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THE SEARCH FOR AL QAEDA:

ITS LEADERSHIP, IDEOLOGY, AND FUTURE

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. INDYK: We are very glad to have the opportunity today to showcase Bruce Riedel and his book, bestselling book, The Search for al Qaeda, which he's now reissuing in paperback form.

We do that as part of a new initiative on South Asia, in which we are -- the foreign policy at Brookings and global economic and development studies and also economic studies at Brookings -- pooling our expertise in South Asia to bring together the work that is being done here in three different programs and to better coordinate it because of the importance that South Asia has taken on in American foreign policy, whether it be the war in Afghanistan, the relationship with Pakistan, the emerging power of India as an economic power in the Asian region.

There are many reasons why we feel it's time now to highlight, better coordinate, and spotlight our work on South Asia, whether it be our President Strobe Talbott's work on India; Eswar Prasad in the global program, who is an expert on the Indian economy; Barry Bosworth, who runs the India Policy Forum; Steve Cohen, who work on India and Pakistan; Michael O'Hanlon and Vanda Felbab-Brown, who are doing work on Afghanistan and counterinsurgency; Kemal Dervis, who is also an expert on the Indian economy; and, of course, our very own Bruce Riedel, who not only works on the pool counterterrorism issue of searching for al Qaeda, but also brings his expertise on India and Pakistan and Afghanistan to bear on this.

So in the months and years ahead, you'll see us highlighting our work on South Asia, particularly in programs like this one. Next week, on the 17th of March, we will be hosting the Indian minister of commerce and industry for a discussion here in Falk. We'd be happy to see you there. And we will continue with a number of other innovative programs that we would welcome you to participate in.

Bruce Riedel's book on the search of al Qaeda has laid out a very clear account of what al Qaeda's strategy is for evicting the United States from the Middle East, and has also laid out a very compelling strategy for countering that effort. So compelling that President Obama, when he first came into office, asked Bruce to chair the interagency policy review on Afghanistan and Pakistan that laid the foundations for the administration's approach to those two countries and the challenge that al Qaeda poses to them and to us.

He is a senior fellow in the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at The Brookings Institution. Prior to that, he served and advised four presidents in his role as director and then senior director for the Near East and South Asia International Security Council. I'm proud to say when I went over there as senior director, Bruce actually worked for me and thank god he did because I didn't know anything about South Asia. I was happy to hand it over to him at the time.

He's also served in senior positions in the Pentagon. He's a 30-year veteran of the CIA and held the senior intelligence position in NATO as the advisor to the supreme commander of NATO.

So he's a man rich in experience, both in policy on this subject and in scholarship on this subject. And we're very glad to have him present today.

To comment, we're very glad to welcome to the podium Ed Luce. Ed is the Washington bureau chief of the Financial Times, a newspaper that is making, I think, a very profound impression in Washington because of the perspective it brings and because of the articles that are always of great interest that it manages to present in its pages, especially its op-ed pages. But no one brings a better and, I think, more astute perspective on politics, policymaking, particularly foreign policymaking, in Washington than Edward Luce. And we're very grateful to you for joining us for this conversation.

Edward was the South Asia bureau chief of the Financial Times. He's the

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author of *In Spite of the Gods: The Rise of Modern India*, which was published in 2008. And something you probably don't know is that he was also speechwriting to Larry Summers when Larry was U.S. Secretary of the Treasury in the Clinton Administration. But we won't ask him questions about that today.

So without further ado, we're very glad to have the opportunity to hear Bruce again on the search for al Qaeda.

MR. RIEDEL: Thank you, Martin, for that very kind introduction. And thank you, Ed, for agreeing to come here today.

What I want to talk about today is the state of al Qaeda as it is in March 2010. But I think we need to start with a little bit of background and perspective. Twelve years ago, in the town of Khost in Eastern Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden, two Egyptians, a Pakistani, and a Bangladeshi declared war on the United States of America. That now is the longest war in American history, 12 years. During this war we have seen the first attack by a foreign entity on this city since 1814, the first attack on New York since 1777, and just recently the first attack on Detroit since 1760. I can't help but take note here that all three of those previous attacks were carried out by the British Army and the Royal Navy, but we seem to have gotten over that now.

The face of this country has literally changed in those 12 years. Two more wars flow directly or indirectly from September 11th, wars that have cost this country hundreds of billions of dollars and thousands of lives. The face of the city of Washington itself looks different than it did on the 10th of September 2001. Getting in and out of the White House, getting in and out of the Congress is today a far more arduous task than it used to be. And if you don't think things have changed, just remember what it was like at Ronald Reagan or Dulles Airport 12 years ago. We have seen a massive change in security throughout this country.

We've seen entire new bureaucracies created in response to al Qaeda: the Department of Homeland Security, the Director of National Intelligence, the National Counterterrorism Center, and a few others. More change in the architecture of the American national security bureaucracy than at any time since the first days of the Cold War.

Meanwhile, al Qaeda and its allies have struck from Bali to London. Their targets in the last decade have included Madrid, Casablanca, Algiers, Oman, Baghdad, Istanbul, Riyadh, Jeddah, Sana, Aden, Kabul, Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Mumbai, New Delhi, and many more. Just last year, plots were foiled planned for Copenhagen, Manchester, and Brussels.

Al Qaeda is today the world's first truly global terrorist organization. It has franchises and cells literally around the world. Its franchises in Iraq, the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa, Southeast Asia, and East Africa; and its headquarters, propaganda instrument, and CEO are believed to be in Pakistan along the Afghan-Pakistan border.

Al Qaeda is also embedded in a syndicate or allied terrorist groups with which it has close operational contacts, including the Afghan Taliban, the Pakistani Taliban, Lashkar-e-Taiba, the group that attacked Mumbai a year and a half ago, and a host of others.

More than that, al Qaeda in the last decade has also given birth to an idea, an ideology in a sense, a narrative, which I try to draw out in depth in the book. And this narrative can now be referred to as the "global Islamic jihad," a movement that doesn't have a single leader, but is very much inspired by the idea of al Qaeda. And this movement, this idea, recruits on the Internet every day. A virtual Internet jihad goes on every day around the world. An example: This Major Hasan, the assassin at Fort Hood.

This idea has also altered the ideology of other terrorist groups. The best example: Lashkar-e-Taiba, which a decade ago focused almost entirely on India and now

also counts crusaders and Jews among its enemies.

All of this has gone on while the top leadership of al Qaeda, Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, have to all intents and purposes vanished off the face of the world. We hear their voices. We've heard Osama bin Laden three times this year. But we don't actually have any real idea where they are. We think they're in Pakistan, but the truth is they could be in the room next door. We haven't had eyes on target number one, Osama bin Laden, in over eight years now. Even reports, inaccurate reports of where he might be are very, very rare.

As I say, we hear their voices, but we don't know where they are. And this despite the largest manhunt in human history and one of the largest bounties ever put on the head of anyone.

If you measured al Qaeda's success by the number of counterterrorists chasing it today and the cost of chasing al Qaeda, you'd have to say this is one of the most cost-effective ventures in human history. It is clear that there are more counterterrorists chasing al Qaeda than there are actual members of the organization.

Now, a lot of al Qaeda's success over the last decade has been due to our mistakes: going into war in Iraq when we should have finished the war in Afghanistan being the most notable. All that said, though, al Qaeda today is also under unprecedented pressure, pressure it has not seen since the spring of 2002, on several fronts.

First of all, some of the franchises which I mentioned earlier have been all but effectively eliminated. The franchise in Saudi Arabia, which was one of the most active only three or four years ago, was formally dissolved by al Qaeda and merged into its franchise in Yemen to create al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. The franchise in Indonesia has been literally destroyed by the Indonesian and Australian intelligence services.

Secondly, much of the Islamic world has turned against al Qaeda in the last

decade. Reliable polling, some of it done by the Brookings Institution and others by University of Maryland and others, shows that Muslims have turned on al Qaeda. While it enjoyed a brief period of popularity after September 11th, in most Islamic countries today al Qaeda is seen as an enemy, not as a friend. For a simple reason: al Qaeda has killed far more Muslims than it's killed Christians, Jews, or Hindus.

A footnote, though, on these polls. The polls also show that a sizeable minority -- 10 to 20 percent -- in most Islamic countries continue to support al Qaeda. And that's sufficient to ensure that it will continue to be able to find what it needs most, which is individuals willing to carry out martyrdom suicide attacks. And in a few Islamic countries, Nigeria being the most glaring example, al Qaeda still has quite large support.

Al Qaeda is also under attack for the first time seriously in six years in its headquarters, in Pakistan, from the CIA's drone program. In 2007, the CIA drone program attacked al Qaeda targets and related Taliban targets in Northwest Pakistan seven times. We didn't get a single hit. In 2008, the attack rate went up to about 30. Last year, the attack rate exceeded 55 and the pace that we're on now will be well over 100 in 2010, meaning a drone attack literally every 72 hours on al Qaeda, the Pakistani Taliban, Afghan Taliban, or others.

The Bush Administration deserves credit for having set up the infrastructure for these operations. And the Obama Administration deserves credit for deciding to reinforce that infrastructure dramatically a year ago and to speed up the pace of attacks. The damage to al Qaeda and its allies has been considerable, especially to the Pakistan Taliban, which has now seen two of its leaders killed in drone attacks.

But there are also downsides to the drones' operation, particularly in terms of support among the Pakistani population. The drones are a weapon, they're not a strategy. They have to be part of a much larger strategy.

And now, most recently, we see a new area of pressure on al Qaeda and its allies coming from a source which we always knew had the capacity to do more, but which for a long time we've been unable to convince to do it, and that's the government of Pakistan and then particularly the Pakistani army and the Pakistani intelligence services. Just a month ago, the Pakistanis arrested the number two in the Afghan Taliban, Mullah Baradar, and since then a half dozen other senior Afghan Taliban officials have been brought under arrest by the government of Pakistan, are incarcerated, and being debriefed today. This is a remarkable change from a year ago.

A year ago, when I chaired the interagency review on Pakistan and Afghanistan, we asked the Pakistanis at the highest levels repeatedly to take action against the Afghan Taliban leadership in Pakistan and they denied that there were any Afghan Taliban leaders in their country. Full stop, outright denial. Well, we now have the satisfaction of knowing we were right a year ago. We still don't know why Pakistan is carrying out these operations. My own view is probably that they finally came to the conclusion that the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistan Taliban are really one Taliban and you can't go to war with one-half of it without dealing with the other half. But the honest answer is we don't know why they've gone after the Taliban. And we do know that what could be turned on, could also be turned off at some point. But in government, as Sandy Berger used to like to tell Martin and I, you've got to take yes for an answer when you get it. And we've gotten at least a partial yes from the Pakistani government.

The synergy of pressures that I've talked about and other things that the Obama Administration has done is putting real pressure on al Qaeda today. They are designed to converge over time and, as the President has put it, disrupt, dismantle, and eventually defeat al Qaeda.

Evidence of this pressure can also be seen in other ways. Those senior



Afghan Taliban officials that have been captured, most of them have been captured in Karachi, which is as far away from the drones as you can possibly be and still be in Pakistan. There's good reason to believe that the Afghan Taliban number one, Mullah Omar, moved to Karachi from Quetta in Pakistan a few months ago simply in response to a New York Times article that said we were going to expand CIA drone attacks into Quetta.

Al Qaeda has responded to this pressure in a number of ways, and I want to highlight two of them. First, it's gone directly after the drones. It was ironic that it was Khost again that saw al Qaeda's response to the CIA pressure in the attack on the forward operating base in Khost on the 30th of December of last year. We have gotten, in the last several days, the posthumous interview of the Jordanian triple agent or quadruple agent or whatever kind of agent he was who carried out that martyrdom attack. And it's chilling to read what he says, knowing that within a few minutes after this he was going to strap on the bomb and head out to kill seven Americans and one Jordanian intelligence officer. What it shows is that al Qaeda is still agile and sophisticated. Running an operation like this is an extremely complex intelligence operation and we had to give them their due, in this case they ran it brilliantly. The bait, the dangle, was information about where Ayman al-Zawahiri, number two, was holed up. The bait was well worth going after. And while we may criticize some of the tactics of the CIA and Jordanian intelligence in this case, I think it's wise to honor their memory because they were really going after the heart of al Qaeda this time.

Footnote here. Mr. Zawahiri has been conspicuously absent for the last two and a half months. A man, who, for a time, was the chatty caddy of international terrorism, hasn't been seen in a new audiotape since December of last year.

Secondly, of course, al Qaeda has also stepped up operational activity against the United States homeland directly. I think we can now say, looking back -- and hindsight is always 20/20 -- that we've seen a change in al Qaeda's strategy in 2009.

Between 2003 and 2008, al Qaeda's approach to attacks on the United States was the next attack had to be bigger and better than 9-11. And they plotted one in 2006, the plan to blow up simultaneously 10 jumbo jets on route to airports in Canada and the United States over the North Atlantic; an attack that had it succeeded would have probably shut down international air travel and you can imagine the impact of that on the global economy.

We know that al Qaeda turned off smaller attacks during this period. We have a very famous incident of where Ayman al-Zawahiri told plotters planning an attack on the New York City Metro no, don't do it. We have something bigger coming and we don't want to waste our effort.

2009, I think we can see, in retrospect, the shift: a decision not to give up going for the homerun of international terrorism, but to be willing to take a single or a double if it fell into your lap or if it was the only thing you could do. Looking back on the last half of 2009, we can identify three, maybe four planned attacks in the United States.

The first, of course, was the Fort Hood massacre, which I've already mentioned. While al Qaeda did not directly create that incident, we can tell from the conversations between the murderer and his Yemeni spiritual leader that they were very much encouraging it. And al Qaeda today lists Fort Hood among its successful "raids" into the United States.

Secondly, we had a plot led by an Afghan American which was to carry out an attack on the New York City Metro system on the anniversary of September 11th in September of last year. That plot included training by al Qaeda corps in Pakistan of Mr. Zazi on the kind of explosives that were used against the London Metro in 2005. And it appears now that he was not alone, that there was a conspiracy of fellow members of his family to carry out the attack.

Third, of course, was the attack on Northwest Flight 253 from Amsterdam

to Detroit on Christmas Day, an attack which was foiled largely because the terrorist lost his nerve at the last minute and was unable to properly detonate his bomb.

I said a fourth because we also know that David Headley, a Pakistani-American in Chicago, was in direct contact with Lashkar-e-Taiba and al Qaeda for most of 2009 before his arrest. He was arrested after he had already successfully done the reconnaissance for the Mumbai attack a year ago and was planning to go back to Islamabad to meet with his al Qaeda handler, Mohammad Ilyas Kashmiri.

What should we expect of al Qaeda in 2010 and 2011? Well, I think we can expect at least two things.

First, more attempts to strike the United States homeland. The Director of National Intelligence, the director of the CIA, all of the directors of our intelligence community warned in their annual threat briefings to the Congress in January that more attacks seem to be likely. And just this weekend, an al Qaeda American operative, Adam Al-Amriki, as he's referred to in al Qaeda, issued a new tape. And I just want to read you one paragraph from that tape, and this is a message to al Qaeda supporters.

"We must look to further undermine the West's already struggling economies with carefully timed and targeted attacks on symbols of capitalism which will again shake consumer confidence. Keep in mind how even apparently unsuccessful attacks on Western mass transportation systems can bring major cities to a halt, cost the enemy billions, and send his corporations into bankruptcy."

Al Qaeda has transformed itself into a global economic strategist system as well, perhaps not one of the best, but that's clearly what they see as their future. Al Qaeda has already mobilized its franchise in Yemen to assist in these attacks and I think there's every reason to believe that some of its other franchises, particularly the one in North Africa, may be mobilized into this pursuit as well.

And secondly and finally, I think we can expect an attack into India. Now, this is the time-honored strategy of al Qaeda and its allies in Pakistan. When under pressure in Pakistan, lash out at India. If you want to get pressure off of you, get India and Pakistan back to the brink of war and that takes the heat off. The December 2001 attack by al Qaeda's ally Jaish Mohammed on the Indian parliament is the classic example of this and we've seen it on other occasions as well.

And here the atmosphere is heating up. The head of Lashkar-e-Taiba this Sunday called for a new jihad against India and urged Pakistan to take up arms against India. Another attack on the scale of Mumbai would probably change all of the deck of cards in South Asia and, unfortunately, change them in the favor of al Qaeda.

With that, let me conclude and we'll listen to Ed.

MR. INDYK: Thank you. Edward, I think it's fitting that Bruce concluded by focusing on the main theater of operations both for al Qaeda and for the United States in particular, which is South Asia, India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. And I wonder whether you might like to lead off by talking about how things are developing there.

MR. LUCE: Sure. I'd first like to very briefly defend the honor of the Royal Navy. The attack on Detroit in 1760 was, I believe, the attack on *Detroit*.

MR. RIEDEL: Oui.

MR. LUCE: And it was French controlled, so it does not qualify as an attack on the Americans. I just wanted to make that very pedantic point.

I will get on to India in a minute or two. Just a disclaimer: I'm not -- I'm far from being an expert on -- or even a source of knowledge on al Qaeda, so you'll be relieved to hear I'm not going to be talking about al Qaeda, which even if I were would be impossible to follow Bruce's really expert synthesis that you've just heard.

Bruce hasn't asked me to talk directly as a reviewer of his book and so this

will embarrass him, but I should say, precisely because I'm not an expert on al Qaeda, that having read this slim and very concise and very pithy volume, and having as a layman read many of the other much thicker volumes -- brilliant books like Looming Tower and Steve Cole's book -- the real difference here is that Bruce is a practitioner. And it is remarkable if you look at the events in the last 25, 30 years and how America has dealt with them in the Middle East and beyond in South Asia, how many of those events Bruce was either, you know, involved in a senior level at the CIA, the Pentagon, or else at a senior level at the National Security Council through, as Martin mentioned, four presidencies. So that really does give this book an authority that might be belied by its concision. It's thin, but it's absolutely packed.

So having embarrassed Bruce --

MR. RIEDEL: Thank you.

MR. LUCE: Bruce asked me and Martin asked me to do two things principally. One is to evaluate how the Obama Administration has followed some of the recommendations that Bruce makes in his book on how to defeat al Qaeda. And I think there are many recommendations there, but to sort of categorize them into three or four groups and take each one by one I think would be the best way of doing it.

The first of which is to interpose the U.S. in a far more effective way in the Arab-Israeli situation in order to work towards what Bruce describes as a just two-state solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. And I think it's one of the remarkable things about this book and very convincing aspects of this book and also, to some extent, brave aspects of this book that Bruce does identify the Arab-Israeli -- the continuing Arab-Israeli conflict as the primary source of motivation not just for the broader support for al Qaeda amongst the 10, 20 percent slices of populations in the Muslim world, but also as the principal source of motivation for the creation of al Qaeda. And I think that's a really striking and very

convincingly argued aspect of the book.

So how has the Obama Administration -- how well has it acted on this recommendation? Well, set against its predecessor, the Bush -- the two terms of George W. Bush's administration, clearly there's been a very dramatic elevation of the Arab-Israeli dispute and attempts to resolve it in the priorities of Washington. If you judge the very desultory and very belated process that George Bush launched in Annapolis and compare that with the fact that on Day 2 of Obama's administration he appointed George Mitchell and Mitchell was on a plane within a few days to the region, I think really underlined just how much bigger a priority the Obama Administration saw that, resolving that issue.

But as is often the case with new administrations and has been the case with this one in several areas, there's a big gap between intention -- undoubtedly a sincere intention here on the part of President Obama -- and execution. And I think it's fair to say that this peace process has run into fairly predictable roadblocks and that the inexperience of this administration has showed in how it's handled those roadblocks. I think many of them, particularly Bibi Netanyahu's resistance to the settlement's precondition, were fairly predictable. And there are a great many people hoping that as Vice President Biden and George Mitchell attempt to revive this peace process this week, that the Obama Administration has benefitted there from a learning curve and that there will be slightly more creative statesmanship applied this time around.

Nevertheless, that box in terms of recommendations clearly checked. It is a very -- it is clear, a high priority for the Obama Administration.

Second, an almost equally difficult recommendation that Bruce makes in the book is that the Obama Administration should put its shoulder to the wheel in getting India and Pakistan to resolve their disputes over Kashmir. Again, within the first week of the Obama Administration coming to office Richard Holbrooke was appointed very prominently,

very publicly as the special representative for the region.

What might have been less noticed here was that a few days beforehand, David Miliband, the British foreign secretary, visited India. And he made the mistake of mentioning the word "Kashmir" in an interview with The Guardian in London the previous week, which gave the (inaudible) for the Indian government and the Indian media to absolutely put him through the wringer the moment he touched down in India.

And sure enough, Richard Holbrooke, who'd been toying with the idea of having India in his designation, dropped India and became the special representative purely for AfPak. And as one person -- one Indian commentator observed, India was killing the chicken in order to scare the monkey. I hate to be -- this is from a country that's seen as a chicken, but clearly it was an effective strategy.

Now, in the last few weeks, in the last few days, the India-Pakistan peace process has been revived. It was in suspension after the Mumbai terror attacks that Bruce mentioned of November 2008. And it's taken this amount of time for Manmohan Singh and President Zardari to get the thing back on the road again. I fully share Bruce's foreboding about the incentive here for Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish Mohammed and other groups to disrupt this process and fully expect that to happen.

One silver lining here is that India does have a congress government under a very wise statesman, who's already got a very close relationship with Barack Obama, namely Manmohan Singh. And I think those of you who have observed the region will join me in counting the blessings that it was him who won reelection and his party and not the BJP, not the Hindu Nationalist BJP. So check that box.

The Obama Administration doesn't want any fingerprints on its efforts to encourage India and Pakistan to restart these peace talks. India remains highly neuralgic about any third party involvement, any outside mediation. And the day that Richard

Holbrooke admits that he's been facilitating these talks is -- would presumably be the last day in his job. He just wouldn't be able to do it; such would be the outcry from India. But I do think the Obama Administration is attempting quietly behind the scenes to help this process along. So check that box.

The third area, and perhaps the most important area, in Bruce's book is to relocate the focus of the war on terror from Iraq back to its cradle in the borderlands between Afghanistan and Pakistan. And I think I don't need to elaborate on the clearing that checks that box. And of course, Bruce was in charge of the first AfPak review that President Obama ordered, resulting in the first 21,000 troop surge to the region.

Subheadings and a corollary of that: the orderly withdrawal from the Iraq civil war that Bruce recommends looks like, in some form or other, is on course, although it's very hazardous to predict what's going to be happening in Iraq as the results of this election filter through.

Under this sort of general heading of refocusing the focus from Iraq to Afghanistan, Bruce recommends a number of other things, one of which really caught my eye, which was that the international community led by the U.S. should try and create nothing short of a multilateral Marshall Plan for Afghanistan. And I think that, to bring Holbrooke into it again, the difficulties -- the huge fraud practiced in the election last August and the whole taint around the reelection of Hamid Karzai and the continued question marks over the effectiveness as well as the venality of his administration in Kabul make that a particularly difficult task for Holbrooke to pull off. But, again, I think he's straining every sinew to do so and the Obama Administration clearly gives a high priority to bringing the neighbors of Afghanistan into the process and bringing countries further away, such as China and Japan, more strongly into the process. Whether they'll have any more luck with that than Vice President Biden's attempt to revive the Arab-Israeli peace process, I don't



know. But, again, it's a checked box; that is being attempted.

The fourth and final area I'll mention in terms of my selective picking of Bruce's recommendations is his, I think, very central observation that the war on terror will not be won on a military battlefield and has to be won through the vigorous pursuits simultaneously of political, economic, diplomatic as well as military means. And again, the Obama Administration within its first few days attempted to completely change the nature of the war on terror and how it is legally and politically pursued from this end, even to the extent of dropping the designation "war on terror." And within the first days, making this by now slightly infamous pledge to close Guantanamo within a year of taking office, a pledge that obviously President Obama has been unable to fulfill.

Which brings me on to the second area, very, very briefly -- because I'll stop in a minute -- that Bruce asked me to address. And that is the Obama Administration's vulnerability, political vulnerability, to another terror attack. I think there's no doubt about it and Bruce would articulate this far better, that in terms of the substance of the actions the Obama Administration has been taking in its battle with al Qaeda, there've been huge gains. It's been very masculine. This has not been a wimpish, democratic, stereotypical prosecution of the fight against al Qaeda.

Bruce mentioned the escalation in drone attacks. He mentioned the fact that Pakistan has been turned, to some degree, half turned or fully turned -- it can be debated -- but it's had operations in Swat Valley in the last year. It's moved into the tribal agencies that it had been fearful of touching for -- throughout the Bush years. It's had an operation or ongoing operation in South Waziristan. The arrest, accidental or otherwise, of the operational commander of the Afghan Taliban in Karachi last month is a major step forward. There have been all sorts of things the Obama Administration has done. And yet, if you look at the state of public opinion, and, indeed, the most recent and I think

comprehensive evaluation of public opinion, in terms of President Obama's conducting the war on terror, it makes for rather depressing reading for supporters of the Obama Administration.

This week, I think yesterday, Democracy Corps and Third Way brought out a very comprehensive, detailed survey of U.S. attitudes on the war on terror. And that gap, that huge gap that persisted throughout the Aughties -- or whatever we call the first decade of the 21st century -- between Republicans and Democrats, that 30 point trust deficit Democrats had vis-à-vis Republicans had been narrowed, as most of you will know, by 2007/2008 and pretty much eliminated. They were neck and neck on this issue. And that persisted throughout most of the first year of the Obama Administration. But in the last two or three months, clearly something has happened to spook public opinion again, of which the Detroit -- the failed Detroit bombing attempt -- or Detroit bombing attempt -- would be the principal element.

And notwithstanding all of these gains that the Obama Administration has made and all of these steps and actions its taken that Bruce outlined over the last year, public opinion often draws sustenance from less empirical sources. And I think the reaction to the Detroit bombing, the fact that it took 36 to 48 hours for the President to be on people's TV screens, the fact that Robert Gibbs and Janet Napolitano initially described on television the system as having worked, and then one or two sort of awkward phrases from Secretary Napolitano -- like I think she described this as a man-caused disaster rather than an attempted act of terrorism; made it sound like global warming -- it made it sound like the administration was trying to avoid using the word "terrorism." And indeed, the President himself tends to reach for the phrase "isolated extremist" rather than "terrorist" when he deals with these issues, none of which alter the underlying substance of what the Obama Administration is doing, but they clearly do alter the perception.

And that reemerging gap between Democrats and Republicans that Third Way picked up on so strongly this week is, I think, a very sobering warning signal to the Obama Administration. It's a reminder that his administration is one successful homeland terrorist attack away from a failed presidency.

And on that very sober note, I will hand it back to Martin.

MR. INDYK: Thank you very much, Edward.

Bruce, like Ed, I went through your book again and checked off all of the things that you had recommended and the Obama Administration has now taken up. But I wonder if you look back on the first year of a strategy that pretty much follows your recommendations whether you would want to see some course corrections.

You make, as Edward points out, a big deal about the need to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. Well, we're not making much progress on that. And yet, the prosecution of the war on al Qaeda doesn't seem to really depend on that as much as you might have suggested. I wonder what your take on that is now.

And then, of course, you said in your book that it's critical to go after the leadership. And maybe they're under pressure, as you suggest, but we still don't have them, apparently not, in our sights.

And so just how would you respond to the experience of the first year of trying to implement the Riedel strategy?

MR. RIEDEL: Well, it's the Obama strategy, so I thank both of you for your kind remarks. I would like to think that the President stays up at night looking at my book, but I hope that he's actually doing something more productive with his time than that.

And I also want to thank Ed for reminding us that more cities in this country have been named in honor of Louis XIV than any other foreign leader in history. I don't know how we worked that into a discussion on al Qaeda, but I think it's very clever that

we've done that.

I think the administration has done pretty well on most of these cases. I think it's had in terms of the Arab-Israeli conflict a problem of vastly expanded expectations, which it actually helped to nurture early on, which came crashing down to reality. It would have been smarter not to have built up expectations so much so that the crash down would not be so intense.

I think the challenge now is to get really serious about this, and I hope that the beginning of proximity talks means that. To get really serious means that the President has to get involved. And no one knows better than you, Martin, that if there's going to be really heavy lifting with particularly the Israeli political establishment, it's got to come from the White House. And I think that the travel of Vice President Biden is a reflection of a recognition of that now and an attempt to try to calm some badly disturbed waters between Jerusalem and Washington, and see if we can get back to the business.

On the second point, the question of the leadership, this really is remarkable. As I said in the opening, more people are searching for Osama bin Laden than have ever searched for anybody in the world before. And yet, in the last year, I can give you one report of someone actually saying they knew where they were. It was a BBC report. It was almost certainly fallacious. But what's more interesting is we got one report in an entire year of someone saying he knows where this guy is.

I think the al Qaeda attempt to dangle the location of Zawahiri, who presumably also knows where his boss is, shows that we may be making some progress. That was a very provocative piece of bait put out there. And I suspect the fact that we haven't seen Zawahiri in the two months since then is that the bait was so good that it may have actually undermined his security a little bit and they're reevaluating security.

You know, the odds are very good that we won't have any advance

knowledge if we ever find bin Laden and Zawahiri. It'll just pop up on our news screens someday. But you can be sure that behind the scenes the CIA, the Jordanians, the Saudis, and a host of other intelligence services now have this as priority number one. And that's where I think there's a change.

The truth of the matter is that in the middle years of the Bush Administration the search for the leadership of al Qaeda was basically given up. I don't mean that if we found him we wouldn't have done something about it. But I would say that in 2004, '05, '06, and even into '07, we weren't looking anymore. Our priorities were elsewhere. And we didn't have a sheriff leading a posse going after them. I think that changed in the last year of the Bush Administration and it has certainly changed in the Obama Administration.

MR. INDYK: I wonder if I could get you both to focus on Afghanistan and the surge there. Let me put it this way, perhaps a little provocatively, but you argue that al Qaeda's basic objective is to get the United States to withdraw from the Muslim world and establish a jihadist Ummah across the whole Islamic world. The United States is withdrawing from Iraq and the President has said in sending more troops into Afghanistan that he also intends to begin the process of withdrawal next year from Afghanistan.

And I wonder whether you can tell us, first of all, how al Qaeda views what we're doing now in Iraq and Afghanistan. And, Ed, perhaps you could comment on how you think the war is going. And since you very usefully brought in the domestic dimensions of Obama's calculations, to what extent is this pressure to reduce commitments abroad going to affect the overall effort to try to deny Afghanistan to al Qaeda?

MR. RIEDEL: Why don't I start? Just to put it in perspective, the objective of al Qaeda's attacks in the United States and specifically the objective of September 11th was, as they say openly, to lure the United States into what they call the "bleeding wars," which is, in effect, to recreate in Afghanistan in particular the quagmire which Osama bin

Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Mullah Omar, and others fought in the earlier part of their life against the Soviet 40th Red Army in Afghanistan; in effect, to do to us in the 21st century what they think the mujahedeen did to the Soviet Union in the 20th century. Now, that may be an exaggeration of what led to the downfall of Communism, but that's how they view recent events.

They now look at our withdrawal from Iraq, I think, with the standpoint of trying to claim victory in what is actually for them in Iraq defeat. They're making much of the fact that the Americans are leaving and that this is a sign that the jihad in Iraq succeeded. I think that's clearly a case of trying to make lemonade out of lemons in this case.

In Afghanistan, they've been quite eager in their propaganda to say yes, come on, send more in. We're ready to kill more of you here. They famously have said it's much easier to kill American soldiers if you can get them into the bleeding wars than you can to kill them in the United States of America, and that's obviously the case. The trick for us here is to pursue a strategy that, once again, outfoxes them as we ultimately ended up doing to al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, which is to get the locals to turn on them and to fight on our behalf. And that's a very difficult and complex strategy that the President has embarked upon now. I think -- I've referred to it on other occasions as a gamble. There's no assurance that this will work. This is long and hard and we may end up finding that the Afghan patient that President Obama inherited on January 20, 2009, was dead on the table and that our efforts to revive it are just not going to work. I certainly hope that's not the case. I think we have a chance of reviving the patient, but it's going to be a very, very long and difficult one to do.

MR. LUCE: Could you just restate the question?

MR. INDYK: Well, let me put it this way. You've pointed out the vulnerability that Obama has in terms of Republican criticism of him as being weak on terror.

MR. LUCE: Absolutely.

MR. INDYK: He also faces, and you've written about this, a lot of pressure to focus on domestic issues, jobs in particular. And he, of course, is now focused on health care. And one suspects that when he gave his speech announcing that he was sending 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan, the need for him to add that they were going to be -- start to be coming home and he wasn't going to do nation-building over there because he had to do nation-building at home was a reflection of that kind of domestic pressure. But it kind of -- if you put it all together, it kind of pushes him in two different directions. To be tough on terror he has to go in and go after al Qaeda, but to meet the expectations of a focus on jobs and the economy he has to focus on nation-building at home. So how does he deal with those competing pressures and how effectively is he doing it?

MR. LUCE: It's very difficult. I mean, Bruce, he mentions in his book that -- the fact that Mullah Omar has made one of the most spectacular military comebacks in history. The Taliban was defeated in early 2002. And then in March 2002, the United States closed down essentially its -- well, took all the most impressive Special Forces, withdrew them to prepare for Iraq, closed the CIA station in Kandahar, and essentially declared the war over. In the next few weeks, we will see that military operation on Kandahar. Following Marja, we will see a military operation on Kandahar.

I think the real nub of the problem here for President Obama is a classic one with counterinsurgency, which is that, you know, this is clear, hold, build, and transfer strategy. The build and transfer element of it remains as problematic as it ever was. We talked a little bit about Hamid Karzai's government, its effectiveness. I believe that fewer than 10 percent of the members of the Afghan National Army -- I might be wrong on my number here, but it's somewhere around there -- are Pashtun.

MR. RIEDEL: Certainly the officer corps.

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MR. LUCE: And of the officer corps. Fewer than 10 percent of the officer corps are Pashtun. Their job is going to be to do as best they can to follow General Petraeus' manual to serve the people, not fight them. The fact that, you know, their majority illiteracy, the fact that the attrition rate or the desertion rate remains spectacularly high really just underscores how difficult that problem is. And I think, you know, the 2011 -- July 2011 soft deadline for the beginning of withdrawal and, you know, if we, in the media, misuse that description, the administration will come down very hard on us. We're not withdrawing July 2011, we're beginning to withdraw. And that's not flexible. How fast do you withdraw? They won't indulge in those hypotheticals.

You can pass that language and that soft deadline all you like here in Washington, but the impression on the ground in Afghanistan and at ISI headquarters is that America is leaving next year. And I think that creates a huge problem in terms of Obama's ability to really carry out General Petraeus' manual -- counterinsurgency manual on the ground.

MR. INDYK: Do you agree with that, Bruce? Because just -- it's interesting to see that despite that, and certainly that appears to be the message that was received, despite that the Pakistani military and ISI appear to be cooperating with us now. Is that because of this deadline or the way they're perceiving this deadline?

MR. RIEDEL: Well, as I wrote in an op-ed today on The Daily Beast, the honest answer is I don't know why Pakistan is doing what it's doing. I've been scratching my head on this for a month now and I still don't have a very good answer.

I think it has more to do with the war inside Pakistan than it has to do with any external development. And I suspect that they found that Mullah Baradar was at least passively, if not actively, assisting the Pakistan Taliban against them. And that would change the calculation of factors in ISI headquarters and the Pakistani army much more



effectively than any talking points that Richard Holbrooke or General Petraeus were using.

The deadline, though, is -- or the milestone or whatever is having the effect that Ed has described. It is the perception that we're leaving. And the fact is that two NATO contingents will leave between now and middle of 2011. The Dutch are probably going to leave this year and the Canadians, I think, almost certainly will leave next year. So there will be that perception, it may not match reality, but that the West is starting to pull back. And that's a very, very dangerous perception because that encourages the Taliban, al Qaeda, and everyone else to believe we just got to hang on a little bit and then the pressure will be pulled off.

The irony, of course, of this is, having been an advisor to his campaign on South Asia, he was elected with a very strong platform that said to his fellow Democrats Afghanistan is the war we should fight, Iraq is the war we should get out of. And he promised during the campaign that he was going to put more resources into Afghanistan and he promised during the campaign he was going to step up drone attacks. Well, it seems to be that a lot of the people who voted for him during the campaigns have had amnesia about those promises now and have some buyer's remorse that he's followed on what he agreed to do. Because those who support what he's doing in Afghanistan today are all Republicans. Support for this war is solid in Alaska and Arizona; it's weak in San Francisco and Cambridge. And the President now finds himself in the very difficult position of having to depend upon the opposition to give him the support he needs to conduct a war. And I don't think any president wants to be in that position.

It may be that the Detroit attack has sobered people's thinking about this war again, although the poll numbers that you reflect suggest that it's not really rebounding to the President's advantage.

MR. INDYK: Let's go to questions. And I'd ask you, please, to identify

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yourself and make sure that you're sentences end with a question mark.

MR. LAYTON: Hi. I'm Don Layton, a retired FBI agent.

Why do you believe that there is a threat from al Qaeda affiliates in North Africa in view of the fact that they haven't really done anything, at least that's known, since they consolidated themselves two years ago?

MR. RIEDEL: Al Qaeda and the Islamic Maghreb as they call themselves is underperforming, there's no doubt about that. They have become largely a kidnapping operation and a ransom operation. But the reason I highlight it, though, is their potential is quite enormous.

There aren't that many Yemeni Americans that you can get onto flights into the United States, but there sure is a huge Maghrebi community in France, in Spain, in Belgium that has French, Spanish, and Belgium passports. And one of the things al Qaeda looks for the most in the world right now is people who either have a valid American visa to come to this country or have a passport that will sail through Dulles. Ironically, of course, they don't ever expect the person to land in Dulles, but the point is to get on the plane. And that's why I think the Maghreb must look to them as a very attractive place to find another individual like the Nigerian, only this time one who will more properly detonate his weapon.

MR. INDYK: Okay, over here.

MR. SCARAVONE: Yes. Anthony Scaravone, independent analyst.  
Thank you for your work and the book, by the way.

In light of your comments and those of General Petraeus last week, I think on Charlie Rose, about the lack of actionable intelligence on specifically bin Laden, if your hypothetical of us waking up one day and turning on our TVs and radios and hearing that he has been captured occurs, what are your thoughts relative to resiliency in terms of decapitation? And where do you see the C4I of al Qaeda globally in general?

Thank you.

MR. RIEDEL: Obviously the only people who can really answer that question are in al Qaeda and those of us looking from the outside can only guess at it. Let me say, first of all, I think that we should not dismiss this. Killing or capturing -- and I think the first is far more likely than the second -- Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri will help to puncture the mythology that they've created.

I hesitate to voyage once again into English history, so I do this with trepidation, but they have been able to portray themselves as the Robin Hoods of international terrorism. The sheriff can't find them, their hideout in the woods somewhere beyond the law. And that's a very dangerous thing to allow to continue to go on. It's already gone on so long that a mystique has been created about these people. Breaking that mystique is very, very important.

I also think that it would have an impact on this organization because this organization really is drawn around the personality of particularly Osama bin Laden. He is the man that they all swear allegiance to. But it won't be the end of them. The franchises will still operate on their own. And, you know, the difficulty of dealing with an organization which extols martyrdom is that when you create martyrs, they actually turn those into recruits -- or grounds for further recruiting. So it's a Catch-22. But I don't think that there's any doubt that we would be a lot better off if we could accomplish our mission and get high-value target number one.

MR. INDYK: Just to follow up on this, Khorazaty, you referred to the interview that he did before he blew himself up. And he refers to how they set up a Shura to run his operation, which I found interesting.

MR. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. INDYK: Does that tell you something about the connection between

the operatives and the leadership?

MR. RIEDEL: I think it does. I think, you know, one of the great points of debate among people following al Qaeda the last several years is how much is Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri really involved in operational activities. That tape provides a very good piece of evidence that certainly Zawahiri was involved in this. I mean, he alludes in the tape, also, that as part of the dangle they provided the Jordanian intelligence officer with what were supposed to be secretly filmed video of him and senior al Qaeda leaders. He doesn't say Zawahiri, but I think it's fair to say it's Zawahiri.

That was a, you know, very clever, very agile thought through intelligence operation, and they knew it would have an impact. And he also says in the tape that they were shocked when they found out how big an impact it was having, that the Americans, as he said, lost their head with excitement. I don't think we should take his tape as the final word on what actually happened here, but it does give you startling and I think very important new evidence of the contacts between the leadership and the cadres.

MR. INDYK: Okay. So question over here.

MS. MANDELSON: Thank you. Miriam Mendelson, independent researcher.

You've spoken about the relationship between al Qaeda -- it's a broader al Qaeda question -- between al Qaeda and its franchises. A little bit more vague question, can you comment separately given the ideological, religious, political, tactical, and strategic divides, can you nonetheless comment separately on the relationship between al Qaeda and Iran, Hezbollah, Hamas, Fatah, and Ikhwan?

Thank you very much.

MR. RIEDEL: That's a very complex question. Al Qaeda is a Sunni extremist movement and it regards Shia as, in many ways, worse than Crusaders and Jews.

The example I can give you is when King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia convened his interfaith council in Madrid, I think, two years ago. And he invited Christians of all denominations, he invited Jews, he invited Hindus, he invited virtually every religious group in the world. Al Qaeda went ballistic over this. And in their propaganda they said this was a terrible thing to do. It shows you're not a good Muslim and especially bad because you invited Shia of all things.

That said, there is, I think, you know, considerable evidence that al Qaeda has operated out of Iranian territory over time and that there has at least been passive tolerance by the government of Iran for that activity. And I think that if you look to the future and you see a steadily increasing confrontation between the United States and Iran, one of the ways Iran can cause us difficulty is simply allowing more al Qaeda activity to go on within its territory. Very hard for us to do anything about that.

Hezbollah, in their eyes, a pawn of Iran. They love to say Hezbollah is a paper tiger. They love to point out that there has been no revenge for Imad Mughnieh's killing. But the truth is that they also have something of an envy of Hezbollah. Hezbollah, after all, is one of the world's most successful terrorist organizations of all time. Unfortunately for al Qaeda, it's Shia and, therefore, beyond the pale of any kind of formal alliance.

Hamas is an organization al Qaeda would long to bring into the arena. They would love to have Hamas join as the al Qaeda franchise in Palestine. Their gripe with Hamas is that it won't do that and that instead of continuing the jihad, it has agreed to a de facto ceasefire. I don't think that al Qaeda has given up hope that Hamas or some derivation of Hamas in the future will join the global Islamic jihad. That's why it doesn't set up a rival organization to Hamas, but it doesn't look like that's in the prospects for the immediate future.

And the Ikhwan, the Muslim Brotherhood, is an organization that al Qaeda -  
- many of al Qaeda's leaders began their careers in: Zawahiri, for example; bin Laden may  
have been an Ikhwani in his teenage years. Their gripe with that is that it doesn't get it. You  
know, they want to do all this touchy-feely, nice, humanitarian stuff when the imperative of  
the day in the minds of al Qaeda is to wage jihad.

MR. INDYK: Garrett Mitchell.

MR. MITCHELL: Thanks. Garrett Mitchell from the Mitchell Report.

This is a question that arguably it could go both -- it goes both to Bruce and  
Ed because Ed has written about it. It's not an al Qaeda question directly, but it refers to an  
op-ed piece that Jackson Diehl wrote yesterday in the Washington Post, the basic thesis of  
which is that Obama has failed to make the kinds of connections with leaders around the  
world that we have seen in presidents that preceded him. And my question really has two  
component parts and I think it's driven as much by the conversation that you had today  
about the India-Pakistan time bomb and it is this.

Does -- the first is to the extent that either of you can comment on it, does  
Jackson Diehl have it right about Obama's thus far not having forged significant relationships  
with world leaders? That's A. And B, if that's so, is it significant and could it be critical in the  
event that al Qaeda decides to try to heat things up in the India-Pakistani situation as an  
example? So it's really a question specifically about his thesis and then the extent to which  
that thesis is influential in the conduct of foreign policy and national security.

MR. INDYK: Ed, do you want to take that first?

MR. LUCE: Okay. I don't know whether Jackson's right. I mean, one  
hears that the relationship between Obama and Merkel or Obama and Sarkozy, Obama and  
Gordon Brown, and others is not good. But it's not bad either. That it's fairly business-like.  
There have been tensions in each of them. I don't think -- I won't go through each

relationship. Nobody gets on with Gordon Brown, by the way. I would suggest that he does have a very warm relationship with Manmohan Singh. So that's one counter example.

But really I'm not qualified, you know. I haven't been in the room with Obama alone and another leader. I'm not qualified to answer that question. I didn't fully understand your question on India-Pakistan, probably because I can't remember Jackson's full column.

MR. INDYK: Well, I think the question's whether what appears to be a lack of personal relationships between this president and other world leaders is going to make it difficult when it comes to try and persuade them to make difficult decisions that require them to take risks and where they need the assurance that the President of the United States is going to be with them. Is there a problem there that you see? It sounds like you don't really.

MR. LUCE: I'll hand that one to Bruce.

MR. INDYK: Okay.

MR. RIEDEL: My observation on that would be this, and I think that presidents -- and I've watched four of them up close -- tend to exaggerate in their minds what their personal relationships can do. I think that they come to believe that the guy on the other end of the phone is really their buddy, but states don't behave like that. We don't behave like that and most foreign countries don't behave like that. It's interests that drive things. If the interest is there, the personal relationship can make it warm and fuzzy instead of cold and hard.

I don't think that this president has any delusion that a warm and fuzzy relationship with Sarkozy, for example, is going to turn into another brigade of French paratroopers in Afghanistan.

MR. INDYK: Okay. One here and then we'll go up the back.

MR. URBAN: Matt Urban from Center for New American Security.

My question is you characterized the Bush Administration as not having a sheriff leading a posse after bin Laden. But in your book you also describe as there is no single sheriff within the U.S. Government. Has there been an elevation of a John Brennan or an Admiral Blair in charge of that posse? And if so, who is it?

MR. RIEDEL: That's a very good question. And if I were to give one criticism of the administration's counterterrorism approach is that it hasn't figured out how to get the American intelligence community to have the leadership it needs to have. The DNI is supposed to be the leader of the American intelligence community, but he's a leader with no power. He's neither in charge of budget nor personnel selection. And if you're not in charge of those two things, you're really not in charge of anything. We have -- and I think this was clear on Christmas Day; we still have confusion over who really is in charge.

John Brennan is a brilliant intelligence officer. I worked with him for many, many years. I think the world of him. But the U.S. intelligence community cannot be coordinated and led by one or two people in the basement of the West Wing. It needs a real leader, a real sheriff.

Part of the problem here is the United States Congress, which created this new intelligence system in the wake of 9-11 and did, to be perfectly blunt, a very poor job of putting it together. It's -- if you go back to the Congress now, I suspect we will get a worse outcome, not a better outcome. It's going to have to be done by executive leadership, and this has been an area where the President has had problems from the beginning. He couldn't find anyone who wanted to be DCIA, literally. Leon Panetta was not the obvious choice to be director of the Central Intelligence Agency. He had to be persuaded to put in one more tour of duty in the American government as a patriot, and I salute him for doing that. But this is an area where I think they still have a problem.

MR. INDYK: Down the back, please.

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MR. PEREZ: Dorian Perez, the University of Manchester.

About your multilateral Marshall Plan, the British foreign minister, David Miliband, recently made statements basically trying to convince the British public that Britain has to maintain its position in the global stage and whoever wins the general elections in Britain, they're going to have to focus on domestic issues. That being said, everyone's looking to the Germans to bail out the Greeks. Just how multilateral would this Marshall Plan be? And what are Muslim nations with the means, like Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi, and Bahrain, doing to help in Afghanistan?

Thank you.

MR. RIEDEL: Well, I think if you look at Ambassador Holbrooke's travel schedule you'll see that he spends a lot more time trying to get support in places like Abu Dhabi and Riyadh and Doha than in Paris or London or Berlin, and in Beijing as well.

Prospects? You know, we're broke. The whole world's broke. The Greeks may be the most broke except for the Icelanders, but there is not -- this is not a great time to be trying to get a Marshall Plan together. But I think the administration has been able to get a lot more aid for Afghanistan. It's certainly got a lot more experts on the ground in Afghanistan, civilian experts. We've focused largely on the military increase, but there's been a sizeable increase in the number of civilian experts on the ground. We've also gotten a lot of other countries to set up an Afghanistan-Pakistan special envoy with the task of trying to bring them there.

At the end of the day, though, it's going to take foreign investment to have any real significant change in Afghanistan. Foreign investment's only going to flow when people see some level of security. That's why security has to come first. And that foreign investment, I would submit to you, is much more likely to come out of China than it is anywhere else because Afghanistan does have one thing that the Chinese want, which is a

lot of minerals. And the largest foreign investment in Afghanistan so far has been a Chinese firm going after mineral wealth. And I think that like the rest of the world, the future of Afghanistan in the 21st century will largely be paid for and made in Beijing.

MR. INDYK: Let's focus for a minute on the political dimension of Holbrooke's efforts or the Obama Administration's efforts, and this is to both of you. There's been a lot of talk in the press lately about this effort to try to split away the Taliban troops from the Taliban through buying them off, as it were, on the kind of Iraq model, and, at the same time, trying to split the Taliban leadership from al Qaeda. And I wonder what you think of the strategy and whether you think we're going to have much success at that.

MR. RIEDEL: Yes, the strategy places a lot of emphasis on the notion, the theory, that at the end of the day, a sizeable part of the Taliban foot soldiers are not committed to the global Islamic jihad; that they're in this war because they get better paid by the Taliban or because their tribe has decided to go into this war or for local reasons, and that if you adjust the security situation in a number of ways, including paying the Afghan army better, which we're now doing -- they're getting roughly twice as much in their paycheck as they were a year ago -- you may start to change that calculus.

I don't think it's going to happen until the security calculus changes. Again, you'd be a very brave Pashtun today to change sides because you'd probably not live to see tomorrow morning and you could be certain that your family wouldn't live to see tomorrow morning because the Taliban will come and get you. Until we can change that security calculus, I don't think this process of dividing the Taliban is likely to go far. And Secretary Gates said, in effect, the same thing yesterday when he went to Kabul.

The problem is that many of our allies, and perhaps our Afghan in particular, also has visions of a grander bargain, which is some kind of big political agreement with the leadership of the Afghan Taliban. And the conspiracy theory of the

month in Islamabad is that's why Mullah Baradar was arrested. And actually there's alternative conspiracies: that he was ready to make a deal and the Pakistanis wanted to stop it or that the Pakistanis want a deal and somehow arresting him is going to be the mechanism for going forward. And you can -- you know, the two conspiracy theories are classic Pakistani conspiracy theories. They both stand on their own. The fact that the contradict each other is irrelevant.

I'm very skeptical and have been from the beginning that the senior leadership of the Taliban is ready to make a deal other than formula for expediting our retreat and the overthrow of the Karzai government. I'm very skeptical that they're prepared to hand in al Qaeda.

If you look at the Jordanian operation on December 30th, it was a joint operation between al Qaeda, the Pakistan Taliban, and the Afghan Taliban. In operational terms they're getting closer, not further apart. The relationship between Mullah Omar and his son-in-law, Osama bin Laden -- because he is his son-in-law as well as the man to whom Osama bin Laden pledges his loyalty -- is an historic one. It goes back a long time now. There have been periods when it would have been much smarter for Mullah Omar to hand in al Qaeda than there are now, particularly 2001 and 2002. He didn't do it then. The hope that sometime in the future he's going to do it is a nice hope, but it's not one that I would build a strategy around.

MR. INDYK: Ed, do you want to comment?

MR. LUCE: I'm not really qualified to cover that. I just have one question to raise in terms of the broader diplomacy of this, where Iran is. You know, if you look at the countries Holbrooke has visited, he's visited all of Afghanistan's neighbors except Iran.

And in terms of sort of testing out, you know, the broader engagement with Iran, difficult as that might be, I wonder whether this back door of Holbrooke and Iran and

cooperation in Afghanistan isn't something that hasn't yet been properly tried and isn't worth trying. And I'd be interested in Bruce's and your views on that.

MR. INDYK: Well, Dick Holbrooke sat in the chair, probably the chair that you're sitting in, making a big deal about how he was talking about all of Afghanistan's neighbors. It was clearly an attempt by him to send a signal to Iran. But it seems to be a hostage of a larger problem in U.S.-Iranian relations, which are moving into a confrontational rather than cooperative phase.

I don't know whether you want to add anything to that.

MR. RIEDEL: The only thing I would add to that is that some of our NATO partners are very worried about this and the most worried are the Italians because Italy now has a 400-mile border with Iran. Because the Italian contingent in Afghanistan is in Herat, which is right on the border. And if the Iranians want to cause trouble, the Italian are going to hear it first.

MR. INDYK: Okay. On that note, ladies and gentlemen, we're going to conclude this session. Here it is, The Search for al Qaeda, in its new updated and cheaper version. You can buy it outside. Bruce might even sign a copy for you.

Edward, thank you so much for joining us in this conversation.

\* \* \* \* \*

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