

Catholic Theological Union President's Circle Lecture with Dr. M. Cherif Bassiouni - August 2011

Thank you all for being here. I apologize for any inconvenience that I may have caused by cancelling the prior two appointments, but you were in heavy competition with the desert of Libya. At the time of the first appointment I was on a mission to Libya and I couldn't get there because of the bombing and the war going on. So I decided to go by car, and so I did about 3,000 miles in the desert by car in about ten days. And it was April and May and we have 40, 50 mph headwind greeting us. So that plus interviewing 300 injured people, stopping at twelve hospitals, visiting six prisons, and conducting investigations for six to eight hours a day with a team of fourteen people, plus having to drive through the desert and through a war zone, is something I would have gladly given up to be with you. So as you can see Father Don you're not the only one to have assignments in life that you would rather have other things to do. I'm particularly grateful to be here, I have to admit this and please excuse me, two of my most favorite persons are in the audience, Rabbi Shulman and Father Senior. And every time I see them, I wish I were both a Jew and a Catholic. You know, provided that one of them, or both, would be my spiritual mentors, but not having had that benefit, I'm sort of forced back into my origins put up on me and in hearing Psalm 8, I'm reminded of two verses of the Qur'an, which out together sort of combine Psalm 8. The moral of the story is that when you really start looking for the meaning in those things, whether you are dealing with the Torah, the Talmud, the Bible or the Qur'an, you are going to find the same message and it can't be otherwise. It can't be otherwise if you are going to have a single God, who has created a single humanity, how could there be competing messages. How could there be competing values? Yes, you could have different approaches, different practices, different forms, but the fundamental values have to be the same. And in these two verses, one verse says, Oh you people, and the divine is addressing the whole of humanity, we have created you man and woman, people and tribe, so that you may get to know one another and to live with each other in peace, verily the best among you is the most pious. And the other verse is, and we have dignified the descendants of man, and we have dignified them in order that they may benefit from the earth and we have put at their disposal the bounty of the earth and the

animals of the earth, so that they may enjoy the fruits of the earth. Verily, the humans are basically, trustees of God on earth. And what's interesting is in that in neither one of these verses, is there a reference to Muslims. It's a reference to all of humankind and all of creation. And the word dignified is interpreted according to Muslim theology, as a word that reflects the 98 terms used in the Qur'an to describe God, God's attributes, God's qualities. Starting with the first being God the most graceful, the most merciful. And as you look at those divine attributes and you say, these are the divine attributes which God has given on to human beings, ergo the analogy with human beings being created in the image of God. Not necessarily in the physical image of God but having been given the attributes that God had, not in their absolute sense, of course, but that means that the pursuit of the achievement of these attributes which are the qualities of God, whether its mercy, compassion, generosity, and others, are the obligations of humankind. And so the quid pro quo, in a sense is, you have been created with these qualities, but you've also been created with these qualities so that you can, I want to say, live by them, live for them, and live to achieve by serving God through serving humankind. And I think that is basically the common message that we see in all three religions and I hope I am not getting too much out of my limited quarters of being a jurist. But after spending a lifetime studying Muslim theology, I think I am getting to the point where I am starting to learn something but not yet. However, these are my conclusions so far. What's happening in the Middle East? Well, in a sense it's very puzzling if you look at things in the context in which they arose in the immediate past. Not so if you look at things in a historical context. And as Father Senior was saying, he goes back in the Holy Land to study the origins of the Scriptures and I'm sure as he will tell you and others, there is still much to be discovered, there is still much to be learned. And so, if you take a theologian, you're not going to have difficulty convincing the theologian of looking at the long term, of looking at the historical evolution. If you look at a politician, it's what's happening today or what happened yesterday at best, but with a view to what's happening tomorrow. And no sign of the understanding of the past. I would like to start here by saying that maybe a good historic starting point is probably when the Prophet Muhammad, who was born in Mecca out of a tribe of Quraysh, very powerful family but unfortunately he was an orphan and in these early days, you know, orphans didn't have much power. His father died when he was born, his mother died when he was six, his grandfather took his over and helped him but his grandfather died so his uncle took over. In a tribal society that was predicated on the force of arms and the wealth,

you know, being an orphan is not a very privileged position. So he sort of charted a course for himself and I think the course was very contemplative, reflective course, in which he retired frequently into the mountains to do some thinking. He became a very, what should I say, strongly committed to personal ethics. He was known for being an extremely honest and righteous person. He was finally hired by a very wealthy widow to be the leader of her caravans. Made a lot of money for her. She liked him, married him, even though he was twenty years younger. So now he had a stronger connection to the tribe by having the rich widow who, of course, allowed him to run her business. But what was very interesting early on, notwithstanding the craziness that you see among some Muslim doctriners about women have to be covered in the burkas from head to toe and all of these things that didn't exist, Muhammad worked for a woman. He stood up when she entered the room, he bowed to her. And in fact that remained with him for the rest of his life, until she died, but also he is the only one who has the habit in that society of standing up anytime a woman came into the room just as he would stand up for a man coming into the room. And he was the first to push for the idea that, you know, women should have their own matrimony and men should not control the money of their women and woman should have their autonomy. There was a practice also of burying in the sand newly born women, I mean babies, female babies. And he fought very hard against it.

So it was a very interesting development at the time [MCB stops to move podium back so he can see Rabbi Shulman] so it was a very interesting development because, and again I hope Father will forgive me and Rabbi as well, but the way I've studied Jesus, I see him in his early days as a, for lack of a better term, as a young Jewish Rabbi, going out and preaching. And what was he preaching, that which he believed were the fundamentals of Judaism. And who was he fighting against, he was fighting against those who were in power in the religion who were in cahoots with the Romans. So what was he? He was a social revolutionist. He preached social revolution. He preached justice and love, which were unknown. He preached equality. He preached the very foundations of which Judaism were based upon. And he fought against the establishment, much as he fought against the Romans. Now an interesting analogy, though maybe not complete, what did Moses do? Didn't he fight against injustice? Wasn't he, his message also a message of freedom and justice. And so here comes Muhammad and his message is exactly the same. He is fighting against the downtrodden, against the oligarchy of Quraysh, which was dominating it. So

you see this common thread going through, where a sense of faith is necessarily linked to the fundamental values that we believe God has communicated to us. And those values include justice, they include peace, they include truth. And in fact, there's probably no more telling than a statement in the Talmud about the world resting on three pillars. The world resting on truth, on peace and on justice. And the Talmudic commentary is that in reality the three are but one, because you can't have justice without having truth and if you have truth and justice, you can have peace. And so you see a sense of continuity between these fundamental values up to our days of today. The same moral issues are still with us and it is amazing that in however many years you want to view the universe, whether is six billion years since homo sapiens or a little less. The point is, it is the same moral issues that remain with us. It doesn't matter how much science we have accumulated, how much knowledge we have accumulated, the relative distance between us and these truths has remained the same. We as human beings have not made much progress in that respect.

This is the fifth year, the fifth war, that I'm investigating. I don't know what word to put to it, my titles have been very important titles, Chairman of the Security Council Commission to Investigate War Crimes, etc. but the bottom line is that they needed somebody who is crazy enough or dedicated enough to go in the field in the midst of war, record what was happening, with a view to achieve something. Now in the former Yugoslavia, it was with the view to maybe tell the parties to the conflict don't do so much harm because that conflict is about to end and you may be subject to prosecution. In Afghanistan, my feeling was that it was different. In Afghanistan, the mandate was crafted in such a way that it would not indispose the United States, which my reports ultimately did. For all practical purposes, the United States mounted a world wide campaign not to have my mandate renewed after two years. They did it very nicely. They had a beautiful resolution thanking me and basically saying you have done everything that needed to be done and you're not needed anymore. And so that was the end of investigating human rights in Afghanistan. And that's because I mentioned that in Baghram Air force station and others there was torture going on, people were kidnapped, arbitrarily arrested and detained and tortured and killed. That there was too much indiscriminate attack upon civilians by the Air Force and others. And that didn't please the then Bush Administration. I have a feeling, regrettably so, that probably the Obama administration would do no different and I have sometimes difficulty seeing the difference between the Obama administration and the Bush

administration with respect to the tortures, with what's happening in Guantanamo, what's happening aboard. But that being the case, everyone of these five mandates that I've had was drafted differently, everyone of them was crafted differently. And you would say, well why is that so? I mean if the goals are truth, justice, and peace, why is that different? Well, it's different because of the politics of it are different, because the interest of states are different. And you know what, just as the moral human questions have remained the same, the state human questions have remained the same. As Emmanuel Kant, among others, would say, states are still driven by their goals of power and wealth. Individuals are still drawn by their power and wealth and you can see that throughout all of the conflicts. Obviously, in situations where governments are in control of mandates, what to do and what not to do, this is more obvious. Why don't we have a commission to investigate what's happening in Syria? Well, because Syria is a big country and we don't want to upset the apple cart in Syria. Why do we have situations that linger on such as in Lebanon, with Hezbollah having its strong ties to Iran. I mean, I see it in my work in the Libya Commission now where there is a strong Shia element, which is directly tied to Iran, which wants to have an Islamic republic in Bahrain, whose religious leadership would be in Tehran. You know, how is it possible to reconcile that, to say well we're going to produce reforms. It's hard to negotiate if you're in the position of the King or the government with somebody who said I'm here to destroy you. Strangely enough not at all the case in Libya. All the people in Libya want a united Libya, they want a democratic Libya, they want a Libya governed by the rule of law. The only dispute is how to get rid of Qaddafi and his family. And when you think about it, it's a fairly easy objective to achieve. And you have to ask yourself, well wait a minute, if the only problem is the removal of the Qaddafi family to have peace there, why isn't that happening? So far, in my investigations in Libya, I have estimated that 10,000-15,000 people killed in a span of four months. And that is in the territorial base of about 1.5 million population, that's pretty high. Qaddafi has been in government, has been in power for about forty years. In my report, I've attached an annex, which I thought would needle the governments, in which I have cited every act of terrorism in the past forty years that the Qaddafi regime has supported or financed. And I put in my report something very undiplomatic, I said, Colonel Qaddafi has yet to see a terrorist organization that he doesn't like. The point is, and I did say that publically to the General Assembly of the United Nations with over 1,200 delegates there, I said to them, I said, I regret to say, and you can can me after that if you want to but you

the governments of the world have made Qaddafi. And you have made the problem in Libya. You have given him accuses for forty-two years of abusing his people, of engaging in terrorism because you benefited from the oil and your benefited from the money. And now you're acting as if, oh my goodness we suddenly discovered he's a bad person. And there's a civil war going on and who are we going to assist and who aren't we going to assist. And we find this absolutely extraordinary, what should I say, almost Kafkaesk type situation, in Europe and in the United States, of some of the Europeans saying yes he is bad but we shouldn't do anything to remove him. And in the United States of those who for years have said he was bad, telling our president, you shouldn't be there. So we ask ourselves the question, how could it be so schizophrenic on the part of major governments of the world to say on the one hand we have to act to remove people who engage in those violations and yet on the other hand, no, no but we cant do anything about them. And I keep wondering, how do the people who are the so called advisors, the NSC or others, what goes on in their minds, what makes them say these things. And I have to tell you, I think my first observation is that it's because none of them have been in the field. None of them have seen a bullet pass their ear, none of them have seen a dead body, none of them have seen a raped woman, none of them have any sense of the reality. Let me give you one example of something the world never knew anything about, including myself, until I went to Libya for the first time in April. And somebody says, did you know about the massacre as such-and-such a prison? I said no. Well, this was twelve years ago. Qaddafi's internal secret police rounded up over 1,200 people, exactly 1,206 persons because they were political dissidents, they put them in prison. The prison was awful. They couldn't see the light, the guards didn't take them out, the guards stole the food, they couldn't have enough food, over one hundred of them got tuberculosis. So they decided to strike to get the attention of the government. So as a result of the strike, Qaddafi decided to send his brother-in-law, Abdullah Senussi, head of the internal security system, who is also one of the people who was responsible for the shooting of the demonstrators in Libya when the event started, to quiet things down. So Senussi went there and said well I'm willing to negotiate with the prisoners, so get them all out in the courtyard. So they got them all out in the courtyard. They had machine guns on the perimeter. They killed 1,206 persons. They buried the people. They didn't say a word. For the next ten years, ten years, the families would go there once a week to bring food and clothes. The guards would take the food and clothes without telling them that there loved ones were dead. Now, you know, you see

situations like this and there are so many of them. And you ask yourself the question, does a leader of world, the free world, the United States, all of these countries, who keep talking about high moral values, doesn't anybody say, you know, this values comes before realpolitik, comes before whatever it is. Why is it that we don't hear in the political discourse, what I would call the moral discourse. I mean, I would like to hear in the political discourse, of political leaders in this country, somebody come out and say, torture is simply immoral, torture is not acceptable. Instead what do we hear? Well there's this hypothesis of, you know, this situation or that situation or maybe its permissible. And when the Pew Foundation ran a research, 26% of Americans favor torture, forty-five [percent] said yeah, under some circumstances its possible. You have to ask yourself the question, whatever happened of the moral discourse, why isn't the moral discourse out there in the public domain, in the political domain, whether its here, or in Europe or in anywhere in the world. Unfortunately, it's not. So, in the various commissions that I lead and my guess is that you sort of gain some experience after a while you start seeing a repetition of things. And this is where I'm going to link it back to the original moral question. You know, here I was in Yugoslavia from '92 to '94. The war was going on. I personally interviewed 223 women who were raped. We obtained affidavits from 575 women, we know of 4,200 hundred cases of rape. And we assume that if you made a projection, it's probably five times more than that which was reported. And you look at the way in which things were done. 200,000 people were killed. I discovered 151 mass graves. Unearthed a number of these mass graves, looked at the dead bodies. One of the things that I have to tell you came most naturally to me but turned out to be apparently extraordinary for others, which I don't find extraordinary at all. I went to a place where the Serbs told me there were about 1,000 Serbs killed. And I went and dug, huge field, and after three weeks we discovered nineteen bodies. Nineteen bodies, well you know, one is too many but it was nineteen it wasn't one thousand. But you know, I'm going to sort of ask you a question because I know you would have the same reaction that I did. What do you do when you discover nineteen bodies in a mass grave? You rebury them. So I needed people to bury them. So there was a Jordanian battalion next to where I was digging, so I went to Cornel and I said you know I want a couple dozen of your men to dig some graves. He said sure. So he sent the men, we dug the graves for the nineteen bodies and I knew they were Serbs so I had the Jordanian troops, who were all Muslims, fashion the Serb cross and we put it on. And, you know, we couldn't find a Serb Orthodox clergy to do a prayer so I did a sort of ecumenical

prayer and I put a little cordon around it and that was it. About a month later, there is a delegation from Serbia that wants to come and see me, headed by the Minister of Justice and the advisor to the Prime Minister, so I saw them. We talked. And the advisor to the Prime Minister said, after they left, can I talk to you. And he said, is it true what I heard, you did this. And I said yes. And he said, let me ask you a question and he said, could you tell me anything about the nineteen bodies. So I described them and I said, well there was one that was really sort of struck my curiosity. It was a woman, she was not totally decomposed, she wore a very long dress up to her ankle, she had a hat, like a sunhat, and the thing that struck me she was holding her shoes in her hand, as if she was walking when she was killed. But apparently she was shot and fell on a blanket so they threw her with the blanket and the man started crying. And I said why are you crying? He said, I am crying for two reasons. The first is that this is my girlfriend whom I intended to marry after the war and I didn't know what had happened to her. And the second is because of the burial you gave to her. And on the way out he turned around and said, I can't believe that a Muslim would do that. And looked around and I said, you know what, before you're a Serb, before you're an Orthodox, before you're a Catholic, before you're a Jew, before you're a Muslim, you're a human being. That comes first. And I said, if people remembered that more in wars, especially in wars with religious overtones, this wouldn't happen. But the point I want to make is that in the former Yugoslavia, totally different culture than Afghanistan, totally different culture than Iran, Iraq, totally different culture than Libya, totally different culture than Bahrain. You eliminate what we call the social order and you basically find human atavism come exploding out. The mensch in us, is not there yet. You scratch the surface and you find the atavism come out. What we have done over 6,000 years in building, developing a better human being is only on the surface, it's only in appearance. When the chips are down and the crises are there you see how fast it is to revert to that. But you're also extraordinarily encouraged by the courage and the determination of those who stand up. Forgive me for using a maybe moral term, but I call it evil because the killing and maiming and torturing and raping of another human being can only be described as evil. You see a lot of decent people out there. So I am not in any way discouraged or despaired in the many human beings who have that goodness in them. I am discouraged and despaired by the fact that those who don't seem to acquire more and more political power and are more and more able to guide the destiny of the world. So I suppose, if I can use this totalism, the moral of the story is that those of us that believe in certain moral

values have to be more committed, more active, more engaged, otherwise it's not going to happen. As of the beginnings of Muhammad, suddenly we have a group of people from Mecca join with a group of people of Medina, and within a matter of twelve years, they've unified all of southern Arabia, which was never unified. They put together armies, which start expanding. The Prophet dies in 632, by 637, basically the Muslim troops go in to what is now Jordan and Palestine. And something extraordinary happens, again not very well known, this happened under the second Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab. He had given the Muslim troops to be commanded by a young man, age twenty-seven, who refused to have the head of state be involved in anything military. He said I'll take the assignments, you stay out of it, and he did. And then before entering Jerusalem, he said I'm about to enter Jerusalem, what are your orders? And Umar ibn al-Khattab said, you stop there until I get there. And he got there and asked to bring in all of the religious leaders from Jerusalem, led by a Bishop by the name of Sophronius who came with all of the Christian clergy from different denominations, Umar came out on his horse, stood in front of them and gave them a decree that exists today, called the Decree of Umar, declaring Jerusalem an open city where each religious denomination will be in control of its site, and including the Jewish site, and revoking the decree of banishment of the Jews issued in 70 AD by the Romans. And that caused the beginning of the reverse of that diaspora, more Jews came, started to come back to Jerusalem and the system established by Umar ibn al-Khattab in 637 still exists today. Each religious denomination continues to run its own place, with of course some difficulties in some churches where Armenians are on one side and the Orthodox are on the other and the Copts are fighting the Abyssinians on the roof. [laughter from audience] Father Don will tell you these stories in case you don't know them. But I love the stories of the Abyssinians waiting for years until one of the Coptic monks, who was sitting on top, decided to go to the washroom for some urgent need he had not thought of and then the Abyssinian guy went up and took his place so now we have a reverse of the historic fight between the Abyssinians and the Egyptian Copts. And once and a while you would go into the church, as I have, and you would see maybe an Orthodox service that's a little too loud, whereupon the Armenians decide to hold their services with a little bit louder tone and so you have the conflicting things going on. Why hasn't somebody talked a little sense into these religious leaders is beyond me but maybe that's the fate of all such organizations where the organization comes first before anything else. The character of each conflict is different, each conflict is sui generis, it's of its own. I was telling Rabbi

outside, I said you know, in sixty years of conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, there is one thing that has always astonished me. I have studied world conflicts for the past forty-five years, all of them, there hasn't been a single conflict in which rape has not been part of the instrument of war, except in Palestine. In Palestine, six years, think about it, how extraordinary. Sixty years, there has never been a rape on either side. Yes, there have been abuses. But if I look at the narrative of the conflict, the conflict is not really an interreligious conflict. The conflict is a political conflict. There is a sub-narrative of religion, you do have Orthodox Jews believing that there is something called Eretz Israel, which is part of a divine covenant and you know as a matter of religion you can't give up an inch of it and it's your religious duty to go and occupy that land. You know, as far as the Muslims are concerned, you know, they really don't care about that, what they care about is Jerusalem which, you know, had a few Muslim holy sites but beyond that, you know, they are perfectly happy with Jews and Christians having whatever holy sites they want anywhere. They are unhappy with the injustice done to the Palestinians but that's more of a political, social, economic, contemporary dispute type injustice, it doesn't stem from a religious source. And yet, this has proven to be one of the most intractable conflicts for the last sixty years and it is, in my humble opinion, the most solvable conflict. The easiest to solve and yet it remains intractable. I don't think its for religious purposes, I think its for political purposes. Whatever the side may be. Just to digress, there is no such issue in Tunisia. Tunisia has been a dictatorship since it was independent, subsequent to the fall of one dictator, the second one came in, it lasted all these years, the people said enough. So to them it's a simple issue of democracy, rule of law and human rights. Now why is this all happening? Let me go back to 637, I keep confusing you by jumping back and forth. Right after 637 within a span of 120 years, the Muslim troops were from Spain to India. Now, how did they accomplish that? They didn't have the power, they didn't have the wherewithal, they were very smart politicians. They went to different countries and they offered them the release of Roman, Byzantium power, the release from their oligaries, you can run your own shows just so long as we are leaders there, we'll take a little modest 10% tax, you know, you're not going to be over taxed. And they were smart enough to do it, and they developed in a hundred twenty year period, or maybe up to a two hundred year period, an empire that lasted for quite a while, in which the Arabs were the masters even though they were few in numbers. 15th century, 1500, Turkish-Ottoman Empire becomes the successor, takes over, now we have a real, genuine empire with Turkey as it's seats with sultans running the

world the same autocratic ways that things used to be in the past but things also in Europe going on. The Turkish-Ottoman Empire basically colonizes the Arab countries so if you look at the Arab countries who were the dominate power almost up to that period, certainly up the 1200s, suddenly they become subjugated between the 1200 and the 1500, by a variety of smaller empires. As of the 1500s they are part of the Turkish-Ottoman Empire, they lose everything, they are now dominated, subjugated people. So everything that they had built up in terms of arts, science, medicine, whatever it is, accumulation of wealth goes down. They become servants. 1918 comes about, great belief in the Wilsonian principles, great belief in what the West is saying. That they are going to be independent countries and so on and so forth, only to find that the weight of colonialism has shifted in a different way. It's the British and the French that become the colonial masters after the Turks. And now what happens is they now have to develop a nationalistic movement. So they develop a nationalistic movement which is necessarily different in every country. There is no such thing as an Arab nationalism, other than in large lines. But in the detail, Morocco is different than Egypt, it's different from the Sudan, it's different from Lebanon, it's different from Libya. So these nationalistic movements can, however, reach to one another, can communicate to one another. So they idea of Arab nationalism as unified in fighting colonialism, Western colonialism, works very well. What happens however, is that the transformation from being the subject of the colonial powers of Great Britain and France, which is succeeded by the United States and, you know, let there be no doubt that the U.S. is an absolute neo-imperial power in that part of the world, or at least used to be until now, suddenly what we have is a situation in which the successors, most of which have been pushed by the Brits, the French and the U.S., become either monarchies or military dictatorships. The colonial powers realize, the imperial powers realize, hey we can't stay there, we can't run it. So what's the next best thing to do? We're going to find a monarchical family who is going to do our bidding or we're going to find a military dictatorship who is going to do our bidding. So all of the nationalistic movement that came out of 1918, all the way up to the '60s so to speak of, is now, if you will coopted by the imperial powers using surrogates and supporting surrogates. And now we have situations as of the middle '50s, which lasted sixty years, of these tyrannies. Whether it's, you know, in Tunisia or in Egypt, where you have military persons over there, or Bashar al-Assad and others. And you find then, this is where the crises erupts, that you know, Ben Ali in Tunisia is preparing his son to follow the example of

Hafez al-Assad who put in Bashar, who is following the example of Hosni Mubarak who wants to put in his son Gamal, so not only do we have those dictatorships, but we have those dictatorships that are now moving into the line of succession of their children. And none of them, none of them have any conscience, none of them have the good judgment of saying, you know, I want to steal but I want to give back something. I mean they should have sent somebody to study Chicago politics. [laughter from audience], I mean, you know, old Mayor Daley knew very well how to balance, you know, how much to take and how much to give, and if you give people safety in the streets, schools more or less work well, transportation works well, you know, the rest, giving out contracts to my buddies, doing patronage jobs, that's okay, you know it's a quid pro quo, you can do that. But these people had no quid pro quo, it was only take. I mean in the Mubarak era in Egypt you had two hundred families, two hundred families, control a country of 84 million people. Bilking 90% of the resources. You speak of a revolution, let me tell you, the revolution in Egypt has yet to come. There are 84 million people in Egypt, 50% of whom are under the age of thirty. That's 42 million. 42 [million] under the age of thirty. 60% unemployment in that category. 25 million people living at the edge or under the level of poverty. How much does it take does it take to send them just so much below that edge that they explode? And guess what, in the last five months in Egypt, the foreign currency reserve has gone down from 36 billion to 27 billion, still going down. The Egyptian currency has gone down over 10%, inflation is about 15%, so enough drive at least a good 10 million people below the poverty level, and the military who have a lot to hide for a lot of their abuses and a lot of their exploitation, the military in Egypt control 20% of the economy, untaxed, all the money, profits go back to the military. And so they want to make sure they calm the waters and don't get exposed. And so they want to blame Mubarak and his cronies and sort of get out of the picture, hope to get somebody else like a Mubarak, more acceptable, in order for them to continue to have their gig. I'm not optimistic even for them, my feeling is that the lack of vision, the lack of planning, the lack of transparency is likely to bring about Egypt into a second wave and the second wave is likely to be a series of demonstrations, food riots, total security disruptions in the street, which unfortunately will force the military to come in and when they come in they are going to have to kill thousands of people because it's a question of numbers. If you have two million people in the street, what force does it take to stop them. The force that it takes is essentially firepower and firepower is going to have to kill a lot of people. Now, you know, I

move from there to Bahrain and I'm thinking, you know, this is a piece of pie, not a big deal, thirty-five people dead, four hundred injured, 1,400 people detained, 3,000 people dismissed from their jobs. Doable. My conclusion at this point is that it is more undoable than all of the other Arab conflicts put together. Can't tell you why. My own read of it is because I have found in that society the highest level of social paranoia that I think exists in the world. Again, if you will forgive me and I don't mean to be derogatory but I found a lot of paranoia in Israel, I found a lot of paranoia among the Serbs, I think if I add the two together and anybody else you want, it will never amount to a match of the Bahrainis. The situation in Bahrain is particularly significant because of its strategic significance. First of all, the Fifth Fleet is there. You know, if the pro-Iranian Shia take over, that Fifth Fleet is gone. If there is a conflict that continues and the ruling al-Khalifa family and the Sunnis start killing more Shias, the whole world will be up in arm[s] against them and will put pressure, and certainly the Tea partiers and the Republicans are going to go on their high horses of principle and say you know, we got to pull out of there. Where do we put the Fifth Fleet is a big problem, no other country will take it. Without the Fifth Fleet there the whole Gulf is in danger. We have seen before how the Iranians put frigates at sea to stop the oil traffic of the tankers coming from Iraq and Kuwait and the Emirates. So that will be a very significant problem. Second, if there's continued destabilization and the pro-Iranian Shias took over, you know, Bahrain is basically a few little islands, they're one causeway away from Saudi Arabia and along that coast, and nobody knows that, there are 250,000 Shias in Saudi Arabia, who are Saudis. So it will become very easy to jump over and have 250,000 Saudi, Shias who would be sympathetic with the Shias in Bahrain and then you have, and I'm reluctant to use the term used in the days of Vietnam but, you really can have a domino effect there. And so, you know, what does that mean? Strategic control by Iran through surrogates of the oil producing countries and from there moving through the rest of the Arab world. And that means not only the control of the Gulf but the control, eventually, of the Suez Canal, control of the Mediterranean, or least the South Mediterranean. There is no doubt that this would lead to a war with Israel. You know, the problem is when you start in a war process, escalation is very easy and when you have an atomic bomb to play with, it becomes very easy to reach a point where you say, oh my god I really have to use it for my own security, and so where are we going. So the prospects are not good. NATO is for all practical purposes missing in action but then NATO has always been driven by the U.S. If the U.S. is missing in action, so will NATO. The U.S. is much too involved,

at least this administration, in the politics of 2012 [meaning Obama's administration] and domestic politics. Much too distracted by people who are interested in destroying the administration, as opposed to building the nation. And as a result of that the U.S. is not on the scene. It can't even provide leadership, it can't provide leadership, it has lost all of its credibility. Just as President Obama makes magnificent speeches here that everybody loves, and then when they leave the speeches the come out and you may remember some, you know, the old McDonald sign, you know of, Where's the Beef? You know, and you say, well where's the action? The action doesn't follow. Well, he goes and makes speeches there and then they come back and go, where's the action? You know, where is the commitment to getting a two state solution in Palestine? Where is the commitment towards advancing democracy? You know, it's not by words that you do it. You know, democracy is not a glass of water where you put some powder, add water and you stir it and suddenly you have instant democracies. The processes of democracy take many, many years and it depends on each society. In my experience in Afghanistan, two hundred years is a good target. You know, in Egypt, maybe fifty to seventy-five years. Tunisia maybe fifty years, much easier to deal with there, much more a population. But what are the risks? The risks are Egypt falls into a chaos situation and becomes another Bangladesh, an absolutely, you know, poverty stricken country with an increase in population. I mean just think of 84 million people, in less than thirty years Egypt will over 120 million people. How is it going to feed these people? You know, where is even the water coming from? Egypt is running out of water now. Nobody, by the way, in the region, including in Africa is thinking of the problem of the Nile waters. We now have a new South Sudan state, it will require its share of waters, who will it take it from? North Sudan and Egypt. Well, they won't like it. Ethiopia is finishing a huge dam on the origins of the Nile and is planning on building three more dams to be an electrically hub to supply electricity for Africa. Now that will mean that the present share of Egypt of the waters, which is 55%, is likely to go down at a time when the demand is going to go up. Where does that lead/leave us? There's no thinking whatsoever for developing a regional agreement on the use of the Nile waters. Just as there is no thinking of developing a regional agreement for developing of the waters from Litani River, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel and the future of Palestine. There has to be a regional agreement on the sharing and the utilization of the waters, otherwise, this is another cause for war. We don't even see thinking along those lines, I'm not, we don't even see people raising the issue, let alone trying to address it. And so the

situation is chaotic. It's lacking in domestic leadership, it's lacking in international leadership, it is fraught with all sorts of dangers. You know, obviously in the end we say, the good Lord has ways of doing it. If I would have used, he has the good way of doing it, I would not be allowed in the house tonight. My wife would insist that it's a she and not a he, because if it was a she, things would not have been as bad as they are, which is of course contradictory to her saying it's not a he. But anyway, the point is, unless there is a divine scheme that will help us come out of all of these problems, the Middle East doesn't look good in the next few years. So with that I'll stop.