollack recommended maintaining a U.S. troop presence until at least the 2009 Iraqi elections, the results of which could help encourage a stable political process.

Jeremy Shapiro challenged those calling for a surge of troops in Afghanistan, arguing that an increase in **troops cannot resolve the country’s biggest problems**: an al-Qaeda safe haven in Pakistan, government corruption, a narcotics industry, and the lack of civilian capacity. Instead Shapiro recommended focusing on development, free and fair elections, the creation of better indicators to measure progress, and a more realistic expectation of success. “**We need to focus on development**, and if we do that well, it might end up looking like Pakistan. That’s the most we can hope for and would be a great success.”

Bruce Riedel warned that Pakistan remains politically frozen over the issues of reinstating the judiciary, the future of Musharraf, and lack of civilian oversight over the military. Riedel noted that **U.S. options are limited by its past policy of supporting military dictators**, leaving a majority of Pakistanis with resentment and hostility toward the United States. Riedel recommended that the U.S. encourage a quick resolution of Pakistan’s domestic political issues, **stand clearly behind the new democratically-elected government and encourage democratic**

processes by avoiding using Pakistan's military and intelligence to solve problems. Riedel voiced support for the bill proposed by **Senators Biden and Lugar**.

When asked about the recent allegations against Pakistan's ISI, Riedel warned the **U.S. should diffuse tensions between Pakistan and India**.

When asked about Iran, Pollack argued that the U.S. needs to recognize how work with Iran on issues that both countries have an interest in, and to lessen the impact on those issues where their interests diverge. **Pollack recommended aggressively engaging Iran**. He noted that while Iraqi nationalism has led to resistance to a SOFA agreement, but is helpful in stymieing Iranian influence in the country.