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YEMEN AND THE FIGHT AGAINST A RESURGENT AL QAEDA

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. BYMAN: Good morning and welcome. My name is Daniel Byman. I'm the Research Director here at Brookings of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy. I'm delighted that you all came out on what is such a cold and miserable day in Washington. I think it shows both your fortitude and the importance of what we're going to discuss today.

One of the developments I would say of the last decade, perhaps a little longer, is the emergence of Yemen from a country that was seen as relatively obscure and from a Washington point of view at least something that was not a priority, to becoming a country that has moved from I would say the edge of the radar screen to its center. Unfortunately as Yemen has moved, the knowledge of Yemen I would say among the policy community and the broader Middle East community in general has not kept pace. There are relatively few people who have a strong understanding of Yemen and a few people who understand the difficulties of policy in their country, and as a result I think overall American policy suffers.

I'm delighted today to say that we have two exceptions to that rule who are going to speak to us about Yemen and the issues for the United States concerning Yemen. From Doha we are joined by the Brookings Doha Center Research Director, Ibrahim Sharqieh, who is a long time Yemen watcher and who has written numerous pieces on Yemen and the concerns there. And we are also delighted to welcome here in Washington Gregory Johnsen who is at Princeton and the author of the newly released book, *The Last Refuge* -- I want to make sure the cover is seen by all of you and it is available outside as well -- which is *Yemen, Al Qaeda, and America's War in Arabia*. And already the book just came out and it's getting tremendous buzz as really an unusual book that demonstrates the author's tremendous access and knowledge of Yemen yet

puts it in a context that it's extremely accessible for an American audience, and I really cannot commend it enough to you.

So I'm delighted to welcome both of our guests here today at Brookings. I think we will start with Ibrahim in Doha for some remarks and then we'll turn it over to Greg here in Washington. So Ibrahim, please.

MR. SHARQIEH: Thank you, Dan, and thank you in Washington for being at such dreary time for a public event. We usually have our public events here in the evening. So I'm glad to be with you and from Doha evening time here.

Yemen has been a very major country in terms of the Arab Spring instability that the region is having in the past couple of years, and we lived with Yemen for almost two years now since that instability began there with the Arab Spring. And Yemen has been going under a lot of transitions lately, especially with the political settlement that lit the road for settlement there. The issue of al Qaeda and the terrorism in Yemen is not new. It's not linked to the Arab Spring, and it began a long time ago at least in the past 14 or 15 years. So how this changed and how the Arab Spring had an impact on that, this is something to be watched carefully. And where is Yemen going from there?

The subject of this event today is about the reemergence of al Qaeda, or what we call al Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula, as something that has been noticed by many experts and analysts in the region. In the past this relationship has been back and forth and at some point the United States declared through the security solution meeting in Yemen that al Qaeda ended influence especially in 2006 and then back in 2008. So it's back and forth and now we're seeing al Qaeda taking over again. The approach that has been taken, which was in the past mostly about a security solution approach that focused on supporting security units within the Saleh regime, the former regime, and

mostly involving drone attacks to targeted al Qaeda attacks there.

To what extent has this approach been successful? Obviously, there are a lot of limitations and probably the reason why we are discussing this today is one reason, to show that this probably has not been the most successful approach dealing with the issue. And in this past relationship what we have seen, one of the major issues that led to this ineffective policy and ineffective approach is it involved a lot of corruption, corruption on the former regime side where during my interviews with many Yemen experts there has been always this argument that comes up all the time that the former regime has actually manipulated this security threat. And the former regime identified that the reason to make more money and receive more funds from the United States is by the presence of al Qaeda or the presence of a security threat. So the elimination of a security threat -- and 2006 is one example -- would probably lead to elimination of the funding that it was receiving from the U.S. So this relationship emerged over the past years that led many to argue that this has been manipulated by the former regime to gain more funds and it became in the interest of the former regime to keep al Qaeda there.

The second issue or the second major problem of the past policies in my view is actually the alienation of the local communities. This former relationship became mostly about the U.S. government aligning with the Yemini government, but then the people were out of this, were not part of this. The people who are living there in Yemen and they're dealing with the issue on a daily basis. So this alienation of the local communities, in fact, was to characterize or to limit the relationship between the two governments.

And I have to say on this; in probably all the interviews that I had with Yemenis that I asked this question that no one seemed to support al Qaeda in Yemen, but also no one seemed to support the drone attacks. So they were not -- the people

themselves they're kept in limbo. They're against al Qaeda, but also they're against the drone attacks. So this kind of past policies that created the alienation of the local communities contributed in my view to the exacerbation of the problem.

And lastly on this issue of the past relationship on this one is that really some of the drone attacks that -- all of the mistakes that were made and ended up some civilians being killed in these attacks -- led to more recruitments and more recruits from al Qaeda with more people joining al Qaeda. To the extent that today we're talking about Ansar al Sharia, which is a local group that emerged in the province of Abyan, that believed to have been led forward by many analysts to a drone strike in Abyan that killed about 40 civilians and then ended up with local groups being formed there.

Now moving forward I think there are three pillars that should guide the international community into dealing with Yemen and trying to fix Yemen or to fix the problems there, which is in my view the single security approach was part of the problem in the past. And in order to fix this security single issue that bears the security approach, you really need to approach it in my view in a more holistic approach. And this holistic approach contains three pillars in my view. One is a political settlement. Yemen since the transition from the old regime to the new regime here guided by the GCC, the Gulf Cooperation Council's initiative, provided a framework for a settlement in Yemen. This political settlement is struggling. It's facing serious challenges whether it's the influence of the old regime or with the southern movement, the separatist southern movement, or with the Houthis who believe to be supported and backed by Iran in the north. This political settlement in my view must succeed. And the international community should ensure that it supports it fully in order to provide a successful solution to Yemen because the alternative in my view is a disaster. And from what we're talking about some problems and about one problem today, we will be talking about dozens of problems in

the future. The importance of a successful political settlement in my view is it will provide hope. It will provide hope for the people that are the most important element in my view as part of the entire issue of fixing Yemen. Really the Yemenis in my view they need hope; they don't need drones. And that is why it's important for the settlement to provide -- the political settlement needs to provide hope for the people that at the end of the tunnel, there is a light at the end of the tunnel, and this political settlement will eventually succeed.

The second important issue about the need for a successful political settlement in my view is the Yemenis or the Yemeni people on their part adopted one of the most impressive uprising models in the history of the Middle East, which is a nonviolent uprising against a dictatorship and with a country that's heavily militarized and with weapons expected machine guns -- over 60 million machine guns for a population of over 25 million people, like three pieces for every single person. And for almost one year, men maintained a successful nonviolent -- and I emphasize nonviolent -- uprising that ended to this political settlement. The success of this political settlement will reinforce in my view the nonviolent model and pattern for change in Yemen and in the region and that is why this political settlement must succeed.

The second pillar in my view that's important, that should guide international community approach to Yemen and fixes the problems, is development. Yemen is definitely the poorest Arab country with unemployment of 46 percent, 56 percent under the poverty line, and an estimate of over 300,000 children facing malnutrition, and about over 1 million people facing starvation. I mean you never hear about starvation in the Arab world, but in Yemen when you go there or in my last research visit, I was in the traditional social gathering of the people, and starvation and the possibility of starvation was part of the discussion. It's part of the Yemeni

conscience. So linked to the political settlement and the success of the political settlement, this development approach must prove to be effective. And the people definitely need to see the fruit of their uprising. And if we focus like what has been in the past mostly, about only a security approach that contributed in my view to corruption of the former regime, that we must approach it on a development approach that should provide opportunities for the people.

And let's keep in mind that Yemen is actually on the frontline, facing serious illegal immigration from Africa and in particular from Somalia. This is not a new problem to the international community. Spain and Italy, they face it in the Mediterranean, but Spain and Italy they have the resources to face it. But illegal immigration particularly from Somalia is a serious problem and there's an estimate, a U.N. estimate, of approximately 90,000 immigrants that Yemen received from Africa only in the past ten months.

So this is the kind of a scale of illegal immigration that it's facing and this has contributed significantly to the problem -- not that only Yemen doesn't have the resources to deal with it like Spain and Italy, but also that illegal immigration is contributing to the devastation of the country and that is why development approach along with the political settlement is needed.

And finally, the third pillar that I believe is important to deal with this issue is actually ownership. The Yemenis need to feel there is an ownership of dealing with the problem of terrorism or with other problems that the country is facing. The drone attacks and the security solution that has been used in the past has been seen by many along from right to left, conservative to liberal political parties, as a direct serious violation of the country's sovereignty.

So the Yemenis need to feel that this problem is fixed and they have to

deal with it and they have to face this issue. And in my interviews also when I met, for example, with the Houthis who are traditionally seen as traditional enemies of al Qaeda, even who are opposed to the direct serious intervention and the bombing of the country, even against their traditional enemy, al Qaeda. So I think through there's an opportunity.

I want to end on good notes. There is an opportunity that there is a new government, a new settlement. There is fair, unanimous, international support for this new government. The international community -- good news for the first time it's united, unlike in Syria, so we don't have the division that we're facing in Syria. So we have a unified international community and that council supports the political settlement. So I think this opportunity should be news.

So far there are struggles, they are seen as struggles that settlement is facing, but I think we should have hope. We should have faith. And I think with the success of this political settlement, this should provide a ground for hope in the future. Thank you.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you, Ibrahim. Greg, if I may?

MR. JOHNSEN: I'd like to echo Dan in thanking you all for coming out on this very dreary day, especially after a holiday for I'm sure many of you. And thanks to Ibrahim as well from Doha for staying up a little bit late and giving us those great insights.

As all of us know, the United States has just been through a presidential election. President Barack Obama was reelected. And the Obama Administration had a number of, I think, foreign policy and counterterrorism successes during the first administration. Obviously, Osama bin Laden was killed in the Special Operations raid. President Obama has overseen the drawdown of troops in Iraq as well as in Afghanistan. And yet I think one of the most lasting legacies from the first term of the Obama Administration may well be what U.S. officials term the "Yemen model." This is sort of

how it is that the U.S. is going to fight these wars -- these wars against nonstate actors, wars against groups like al Qaeda -- in the future.

And in many ways I think that during the first term of the Obama Presidency, Yemen has become the laboratory for this sort of approach. Yemen is now a place over the past four years where the U.S. has tested out different ways in which it could fight al Qaeda. So we've seen a number of different approaches and we've seen the Obama Administration move away from what the Bush Administration attempted to do, which was sort of large ground scale invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. And I think everybody who spends anytime in Yemen would agree that any sort of a boots-on-the-ground approach to Yemen would be a disaster. But there is an organization called al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula that's actively targeting the U.S.

And so what I'd like to do today in sort of these opening remarks that we have is to just go through the past four years and look at what the U.S. has done and look at what al Qaeda has done.

Almost four years ago, a little less than four years ago, President Obama, of course, was being inaugurated, sworn into office here in Washington, D.C. I was, as I'm sure many of you, watching the inauguration. I was at home in Princeton, New Jersey, and I was watching it. And as I was watching the President be sworn into office, I was also sort of trying to multitask and trying to keep up with some of my studies, going through a stack of Arabic papers that I'd printed off, but hadn't had a chance to look at. And one of these was a printout from a Jihadi forum, an Islamic chat room, if you will. And it announced the formation of this new group, a group that was calling itself al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. And along with that announcement, it was just sort of a little banner announcement, and then it also said that the new Deputy Commander of this organization was an individual by the name of Said al Shihri. And that Said al Shihri had

actually been a former detainee within Guantanamo Bay. So it was very jarring to watch President Obama -- who'd campaigned and made, I think, the second bill that he signed his intention to close Guantanamo Bay -- to see the President being sworn in and yet have this piece of paper in front of me that suggested to me and, I think, has later turned out to be true that the President was going to have a great challenge and would ultimately be unable to close Guantanamo Bay because of some of the things that we saw from people like Said al Shihri who returned to join al Qaeda after their time in Guantanamo and then going through the Saudi rehabilitation program.

So really from the beginning of President Obama's first term, that's also the beginning of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. There's a long and a deep history. Much of it's in the book, which hopefully is more of a story than a history. But again, they're really linked, I think, in both the organization's mind as well as in the minds of the officials who are serving in this first administration.

What we saw then, of course, on Christmas Day 2009 is that al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula was able to put a would-be suicide bomber on a plane over Detroit who came very, very close to bringing down that plane. And that, I think, was sort of the initial thing in January of 2009 where al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula announced that this merger between the Yemeni and Saudi branches -- that was the opening and this was really the wakeup call on Christmas Day 2009 when this Nigerian student who, of course, we all remember the so-called underwear bomber came so close to bringing down that airliner. Thankfully for all of us, for the U.S., for everyone, he was unsuccessful.

But this hasn't stopped al Qaeda from targeting the United States. There was the cartridge bomb plot in 2010, which again was thankfully uncovered. And then earlier this year, we know that the individual, Ibrahim al Asiri, who we believe to be the

head bomb maker within al Qaeda, he designed a new bomb that was sort of an underwear bomb, 2.0 if you will, that had a bit of a redundancy built into it. So one of the failures of the underwear bomber on the Christmas Day attempted attack was that he was unable to detonate the explosives, which is very stable but difficult to actually detonate, to ignite. And Asiri went to school on some of his past failures, and I think this is one of the things that actually speaks to what al Qaeda as an organization has been doing is that they tend to learn from their past mistakes. And there is some bureaucracy within the organization, but it's not the type of bureaucracy that we have in Washington, or at least what I see from my perch from a few hundred miles north of what we have in Washington. And so they are able to adapt and to learn fairly quickly.

And so while al Qaeda has been targeting the United States, the U.S. has also been targeting al Qaeda. And, in fact, in December of 2009, the Obama Administration opened their campaign of bombing attacks against what they believed to be al Qaeda targets in Yemen. So on December 14, 2009 -- this is obviously about 11 days before the Christmas Day attack -- Secretary of State Clinton added al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula to the terrorist list, named them an official terrorist organization, and then three days later the U.S. carried out its first attack. So it was in southern Yemen and Ibrahim mentioned this in his remarks. It was on the village of al Majalah. And what the U.S. thought was that there was an al Qaeda training camp and they knew some of the operatives who were there. So they had U.S. naval ships off the coast of Yemen that fired missiles equipped with cluster bombs into what they believed to be an al Qaeda training camp.

Unfortunately for the U.S., this turned out to be a Bedouin village in which several or a few al Qaeda members were hiding. There were 55 casualties during the first round of attacks. So this happened sort of in the predawn darkness in Yemen on

December 17. Most of the Bedouins were sort of living in these tattered blue tarps in brush lean-tos. It's a very difficult place to get to, very remote. And so when the bombs came in in the morning, everyone was sleeping, of course. The destruction was just amazing. One of the individuals who is quoted in the book is a tribal shaikh from near al Majalah in southern Yemen in Abyan. And he went to this sort of gravel shelf where the Bedouins had been staying, and he walked around and he says "You know, the destruction was just -- it was grotesque and it was horrible, but there was so much flesh around and so much just meat that you couldn't tell if it was human, if it was goat, if it was sheep." And this is -- in Yemen this has been a very powerful recruiting tool for al Qaeda. When you have images and when you have pictures like this and when al Qaeda can sort of caption these with "made in the U.S.A.," this becomes something that I think is a very powerful recruiting tool.

So what we've seen over the past three to four years is that al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula has grown quite quickly, going from -- if we say look at Christmas Day 2009, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is about 200 or 300 individuals. At least that's our best guess based on estimates both by the Yemeni government and by the U.S. government, and I think those estimates are probably about right. Now three years on, almost three years on, the group is more than tripled in size. So we're seeing John Brennan who's estimated that the group is now 1,000 fighters. There are individuals in Yemen who put it as high as 6,000. I think the 6,000 is probably quite a bit inflated, but nevertheless there has been a significant increase in the number of al Qaeda operatives.

And I think one of the key questions that we have to ask is why? Why has al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula grown so strong so fast? In other parts of the world, we've seen al Qaeda that's suffering. But in Yemen they seem to be growing and so why is that? And this has been something that a lot of people who went to Yemen

have looked at and have debated. And I think it gets -- you know there's not just one driver of radicalization. There's not just one cause for why al Qaeda has more than tripled in size in just three years. Some people point to economics. I think that certainly has a role, but I think it's a bit misleading to claim as John Brennan did earlier this year that the U.S. sees no evidence that U.S. air strikes, U.S. drone strikes, have led to an increase in the number of operatives within al Qaeda. I think that's either incredibly naïve or deliberately misleading. And one of the potential reasons for that may be that the U.S. policymakers in Yemen just don't get out and don't interact with a lot of Yemenis. There are obviously very real security concerns. We all know the situation in Benghazi in Libya. Obviously, U.S. diplomats abroad are a target. I was just in Yemen a couple of weeks ago. I visited the U.S. embassy. It's very, very difficult to get in, and once you're in you don't really get out. When I first started going to Yemen about a decade ago, you had U.S. diplomats who were based all throughout the city. They would travel throughout the country. Now the situation is that U.S. diplomats all live in essentially what's a little green zone in Sanaa. So you have them staying at the Sheraton Hotel, which is right above the embassy in sort of the secure corridor and then going to work at the embassy and then going back to the Sheraton Hotel and back and forth. And when you don't get out even into the capital city, it's very, very difficult to ascertain what's actually going on there in the country.

And so I really do think that -- let me put it this way -- there are a couple of different ways that this debate has been talked about. In the U.S. we tend to talk about drones and we tend to talk about the technology. And that, I think, derives a little bit from the fact that neither the Bush Administration nor the Obama Administration really made an effective legal or moral or ethical framework. And this is something that I think has been a real failure of American leadership from both parties. I think when you look back

into American history, whether it's the Supreme Court, whether it's George Washington, our leaders have a history of looking at the situation at the moment, but also keeping one eye and looking far down into the future and realizing how the great impact that precedent can have. And I think that's something that both the Bush Administration and the Obama Administration have failed on with drones. But that's an argument, I think, for legal scholars to make, and that's not one that I have the training to really press any further.

The argument that I would make is one of effectiveness and that is that drones in Yemen, despite the Obama Administration's rhetoric that what they want to do is disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda, that it's not drones or airstrikes that are really sort of driving al Qaeda. So in that sense John Brennan, I think, is correct, but it's the civilian casualties. It's the individuals who are being killed along with the al Qaeda targets. When I was in Yemen I was talking to someone who is very, very close to al Qaeda. And he said "Look, you know, there's a difference between Yemen and Afghanistan. In Afghanistan al Qaeda are Arabs in a non-Arab country. In Yemen, they're Yemenis in Yemen." And so they move around much easier in Yemen than they did in Afghanistan and also they have many more identities. So in Yemen they can be a member of al Qaeda and a tribesman and they can be known locally. Maybe some people know them as a tribesman and yet others see them, the U.S. for instance, would see them as an al Qaeda member. And so when the U.S. targets the al Qaeda member, the U.S. thinks it's killing an al Qaeda member and maybe it is, but who's being killed on the ground and who Yemenis are seeing being killed is, in fact, a tribesman. And I think this is a challenge that the U.S. and the Obama Administration have not really solved. And I would argue that the drones and the airstrikes have not actually solved the problem and, in fact, like Ibrahim, they've actually exacerbated the problem a great deal within

Yemen.

And so not to go on too long, but just let me close with this last scenario. After the Christmas Day attack in 2009, President Obama asked his staff to imagine what would happen if the bomber, if al Qaeda had been successful. And I think that's a very good exercise. And if today al Qaeda were able to carry out an attack, even a fairly small one -- not on the scale of September 11, but on the scale of, say, Christmas Day 2009 -- how would the U.S. respond? Many people -- I would put myself in this camp -- think that a large scale ground invasion of Yemen would be a mistake. And yet the U.S. has been bombing Yemen for the past three years and it really doesn't seem to have had the impact that the U.S. would like it to have. One of the arguments, I think, has been that if the U.S. is able to bomb al Qaeda, keep al Qaeda back on its heels in Yemen, then al Qaeda won't be able to sort of plot, plan, and launch attacks against the United States. And I think the last three years have shown that that is not indeed the case. In fact, we've seen this year that the U.S. has carried out, at least by my count, anywhere from 37 to 50 airstrikes on suspected al Qaeda targets. And those are according to the anonymous officials that we all see quoted in the *Washington Post* or in the *New York Times*. Those are an effort to kill ten to 15 individuals who the U.S. believes are plotting against the U.S. So I think one of two things is true; either the drone strikes aren't as accurate as we're all told that they are, or the U.S. is doing something different than what it says it's doing, that is targeting more than just the ten to 15 individuals.

And so what would any administration then be able to do if al Qaeda were to carry out an attack today? If a large scale ground invasion is sort of foolish and would be disastrous and is really off the table, do they just have another sort of missile surge which we've already seen and which doesn't really seem to be effective?

And so this is, I think, my major critique is that this Yemen model that

has been designed by individuals within the Obama Administration is not actually disrupting, dismantling, and defeating al Qaeda, at least in Yemen. In Yemen what's happening on the ground is that al Qaeda is actually expanding and the problem is being exacerbated. So Ibrahim sort of finished on a very optimistic note, I'll bring us all back to earth with a rather pessimistic one.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you both. Before I open it up to questions from the audience, I wanted to ask two of my own -- one I think relatively narrow, one relatively big.

The first question is how much of al Qaeda of the Arabian Peninsula is really a threat to the United States? Is it fair to say this is an organization that is dedicated to attacking the United States? Is it fair to say really it's only these 10 to 15 individuals? And if they are dead or arrested or somehow get bored and retire, then this is just a Yemeni problem and not one that should keep Americans up at night?

A bigger question I have is both of you are critical of a drone solution. Greg, I think you spoke pretty clearly that a bigger boots-on-the-ground solution is not going to work, but there are problems as well with what I'll call a development solution. There's no real linkage in the academic literature that development actually reduces support for terrorism and, in fact, there is some belief it might actually increase it. More broadly I would say there is absolutely no political will. There is almost no financial capability perceived at least in the United States to do a massive development program in Yemen. And historically I would say this is not something the United States is particularly good at, maybe an individual project here or there, but in terms of transforming the economy of an undeveloped country is not an American strength.

So in a way if all the options are lousy, do we end up with well, I'll take the lousy drone option rather than the lousy more expensive development option or the

more risky military option? So I'll ask you to comment on both of those. Ibrahim, if I could ask you to start us off, please?

MR. SHARQIEH: Thank you. Well, let me start with the threat. I think the threat exists and exists on a very large scale not only to the U.S., but to the international community in general, and I'll explain how.

One of the issues that I'm not very supportive of is to treat one single issue without looking at the entire context. I think the problems and the chaos and the instability that Yemen is facing, that is where as a whole, when I look at it as a whole, that's where the threat is coming from. Yemen is almost the size and population of Saudi Arabia; 25 million people there with unemployment of 46 percent, that's a demographic threat, a demographic threat to the entire gulf region. And the gulf region here -- again we're talking about an oil-rich region that is linked directly to the international economy, to the oil markets, and to the international community as a whole. So Yemen so far has kept -- the international community has kept Yemen on the cultural and contained in one geographical area that we know today as the geographical borders of Yemen.

Let's keep in mind that on the other side of Yemen there is Somalia and that piracy problem. And that we have the Mandab Strait that Yemen is in culture of along with Somalia on the other side. And we have only imagined of the oil movement between the gulf or between Europe and Asia and about how the piracy problem in Somalia is causing to the international community. So that is where I see -- when I look at it as a whole, that is where I see the major potential problem that if the situation becomes worse and Yemen slides into violence and chaos, that's what we should be expecting to see coming out from Yemen.

So probably you're right, Dan, probably at the moment we're not seeing that very obvious threat, but these scenarios especially getting back to what I mentioned

earlier, if the political sentiment fails in Yemen, that's probably where we would expect to see such scenarios happening in that region. And that's in my view where the real danger is.

Now how to deal with it and with development and other approaches, are these effective? Well, Greg and I, we have agreed that a security solution driven or based on drones probably in terms of effectiveness, hoping that ethical and the legal argument aside, in terms of effectiveness is not effective. And look at where al Qaeda was ten years ago and where it is now. And this is, again, as Greg said, in terms of anonymous quotes in the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* or others of the numbers of al Qaeda or others. So we know at least that the drones are not working and the security solution has failed. And it contributed in a way again to the former regime being or based on its policies of manipulation of al Qaeda, of course, to get more money. And that is how it went.

Now I think the importance probably of development in my view that it provides hope and it engages the people in a process that would not at least cause the casualties of the civilians like in Abyan Province, but engaging the communities with a process that they belong to and that they contribute to and they own because in my view I think one of the major problems again is the potential issue that was limited to former regime that was very much in. And now the way I see it happening now with the new regime with the Hadi presidency is embarking on similar policies. So engaging the people, that is probably in my view the major key here and that would contribute to making a difference.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you. Greg?

MR. JOHNSEN: Thanks, Dan. I think those are both very good questions. I think Ibrahim gave some expansive answers. When you look at al Qaeda in

the Arabia Peninsula, this is an organization -- we in the West tend to think of al Qaeda as a terrorist organization and that's who it is that they are. That defines them. Al Qaeda, of course, sees itself as an organization that carries out attacks. They wouldn't call them terrorist attacks. I think we'd all agree they are terrorist attacks, but they are an organization that carries out these operations and that, I think, is an important distinction. Carrying out these attacks is only part of what it is that the organization does, and this is an organization that, unlike other groups of al Qaeda that we've seen, that they're able to carry out attacks within Yemen and they're able to carry out attacks or attempt to carry out attacks abroad, whether it be in Saudi Arabia in the attempted assassination of Mohammed Bin Nayef in 2009 or whether it's their attempts against the United States. But I think there is a difference in these two degrees of attacks, and I think that is that attacks in Yemen are a means to an end for the organization; they're a means to sort of hit back against the Yemeni government or the Yemeni military that's attacking them, whereas attacks against the West are an end in and of themselves.

And, Dan, you asked about sort of killing these individuals and are we just going after the ten to 15, and if we could kill those individuals who are plotting or who the U.S. believes are plotting against the United States, would we be safer? There's just a great three-part series in the *Washington Post* by Greg Miller, Karen DeYoung, and Craig Whitlock that I think addressed just this. And one of the quotes from a U.S. official in there was that, you know, we have ten to 15 or 20 and then we kill some and then there's another 20 guys that sort of pop up, and I think this is very seductive. If you're in the Pentagon, you have this list of individuals that you believe are plotting against the United States. And so if you can sort of cross these names off the list, it makes it feel as though you're keeping the United States safer. I think there's a faulty logic going on in there because we've really seen over the past decade the U.S. has been fighting these

wars that just killing these particular individuals doesn't itself make us safer because so often many more people come up within the ranks.

And I think there's also a tendency within the U.S. to sort of personalize al Qaeda. Particularly in Yemen we saw this with the American-born cleric, Anwar al Awlaqi, right? This is the individual that the argument was advanced by some if he could be killed that the U.S. would be safer. He was, of course, killed in a drone strike in September of 2011; al Qaeda continues to plot. We know that they had a plan in which they gave this latest version of the underwear bomber thankfully to an undercover agent. So now Anwar al Awlaqi has been crossed off the list, and now we talk about Ibrahim al Asiri who Congressman King has killed an evil genius. This is the new guy that we're all very worried about because he's the bomb maker in Yemen.

But I think there are a couple of important things to remember. One, Ibrahim al Asiri wasn't a member of al Qaeda on September 11, 2001. This is an individual who's been radicalized since. He was radicalized largely because of the Iraqi War. And while we're focused on this individual, on Ibrahim al Asiri, as the bomb maker, I think it's a mistake to think that if the U.S. were to kill him, al Qaeda's bomb making capabilities would all of a sudden disappear. Ibrahim al Asiri is a college dropout. He was a chemistry student, crossed the border in 2006 as I recount in the book. He was trained by someone presumably in Yemen, and he's been in Yemen now for more than six years. I think it's a fairly safe assumption that he's trained other individuals as well.

And so just talking about these individuals I think sort of misses the point. And what I think is particularly important is that as al Qaeda has expanded from this 200 to 300 individuals in late 2009, up to 1,000 or more today, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula now has a much bigger pool of talent upon which to draw now than it did previously.

And just briefly on your second question, I agree. There aren't a lot of very good options. I'm not anti-drone. I think drones are an amazing piece of technology that the U.S. has that its enemy does not have that if used judiciously and wisely, can I think make a big difference in the war against al Qaeda. However, I think that instead of being a part of the solution, they've sort of become the totality of the solution for the Obama Administration. And I think you're right that a lot of people in Washington look at Yemen and just see a mess, and Yemen has essentially I think for a number of officials become too hard to do. And so the easiest thing is this okay, drones aren't perfect, but let's do that.

I think a very real but unspoken assumption that's underlying all of this -- and this was really brought out over this past month as I went to Yemen and then back here to the United States -- is that the U.S. seems to believe that this is a war that the U.S. can win on its own, and I think that's wrong and I think that's a mistake. If this is the U.S. against al Qaeda in Yemen, I think if it's framed that way, if it's seen that way, then that's a war that the U.S. can never win. The only people who can ever defeat al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula are the Yemeni tribes, the Yemeni clerics, and so forth. The U.S. can do, I think, a lot to help them. Unfortunately, what we're seeing right now I believe is that the U.S. is acting so heavy handedly and by carrying out so many strikes and by killing so many individuals in Yemen, what the U.S. is essentially doing is shrinking the space in which those individuals can then stand up against al Qaeda.

So let me just end with one anecdote. There is a preacher, am anti-al Qaeda cleric, out in Hadhramout. He railed against al Qaeda from the pulpit, talked about what it is that they were doing is against Islam, how Yemen should not be an active theater of Jihad, and so forth. This was something that was having a real impact on the ground. It was hurting al Qaeda's recruiting. They scheduled a meeting with this cleric.

They wanted to get him to sort of back off on some of his rhetoric. This meeting was struck by a U.S. drone, a U.S. airstrike, and the anti-al Qaeda cleric was killed.

MR. BYMAN: Can we open it up, please? Yes, in the back or sort of back. Yes, you. I'm sorry, please wait for the microphone and please introduce yourself.

SPEAKER: My name is Helema and I spent the last year in Yemen and had some of the same observations that I heard you talk about. I was there from September to May, and personally I felt the anti-American sentiment quadruple just in that short time. And I think this last point that you leave us with, that there was a huge space for America to really engage tribesmen. And when you talk to Yemeni people, they talk about there was this window where it was the prime opportunity to work together and for America to partner with tribesmen against al Qaeda. That opportunity has largely been ruined because of the drone policy. Do you think that there is any room or opportunity to somehow patch that up and to work from there?

And then the second part of the question is there's been no moral accountability, there's been no accountability at all. And a lot of Yemeni people are saying hey, where's the responsibility? Where's reparations? All these civilians have died. You have not acknowledged this loss of life. There has been no reparations. Do you think that that could even ever be a possibility, and what would that look like on the U.S. part?

MR. BYMAN: Right, thank you. Greg, why don't you start and then we'll go to Ibrahim.

MR. JOHNSEN: Sure. On the first point I think you're absolutely right about a missed opportunity. I think we saw this on both the counterterrorism side as you addressed quite eloquently as well as on the political side. I think that the U.S. really missed an opportunity to get rid of President Saleh and his entire family. And I think one

of the lessons of the past year, year and a half, in Yemen politics and in how the U.S. has interacted in Yemen is that when these opportunities are missed, they don't come around again, that there is a price to pay for diplomatic mistakes. And when the U.S. makes a mistake by running its Yemen policy through Riyad or letting Saudi Arabia, a kingdom, take the lead on democratic transition in Yemen -- which is sort of mind-boggling on why that would be done -- there is a very real diplomatic and political price to pay.

And when I was in Yemen, the thing I took away is Yemen is a broken country. It's very difficult now, I think, to maintain faith in the fiction that Yemen is still a unified country. Places outside of the capital have drifted so far beyond the control of the central government in Sanaa that it's going to take much more time, much more effort, and much more money to bring them back into the orbit of the central government than I think the Yemeni government really has the capacity for right now. And even in the capital, Sanaa has become a city of factions. There are essentially four factions that are fighting over Sanaa, and this is a mess. So at the top you see these political elite -- the president, the former president. This is one of the really amazing things. In Tunisia Ben Ali goes into exile; in Egypt Mubarak goes to prison; in Libya Gaddafi is killed. In Yemen Ali Abdullah Saleh becomes now the leader of an opposition party I suppose. He has immunity, and he's still a political player. And so you see these factions that are really fighting while everybody else is dealing with electrical blackouts that happen every day, are dealing with the rising price of water and flour and bread and petrol, and it's really quite broken. And into this steps organizations like al Qaeda who in the south were able to provide services.

So I think you're right that this opportunity has been missed. I don't see any easier quick solutions, and I think that's what the U.S. is looking for right now.

On the second point of accountability, I think you're absolutely correct

there as well. This has been a frustration. I've had, I think, many of the same conversations that you've had. And I've sat down and talked to some U.S. diplomats, including some in Yemen who are intimately involved in some of these strikes. And when I ask them about situations like, say, Abduhrahma al Awlaqi who's the 16-year-old son of Anwar al Awlaqi. He was born in Denver, Colorado. He was killed in a separate U.S. drone strike in October of 2011. And what's been told to me, what's been said to me, is that look, you know, he was sitting with the wrong people and if you're sitting with the wrong people, well, that's what happens. But that might be a view that makes sense in Washington and that might be something that when you look at people as either al Qaeda or not al Qaeda that that works. But in Yemen where people are known as more than just members of al Qaeda, where they have multiple and at times competing identities and a hierarchy of allegiances, that does not sit well at all. And I think one of the things that we've seen is it's not as though al Qaeda's theology, their world view, their morality, has suddenly become popular in Yemen or has suddenly become palatable to a lot of people in Yemen, but when people are being killed, when you're losing a tribesman, when you're losing a father, when you're losing a mother or a brother or a son, what happens is that we're seeing a marriage of convenience and you're seeing people pushed into the arms of al Qaeda because al Qaeda is who's fighting back against the U.S. and the U.S. is the organization, the country, that killed your tribesman, that killed your family member. And so it's really a marriage of convenience for many of these people, and I think that's very dangerous because this marriage of convenience can then expand al Qaeda much broader. And it doesn't matter what the motivations of these people are; it matters the actions that they're carrying out in their attempts to attack the U.S.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you. Ibrahim?

MR. SHARQIEH: Thank you. First let me start with the tribe element here. The tribal component of the problem in Yemen really is very complex. And one dimension of this complexity actually is that the fact in the past that the former regime actually ruined many of the tribal leadership and it got many of them involved in corruption and others. So the former regime really outsourced security in many parts of the country to the tribes. So the tribes have their own structure. They have their own loyalties. They have their own interests. And they're pursuing their own tribal interests. The tribal leaders are pursuing interests of their tribal members. There are tribal leaders who are loyal to Saudi Arabia.

So the issue is not only limited or contained within Yemen, but also it extends beyond that. The tribes are a stakeholder and whether you can build an alliance with the tribes, that's a big question. And for that I want to mention actually the example of one of the most recent experiences in the Province of Abyan; when the new government scored successes in Abyan and forced al Qaeda out from five cities. And one of them is the city of Jaar. The city of Jaar, there was this alliance between the tribes and the local army, the Yemeni army, the Yemeni army and the local tribes. So what happened is again as part of the drones and the alliance with the Yemeni army and the tribes fighting with the army. After al Qaeda was forced out from Jaar, what happened is the Yemeni army withdrew from there and left the local tribes to deal with the problem and to deal with the retaliation of al Qaeda. So what happened just a few weeks later, a suicide bomber hit one of the tribal gatherings, a funeral, that ended up killing 46 people. So this has been a huge impediment, a huge problem, obstacle, for the alliances to build the trust with the Yemeni army or with U.S. forces. So we're not only now dealing with the issue of outsourcing security and the tribes as a stakeholder, but rather new issues emerging which is the issue of trust. To what extent the tribes can trust the new

government or can trust the U.S. government, I'm not sure that this issue of trust exists, which makes it, of course, more complicated.

Now I want to thank the lady for bringing up the second issue, which is about reparations, which now I am writing a paper on that issue of reconciliation and I talk about reparation now and how to reconcile. That hopefully will come out soon. And linked to that, of course, is the issue of accountability. So as part of the reconciliation process that I tried to outline -- moving forward because I strongly believe in the need for the political process to succeed -- is that there should be not only reparation in terms of money, but most importantly an apology, an acknowledgement in particular from the state, from the Yemeni state, that contributed to the suffering and the pain that the people in Yemen that they went through.

Now with these problems that the drone attacks also caused, we should look not only in terms of financial reparations, but an apology. This is something that the U.S. government is willing to do, is ready to do. So reconciliation and reparation is not only about financial reparation, and it is definitely part of the solution in my view.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you. Yes, right here in front.

SPEAKER: Thank you. My name is Dan Graham. I work at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. I was wondering if you thought it'd be useful to think of al Qaeda not simply as a terrorist organization, but increasingly as an insurgency within Yemen; that many of the lessons that were learned or perhaps not ever really learned in Afghanistan or Iraq. There might be some things we can be informed by those prior experiences in our approach to Yemen because I'm struck by how much the policy obstacles that are discussed are eerily similar to many of the things talked about in Iraq and Afghanistan, different points. We had a counterterrorism tragedy in Afghanistan that was demonstrated to be inadequate in 2006, similar in Iraq.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you. Greg, do you want start that one off?

MR. JOHNSEN: Sure. Yeah, I'll try to be brief, which is against my nature, but I'll try so we can get some more questions in. I think like I said earlier, I think it is important for us to think of al Qaeda more like they think of themselves, as an organization. We saw in 2011 and 2012, as Ibrahim mentioned, in Jaar and in other places where al Qaeda was able to provide services. So they essentially became the de facto governing body there. They set up their own police system. They set up their own court system. They were providing water. They were providing electricity. And they were providing importantly security. It was very Draconian. It was very narrow. It was their own interpretation of Sharia law, and yet it was something that people knew the rules of the game. They knew the security.

And in that way I think there are parallels to sort of the rise of the Taliban in the 1990s in Afghanistan. And you had places where schools had been petitioning the Yemeni government for years to send teachers. They never came and al Qaeda showed up and they saw a need. Within a couple of weeks there was a bunch of al Qaeda guys teaching the young individuals within the school, and you can imagine what it is that they were teaching. I think one of the important things to keep in mind here is that the current generation of leaders -- people like Nasir al Wuhayshi who was bin Laden's personal secretary, someone who went off to Afghanistan -- their world view was formed in the 1990s. The world view of tomorrow's al Qaeda leaders is being formed today in an environment that's much, much more radical than was the case nearly a decade earlier.

And I think there are some important lessons that the U.S. can learn from Iraq and from Afghanistan and from what's taking place there. But, again, the thing that I would take away and the thing that I would really stress to people is that this is not a war that the U.S. can win on its own. It's very tempting for the U.S. to see a problem and to

want to go in and solve it all the way. And I think there has to be a realization that sometimes being so proactive and carrying out so many missile strikes and carrying out so many drone strikes can actually have a negative impact.

MR. BYMAN: Ibrahim, did you want to chime in on this one?

MR. SHARQIEH: Well, I didn't hear the question. I have a hard time hearing from the audience, but what Greg said made sense to me so thank you.

MR. BYMAN: I'm sorry. I'll actually start repeating the question to make sure we can get it to Doha.

MR. SHARQIEH: Yes, thank you.

MR. BYMAN: Next question?

SPEAKER: Thank you. Good morning. My name is Giancarlo Gonzalez with Talk Radio News Service. Yemeni President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi was here late September, and he expressed his unreserved admiration for the drone program. I'd like you to comment on that as well as his subsequent statements where he -- obviously you've mentioned that the economic package is part of the corruption that has dogged this part of the world -- he also mentioned a huge economic stimulus would help his country; as well as thanking his allies like the Saudis for giving him oil which enabled him to ultimately hold elections. Thank you.

MR. BYMAN: Great. Ibrahim, the question was about the new Yemeni President's statements that have endorsed the drone program, that have thanked the Saudis for their support -- and I will add my own little bit to his question -- and in general have kind of gone against the impression that I'm getting from both you and Greg that there are grave problems with the current approach. So let me start with Greg and then ask Ibrahim to comment as well.

MR. JOHNSEN: Certainly, I think that's a great question and a very

important one. I was actually in Yemen when President Hadi was here. His remarks did not play particularly well with a lot of people, but there were bigger concerns. And I think it's important to remember when we're talking about President Hadi specifically that this is an individual who came to power with almost no domestic base of support within Yemen. And so what we've seen happening since he took power in February of 2012 is that President Hadi is incredibly reliant on the U.S. and the international community in order to continue to rule because he needs the U.S. and he needs the strong, full-throated, support of the international community in order to offset the lack of domestic support that he has within Yemen. And the U.S. needs President Hadi because President Hadi allows the U.S. to carry out and to do what's really important for the U.S. and Yemen, which is carrying out strikes against al Qaeda.

And so I'm a little concerned -- actually more than a little concerned, I'm very concerned -- that what we see here is a mutually dependent relationship where both sides need the other in order to do what it is that they want to do in Yemen -- Hadi to continue to rule and the U.S. to be able to carry out drone strikes. But neither of these sort of advance Yemen down the road any and neither sort of create the environment that we all want to see in Yemen, which is a place where al Qaeda doesn't have safe havens.

MR. BYMAN: Ibrahim?

MR. SHARQIEH: Thank you. That's a very good question, and I have an op-ed actually in the *National* -- that came out yesterday that addresses this issue in particular and about Hadi sending his congratulations to the new term for President Obama and the issue of actually in his congratulations cable thanking the President for continuing to deal with counterterrorism policies.

Let's keep in mind that no president -- President Hadi is actually part of the old regime. He was the vice president of the former President Saleh and he's a

military man. He's a military man with a military history and the vice president of the old regime of the old president. And he was part of the policies that have been adopted again. So that's one, the background.

Two, I think from the number of statements that I have heard talked about, there's more of mentioning the support, the military support, to restructure the military units that he has in there, which is one of the major challenges that President Hadi is facing now. And actually that will determine to a very large extent his success or failure in the interim phase that he's leading now. The former regime, the former president, is still there and is part of the opposition, leading an opposition group. So one of the major challenges is reforming the security units in Yemen and that is why the U.S. help is needed in particular. So we see that continuing policy of focusing on counterterrorism and military support to President Hadi and the policies there as well.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you. Yes, in the third row.

SPEAKER: Thank you. Danya Greenfield with the Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East. I agree with both of your comments and statements that the narrow view of our security approach on the drone strikes and counterterrorism has been counterproductive and that a development approach should be taken.

But I'd like to push you both a little bit further to better define exactly what that would look like. Imagine you're sitting at the Pentagon and trying to conceive of a program or an approach that would be more effective, understanding that you don't want to be the person responsible for the next underwear bomber who does slip through the cracks and make it through, and understanding that the development approach I think we all see as being fundamentally essential will take years if not decades to actually achieve its objectives. And so for a sort of short- and medium-term strategy, what is the alternative? Pulling back on drone strikes may be something that we'd all like to see, but

what replaces it?

And I ask that also with in mind that the last question about President Hadi's very robust embracing of this policy in some sense is taking ownership in the way that you mentioned that needs to happen for the Yemenis to see this as their fight against extremism, not the West's fight. So here's President Hadi taking ownership of it, saying I'm the one who personally approves these strikes. And then the public reaction, obviously, was extremely negative in Yemen, and I sensed the same thing when I was there as well -- so how to deal with all these factors.

MR. BYMAN: Great. Ibrahim, just to repeat very, very briefly, what would a development approach look like in some detail? So beyond we should try to encourage development in Yemen, but what sort of program and initiatives might lead to success? And to piggyback on that, if development does succeed, it would succeed in the long term. And so there's still a short-term and a medium-term risk and threat and how would those be balanced and how would those be dealt with?

Greg, just to give Ibrahim a bit more time to think, I'll ask you to begin again.

MR. JOHNSEN: Okay, sure. Well, I don't know if I agree that a development approach, taking that approach, is the best way to go in Yemen. I think I agree with many of the things that Dan said in his remarks before his question. I think development has to be part of it, but we have to take reality for what it is. The U.S. is having an economic crisis. The U.S. is in an age of austerity. We're not just going to pour money into Yemen, although we're giving Yemen more money this year than ever before. And one could make a lot of arguments about how much we're spending on drones since those are all classified numbers and the military spending on the parallel clandestine programs. They aren't known or at least they're not known to me.

I think there are a lot of things that the U.S. can provide. The U.S. can provide political leadership. The U.S. can do a good job on things such as judicious use of drone strikes and other things. But I think this is where the U.S. has to bring in some other regional allies, and particularly I think Saudi Arabia could have a very positive role to play here. Mohammed Bin Nayef who's just been promoted obviously to the Minister of Interior is someone who's running several networks of informants -- we know from leaks or we think we know, I guess, from leaks. And the U.S. is concerned about Yemen because of al Qaeda. I mean I think everyone in this room realizes that. That's primarily the U.S. concern. And when the al Qaeda problem goes away like it did in 2004-2005, the U.S. tends to forget all about Yemen, slashes aid, Yemen goes away. I mean there's an argument here I think to be made about incentivizing the type of behavior that you want to avoid.

But for Saudi Arabia, Yemen's right on their border and Saudi has a lot more concerns. Certainly they're concerned about al Qaeda. They're also concerned about chaos spilling over. And I think this is one of the ways that the U.S. can partner with, and I would say take a lead. I think it would be a mistake for the U.S. to sort of abdicate its leadership role within the international community and give that to Saudi Arabia because of all of the mistrust. I mean one of the things that really stands out to me, and this is something that a Brookings Institute individual -- Shadi Hamid -- has talked about a lot. For all the U.S. mistakes, there's still a belief -- and this is true in Yemen as well -- in what it is the U.S. stands for and what Yemenis would like to see and that there's still a role for U.S. leadership.

And so I think U.S. political leadership combined with Saudi economic support could go a long way toward solving this, as well as not taking drone strikes off the table but rather limiting them, because it's not as if Yemenis are up in arms whenever

there's a drone strike and say an al Qaeda operative is killed. It's the civilian casualties that are a result of the drone strikes, not dead al Qaeda members. And I think that's an important thing to keep in mind.

So hopefully, Ibrahim, I've given you enough time to really tell us what the solution is.

MR. SHARQIEH: Well, I wish I had the solution, Greg. But I think there are a lot of areas of agreement then. One is that definitely yes; development is not the only approach that can be used here for a solution. And that's why in my presentation I outlined a strategy, not relying only on development that development will fix the problem. And that's why I emphasized three pillars: The political settlement, which is believe it or not, in my view, is probably the most important on the short term even, not on the long term as in the case of development. A successful political settlement or the people to see that they're trusting the transition process and that there is a process in place. And this process is making a difference and is making progress and in the short run provides answers to many Yemenis. And that is why I believe this should be supported.

And second on that development issue, yes, if you're expecting a short-term solution that development's going to provide, then probably you should look for something else because development provides a long-term solution. But keep in mind, long term but sustainable. And here is the sustainability that lagged, that was a major problem with all the past policies that if you review the history of a security solution was this year there is an al Qaeda problem, next year there isn't, and then back and forth. We know in 2004 that was the case, 2006 and 2008, and so forth. So development provides long term not short term, but sustainable solution.

Now on this issue in particular, again going back to the short term, I asked this question to the Yemeni politicians themselves. What is your solution? What

are you going to do? What is the solution? The answer that I got from Yemeni politicians is that this is our issue. And, again, the way we put it here is in terms of ownership. I think ownership is a key issue and important of the local leadership who has to deal with the Yemeni problems is definitely a solution.

And I can't agree more with Greg on involving Saudi Arabia as a neighboring country that can definitely be supportive of a successful transition process in Yemen, which would solve many of the problems. Thank you.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you. Ah, yes?

SPEAKER: Hi, Mike Lapitsize. I have a question. Why do you think that the drone attacks have become kind of an acceptable necessary evil when -- and this may sound naïve -- if someone in the U.S. were to issue a similar threat, the person wouldn't be killed. There'd be a process where they'd be arrested and violence would be a last resort. Why does it seem as though because it's done outside the U.S., it's okay just to kill them because they've been labeled as terrorists? They've issued a threat, not killed an American.

MR. BYMAN: I'm going to actually start taking questions two at a time just because we have limited time and a fair number of people. Also in the very front, sir? One second, please, wait for the microphone.

SPEAKER: Will Adams Heritage Foundation. I just wanted to get your thoughts really quickly on the Houthi people and Iran's influence in the south, and if you think it might be a regional competition to influence these people.

MR. BYMAN: Great. Two questions, one on why the drone attacks are at all considered a necessary evil. And the second question on the Houthi situation and Iran's influence I would say both with the Houthis and more broadly within Yemen. Ibrahim, if I can ask you to start off this time?

MR. SHARQIEH: I'm sorry, what is the Houthi question? I didn't --

MR. BYMAN: I think just your brief thoughts on the status of the situation with the Houthis.

MR. SHARQIEH: Oh, okay. Well, first of all let me start with drones. I think, and again Greg outlined a very important thing here, distinguishing between the different dimensions of the drone policy, the legal, ethical, and effectiveness. I'm not sure we got into or we are or we claim to be able to deal with the legal factor. The ethical component was not discussed. I think we focused on terms of effectiveness and what is effective and what is not effective. And in terms of effectiveness, I just don't see how the drone policy contributed to a solution. I just don't see it.

In terms of effects, of course, when it involves civilians anywhere. Of course, that's a very unethical issue. And, of course, when you're dealing with the issue of terrorism, also ethics becomes the major driving force here. So the focus, the way I understand it, was on the issue of effectiveness. That is on the first question.

The second question on what it is, I'll tell you something. When I went -- my last three trips to Yemen, I went with many questions, trying to answer. That was the most difficult. What is it the Houthis really want. And I asked even the Yemenis many questions, what do the Houthis want? And no one seemed to have an answer. Everyone gave me a different answer. And until finally I asked to meet with the Houthis Information Office in Sanaa and I asked them this question, what do you want? And I'm not sure, the answer was -- I'll tell you what the answer was. I'm not sure how much sense you can make of this. He said, "We want to be treated like any other Yemenis."

Now I'm not sure how does this tell you about what is the Houthis' cause here or what is the Houthis' issue, but it tells you where it stands. The Houthis accepted or participated in the uprising against Saleh. They have an office in the Change Square,

protesting against the old regime. They fought six wars against the old regime. They're demanding -- they have social, political, and economic grievances that they want to be addressed. I think too many Yemenis, yes, they have grievances that should be acknowledged, should be addressed. How to address them? That's a big question.

The major issue actually of the Houthi is that a large level of Yemenis believes that they're closely connected and backed financially and even militarily by Iran, trying to have an influence there. The Houthis demand this. When I asked them this question, many Yemenis believe they do. The most important development, I think, is for the Houthis to accept to be a part of the national dialogue process and to transition from a militant party, a militant group, to a political party. And I think in my view this is the solution. This is the solution for the Houthis' cause and acknowledging, of course, their economic and social and political grievances, and become a political party. And to, of course, disarm, and become part of the process. That's what many Yemenis want. The Houthis do not seem to accept this because their argument, again, is that there are many militant groups in Yemen. Why us? And there is a power of balance that we should admit them.

So where it stands now, they accepted to be part of the most important next immediate step in Yemen politics that will determine the future of Yemeni politics is the national dialogue process. They issued like ten conditions that should be met for them to be part of this national dialogue process, which will involve, of course, transitioning from a militant group to a political party. The conditions are not extremely difficult. Many of the conditions are reasonable in my view. And I think a successful transition of the Houthis' political party will solve a big part of the problems of Yemen, a major one actually, and strengthen the hope that I see that we should have for Yemen. Thank you.

MR. BYMAN: Greg?

MR. JOHNSEN: Just briefly on the drones. Like Ibrahim, I'm not a legal scholar. I've often dreamed about going to law school, but maybe in a couple of years.

Ben Wittes here at Brookings, Robert Chesney, Jack Goldsmith, Mary Ellen O'Connell at Notre Dame -- all of these individuals have studied drones and looked at drones and they fall on different sides of the issue. But I think their writings and their speeches are in a much better position to address the issue, which gets it sort to the idea of the American public and what it is that the American public considers to be palatable.

One thing I would say just as a bit of a footnote is that I think if what was being done in the name of America was known in the United States to the degree that it's known in places like Yemen, I think we'd have a much different debate and discussion. And one of the positive things that I've seen with books like Daniel Schlademan's *Killer Captured*, the big piece by Scott Shane and Jo Becker in the *New York Times*, is that now as a country we are starting to have these debates in a way that we weren't just a couple of years ago. And so the more accountability -- it's obviously difficult to have transparency with national security, with counterterrorism operations -- but the more that we can discuss the pros and cons of how it is we want to do this, then there is, I think, a possibility to put in place a legal and ethical framework that administrations of both political parties have up to this point not done.

On the issue of the Houthis, one of the things that really surprised me and took me aback when I was in Yemen is how popular the Houthis have become. I think what we've seen over the last few years is that at the beginning President Ali Abdullah Saleh was screaming "Iran was backing the Houthis, Iran was backing the Houthis." There was very little evidence of that early on. Now it's become a bit, I think, of a self-fulfilling prophesy. And one of the things to remember about Yemen is that a lot of

people take money from outside sources. So you have Iran putting money into the country. You have Saudi Arabia putting much more money into the country. What's always unclear is how much influence that money buys. Traditionally, Yemenis take a lot of money and then just do whatever it is they were going to do anyway.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you. I think we have time for one last question. Yes, Jim?

SPEAKER: Jim Placke, Cambridge Energy Research Associates. To expand upon Greg's comment about American policy broadly, in light of today's very comprehensive review of the effectiveness of the drone strategy, to what extent does this represent an increase in militarization of American foreign policy?

MR. BYMAN: This is a very big question, a question on is the drone approaching Yemen and more broadly elsewhere a reflection of a broader shift in U.S. foreign policy that shows greater militarization. Greg, can I ask you to start?

MR. JOHNSEN: That is a very, very big question. With regard to Yemen, I definitely think you're on to something. And I think there are a couple of reasons that I would point to very briefly and in closing. And one is that drones are -- there's the sense that using drone strikes, using airstrikes, is a way that the U.S. can effectively combat its enemies without putting American forces at risk and without sort of suffering the casualties that we've seen in Iraq and Afghanistan. And while I think that may be true long term, I have great concerns about the potential blowback from those actions and what the potential casualty count will be later on. But that's a very difficult argument to make. I don't think anyone has the data to make it yet because we're still at the point where we haven't seen all of the repercussions that are taking place from these attacks. But I do think that there will be -- unfortunately, I think there will be repercussions.

The other thing I would note is that I think -- obviously given the situation in Libya and Benghazi, there are very real risks to American diplomats abroad. But I think what we've noticed over the past decade, past two decades, is moving really toward sort of risk aversion within the State Department particularly. Many more people who -- instead of having risk management, now we're much more risk averse. And I think both of those, the militarization of U.S. foreign policy and the risk aversion within the State Department, has had the effect of meaning the drones are much more tempting because we don't put people immediately at risk, and we think we can solve the problem. I, of course, think that that's mistaken.

MR. BYMAN: Ibrahim, let's give you the last word, please.

MR. SHARQIEH: Well, thank you. Actually, Greg said enough on this question, so I want to thank you, I thank Greg, I thank the audience, for such a very important discussion and contributing to the understanding of the challenges facing Yemen and facing the region.

And I will end, again, with what I started with, that there is a need to ensure or to make sure that the nonviolent model in Yemen of change of going on violence should be supported, should be encouraged. And I think a successful political settlement would reinforce this model and would strengthen it. And in terms of the long run and sustainability, I think that's what gives us solutions to many questions that we're struggling with at the moment. Thank you.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you, Ibrahim. Thank you, Greg. Before everyone leaves, please join me in a round of applause for both of our excellent speakers today. And I will add that Greg's book, which again I highly commend to you, is available for sale outside the room.

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I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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