

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

THE OBAMA AND ROMNEY FOREIGN POLICY AGENDAS:  
A DISCUSSION WITH THE CANDIDATES' LEADING ADVISERS

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

MR. INDYK: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the Brookings Institution. Special welcome to the overflow crowd in the other rooms. We're very glad to have the opportunity this afternoon to host a special conversation about the foreign policy approaches of President Obama and Governor Romney, his presidential challenger.

I'm Martin Indyk, the director of the Foreign Policy Program here at Brookings. We have, for a long time, wanted to host both President Obama and Governor Romney to give their foreign policy speeches here at Brookings. For reasons that will be clear to you, they both gave their foreign policy speeches, or at least their initial foreign policy speeches, at another venue, the Veterans for Foreign Wars. I'm not sure why they preferred that venue to Brookings, but they did. (Laughter) In the last two days they've both outlined parts of their foreign policy.

And of course as you probably all know, Governor Romney is embarking on a foreign trip on Friday, which will take him to London and then to Jerusalem and Warsaw. And so we thought it was a particularly appropriate time to have a conversation rather than a debate between representatives of the Obama and Romney campaigns, and it's in that spirit that we are delighted to welcome both Michèle Flournoy and Rich Williamson. Michèle is probably known to you, because she served from the beginning of the Obama administration through February of this year as the undersecretary of defense for policy, where she was the principal adviser to the secretary of defense in the formulation of national security and defense policy and in that capacity led the development of the Defense Department's new strategic guidance.

Michèle is well known to us here at Brookings, has appeared many times, both when she was an administration spokesman as a senior Defense Department

official and also in her previous capacity as the co-founder of the Center for a New American Security, a new think tank that is doing excellent work in the field of developing national security and defense policy. She served in previous administrations as the principle deputy assistant secretary of defense for strategy and threat reduction, and she is now chair of the National Security Advisory Group of the Obama-Biden Re-Election Campaign.

Rich Williamson, ambassador, is a non-resident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, now on leave to the campaign for Governor Romney. He recently founded the Salisbury Strategies Group in Chicago. Previously he had a number of distinguished responsibilities in both the Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and George W. Bush administrations, first as special assistant to the president and deputy to the chief of staff, and in the White House as assistant to the President for intergovernmental affairs. His many diplomatic posts have included ambassador to the United Nations offices in Geneva; assistant secretary of state for International Organization Affairs; and, most recently, as President George W. Bush's special envoy to the Sudan. He is also a long-time member and I think now vice chairman of the board of directors of the International Republican Institute.

So, we are very glad to welcome both Rich and Michèle to this podium. Brookings prides itself on being a nonpartisan think tank, and it's in that context that we are hosting this event today.

Our moderator is guest scholar at Brookings and former chief, diplomatic correspondent for CBS and then NBC news; former anchor of the NBC *Meet the Press* program; and also, most recently, of the *Haunting Legacy*, Marvin Kalb, and it's my pleasure to hand over the podium to you, Marvin, to conduct this conversation.

MR. KALB: Thank you. Thank you very much, Martin.

I assume that all of you are foreign policy fans and you all realize that this is our moment in the sun for this 2012 presidential campaign (laughter), and I haven't a clue as to how long it's going to last but let's take full advantage of it. Like all of you, I'm sure, I read both of the speeches -- the governor's speech, the President's speech -- and what I'm going to do is just sort of run down major highlights and ask you questions about it starting with Iran.

And every now and then when I think about Iran and then I listen to the governor and the President, I ask myself what's the real difference between the two, because they both want that Iran not have nuclear weapons. They're both sort of impatient that the process has gone on for this long.

Let's assume for a second, Rich, that Governor Obama -- Governor Obama, get that (Laughter) -- that Governor Romney is elected in November and a President Romney takes office on January 20th of next year, would he, in his impatience to get this process moving, cut off the negotiation and begin more seriously to consider a military option?

MR. WILLIAMSON: Well, Iran is an important issue, and I've got to respond by putting a little bit of context in it.

MR. KALB: Sure.

MR. WILLIAMSON: It was four years ago this month that in Israel Senator Obama gave an important speech about the Middle East and identified Iran as perhaps the most growing threat to international security in the Middle East. We're more than three and a half years into the Obama administration, and irrefutably Iran is much closer today than they were three and a half years ago.

MS. KINARD: Mm-hmm.

MR. WILLIAMSON: So, whatever the strategies are, they failed. And

Governor Romney's been clear that a nuclear Iran is an enormous threat to U.S. security to our friends in the region and needs to be addressed.

MR. KALB: And essentially unacceptable, is that right?

MR. WILLIAMSON: Unacceptable. He wholeheartedly -- and yesterday reiterated his view, consistent with the four U.N. Security Council resolutions of zero enrichment, a suspension of enrichment.

MR. KALB: But that hasn't happened up to this point, so --

MR. WILLIAMSON: You know what? You know why, in our opinion -- as Bismarck said, "Diplomacy without the threat of force is music without instruments." There is no credible threat of force. No one in Tehran or in the region feels that the Obama administration will use force.

For example, they legitimately wanted to pursue a policy of engagement, which contributed to a muted response to the Green Revolution when innocent Iranians were being beaten, arbitrarily arrested, and killed. It meant that he was willing to work and allow the Security Council to define what sanctions would be in place, therefore allowing Russia and China to have a veto over what we did to pursue our own interests. And the current engagement of discussions is going nowhere, and they're buying time for Iran to contribute.

So, I think, one, there -- as you know from the press reports, as all the people here know -- there are winks and nods and suggestions there might be acceptance of a 3-1/2 or 5 percent enrichment.

MR. KALB: Mm-hmm.

MR. WILLIAMSON: That message to Tehran is okay, we can wait until they move; they keep moving the red lines and the U.S. government --

MR. KALB: And that would be unacceptable --

MR. WILLIAMSON: That would be unacceptable.

MR. KALB: -- unacceptable to Romney.

MR. WILLIAMSON: That would be unacceptable.

MR. KALB: And so would he also be impatient to get the process moving and if the negotiations aren't working move toward a military option?

MR. WILLIAMSON: He would create a credible threat. He has not taken it off the table. The mixed messages we've had -- for example, the President gave a very firm speech in APAC: I've got Israel's back, going to have use of force on the table. The next day Republicans, including Governor Romney, made a reply, or gave their position. The day after that, President Obama said those Republicans are too militaristic; they're causing a war. We just undercut what he'd said on Sunday. There's been a history of inconsistent messages from the administration on Iran.

MR. KALB: Okay, okay, you -- we got the message. (Laughter) We got the message, yes.

MR. WILLIAMSON: And hopefully Tehran will.

MR. KALB: Now, Michèle, from an Obama administration point of view, what it is that Rich said about a perception out there in the Middle East. Number one, do you agree that there is that kind of perception of the President not choosing to act militarily; and, second, in light of what Rich said, what is it that you think an Obama administration re-elected ought to do?

MS. FLOURNOY: So, I don't share Rich's characterization. I'm sure that's very surprising to all of you (laughter) -- the President's record on this. You know, the truth is that this is a President who is very careful about what he says and then does what he says. You can track that on his Iraq policy, on his Afghanistan policy, on his al Qaeda policy. He was very careful when he chose the words he uses with regard to

Iraq, that we must prevent Iran from gaining a nuclear weapon, that a nuclear-armed Iran is unacceptable.

MR. KALB: He also said he doesn't bluff.

MS. FLOURNOY: And he doesn't bluff.

So, that is the policy. I think that the policy has -- I would strongly disagree and reject the notion that the policy has failed. The truth is we went through a period of engagement, because that was the only -- wait, first you have to give it a chance, but secondly it's the only way to create international unity behind any sort of effort to pressure Iran. So, we went through a period of engagement. We got a very disappointing response from Iran. And that set up the possibility of getting U.N.-sponsored sanctions against Iran with Russia and China on board, and then that set up further action for the E.U. to take steps, for nations to take steps, and the truth is today we have the most serious sanctions ever put in place against any country on the face of the earth, including sanctioning their oil products, their Central Bank, and so forth. Some of those effects are still to be felt, because some of the -- the most recent round of sanctions just started in July. So, that is still to be fully felt in Tehran.

At the same time, you've had an effort at negotiations. And I think everybody's been disappointed with the Iranian response. But the President has been very clear that the military option remains on the table. He's never taken off the table. And, you know, having come from the Pentagon, I can assure you the Pentagon planning for this is incredibly robust; it's ready; it's there as an option. You look at our force posture in the region -- you know, it is very strong and well positioned. So, the military option is real. The President's judgment is that now is not yet the time, because there is still a chance, with further sanctions biting, for Iran to change its calculus.

MR. KALB: And how much longer does the President --the

administration feel it can wait and give the negotiations a chance?

MS. FLOURNOY: The key is that we have to ensure that Iran is not able to enrich material to actually get a weapon. I think that that is what the intelligence community is watching very closely. Their judgment is that we do still have time and that the signs of a breakout would be very visible.

MR. KALB: How much time?

MS. FLOURNOY: They've testified publicly on this on the Hill -- a year or more at a minimum.

MR. KALB: Okay. Let us jump ahead to Syria, which is another urgent issue here. Let's jump ahead. We've got to do a lot of things. (Laughter)

Michèle --

MR. WILLIAMSON: You would ask a question about Iran later.

MR. KALB: That'll come up, I have no doubt.

If the Assad regime used chemical weapons in any way against its own people, against an international force moving in, would the Obama administration use American military power to stop it?

MS. FLOURNOY: Look, I can't, you know, speak for the President on that issue. That's going to be his decision, obviously.

MR. KALB: Sure.

MS. FLOURNOY: And that's -- you know, we're now getting into hypotheticals. But what I can say is that the President's been very clear on a repeated basis that the use of chemical weapons either inside Syria or the transfer of chemical weapons to any elements like al Qaeda would be unacceptable and that the Syrians involved would be held accountable for that. I also know that this has been a topic of intensive discussion with the neighboring allies, with our allies who are neighbors of



Syria, to say what would we do, how can we plan and prepare for that contingency and be ready for it. So, I have every confidence that the President is taking that threat very seriously and would take the appropriate steps.

MR. KALB: And that includes Israel, clearly, in those discussions.

MS. FLOURNOY: Yes.

MR. KALB: Rich, Governor Romney has said many times that he would support the Syrian rebels. But in what way would -- is he talking about providing American weapons to the rebels? Does he know things that many of us don't know about who the rebels are? Is there the possibility that these weapons could end up in the hands of al Qaeda?

MR. WILLIAMSON: Governor Romney has been clear and has a different approach than the President on Syria. Now into the 17 months, 17,000 people have been killed. The rhetoric to justify the Libya action looks pretty hollow when you look at what's happened in Syria. Over a year ago, Governor Romney said we should be using our resources to work with the opposition, to try to identify moderates, help them organize some of the things that we've done in other spots.

The administration recently has been telling reporters and having stories about how about five weeks ago we began to work with the opposition, which is great, but it's 15 months late and a year after Governor Romney said we should be leading. Second, he said we should be willing to arm the moderate opposition. Well, we don't even know who they are now, because there was a vacuum in al Qaeda, and others have come in, in the last six months.

MR. KALB: Did we know a year ago who they were?

MR. WILLIAMSON: Well, you know, you don't know if you don't talk to them, and this administration didn't send resources in and covert to have a dialog like

we've done in other parts of the world. So, yeah, we didn't. We are where we are. The point is leading means engaging an issue like Syria, one that is -- according to the CENTCOM commander, the biggest strategic blow we could give to Iran is if Assad leaves. It's strategically important to the Soviet Union, to say nothing of the humanitarian crisis. Again, the rhetoric used in Libya is shown to be hollow in the context of Syria. And to neighbors in the area like Turkey, Jordan, and Israel, where we have interests and alliances.

MR. KALB: So, that being the case, the idea of the U.S. under President Romney, if he were President now, providing American weapons is correct. He would be providing weapons.

MR. WILLIAMSON: He has said repeatedly he would be willing and support arming the moderate factions within the opposition.

MR. KALB: And what about moving American forces, on the ground, to look after the arming of the rebels?

MR. WILLIAMSON: Well, you know, Senator McCain and Senator Lindsey Graham and others have called for safe havens, no-fly zones.

MR. KALB: Right.

MR. WILLIAMSON: Governor has not done that. But he has --

MR. KALB: Would he agree to that?

MR. WILLIAMSON: He's been asked, and he says no. He's --

MR. KALB: Oh, he said no.

MR. WILLIAMSON: He has said that's not his position.

MS. KINARD: Oh, I see, okay.

MR. WILLIAMSON: But he feels we should have been and should be arming the opposition, but, importantly, we shouldn't have been leading from the behind;

we should have, a year ago, been in there, had our assets trying to identify and work with the opposition.

MS. FLOURNOY: May I --

MR. KALB: Okay, please, go ahead.

MS. FLOURNOY: To correct the record, the administration has been working with the opposition for many, many months, not just -- the past five weeks is when it came out in the news. But it's been working with the opposition first and foremost to providing humanitarian assistance and medical supplies, then, most importantly in my view, helping them to gain some greater cohesion, helping -- working with the political opposition to develop a common platform, to develop a Syrian-derived transition plan. And this is really crucial, because you have to have a theory of the case: How is change going to happen in Syria? The way change will ultimately happen in Syria is if you can get parts of the inner circle around Assad to begin to defect. We've started to see that. But to do that, they need the assurance that they can be part of a future Syria, that they can be part of a new Syrian government, and so it's very important for them to hear that from the political opposition for them to really feel that minority rights will be protected and so forth. So, you know, I think working the political dimensions of this is the most important piece, and that's what this administration has been focused on from the get-go.

MR. KALB: Okay. Move on to Israel for a second. I want to ask you, Michèle, when the President went to Cairo in June of '09 and delivered there a very important speech to the Arab world, is there any thought now that he made a mistake by not, at that time, going on to Jerusalem, which after all is a 40-minute flight from Cairo?

MS. FLOURNOY: You know, I think when you judge a President's commitment to Israel you have to look beyond the itinerary, his travel itinerary. The truth is does anybody criticize Ronald Reagan and his commitment to Israel? He never went

to Israel.

MR. KALB: Mm-hmm.

MS. FLOURNOY: Does anybody criticize George Bush -- W. Bush -- he didn't go till his second term. So, what you have to do is what has this administration actually done for the State of Israel? We have increased -- they have increased, I should say, security assistance levels to historic levels. It's never been higher. We have added on top of that funding for the iron dome system to protect Israeli citizens against rockets coming from Gaza. We have stood by them in the U.N., vetoing resolutions that we're trying to condemn Israel --

MR. KALB: Why is it --?

MS. FLOURNOY: -- and so forth.

MR. KALB: Excuse me, but why is it that there is still the move, the feeling, the stories that are written that the relationship between President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu, for example, is so tense and strained?

MS. FLOURNOY: Yeah, I think it's a good question, because I think there's a lot of playing politics with this issue, and this is an issue where we've always had bipartisan consensus.

What I just wanted to read -- I did bring one little card of quotes, because it's important to hear from the mouths of Israelis, what do Israelis think about the Obama administration and their policies. So, this is from Prime Minister Netanyahu at APAC. He said, "If there's one thing that stands out clearly in the Middle East today it's that Israel and America stand together." Then Ehud Barak said, "President Obama is an ally and friend of Israel. The Obama administration gives backing to Israel security in a wide, all-encompassing and unprecedented manner." Then Perez went on to say, "Never has the security or the means of security been better met than today under President Obama."

MR. KALB: Okay, point --

MS. FLOURNOY: Those are Israelis talking about the relationship.

MR. KALB: Point registered. Understood. (Laughter)

MS. FLOURNOY: Thank you.

MR. KALB: Rich. The governor yesterday in his speech at the Veterans of Foreign Affairs accused President Obama of treating Israel in a shabby way --

R. WILLIAMSON: Right.

MR. KALB: -- and adding his voice to a U.N. chorus of what he called accusations, threats, and insults against Israel. Now, what would specifically a President Romney do to advance the Israeli-Palestinian negotiation?

MR. WILLIAMSON: Well, first let me talk -- respond to something Michèle covered, because I think it's important you put some context in your question.

I think the very fact that Michèle pulled up three quotes from Israeli shows the defensiveness of the Obama administration on the relationship to Israel.

(Laughter) Second, when Romney's --

If you have other quotes on other countries, I'll be interested, but I think that says something.

Secondly, when our itineraries announced -- the campaign says oh, this is just a gimmick going there but Obama will do it in the second term -- look, you treat your friends not only with military support, which the Obama administration has done quite a bit, as has his previous administrations, but you try to get a condominium of political cooperation. And that has not existed. There have been harsh differences, whether it's dealing with the Palestinian issue, dealing with Iran, and it symbolized to me by the fact that the Vice President of the United States kept the head of the State of Israel waiting 90 minutes for dinner, because he was having a temper tantrum. You don't treat

any head of state that way, let alone your friend.

MR. KALB: I'd like us not to go through the political language here excessively. We do read the papers. We do understand that. My question has to do with Romney as President. What specifically would he do, propose, advance to move the Palestinian-Israeli negotiation forward?

MR. WILLIAMSON: Well, I think the first point is something that you've made, because you've covered the Middle East for decades, something that Ambassador Indyk has done in his work in the Clinton administration and afterward. The United States can't want this worse than the parties.

MR. KALB: Mm-hmm.

MR. WILLIAMSON: And you have to have a respectful dialog, which is why Governor Romney, when he's in Israel, will also be meeting with Palestinian leaders. You don't go public on a negotiating position before you talk to one of the parties who you say is a friend. But it's a difficult problem. I don't think there's an instant solution. Anyone who does either does not spend the kind of time you and others in the Middle East have or has a different agenda. It's very difficult. You're going to have to continue to try to work for it. You're going to have to continue to try to work to manage that tense situation so there's less friction, less violence, less clashes.

MR. KALB: Will Governor Romney, while he's in Israel this week, to the best of your knowledge, be discussing with Prime Minister Netanyahu the idea of a joint American-Israel operation in Syria or against Iran?

MR. WILLIAMSON: Well, it's a good reporter's question, and I'll give a response of somebody who's been in government. The two principals will have the discussion they have, and they'll decide what they want to go public with.

MR. KALB: Okay, we'll go on then. All right. (Laughter)

Michèle, I'd like to talk about Pakistan. I'm sure we've all read widely, and you may know from more personal experience, that President Obama is described as being extremely disturbed, concerned about the possible "disintegration" of the state of Pakistan. And then the question comes up: What do you do with its nuclear weapons? So, I'm wondering, first of all, if you think that description is accurate. And then I've got a follow-up.

MS. FLOURNOY: Well, I think, yes, I think the United States is and should be concerned with the fragility of the governing situation in the State of Pakistan. You know, you only have to look at what's happened on the civilian side and some of the dynamics between the civilian side and the military to be concerned about the long-term future of Pakistan and its democracy.

MR. KALB: Is that the reason why the President, when he thinks about the future of Afghanistan, would like to retain a force of some 20,000 American troops in Afghanistan just in case something dreadful would happen in Pakistan with the weapons?

MS. FLOURNOY: When I think -- when the President talks about a follow-on force, a much smaller force, in Afghanistan post-transition, post-2014, that force is really focused on continuing to train and work with the Afghan military --

MR. KALB: Yes.

MS. FLOURNOY: -- so that they reach full capacity --

MR. KALB: Right.

MS. FLOURNOY: -- and pursuing joint counterterrorism operations in the region. It is not a force directed at any of Afghanistan's neighbors, including Pakistan.

MR. KALB: I don't mean it as -- forgive me, I don't mean it as directed against. I mean that the force would be there in Afghanistan in case in neighboring

Pakistan the government disintegrates and then the question of who controls the nuclear weapons arises --

MS. FLOURNOY: Yes.

MR. KALB: -- as a real and urgent problem.

MS. FLOURNOY: That's really not been a rationale for thinking about U.S. --

MR. KALB: I see.

MS. FLOURNOY: -- the follow-on footprint in Afghanistan. What I will say is that several administrations, Republican and Democrat, have been seized with this issue. They've been very concerned about the safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, and they have worked on this issue, and the situation has improved somewhat over the years. I think one of the things --

MR. KALB: But what do you mean by "worked on the issue"?

MS. FLOURNOY: Well, I don't want to say more than I can.

MR. KALB: Oh, sorry.

MS. FLOURNOY: But there have been efforts, cooperative efforts to improve the situation. The thing that worries a lot of people is some of the rhetoric coming out of Pakistan about their future nuclear plants, in terms of growing their arsenal, diversifying their arsenal --

MR. KALB: Oh, I see.

MS. FLOURNOY: -- and so forth, and that would be, I think, a worrisome development should it happen.

MR. KALB: Rich, Governor Romney now seems to accept the President's 2014 deadline, which during the primary season he did not. But according to his speech yesterday, he now seems open to that. So, why the change?



MR. WILLIAMSON: Well, actually the change -- or the position on 2014 was last fall, so it was there, but he's been critical of the President, in his view, being guided more by political consideration than facts on the ground, and he's been concerned that our military leadership has not been supported as General Petraeus' testimony when he was CIA director.

But I think Michèle's exactly right. Pakistan is enormously difficult. Between the intelligence, the army, the civilians, the religious factions, it is a barely functioning state, and they've got nuclear weapons that are extremely dangerous. And there's no simple answer, and the governor understands that. He has said, with respect to their Talons in their Western region, of Taliban forces, we should look at conditionality for our foreign aid, but that's pretty much what his position has been on Pakistan.

So, I just want to acknowledge that Michèle's description has a lot of merit to it, and it's one that Governor Romney understands.

MR. KALB: What does "conditionality" mean here?

MR. WILLIAMSON: Well, if you're going to give -- continue to give the aid --

MR. KALB: To Pakistan.

MR. WILLIAMSON: To Pakistan.

MR. KALB: Which is a lot.

MR. WILLIAMSON: Which is well over a billion dollars a year.

MR. KALB: Yeah, right.

MR. WILLIAMSON: The tolerance of them allowing the Taliban and other factions to work in their Western mountains that bleed over and kill Americans at this time, et cetera. You begin to pull that back.

MR. KALB: Well, isn't that something that you guys in the Obama

administration have been --

MS. FLOURNOY: Well, I think there is -- I wouldn't use the word "conditionality" per se, but I think that the discussion with Pakistan after they took some steps to, you know, close the ground lines of communication for the supplies and so forth, as we've sort of worked our way back towards a more cooperative relationship I think the United States and this administration has been very clear about the areas of cooperation that we need to see to be able to continue to move forward with assistance and with support, starting first and foremost with counterterrorism and things related to the safety of our troops in Afghanistan.

MR. KALB: Okay, moving onto Russia and our relations with Russia.

Michèle, Governor Romney seems very upset with President Obama's reset policy toward Russia. The governor has described Russia, I believe, as the number one global foe of the United States. First of all, what do you think of the governor's criticism?

MS. FLOURNOY: Well, I think it's unfair, and I think it misses some of the tremendous benefits that we've gotten from the recent policy. From the very beginning, President Obama's been clear that we want to have a cooperative relationship with Russia where our strategic interests align. Where we have differences, we will, you know, continue to negotiate and press and push and work, you know, work through those, but we will not in any way sell out our allies or allow Russia to have spheres of influence in Europe, none of that.

But what you get from the reset is very tangible progress in some important areas: The new START Agreement, another step in arms control that makes the world safer, that keeps the START verification provisions in place, that is a very positive development that had broad bipartisan support in the Congress; cooperation to

transit forces and supplies through Russian territory to get to Afghanistan, very important, very important political cooperation on sanctions against Iran. Russia agreed to stop supplying Iran with some of its most sophisticated weaponry, some of its air defenses, and so forth. So, these things matter, and these kinds of cooperation -- I worry that if you took the approach of this is now our new geopolitical foe once again that you would lose a lot of that cooperation that's really important to American interests.

MR. KALB: I'd like to ask a question of both of you, starting with Rich. Do you think that it is possible that we will see, in Russia, under President Putin, the rise of an Arab Spring-like popular uprising?

MR. WILLIAMSON: Well, there's been an authoritarian drift in Russia during the last three and a half years. Ironically, if you look at Ambassador McFall's writings when he was at Stanford near the end of the Bush administration saying Bush was too soft and didn't get enough, it has to be magnified if you apply the same standard today. Not only did he have the authoritarian drift where the European observers were unwilling to say it was a free and fair election for Putin, you have a new NGO law that just passed in the last ten days that further squeezes civil society. You've had a law that tries to outlaw independent political parties in the provinces, you've got Russia, with all due respect, who has been a lifeline in both Syria and intransigent on Iran, and you just have to make this point. When I was president, special envoy to Sudan, there were things we couldn't get through the U.N. Security Council on sanctions, because China got 6 percent of its oil. We put together a coalition of the Europeans and others of over 20-some countries that put sanctions on their banking and other things. So, they had to divert it. It caused trouble. It cost costs. You don't have to wait for Russia to say you may do this. And you've got Russia against the missile defense deployment; you've got Russia using their oil and energy to intimidate Eastern Europe.

MR. KALB: So, what do we need to do about these things?

MR. WILLIAMSON: Well, the first thing -- be honest. And --

MR. KALB: You mean both talk about it.

MR. WILLIAMSON: You talk about it. You know, I've -- for better or worse, whether it's Hong Sun or Robert Mugabe or al-Bashir, I've dealt with some less-than-pleasant guys, and saying you are not doing good things never surprises them. They know they're not.

MR. KALB: Mm-hmm.

MR. WILLIAMSON: Putin knows what he's doing. So, we have this false politeness. We don't want to offend his feathers or whatever.

MR. KALB: Okay, Michèle.

MR. WILLIAMSON: Wait, wait, one more thing I have to say --

MR. KALB: Go ahead. Go ahead.

MR. WILLIAMSON: -- because I want to just agree with Michèle's earlier comment that President Obama says what he means and means what he says, and he did that with an open mike, and that should concern us with respect to Russia and other places.

MS. FLOURNOY: Listen, I mean, we don't have polite tiptoeing around conversations with our Russian colleagues. They are very hard hitting. We raise human rights. We raise concerns about democracy and the reversals. We've been pounding them both privately and publicly on Syria. You know, so, there's no holding back. We've been very clear on Georgia and so forth. So, you know, and so I think we -- to be fair, we should characterize the record accurately.

Now, the question I have is what exactly would you do differently or more? I mean, would you -- what would you sacrifice in the current reset relation? What

would you be willing to put on the table to get some -- you know, to take a different approach? What -- you know, beyond the rhetoric, what you do differently?

MR. WILLIAMSON: You know, I was on the senior staff at the White House when Ronald Reagan went in the Press Room and referred to Mikhail -- referred to the Soviet Union as an evil empire. People in this town, even in the administration: Oh, my God, we can't deal with them, we've spoken the truth, but you can't do that. And lo and behold, we got the first nuclear reduction in history with the IMF Treaty under Ronald Reagan. So, first you speak the truth. The Russian people that are trying to get more space for their civil rights deserve it. The American people deserve you to stand up for that. You don't empower them by saying Russia has a control over you pursuing your own security interests, whether it's with Iran or with Syria, and I think you'd see changed behavior. What you've done is allowed them to constantly test the limits. They've tested it and then felt they could go further.

MR. KALB: Okay, let's move on.

Leaks. The governor says that the White House is leaking classified information for political gain.

MS. FLOURNOY: So, there's no one who was more upset and disturbed about the leaks than President Obama. He did not authorize them. They were not authorized. He has appointed two prosecutors to pursue them, and the instructions have been very clear, that -- pursue the fact base wherever it leads you. No one is immune, nothing is off the table, I want to know how to -- you know, I want to get to the bottom of this. And he's also said that he will be accountable, and, you know, he will pursue the investigations to their logical conclusions, and he'll hold accountable and prosecute anybody who is found to have leaked. I think that's very clear. If you look holistically across the administration, there's no administration that's been more aggressive about

pursing leaks than this one. And I -- you know, I think you can look back to some of the things that happened in the Bush administration in terms of how difficult these things are to deal with, and yet what you need is a clear presidential direction that this will not stand; it's intolerable; it's unacceptable and to go after the people who might have been responsible.

MR. KALB: Rich, your hands are up in a "ah." (Laughter) I have to ask you this question before you let loose.

MR. WILLIAMSON: Yes, sir.

MR. KALB: Do you think that Romney was equally disturbed when the Bush 2 White House leaked oodles of classified information to Bob Woodward when he was writing his four books about the Iraq and Afghan wars, including interviews with the President?

MR. WILLIAMSON: I don't understand administrations' incestuous relationship with Bob Woodward and these books that come out. (Laughter) And I've been reading this ever since I was in school in the Watergate days. I have never had a discussion with Governor Romney, but I find that extremely disturbing, too, but the leaks that we've seen now are unprecedented. Look what happened to Israel that was part of the cyber engagement with Iran. Do they want this leak made?

MR. KALB: The answer there is I've worked in Israel. The idea of leaks not happening in the Israel government? (Laughter) That's routine. It happens every day. They live with leaks.

MR. WILLIAMSON: All right, let me just parse this in. (Laughter) So, you're saying that the Israelis like the fact --

MR. KALB: No, they don't like it, but they live with it.

MR. WILLIAMSON: These leaks didn't come from Israel, and you know

it. And the President was first very careful when he said I'm so offended, we've done no illegal leaks. Well, maybe he declassified some things at the last minute. The fact is that both the thought of the President picking targets for the Jones, which was highly classified; the fact that we engaged in the cyber attacks; even the meetings with senior Pakistan officials in Abu Dhabi hurt American security. The President should, A, do a special counsel; B, publicly say I've instructed everyone in the White House to respond to every question that's asked; C, say they should all waive whatever press confidentiality agreement they did during the leaks; and D, before gleaming with Congress' efforts to try to get to the bottom of it, Dianne Feinstein made a statement then backed it off after she was "Bookered." Isn't that the mayor of --?

MR. KALB: Rich, you know that if --

MR. WILLIAMSON: And identified the White House as a source. I believe every reporter in this town knows at least one of his sources --

MR. KALB: Rich, one of things --

MR. WILLIAMSON: -- and it's the White House.

MR. KALB: -- to bear in mind, it'll probably save the government a lot of money. If you took a look at David Sanger's latest book, in the back he lists all of the people he spoke to at the White House. So, there's no need to go through this entire thing. It's all there. It's all open and public. You know --

MS. FLOURNOY: I think it's very important. Nobody owns outrage of how national security leaks --

MR. WILLIAMSON: Absolutely.

MS. FLOURNOY: -- that are dangerous for the country. This President feels that outrage. I'm sure Governor Romney feels that outrage. The truth is the President is going after this aggressively, and I've no doubt that they --

MR. WILLIAMSON: Right.

MS. FLOURNOY: -- will get to the bottom of this.

MR. KALB: Let's talk --

MR. WILLIAMSON: Let me just mention the Sanger book. A while ago I was at a forum with Ambassador-at-large Steve Rapp, dealing with Libya, Syria, and the Atrocity Prevention Board. During the Q&A there was a question about would it help the Atrocity Prevention Board if he has better intelligence leaks -- I mean, sharing? And Steve made a very thoughtful response, and then I just said I think the Obama administration has figured out how to do it: Have the national security adviser talk to Dave Sanger, then all intelligence is shared.

MR. KALB: Okay. Let's move on to defense spending.

Michèle, question for you. The President, in an effort to sidestep the sequestration requirements coming into play at the end of this year, has proposed a \$500 billion defense cut over a 10-year period of time, and the question that I ask is based on a Congressional Budget Office study, which says that if the President got his way, it would be almost impossible to get everything that he wants in his own defense policy, because you wouldn't have the money.

MS. FLOURNOY: That's right.

MR. KALB: So, how do you get the difference? How do you reconcile that?

MS. FLOURNOY: I'm really glad you asked that question, because there is a lot of confusion on this issue, including in Governor Romney's characterization --

MR. KALB: Oh, please help us out. (Laughter)

MS. FLOURNOY: -- at the VFW. So, first of all, the President is not advocating \$1 trillion of defense cuts, number one. Two, there are two separate issues.



The first is there is a Budget Control Act that was passed this past year by a bipartisan majority of Congress. All of the congressional Republicans who worry about defense issues, the chairman, et cetera, they all signed on. \$487 billion of cuts over the next ten years. That was the planning assumption for the budget that the administration then developed for FY13. And Secretary Panetta was very clear: This is really hard, but after so many years of growth we think it's possible. And just to be clear, that leaves the FY13 defense budget at 525.4 billion. In FY17, it envisions the budget will grow to 567 billion and change.

So, it is not cutting the baseline of defense. Yes, it's cutting more funding as the war ends and transition happens, but it's not cutting the base budget. It is slowing the growth in the budget.

Just for a factoid -- it's always nice to introduce some facts in these discussions -- I've compared Bush administration '08 defense spending base budget 479 billion. So, this is not some devastating, radical, horrible cut in defense spending. This is a reduction in the pace of planned growth. So, that's the Budget Control Act. That's what the administration has said yes, we're going to live with the law that Congress passed.

Break, break. Second issue, sequestration. Sequestration is the Sword of Damocles that's hanging over our heads if the Congress fails to come up with \$1.2 trillion debt deal, right? The administration, the President has proposed a very balanced approach putting both revenues and very deep spending cuts on the table to avoid sequestration. If Congress fails to act, and right now the Republicans in Congress are saying we're not going to touch this issue until after the election and even then we may not even allow revenues to be part of the equation. So, who knows how we solve the problem without revenues being part of the equation?

But if the sequestration goes into effect, then you see another half trillion cut in defense. And everybody -- the President, the Secretary, governor -- everybody agrees that that would be very devastating for U.S. national security --

MR. KALB: Thank you.

MR. FRIEDMAN: And we want to avoid that at all cost.

MR. KALB: Well, thank you, thank you. That is helpful.

Rich, Governor Romney has said many, many times that he would like not to cut the defense budget but rather to add to the defense budget, at the same time being consistent with the general rule of Republican pitch for lower taxes. Within the framework of the problems that the country has today with respect to the national debt, deficit, et cetera, I don't know anybody who says you can raise defense spending, cut taxes, and accomplish anything with respect to the national debt. So, how do you do that, sir?

MR. WILLIAMSON: I should introduce you to more people. (Laughter)

MR. KALB: Oh, please.

MR. WILLIAMSON: Look, I heard this same --

MR. KALB: I'm right here at Brookings.

MR. WILLIAMSON: I heard the same thing in 1979 and 1980.

MR. KALB: Uh-huh.

MR. WILLIAMSON: And the economy was crippled with double-digit inflation. Double --

MR. KALB: Do you think there's --

MR. WILLIAMSON: Double-digit inflation rate.

MR. KALB: Do you think the economy in 1979 is the same as today?

MR. WILLIAMSON: No, it's worse of the last three and a half years.

(Laughter) But it can be done. What the governor's been clear about is he thinks we have to rebuild our Navy. He's called explicitly for 14 more ships a year. And he thinks that obviously where there's a philosophical difference between President Obama and Governor Reagan on the economy --

MR. KALB: Governor --

MR. WILLIAMSON: Excuse me, Governor Romney and President Obama on the economy. It's one that the American people are intensely interested in. Governor Romney wants to keep discussing that issue and allow the American people to make a decision on the two alternatives. That creates whether you create growth by more revenue and -- you know, I don't want to -- spending on the stimulus and other things that he would argue are a waste of money versus trying to support and unleash the private sector for growth.

I would suggest that President would like to have the debate just about taxes versus no taxes. That's why they're trying to posture this. There are reasonable legislative proposals to deal with the defense portion by McCain and Graham and others. The administration refuses to engage them, because they want to talk only about taxes they'd like to be that issue. We're willing to have that debate in the context of a larger economic discussion, but we don't think that the current path, which allows a diminution of our defense capabilities, allows what's necessary in this century for American leadership, for a U.S. interest, and the interest of others.

MR. KALB: Do you think that it is possible, short of an agreement on the economy and the fiscal cliff that is described for the end of this year -- do you think it's possible, short of an agreement, to increase the Navy and increase the Army and put more money into defense? Do you really believe that?

MR. WILLIAMSON: I believe we can, should, and need to have an

adequate defense to lead --

MR. KALB: But where would you get the money from?

MR. WILLIAMSON: I'm happy to provide Brookings with one of our economic advisors to go through the details, but the --

MR. KALB: I don't think that's appropriate now. (Laughter)

MR. WILLIAMSON: But it's in that (inaudible).

MR. KALB: No, no, but please give me your answer.

MR. WILLIAMSON: But we can go back. There's a difference of view. The President's view is we're going to tax more, we're going to provide more stimulus --

MR. KALB: Oh, okay.

MR. WILLIAMSON: -- and that's going to have results. Three and a half years, say, it hasn't worked. The President doesn't want that discussion with the American people. He wants a discussion on taxes.

MR. KALB: Okay.

MS. FLOURNOY: Can I introduce two small facts?

MR. KALB: Okay, go ahead, quickie.

MS. FLOURNOY: Two small facts. You know, again, just to put the President's current defense plan in context, the Army is coming down somewhat in size, for example, with the end of the war in Iraq and the transition Afghanistan. It will still be larger than it was, you know, at the point of 9/11 before the wars began. We grew Army to prosecute these wars; it can resettle at a size that's slightly larger than when it started. This is not harming U.S. national security. You have every service chief, every combatant commander in full support behind the President on this budget proposal. So, I think that's very important.

The other thing is that history should inform this debate we're having

about the economy. At the end of the Clinton administration you had a surplus and a very robust economy. You then had the Bush administration put in place many of the same policies that Governor Romney is now advocating economically. And at the end of eight years, you had a profound deficit and debt problem. So, I mean, we have tried this before and it doesn't work.

MR. KALB: Okay.

MR. WILLIAMSON: I understand the desire to run against George Bush a second time.

MR. KALB: Now, let's do --

MR. WILLIAMSON: You run against Governor Romney.

MR. KALB: Okay, let's move on. (Laughter) Let's move on. Geez.

MR. WILLIAMSON: Thank you. I need a break. Sorry.

MR. KALB: This part is over now, this part here. But we would love to have your questions, and not only questions here but questions in the spillover crowds next door. And please, when you ask your question, identify yourself, please be brief. If you make a speech, I'm going to cut you off. And I appeal to our panelists to try to be brief in their answers so we can get as many people as possible.

Right here, starting. And a microphone here, please. Thank you very much.

MR. ROGIN: Thanks. Josh Rogin, *Foreign Policy Magazine*. Thanks for taking the time to speak with us, and thank you for your service.

Mr. Williamson, I wanted to ask you about the fact that a lot of the criticism about Governor Romney's foreign policy during this campaign recently has come from Republicans themselves. Today Bill Kristol published a long piece in *The Weekly Standard* criticizing Governor Romney for saying that he wouldn't hold a national

security meeting during the first hundred days of his presidency. Overall, there's a feeling amongst many Republicans that Governor Romney has de-prioritized national security in favor of the economic message and failed to offer specifics and details. I'm wondering if you could react to that and tell us what is the priority of foreign policy of his campaign.

Thank you.

MR. WILLIAMSON: Good question, Mr. Rogin. I think Governor Romney, if you read his book, *No Apologies*, started on foreign policy. In his first three chapters he laid out at the Citadel his vision of an American century, and what was required to be able to satisfy it. He amplified and refreshed that in the VFW speech yesterday. He's answered questions about it.

There's an understandable desire always to have more and more details, and we try to provide those in response to questions of journalists like yourself and others, but in the end what he needs to do is try to present a world vision -- and it's dramatically different than President Obama's -- and a thrust of how he would approach it, whether it's dealing with China or Russia, whether it's dealing with Iran -- and he's done that. I think my friend, Bill Kristol, will never be satisfied that there's enough details, and he's paid to be provocative, so he'll write columns that are challenging. But we feel we're laying out a vision for where America should go and that it is detailed in the same way other challenges have, and we're comfortable and the governor is comfortable with that.

MR. KALB: Okay, right over here, please.

SPEAKER: Thank you. (inaudible), Macedonian television correspondent from Washington, D.C.

MR. KALB: Speak directly into the microphone, please.

SPEAKER: Okay, it's better now. I said (inaudible), Macedonian television correspondent from Washington, D.C. I have a question for both of you. If your candidate wins the election, what your administration will be policy towards Macedonia, have in mind the main issue that keep from NATO Macedonia for so long now.

MR. WILLIAMSON: I'm sorry that I did not --

MS. FLOURNOY: Policy towards Macedonia?

SPEAKER: Macedonia.

MR. WILLIAMSON: Macedonia.

MS. FLOURNOY: And specifically with regard to NATO? Is that -- I'm sorry.

SPEAKER: I asked what will be your policy --

MR. KALB: No, we're not hearing you without a microphone.

MS. FLOURNOY: I'm sorry.

SPEAKER: What would be your policy toward Macedonia --?

MS. FLOURNOY: Yes.

SPEAKER: -- keeping in mind that we are allies in Iraq, in Afghanistan for so long.

MS. FLOURNOY: Yes.

SPEAKER: Greece is also a member state of NATO.

MS. FLOURNOY: Right.

SPEAKER: USA is also a member state of NATO.

MR. KALB: Okay, thank you.

SPEAKER: And we haven't been --

MR. KALB: Thank you very much.

MS. FLOURNOY: Thank you. I think for the Obama administration it's been a very important pillar of our policy in Europe that the door to NATO remains open and that as countries develop his democracies as stable, as contributing, able to contribute to the security of Europe that the door should be open in principle. I think there's been, in practice, a very robust engagement with Macedonia working military, you know, capacity building, exercises, and so forth as part of the Partnership for Peace and so forth. So, I think, you know, I think that -- I would expect in a second term that policy to be continued.

MR. KALB: Thank you very much.

Yes, right here. That third row, right there.

Hang on, Miss, one question at a time. Yes, please.

MR. BERGER: Jonathan Berger from *Congressional Quarterly*. This is a question for Mr. Williamson.

I'd like you to answer a question that Mr. Kalb asked you earlier, and that is where the money is going to come from to rebuild the Navy and to raise the defense budget. Where would that money come from?

MR. WILLIAMSON: As the governor said yesterday at the VFW, in order to have the sort of American century he envisions and to have America in a position where it can lead internationally, the first step is to renew and rejuvenate the economy. He believes that will come through allowing incentives in the private sector, a different approach on regulation, eliminate uncertainties including Obamacare that will all contribute to a stronger economic growth in the United States and that while we have many important issues to deal with at home, if we're unable to protect our security interests, the U.S. Government is failing in its first responsibility to the American people.

MR. KALB: And, Rich, just to follow that up, until all of that happens, I



mean, that doesn't happen in one day.

MR. WILLIAMSON: Right.

MR. KALB: As soon as the government becomes President, let's say. In that period of time, whether it takes 3 years or 6 years or 10 years, where are you going to get the money in order to deal with what it is that he says is so vital? That's my problem in understanding this.

MR. WILLIAMSON: You're entitled to your view.

MR. KALB: No, my problem.

MR. WILLIAMSON: You're entitled to your view of your problem.

(Laughter) In the last three and a half years, whether it's a billion-dollar stimulus bill, whether it's added burdens on the private sector through overregulation, whether it's Dodd-Frank, or whether it's Obamacare, et cetera, you've stifled the growth, and the fact is you've had the slowest economic recovery since World War II.

MR. KALB: Okay.

MR. WILLIAMSON: You've had the highest -- or the longest rate of unemployment, over 8 percent since the Great Depression.

MR. KALB: Okay.

MR. WILLIAMSON: And so the policies that you seem to feel are the only ones aren't the only ones. There's a different approach --

MR. KALB: Number one, I don't feel anything about policies. I was asking a question. (Laughter)

Yes, please, right there. Right there, yeah.

MR. LEE: Thank you. My name is Chi-dong Lee. I'm a Washington correspondent for South Korea's Yonhap News Agency.

I have a question for Ambassador Williamson. What is your strategy -- I

mean, Mr. Governor, strategy on North Korea as -- I mean, what is the main difference between your approach toward North Korea and that of the Obama administration? More specifically, what do you think about the six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear program and food aid for Pyongyang? Thanks.

MR. WILLIAMSON: Right, thank you. North Korea is a tremendously difficult problem, and on a bipartisan basis there's been support for the six-party talks. As you know, North Korea is sustained by Beijing's food support to the North and other support to the regime. The approach now for six or seven years bipartisan has, through the talks and through discussions with Beijing, been to get them to put more pressure on North Korea to abandon their nuclear program. Clearly, it hasn't worked. Governor Romney has not outlined in detail a contrary policy. We recognize, as President Bush does and as President Obama does, that China is the leverage point to try to get change, and we have to continue to work to try to help that.

MR. KALB: I'd like to put in a question here that we have from a columnist from India, Seema Sirohi. What would be Romney's policy on China and how would it be any different from what it is that President Obama is pursuing. This question, please.

MR. WILLIAMSON: Right. One of the strengths of Governor Romney is this long and very successful career, including international business activities, and in the first foreign policy debate in Spartanburg last October, for example, he said we have to be tougher on the ways in which China is tilling the field. He called for us to go to the WTO. At the time, it was dismissed in Washington and elsewhere. Since then the Obama administration has taken China to the WTO on one issue, but I think that's indicative that he'd like to -- he looks at China as someone who is not playing by the rules financially, whether it's the support of their currency, whether it's support of state-

controlled businesses, whether it's in various trade aspects, and he said he will use the WTO and other leverage points on China. And then on human rights he has taken a further position. I'm pleased the Obama administration has moved.

As we all remember when Secretary Clinton first went to China, she said she wouldn't raise human rights. Now it's part of the dialogue. The President has made good progress there, in my opinion and the governor's opinion. But from day one, Governor Romney's going to raise human rights issues.

He's also said we have to be more forward-leaning in dealing with the difficulties in the South China Sea, which, after I think it was 14 incidents with Philippines ships and aid with Vietnam or vice versa, beginning last summer, Secretary Clinton did take some initiative and has tried to get some talks going. They had a disappointment at the recent ASEAN meeting. Governor Romney has said that's a start, but we have to be firmer on the freedom of the seas. So there are differences in approach and I think especially on the economic issues you can express a more forward-leaning confrontational approach on China and its cheating that's helping cost American jobs.

MR. KALB: Thank you, Rich. Michèle, may I just follow up on that and ask you how do you judge the seriousness of the rising set of problems concerning the South China Sea?

MS. FLOURNOY: I think we have to take them very seriously. They are a number of countries that have resource claims, territorial claims in the area. And these disputes have the potential to erupt in conflict if mismanaged. We've seen the very aggressive posture of some Chinese fishing vessels and so forth. And so I think Secretary Clinton has gone to ASEAN, the President's also talked about this, made very clear that we cannot see use of force to resolve these disputes. And I think the fact that the U.S. has shown up, the U.S. consistently has naval presence in the region, exercising

freedom of navigation across the board, it has given some confidence to our partners in Southeast Asia that they can sort of stand up for themselves and for the rule of law and for, you know, resolving these disputes peacefully.

I do think more needs to be done, but I think, you know, this is an area of the world to watch. It's one of the areas that we thought a lot about in making the decision -- when the President the decision to rebalance towards Asia-Pacific given how much that area controls trade flows and contributes to our economy.

MR. KALB: Way in the back on the left. No, no, the one behind you.  
Yes.

MR. MOHAMMED: Arshad Mohammed of Reuters. Ms. Flournoy, can you explain to us what are the primary factors behind the administration's rejection of arming the Syrian opposition? And do you see any circumstances under which that might change?

And Mr. Williamson, the Romney campaign has said that Governor Romney, if he's elected, would not grant exemptions to the NDAA sanctions to countries like China if they fail to meaningfully cut their imports from Iran. Does that mean that Governor Romney, if he were elected, would not exercise a national security waiver to spare China the effect of those sanctions?

MR. KALB: I didn't know that you were asking two questions. Answer the first, please.

MS. FLOURNOY: So in terms of arming the opposition, I think, you know, early on, the earliest concern was lack of clear information and reliable information on exactly who the opposition was, where the arms would go, how would you control that, and the very real risk that given that there are some al Qaeda elements there and other extremists, that some of the American arms supplied could fall into the hands of terrorist

organizations and that that would pose very serious downside risks down the line. I think beyond that, I think the focus of this administration, as I've said before, is really on trying to create the basis, the political conditions for a transition. And so the focus on working with the opposition has been to give them communications, logistics, medical, humanitarian, all kinds of assistance to help them be more coherent and effective, but to keep open the path for Assad to step down and for the transition to happen.

The last element is that we have had some significant success in preventing Russia from re-supplying and re-arming the Syrian military. I think if you were to launch a major American weapons supply program to the opposition, we would lose a lot of leverage with Russia and you could basically open the floodgates for Russia to be re-supplying the Syrian military in full, you know. And, I think, that would just be pouring fuel on the flames of what is looking like, you know, an increasingly deadly conflict.

MR. KALB: Just to be clear, there are no Russian arms currently going to the Assad regime?

MS. FLOURNOY: Well, there are lots of things on the books, but we have been able to stop the last few shipments from going in. For example, they had repaired a bunch of helicopters and were sending those in. We were able to get the Russians to turn those around.

MR. KALB: But other equipment is still coming in from Russia, is that right?

MS. FLOURNOY: I think that there is some, but some has been stopped and turned around, and I think that's important.

MR. KALB: Question in the back behind that camera. You got a microphone there?

MR. PULJIC: Thank you so much. My name is Ivica Puljic. I am from AI

Jazeera-Balkans. I stay a little bit with Macedonia (inaudible) neighborhood. Bosnia and Kosovo are American interests for the last three U.S. administrations. Mr. Williamson, what is Governor Romney's thinking about Bosnia and Kosovo and that part of Europe, southeast of Europe, Balkans, what is a big problem for Europe? Thank you.

MR. WILLIAMSON: Right. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, they have tremendous infrastructure problems. They have tremendous governance problems. They have tremendous economic problems. Kosovo continues to have incredible ethnic tensions. The U.S. has to be engaged both through the OSCE and the U.N. and the European Union in those areas and try to find them with a greater capacity. So I think the Balkans, and it bleeds into Macedonia, continue to be a very precarious situation.

But for Kosovo to be sustainable it's going to have to have some economic viability, which it doesn't have now. And, hopefully, once you have some economic growth there and some progress in governance, some of the tensions between the Kosovars and the Serbs will diminish and you'll begin to have a more sustainable, stable state.

MR. KALB: Thank you very much, Rich. Right up there standing. The gentleman standing. That's right.

MR. PRICE: Yes, Jeff Price. I'm a lawyer and I teach at SAIS in Georgetown. It's a question for Rich Williamson. You mentioned nuclear arms control and one of the things that President Obama was to continue Ronald Reagan's START framework with the New START Treaty. Governor Romney made quite an impression by opposing that. It was criticized by many Republican national security leaders, who noted that the START Treaty continues Reagan's interceptor exception for missile defense, continues the onsite verification.

MR. KALB: You're going to have to ask a question, please.

MR. PRICE: And the question is would Governor Romney adhere to his criticism of July 2010, and, if elected, would he withdraw from the START Treaty? Would he continue it?

MR. WILLIAMSON: Governor Romney stated his position which he would not have supported the START Treaty when it was being deliberated in the Senate. It is now in force. Like every new president, he'll do a review of our existing arms control agreements and other major policies. But he hasn't said he's going to withdraw it and it'd be premature for me to speculate.

MR. KALB: I have another question from the overflow crowd and I'd like to ask Michèle about this. The person asks what are the candidates' approaches to European relations and the euro crisis specifically. Can you help us with that?

MS. FLOURNOY: Well, I think President Obama has spent a lot of his time and energy revitalizing our alliances and our partnerships across Europe. Certainly Europe has been -- you know, we've gone to Afghanistan together, Libya together, done a tremendous amount of work. It's hard to find a policy area where we are not lockstep with (inaudible), like the UK, and with our NATO allies more broadly.

I think that obviously because of the interconnection between our economies there's great concern in the United States about the euro crisis, and the administration's been very engaged working with European leaders, trying to help them take the steps necessary to solve the problem. I don't think anybody envisions any kind of U.S. bailout. I don't think anybody thinks that's necessary. But I think, you know, one of the things that was curious to me is in Governor Romney's whitepaper there wasn't a single mention of Europe or NATO, as far as I could find. And so, I mean, I'm very interested in understanding sort of how -- and maybe we'll learn more on this trip, but, you know, how does the governor view Europe as a priority in our foreign policy given

that it is really the foundation of our most important alliance relationships.

MR. KALB: Rich, what about that?

MR. WILLIAMSON: Well, I think both in response to questions and in various speeches over the last year and in the theme of the importance of us to renew and keep our friends and allies close, he has talked about Europe. It's obviously that's where he's going on this foreign trip, both with respect to the UK and in Poland. He's expressed concern that in the Libya incursion the largest economy in Europe -- Germany -- basically sat on the sidelines, that there were only a few players that came in. And I think that, with all due respect, shows a certain tension within the NATO alliance and the need to work at it.

But he feels that Europe has been and remains our most important alliance. He's going to reiterate that message when he's in London meeting with Prime Minister Cameron and others. He will also be reiterating it when he goes to Poland and gives a major speech there.

MR. KALB: Rich, does he have any specific ideas about the problems of the euro?

MR. WILLIAMSON: Well, the euro, as Jim Baker said a long time ago, it's real hard to have a single monetary system when you have 17 fiscal systems, and they're now bearing the fruit of it. The Europeans are going to have to sort this out and there's a tremendous tension obviously on the Germans who are being asked disproportionately to try to help the Mediterranean states. He hasn't thought it was appropriate for him to prescribe solutions, but we recognize how difficult it is. He's talked about that and the importance to try to keep Europe economically strong.

MR. KALB: Question right here. Thank you.

MR. HAROLD: Scott Harold of the RAND Corporation. I'd like to ask



Ms. Flournoy and Mr. Williamson if you could comment on two geostrategically important countries, two countries that are important economically. That's Japan and India.

Japan we have not yet heard, I think, a position from Governor Romney on whether or not he would support TPP for Japan. And India is a country that we've all been looking at as a possible security partner. I wonder if either of you could comment how you see that going forward.

MR. KALB: Let's start with Michèle.

MS. FLOURNOY: Okay, let me start with India. I think this is an area where we've had a lot of, frankly, continuity and bipartisan support. India is an important security partner today. Our military relationship has never been closer; that is growing. I think they exercise more with the United States than with any other country. We are growing our cooperative efforts on counter-piracy and other things in the Indian Ocean.

It is a rising democracy. It's a very, very powerful partner for us in the Asian region. And we have so many common interests and so many common values, and I think this administration has invested a lot in that relationship. The President's first State Dinner was for the Indian prime minister.

Japan is also a critical ally. I think that we've not only continued to invest in that relationship, but I think, you know, after the tsunami and the nuclear accident, the way we were there for Japan, it was something that our military forces who were there were so proud and happy to be able to help and to be able to be there in a moment of need. And I think that has only solidified the relationship further. We're having very productive discussions about the future of our posture and how to adapt that to the new security environment, and those are going very well.

So I think both of those relationships are very vibrant and very strong under this -- and have continued to be so under the last three years, the last four years.

MR. WILLIAMSON: I just reiterate what Michèle said. I think one of the successes of the Bush administration was to strengthen and renew the relationship with India and it's been carried out, and that's a good thing for India and a good thing for the United States. The governor's been clear that he recognizes the importance of Japan and the Republic of Korea to our security interests, but also economically and as partners, and has expressed his desire to strengthen and work on that relationship.

MR. KALB: In the back right there, in the middle. Yes, yes, yes. Yes, you. No, you right there, standing up with your hand up. Yes, yes. Thank you very much.

MR. AGOKAY: Hello. Thank you very much, sir. My name is (inaudible) Agokay (phonetic). I'm from the Ivory Coast. So I've been here since the beginning. We did not hear anything about Africa. And now you heard recently that in Ivory Coast the forces of the current president have attacked a displaced people camp and hundreds of people were killed. And I just wanted to know how the current President or the future President of America will make sure that the victors' (phonetic) justice stops in Ivory Coast and how impunity can stop in Ivory Coast. That's my question.

MR. KALB: Thank you very much.

MR. AGOKAY: Thank you very much.

MR. KALB: Michèle?

MS. FLOURNOY: Well, I think since that's one and the same person I should answer the question, both the current and the future president. (Laughter)

But no, I think, you know, this administration and this president has spent a lot of time and energy on Africa. Actually the President visited the continent, you know, in his first six months in office. He's laid out a very sweeping set of policies that deal not only with very important issues like food security and development assistance and so

forth, but also continued democracy development, rule of law.

I don't want to get into the particulars of the situation in the Ivory Coast today because I think the White House is actively engaged on that and I don't want to sort of, you know, insert myself as an administration official when I'm not one anymore. But what I can say is anytime there is violence like this, it is on the radar screen. It raises serious concern and I'm sure there will be appropriate action taken.

MR. KALB: Rich, there's a question also from the overflow crowd and it concerns Turkey, another key country. What kind of thinking has Governor Romney been involved with looking toward Turkey? How would he improve the relationship? What does he think about its importance, et cetera?

MR. WILLIAMSON: Right. Turkey, obviously, has growing importance. They've had 6-1/2 percent GDP growth in the recent years, something of course, we'd like just a fraction of back home. And they've become more assertive in the region trying to play a larger role.

It's come up in the context of discussions about Syria and the need to work closely with Ankara on both our strategy and support. With Turkey's efforts to protect its border, as we know, they've allowed some of the opposition to have offices in Turkey. Governor Romney recognizes Turkey's unique role as both a NATO country and in the broader Middle East region. It's obviously a country that the United States has a great interest in developing and strengthening the personal relationship with, even though we've seen on some items we're not always going to be in agreement. But I think most of our discussion has been in the context of the crisis in Syria, and he clearly has an appreciation of the pivotal and critical role that Turkey plays there and in the region.

MR. KALB: Do you see the Obama administration strengthening even beyond where it is today the relationship with Turkey in general, but also specifically with

respect to Syria?

MS. FLOURNOY: Well, I think Turkey is a very, very close partner right now on Syria and those engagements are daily and intensive, and we've been working very well together. I think the administration has recognized the new and growing role that Turkey is playing, particularly looking east. They've been very important on Syria. They've been very important on Iran.

But I think we've also taken pains to continue to make sure that they stay anchored in Europe and in NATO. And I think the President's Missile Defense Program that has now been adopted and then re-endorsed again at two NATO summits, having Turkey be a critical part of that, agreeing to host the radar, is very key as has, you know, continuing to have cooperation with Poland and Romania and Spain, all of whom will be hosting elements of a system that will provide more capability, lower cost, and be deployed sooner than the predecessor system would have.

MR. KALB: We are honored to have a question from Martin Indyk, if we can get a microphone to him.

MR. INDYK: I wonder if I can step up or widen the lens a little bit and ask you a more general question about strategy to the two candidates. President Obama has placed a lot of emphasis on shaping an emerging global order in which China, India, Brazil, other powers will have a seat at the table. And he's worked quite hard at this kind of multilateral approach. I wonder, first of all, whether Governor Romney has a different approach to the rise of these powers. And whether President Obama in his second term, if he has one, will still make this a priority.

MR. KALB: Rich, why don't you start?

MR. WILLIAMSON: Yeah, sure. I guess, first, it's important to make the comment that Governor Romney believes it's important to engage. It's important to seek

multilateral cooperation, collaboration, coordination, and to recognize that the relative powers are shifting with the rising powers in China, India, Brazil, and that that means shifting some of the way you do business.

Having said that, I think there's a fundamental difference in how they view the world. I think the President has a very legitimate perspective with engagement, confidence in multilateralism, and deference to international law. As one person wrote, one commenter wrote, the President went to China thinking his ideas and eloquence would bend their behavior and the Chinese found that curious and looked to their interests. I think Governor Romney believes all countries look at their interests, and they should, and that that means sometimes you have a different way you work with them.

So there is a difference in approach where we would argue or suggest that Governor Romney's more in the tradition of Truman, Kennedy, and Reagan, and that President Obama has a different approach, a different way to look at it. And the American people will judge how successful it's been.

MS. FLOURNOY: I have to say something.

MR. KALB: Michèle, please, I want you to.

MS. FLOURNOY: I spend hours watching this president make decisions in National Security Council meetings and so forth. He is, first and foremost, a patriot and a pragmatist. He starts with American interests, but he also believes that we have to be -- it benefits us, it advances those interests when we are also true to our values.

When we say respect for international law, it's not something that somebody else created. We created the international system that came out of World War II. It's based on our values and our notions of law. And so when we respect that, we are advancing our own interests in keeping that system. It has to adapt to accommodate new players. It has to -- we need to find ways to integrate a rising China and so forth.

But this is not some vague, abstract, sort of idealistic notion. This is very essential to who we are. And you don't have to choose between pursuing interests and being true to your values. You can do them both at the same time and that's exactly what he's been doing remarkably, I think, over the last four years.

MR. WILLIAMSON: He just wished he'd done it more in Syria.

MR. KALB: Would you like to comment on that?

MS. FLOURNOY: Again, I think we have been very clear on the differences on Syria. You know, this is a president who was one of the first, if not the first, to call for Assad to step down, to recognize the horrors of what was happening, to put millions of dollars of humanitarian assistance on the table, and to lead the Friends of Syria effort to help bolster the opposition, get them to be cohesive so that they have a viable chance at transition. I think we've been consistent with our values in the way we've approached Syria.

MR. KALB: What I would like to say as we wrap up, and I'm terribly sorry to those of you raising your hands, but our time is up and we have to fold, but this has been a wonderful discussion. We ought to take it on the road. What do you think?

(Laughter)

Thank you both very, very much.

MR. WILLIAMSON: Thank you.

MR. KALB: And thank you all for coming. (Applause)

May I just ask that you all remain seated while the panelists have an opportunity to leave? It'll just be a minute or so. Thank you again very much.

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