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AFGHANISTAN: ENDGAME OR PERSISTING CHALLENGE
WITH CONTINUING STAKES?

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. INDYK: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to Brookings. I'm Martin Indyk, the vice president and director of the Foreign Policy program here at Brookings. I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to moderate this book launch of Vanda Felbab-Brown's new book, *Aspiration and Ambivalence: Strategies and Realities of Counterinsurgency and State Building in Afghanistan*.

Vanda is, I think, well-known here in Washington. She is, in particular, a unique kind of Brookings scholar in the sense that she seems to go everywhere that none of our other scholars would dare to go. She's just back from the wilds of the forests of Indonesia and has spent a good deal of time doing research for this book in Afghanistan on the ground there. And part of the interest in this book is not just its very important analysis and policy recommendations, but it's a very human story of her interaction with the people of Afghanistan as she went about her research.

The question of how to handle America's troop exit from Afghanistan is one of the highest, most important priorities on President Obama's second term agenda. Ending wars in the greater Middle East is going to be very much part of his legacy. One has already been ended in Iraq and now we know he, in fact, has a mandate to end the war in Afghanistan on his watch, particularly by 2014. And so it's in that context that Vanda's on-the-ground research, combined with her policy recommendations, is particularly important and particularly relevant today and in the near future when the president is going to have to make an early decision on how many of the 68,000 troops that he sent into Afghanistan as part of the surge there will be withdrawn in 2013. And this is a complicated decision because the surge didn't work out quite as well as it did in Iraq, and the challenges, as we will hear from Vanda, are in many ways far more complicated and difficult in the case of Afghanistan.

Vanda, because of this book and her other contributions to the Foreign Policy program at Brookings, has just been appointed a senior fellow in the 21st Century Defense Intelligence and Security Center. I think -- I'm not allowed to ask her age or anybody else's age in our program -- but I think she's one of the youngest, if not the youngest, senior fellows that we have here in our program. It's a testament to the work that she has done. Some of you know that her previous book that was labeled *Shooting Up: Counterinsurgency and the War on Drugs*, and she's been a prolific scholar of a large number of policy papers, articles, op-ed pieces and so on. So I'm very happy to have the chance to introduce her new book today and have her speak about it.

After she presents her main arguments, we're very glad to have Ron Neumann back on the podium. When the subject is Afghanistan, we're always quick to draw upon Ron's expertise. He was, of course, ambassador in Afghanistan from July 2005 to April 2007. Before that he served as our ambassador in Bahrain and Algeria, and somewhere in between there he was the deputy assistant secretary of state for Near East Affairs. And that was a very important period in the life of the Near East Bureau since I was assistant secretary, his boss. But it gave me an opportunity to work closely with Ron and to depend on him. And there isn't anybody who is a more effective diplomat and more knowledgeable about, in particular, dealing with the government of Hamid Karzai.

Ron also is the author of *The Other War: Winning and Losing in Afghanistan*. And, as I said, he will comment on Vanda's presentation and on her book, and then we'll have a chance for a discussion and conversation with you in the audience.

Vanda, please.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Thank you very much. Good afternoon.

One of the things that *Aspiration and Ambivalence* seeks to do is to give

words to the Afghan people and to amplify the call for the need for improving governance in Afghanistan and for putting governance on par with security considerations. I certainly do not arrogate to myself either the capacity or the right to speak on behalf of the Afghan people, but the book seeks to reflect the interactions and conversations I have had over the decade with the Afghan people, often in circumstances that put many of my interlocutors in jeopardy. Certainly, it was brave and courageous for them to be linked a lonely female, ferengi, a foreigner, an American. Often that would expose them to great danger from the Taliban and other insurgent groups, but also from abusive powerbrokers. And so my very many thanks go to them, and the book is dedicated to them and to those who have tried to make Afghanistan a better place.

But I equally need to thank my Washington-based interlocutor from whom I have learned a great deal about Afghanistan, about the U.S. policy towards Afghanistan. Some of them are sitting in the audience. I see Marvin Weinbaum. I see Catherine Dale, Ken Williams, and many others, whose contributions and interactions with me were equally critical to what *Aspiration and Ambivalence* is. And I certainly need to give very special thanks to Ambassador Neumann, who has been a great mentor over the years. And of course, it's a hallmark of a mentor, the pupil might at some point disagree, and if you see it today that might perhaps be the case.

MR. NEUMANN: It didn't really take very long to get there.

(Laughter)

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: And finally, my very special thanks to Ambassador Indyk, the vice president of Foreign Policy here, whose leadership of foreign policy has been phenomenal and has many hallmarks. And I must say that the wisdom of Martin is the fact that he has allowed me and supported me to traipse through Afghanistan over the years and that he has been willing to live with some of the potential

dangers that I face, and that he continues to do so both in Afghanistan and other places. So thank you very much, Martin. The book certainly would not have existed without your support.

Aspiration and Ambivalence reviews the decade of our efforts in Afghanistan, and it asks what were the interests and motivations of why we went to Afghanistan, and what were the policies and strategies pursued in implementing those interests. But it also asks where we are today and what are we leaving in Afghanistan? And indeed, the picture is rather grim. We are meeting here today at a time when U.S. and international will for persevering with the efforts in Afghanistan is collapsing rapidly. More and more we are hearing calls for the drawing out of Afghanistan, liquidating the mission, bringing the troops home. And there can be no doubt that the costs have been very substantial for the United States and our coalition countries. The costs have also been very large for the Afghan people, many of whom are tired of western presence, with sometimes broad improvements, significant improvements to their lives, but other times also brought violence, insecurity, uncertainty, and large costs.

Yet even as Afghan people are tired of the western presence, they are also very afraid of the post-2014 future where the presence of U.S. and international forces will be significantly reduced. Most likely, we will retain some sort of force, and one of the big decisions that President Obama needs to make is not simply how many troops will be left in Afghanistan next year and how their mission will be defined, but critically, what kind of presence and support you will maintain in Afghanistan after 2014. What will be the troops? But also what will be the mission? Will the mission be extremely narrowly defined as a counterterrorism operation focused on al-Qaeda? Or will it seek to build a broad support and engagement with whatever government or political arrangement there is in Afghanistan after 2014?

On the security situation, we are certainly leaving behind a far more complicated and far less (inaudible) picture than we would have hoped. The war is essentially stalemated. The surge did improve security in the major surge areas in parts of Kandahar and Helmand, but in the east the war has been stalemated. In the south, we don't know how robust the accomplishments are. And even other parts of the country, the north and the center, have areas of intense conflict or at least conflict in the making, with ethnic tensions running high.

Economically, Afghanistan is facing a major economic downturn after 2014 that will not easily be offset by any future imagined economies of the Silk Road or potential minerals that could be exploited. A lot of the money that flowed into Afghanistan over the past several years, certainly during the surge years, was money wasted. Not just money wasted; money that was counterproductive, that was designed for short-term economic projects that were meant to (inaudible) but at the end of the day did not (inaudible) either for the Afghan government or the United States, and distorted local economies and generated their own security.

That the spigot is being turned off on this money is no loss. However, there can be no denial that much of the Afghan economy over the past decade was tied to the presence of western forces and foreigners more broadly. And their departure, the decamping which is already taking on mass, will lead to big drops in GDP. Yes, minerals and potentially the Silk Road one day can bring new economic opportunities to Afghanistan and be an engine of growth for the country, but they require security; they require massive investment in infrastructure; and they require rule of law.

The strength of the Afghan security forces, the lynchpin of the current transition process, has grown. Numbers have grown rapidly, and to some extent quality has grown. But the forces do not have the capacity to operate without western support,

without international support. They are critically lacking in enablers, and they will not have these enablers by 2014. We have long assumed, and certainly we have told the Afghans that we will provide enablers such as logistics, air support, medevac and a variety of others after 2014, and yet even these decisions are being questioned today, and we are wondering whether the Afghans can find a way to do it on their own.

But most importantly, the past decade systematically underemphasized the need for good governance in Afghanistan. And instead, we have seen arrangements of complicated, problematic, and often highly unstable power arrangements, and increasingly deep corruption and abuse of rule. Indeed, one of the stories of the book is that Afghans across the board, including members of the Afghan government, would frequently tell me that they are living in the Mafia rule. The Mafia rule is not just abusive, but it is also capricious and rapacious. And much of our effort over the past decade assumed that we can perhaps achieve stability without accountability, without legitimacy. And indeed, under some circumstances you can imagine very stable governments that rule solely through the male fist. But that's not what we set out to build in Afghanistan, and that is not what was really achievable in Afghanistan. And so to assume today that we can have stability without legitimacy is as unrealistic as it has been over the past decade.

Yet, for a variety of complex reasons, we have chosen to underemphasize the need for good governance or when we realized and embraced that good governance was as critical as stability and security and there were some moments when either the Bush or the Obama administrations recognized that, we very frequently found that going about encouraging good governance was very complicated. And so we frequently chose to privilege short-term military objectives at the sake of saying, well, you'll get to governance later.

And so we frequently embraced problematic powerbrokers of the members of the Karzai government or associated with the Karzai government who would promise us that they would fight the Taliban. Yet, from the perspective of many Afghans, they would be as abusive or sometimes even more abusive than some of the Taliban they would be experiencing.

Needless to say, of course, the Taliban is extremely brutal. It is abusive. And it is the source of the majority of casualties in Afghanistan. But from the perspective of the Afghan people, negotiating the everyday security arrangements, going about the necessary every day needs can be far more complicated with the powerbrokers as with the Taliban.

Not only are we moving towards the major economic and military transition in 2014, we are also moving potentially toward an end of a political era. 2014 is a year where there are supposed to be presidential elections held in Afghanistan, and President Karzai is supposed not to run. The Afghan constitution prohibits him from seeking another term. He has repeatedly promised that he will not run.

And so today much of the political space and energy in Afghanistan is being consumed by preparations for the presidential elections, and in many ways, efforts to improve governance are on hold to see what shakes out after the post-2014 future. But the range of possibilities is wide, and many Afghans believe that one of the very likely possibilities is a civil war; a civil war that would look radically different perhaps than civil war in the 1990s, but nonetheless, a steady and major deterioration of security.

That future is not preordained. We are not there yet. But it is a future that is not unlikely and that we need to be ready for. So we are living a very unstable, very much unresolved and highly optimistic security, political, and economic environment in Afghanistan. Certainly, I would argue we have accomplished with respect to stabilizing

Afghanistan far less than we have hoped that we would accomplish. And one of the questions that both the Obama and the Bush administrations have struggled over the past decade is whether pursuing very narrow counterterrorism al-Qaeda objectives require what the administration called "nation building," which is in my view a misnomer. What we are really talking about is state building. Or whether we can accomplish these narrow counterterrorism goals simply through limited means via drones, perhaps fed intelligence by local powerbrokers and assets, or whether we need to leave behind a stable environment.

Those that are calling for liquidating the mission, for going out of Afghanistan, for saying that the patient is too ill at this point to be saved or that we have accomplished our goals, need to ask then what are the interests that we have in Afghanistan. And will those interests end in 2014 or will they be maintained? Clearly, counterterrorism is one of them. And one of the big questions is whether a Taliban, which is still robust and will be robust in 2014, will be willing to break? And in what form with al-Qaeda or whether it will maintain linkages with al-Qaeda. I'll leave that discussion for the question and answer period, but it's a major polarizing, unresolved debate.

The second interest, of course, that we have, apart from counterterrorism interests, is an interest in stabilizing Pakistan. And another big question is whether Pakistan can be a stable, prosperous, thriving country while its neighbors, especially Afghanistan, are highly unstable and perhaps experiencing massive deterioration in security. In other words, we got used to over the past decade saying that we cannot stabilize Afghanistan without stabilizing Pakistan; but I would posit that the reverse also holds; that without a stable neighbor on its western flanks, Pakistani leaders will be continually distracted from taking on the massive challenges that Pakistan faces -- security challenges, economic challenges, energy challenges. In other words, Pakistan

is a country that is experiencing a steady hollowing out of the state, increasingly weaker and weaker capacity as the challenges are growing and that is experiencing a more impoverished society, impoverished in a sort of multiple meaning of the world, an increasing radicalized society.

The more unstable Afghanistan is, the more it will be like an ulcer leaking into Pakistan and complicating significantly efforts in Pakistan. And one of the sort of difficult secrets of the trade is, of course, should Pakistan experience some major collapse of security, and perhaps a terrorist group gets its hands on an atomic weapon or some fissile material, for the United States to be able to take any meaningful counteraction against that it will need platforms in Afghanistan to reach into Pakistan. Now, of course, Pakistan has served no interest in seeing us maintain any sort of basis or platforms in Afghanistan for any action in Pakistan.

And finally, I would also argue that we have responsibilities towards the Afghan people. I will say it is only very rare and exceptional circumstances where the United States should mobilize and authorize the use of its military simply for the sake of fostering the well being of other people. That for the use of U.S. military there needs to be very substantial, very significant national security interests at stake. But nonetheless, once we decide to intervene, we have responsibility for the people whose lives we influence.

So yes, our leadership has primary responsibility toward the American people, and it is the hallmark to paraphrase George Cannon of a greater power to know when to liquidate unwise commitments, but how we go about changing the commitments is equally important, and simply rushing out of Afghanistan, simply rushing out of the commitments can be even more disastrous than engaging in the first place or preserving. And finally, we do have responsibility to the Afghan people.

So what can we still do with the circumstances that we are facing? The number one is to go out in as orderly a fashion as possible. We should address this call to go out very, very quickly, faster than we have told the Afghan people that we would go out. We should also try to engage as robustly after 2014 as possible, not simply define our interests in the narrowest anti al-Qaeda terms, but define so in ways that enable the emergence of as much stability in Afghanistan as possible. That requires emphasizing governance as much as emphasizing security. Clearly, our leverage is diminishing every day and diminishing rapidly. So we will have to ruthlessly prioritize what aspects of governance we are willing to emphasize and we are willing to back up. What are the most egregious force of corruption and abuse would undermine the capacity of Afghan security forces that so alienate communities that they invite or enable the Taliban to take hold; that fuel conflict, whether it's ethnic conflict. We also critically need to find the wherewithal to back up the redlines that we set with action. The worse we can keep doing is saying that certain behavior is intolerable and then they say, well, okay, we'll live with this this time along.

And finally, we need to find a way to realize that this is up to the Afghan people at this point to improve governance. It was all along up to them, but we should at minimum not try to make the life more complicated by continually embracing short-term expediencies or short-term military -- promises of short-term benefits and never putting on equal footing the medium- and long-term goals.

My final word would be that *Aspiration and Ambivalence* is about Afghanistan, but it is also about lessons of state building. We are increasingly finding ourselves in an era perhaps when we will be very reluctant to intervene and engage in similar enterprises. Yet even as we are leaving Afghanistan, we are now talking about taking on new missions, whether it is Somalia or the most sort of dramatic Malia. And we

are telling ourselves that we can do those new missions because we don't have the wherewithal perhaps in capacity to resource them fully on a shoestring in a quick drive by in-and-out interventions. If there is one lesson of the Afghanistan effort, it is that such quick in-and-out, on the shoestring drive-by interventions do not easily work, and they do not secure even the minimal security counterterrorism objectives.

If we decide to intervene, we need to emphasize governance and not put it on the back burner because in the absence of reasonably good governance that satisfies the minimal needs of the local people, we will at best be only perpetuating instability.

MR. INDYK: Great. Thank you, Vanda. Great presentation.

I forgot to actually tell you what Ron Neumann is doing now. He's the president of the American Academy of Diplomacy, and it's in that capacity that he's with us today. Welcome.

MR. NEUMANN: Thank you. Well, that quick survey by Dr. Felbab-Brown should have persuaded you that this is probably not a simple subject. I don't want to try to do a second speech covering Afghanistan, but just to sort of highlight a few points that I think tie on both policy and on the book. We are -- we, the United States -- are now coming up to certain very critical decisions that will be made fairly soon, both about our presence in Afghanistan after 2014 and about the next year, what we will do in terms of troop levels, as well as perhaps some other pieces of policy. This debate has been completely ignored in the electoral period, and it is being framed all too much in bumper sticker phrases, which simply are idiotic ways of trying to understand the complexity of Afghanistan.

I was recently reading a book on Vietnam and I was struck -- that was my first war. I fought there. I was struck by the fact that as wars, they are completely

different, and Washington at War was remarkably similar, which was not a particularly happy conclusion to draw. The fact is we have a policy. What we are not clear about is whether we're serious about that policy and what the policy requires. We are speaking in these bumper sticker phrases at a time when we really need a certain degree of clarity. It's probably too much to ask of the policy debate of this magnitude occur at a very high level of detail, but there should be enough detail to connect the decisions slightly to reality.

This book is a help in that because despite all of the criticisms of policy, which are in it, most of which I think are merited, it is not a book about being hopeless. It is a book about rather detailed recommendations for how to address a series of issues in governance, in corruption, in security. A lot of dealing with the security issues of the Afghan local police. So it has a lot of specificity in it, which would be most usefully injected into our policy process.

What we are particularly lacking, aside from clear statement of purpose, is a discussion about the ends which are to be fulfilled by the resources and by the forces. We're talking about leaving. So you're having a debate about numbers which floats ethereally without being connected to missions. In fact, the debate, the discussion should be in the reverse. What are the missions which you deemed critical to Afghanistan, and then you can have a whole second argument about what numbers do you need or are you goal plating your numbers? We had experience of two recent editorials, both in the Washington Post. One arguing for a number of 30,000 people; another arguing for a number of 10,000. Both fairly specific. What does not come through clearly with the editorial world limits is that in talking about two different mission sets. One is talking about a mission limited to a light counterterrorism terrorist and a little bit of training, and the other suggests that you can't accomplish that mission without a

certain amount of advising with Afghan units in order to go from quantity to quality. And without at least a period in which we provide some of the support, what the military calls the enablers that Vanda was talking about, which frankly were never going to be ready now. When I was in Afghanistan 2010, it was very clear that the expansion of the Afghan Army had required complete utilization of all training places. And all of the big work on the complex logistics and medevac, artillery fire support had been diverted a year orater in order to begin heavy, rapid production of infantry units.

Now there are a lot of problems with the security services. I don't wish to be sounding like everything is good, because it's not. But to get terribly concerned that we have not accomplished something which we always knew could not be accomplished yet and is therefore a reason for defeat is also a kind of silly take on the process. It simply means it needs a deeper discussion starting with where we are. I must say I bridle a little every time I hear the words, not from Martin but from certain higher levels that we are winding down the war because we are not winding down a damn thing. We're winding down our participation in the war. That is extraordinarily different from winding down the war. And we should be clear about that. We can say we want to wind down our piece and leave other people hanging, but let's be clear about what it is we're doing.

So we need a discussion that is more articulated about missions, both military missions and others, and one can take different positions on whether you should advise in the field or not, or whether you're going to provide air support and some other key things, at least for a limited period while the Afghans finish development of those. But that argument logically -- of course, we're not always logical; this is Washington -- but that argument ought logically to precede the discussion of numbers, which now floats on board with reality. That is something where *Ambiguity -- Aspiration and Ambivalence* --

I'm going to reverse titles here if I'm not careful, but we're pretty ambiguous -- does make a serious contribution. The public dialogue is essentially becoming a static dialogue between those who say it's all hopeless, let's leave, and those who are sort of cherry picking the positive. And in fact, Afghanistan is a place which is always in ferment. There are a number of things happening right now which actually are positive. There is a very peculiar development in Pakistan -- and it's much too early to say whether it's serious or not, but certainly the Pakistani discussions with the Afghans is very different in tone and texture from the discussion of the Pakistanis a year ago. Whether it means something or is a game, I don't know. I'm not saying it does mean something. The Kabul Bank trial, which is now on television, took an enormous amount of international pressure to get there. It does not prove that there is now going to be a serious addressing of corruption. On the other hand, the fact that you have a publicly televised trial in which people are accusing the brother of the president and the brother of the vice president of massive corruption is really quite a change in Afghanistan. The fact that the parliament -- Lower House of Parliament passed a bill to put international folk on the election commission to my mind is also a positive, although that effort has failed in the Upper House. It's been blocked by President Karzai, but it is the first time that the Afghan Parliament has begun to look at issues and take action on its own to deal with some of its major systemic political problems, rather than having everybody wait for the United States to take action.

All of these things may be wildly insufficient to my purpose. I'm not making a happy argument. I'm simply making the argument there are things going on that we need to pay attention to. We have under the policy annunciated by the administration the better part of two years to still work. It is enormously important that if that is the administration's policy, it actually used those two years well. If it is not the

policy, it would be good to be honest about what we are doing so we stop having our own people die to carry out the policy.

Vanda has pointed out a lot of problems, most of which I agree with. We'd probably have more fun talking about the other ones. It does seem to me that the greatest single contribution that America could make to having this thing come out a little better rather than a little worse is clarity about our own purpose. Right now we lack that clarity. I can't, sitting here, tell you whether I believe that this administration is actually committed to trying to make the Afghan Army as good as it can be in the next two years or whether we're simply trying to look for a decent interval while we dump that. If I can't tell you, it's not surprising that Afghans can't tell you.

And since one of the key pieces of understanding, and the last one I really want to get across is we cannot succeed by being about the success of transition in 2014 unless we understand that the Afghans are about survival in 2015 and beyond. If we cannot clarify at least what we are prepared to do to try to deal with Afghans' survival post 2015, you should expect simply an acceleration of all the hedging behavior -- bad government, rapaciousness, corruption -- because they're looking for how they survive in that period. So what we have that we could do above all the implementation points is to clarify where we are going with implementation. And that is going to be the task of hopefully the next few months if the administration chooses to actually make decisions, and it's a task for those who are observing it, watching it, fulminating about it or whatever, can be somewhat advanced with this book. Thank you.

MR. INDYK: Good. Thank you, Ron.

Vanda, let me just pick up on Ron's last question, which was what are we prepared to support in the period after the withdrawal? What should we be prepared to support? What is doable and sustainable given the way that Americans are war weary

and essentially appear to be turning their backs on Afghanistan?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Americans are tired and weary and wary of the war, but so are Afghans. Yes, they are afraid of another major civil war instability coming in 2014, but with all the hedging behavior that really more than anything characterizes the period, they also do not want massive deterioration of security. So one of the first and starting elements is to work with the Afghan security forces to continue to try to have as much stability and security in as large a part of Afghanistan as possible. There are many elements to it, one of which is the push to build up numbers that we have achieved, but the key element of that is to focus on the (inaudible) patronage networks that are permeating the Afghan National Security Forces that we arguably have not paid as much attention to as we should.

A component of it is also to more broadly define what security means and not simply narrowly -- very narrowly define as fighting al-Qaeda or for fighting the Taliban, although we are more and more questioning now whether the Taliban can be separated and this is at the core of negotiations that we have started supporting about two years ago and that have been sort of on and off and are perhaps in a little bit of an on phase again. But it is also to focus on some of the abuse. It is no secret that the Afghan Police is not only not an entity that combats crime, but it is the purveyor. It is the perpetrator of much of criminality in Afghanistan. And we have chosen perhaps not to act as forcefully, not to focus on that aspect as we should.

Clearly, we need to support some of the political processes that Ron was describing -- efforts to prepare for the 2014 elections and avoid the fraud that characterized the previous elections. How that fraud is avoided is, of course, matters a lot. On the one hand we are seeing perhaps an effort to reach a consensus candidate in the way that we have seen in the early 2000s, which might be a way to avoid some of the

instability that the election could trigger, some of the violence, but it arguably, potentially could not be a way to really improve governance. Even if there is a major deterioration of security, we will have interests in Afghanistan persist. The question at this point is whether the interests of the American people are increasingly at odds with the interests of the Afghan people. And I would argue that they are not. They still both want to see as much stability in Afghanistan. The question is can we still achieve it and how much we are willing to pay. (Inaudible) means supporting as robustly as we can the Afghan security forces, but holding them accountable, including holding them accountable to abuse the perpetrators as much as powerbrokers perpetrate abuse and also holding them accountable to minimizing the patronage and ethnic fractures that are developing in the institutions.

And the second aspect is helping reformist politicians in Afghanistan to move governance toward better governance that gives the Afghan people hope that over time Afghanistan can break out of the Mafia role, that although this will not take fast and it will not take uniformly, there are some signs of greater accountability. If there is a leader that is willing to pay greater attention to the needs of the Afghan people and act against corruption, he should receive our support and he should not be constantly compromising these objectives for the sake of fighting the Taliban the next day.

My final comment is that we should not once again slip to sort of the immediate military experiences dominating our decision-making. And I very much see that with the Afghan local police, which is a self-defense force that they do not call militia that they are striving to build up as much as possible in Afghanistan with the belief that the Afghan local police will fight the Taliban. Well, they might fight the Taliban as long as we pay them. Often they are the Taliban that are simply stopping to fight the government because we are paying them. But in the long term, it is precisely that kind of force that

leaves huge questions about governance, and we are building it up without having any sense of how it will end. What will happen with it in 2014? So we should not be making decisions as Ron said with 2014 being the end. If we decide to build up something like the Afghan local police, then we need to think what will happen with the Afghan local police in 2020, in 2024, and how are we between now and then going to channel the force into something positive. But as long as they are over by 2014, we are essentially about (inaudible) our departure.

I was asked yesterday in an interview whether we are on track with transition, and my answer was, well, it depends what track means. If the track is simply getting out, we are. If the track is leaving behind a stable government that serves the minimal needs of the Afghan people and also is aligned with our interests, I have serious questions that we are on track.

MR. INDYK: But you also seem to believe, and I think, Ron, you agree with this, that if there's a course correction, we still have time to get on track. We still have time to ensure a stable outcome.

MR. NEUMANN: The one thing --

MR. INDYK: Reasonably stable outcome.

MR. NEUMANN: I think we have a chance. I think the chance is fairly small, and I think it is smaller than it was a year or two ago as we've used up a lot of time. I would say that we don't really have an issue, an option of a course correction. Right now we're about -- if you think of course essentially as policy, we're done. We have a course which we can either carry out or not. What's at issue is how we implement that. It's a much more complex discussion in a way than Washington sort of as a culture likes to have because it isn't really about the policy. It's really about what you are going to do to try to make the policy work, which is a myriad of detail, some of which goes beyond

what you could expect to do in Washington, but it's much more about implementation than it is about policy. And I think the starting point is recognizing that that's what it's about because we certainly do not have time for another major policy review which is usually a highly ponderous process, as you will remember also, which then has to be followed by the movement of money and people. And that I'm sure we do not have time for.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Afghanistan's future is not preordained. Ron pointed out some of the important positive developments, whether it is the activity and energy in the political space that we are seeing for the first time in many years in Afghanistan, some elements of accountability, some breaking with the complete impunity that has characterized the past decade. There are parts of Afghanistan that are prosperous and thriving. Can they be isolated from the broader insecurity is one of the big questions. Our leverage is diminishing rapidly and we are leaving. There is no guarantee that we can prevail and succeed in stabilizing Afghanistan and guaranteeing our interests. We can, however, guarantee that we fail. And if we simply cut out and run, then we are going to leave an Afghanistan that will melt; that will not be sustained after 2014 in the way that we would see it. And so we should make everything possible to minimize the transition -- the diminishment of our presence as possible. There is no guarantee of success.

MR. NEUMANN: Let me use for a second this ALP, the Afghan Local Police, as a very interesting kind of point. It's an area where Vanda and I have some differences. They're not fundamental; they're more about individual places. But the notion of building community police, linking it tightly with district police chiefs, putting it under the government and eventually moving some of them or all of them into government forces is a theory. Now, it has been done well in some places with a great

deal of care and a great deal of time. It's been done extraordinarily badly in some other places.

MR. INDYK: You're talking about all within Afghanistan?

MR. NEUMANN: Individual spots within Afghanistan. And the book documents some of the worst ones in Baghlan.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: As well as some of the good ones.

MR. NEUMANN: The point is we can, or we may, be able to do this if we do it carefully. If we keep our eye on the point that Vanda just made about where is it going if we're resourcing that point and if we're devoting enough force to supervise and know what we're doing. We can rush forward, call any collection of gun-toters and ALP, slight the vetting process and the organization process, screw this thing up fairly well, and have a whole another bunch of militias running around, taking predatory action towards the fellows, and fighting with each other. And the difference between success and failure is all about this control and this implementation. It's not fundamentally about the policy. You can make a policy argument but that fundamentally isn't where it is. Right now, there is huge pressure on the special forces, who tend to be the major operators, to keep picking up the pace. It's a very dangerous pressure because if it moves -- if they are forced to move too quickly, they cannot do it well, in my judgment, and then we will rush to failure. But that's a microcosm of the kind of decisions that are going to have to be made and the attention that's going to have to be paid in the difference between failure and a chance at success.

MR. INDYK: Okay. Let me ask you both to spell out to us what are the consequences of failure? Is this Las Vegas where what happens there stays there? Or is it spent on the region? Just spell it out for us, Vanda.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Well, one of the --

MR. INDYK: If we turn our backs and say we gave it a good shot, good riddance, we'll take care of al-Qaeda in the ways we know how to do now and let the Afghans fend for themselves?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Well, the answer, of course, partially depends on what failure would look like. But we have already had experiences with turning our back on Afghanistan, leaving the country to fester problems with terrible disasters coming to haunt us, namely 9/11. One of the big questions about what Afghanistan will look like and what collapse would look like, of course, is if there is a great deal of instability once again, dangerous Salafi groups would return to Afghanistan. Would the Taliban support that? There is some very powerful evidence by first rate scholars of Afghanistan that suggest that the Taliban has soured on al-Qaeda. Some key Taliban leaders have said that al-Qaeda was the greatest fight that the Taliban has experienced and that arguably Afghanistan has experienced. And the very prominent scholars, Bruce Riedel, our colleague here, of course, have also showed the linkages and connections between al-Qaeda and Taliban. And different strengths of the movement of the Taliban might have different views. However, I believe that regardless of whether the Taliban ideology or at least part of the Taliban have been willing to sever with al-Qaeda, that's not the same thing for them to actively cooperate with us in efforts against al-Qaeda or other Salafi groups because actively cooperating is very costly. It means breaking with their brethren. So perhaps the best we can hope out of any circumstances where the Taliban controls some territory, potentially a lot of territory in Afghanistan, is that they quietly, to some extent cooperate with us and try to play it both ways.

But certainly, there is a great deal of instability that will be fertile opportunities for many Salafi anti-American, anti-western terrorist groups to once again become at least somewhat entrenched. And I've already indicated that a second huge

consequence for the United States and for global security is the impact that Afghanistan will have on Pakistan, and in what way it will stabilize and distract Pakistan from finally taking on the massive internal challenges that the country is experiencing and really has been handling and unable to robustly confront.

And finally, if there is major instability and security in Afghanistan, if there is a civil war, Afghanistan will once again draw all the neighbors and more remote powers into trying to prosecute their interests, and in fact, coming into conflict. And these powers, of course, are Iran, which has an extremely problematic and difficult relationship with the United States and is willing to compromise some of our most fundamental security interests, but it also means Russia and the Central Asian countries. India, of course, will be responding to Pakistan moves and China. And so we are looking at an environment that will very significantly complicate relations between major powers and major actors in Asia and really prevent them, or at least greatly complicate their cooperation in other vital areas.

MR. INDYK: Do you want to add to that in terms of doomsday scenarios?

MR. NEUMANN: Well, this scenario of roiling instability in the outsiders, you're talking about a sort of quasi-civil war scenario that goes on for years because none of the outside players can afford to lose and none of them are going to be strong enough to win. And that has the potential to destabilize Central Asia from Pakistan to Kazakhstan and to keep it destabilized for a decade or more. Compare with Lebanon, 15 years that civil war went on and it had fewer outside players of far less capability than those that will be drawn into Central Asia. That's a major piece of the area with nuclear weapons destabilized. That's a big problem.

Second is we have this larger issue. You have al-Qaeda. You have

Salafi movements elsewhere. People talk about, well, you need to fight them elsewhere. I think that's true. Not necessarily in the same way. But you have groups which look at themselves as being engaged with us in a war, which at least from our point of view, although not theirs, began on September 1, 2001 in New York. So just bolting is essentially they win and we lose the Afghan campaign. Now, we may not think it's that way. We killed a lot of people. We went, we kicked them out of there, but that's their take on it. I think that also revitalizes them. That adds a sense that God really is within them. I think we will pay for that. I don't know exactly how or where, but I think that those who want to dismiss that argument have a responsibility to say why it doesn't matter to us that we have massive instability for a long time; why we won't have serious threats because people who have already killed 3,000 Americans in New York think that they've won. Or you can say yes, we will have those threats, but our problems are so bad, our economy is so bad and this situation is so dangerous that we should accept the threats to the national interests and to stability and on some kind of balance of forces it's worth accepting those threats. I don't hear that discussion though. I hear a discussion that is a lot more like your kids when you're still 50 miles from home. I want to stop the car. I'm tired. It's not a particularly intellectually mature discussion.

MR. INDYK: We'll go to the audience in a minute, but I just want to ask you both about -- now that you've mentioned the neighbors -- part of the art of diplomacy, part of what I understood Richard Holbrook was trying to do before he unfortunately died, was to concert the efforts of all of the neighbors in terms of some understanding about what a post withdrawal arrangement -- regional security structure would look like to help bolster the efforts of maintaining stability. And that effort seems, at least not to be visible. That may be the best you can say about it. But what happened to that idea?

MR. NEUMANN: Two things. I think it is still there but it's sort of vague.

MR. INDYK: It's sort of what?

MR. NEUMANN: Vague. It is coming up against a reality which I'm not sure that Richard and others fully appreciated, which is that this kind of regional notion, which is in the end a neutralization of Afghanistan, a return to the neutrality of the period before the '70s, requires an Afghan government of a certain amount of strength that can keep basic order. Because if you don't have that, the internal players play for power. They draw in the externals. The externals can't afford to let others be drawn in. And so I don't think you can stabilize a political vacuum. I think you should be talking about it. I think it is a direction of policy in which to go, but it's not a solution now. It is sufficiently complicated though that it would be well worth working on more now. And then our organization has made this more difficult. If you have the assistant secretary for South Asia responsible for Afghanistan politics, you can talk to India as well as Pakistan. The special representative position meant that Pakistan did not want -- India did not wish to talk to Holbrook and Pakistan wanted that to happen and would like to see Kashmir as a central element. So you have an additional diplomatic complexity.

MR. INDYK: Do you want to comment on that?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: You know, one of the -- Iran again perhaps has things of the effort in the Afghanistan is perhaps with the exception of Pakistan the neighbors agree on some fundamentals. Few of them really want to see Afghanistan disintegrating into great instability and another civil war, and few of them, if any, want to see the Taliban in charge of the entire country or large territories. I say perhaps with the exception of Pakistan, and that is, of course, the one critical element where Taliban continues to define its interest in Afghanistan very much through the prism of its rivalry with India. India is a country that is increasingly taking on one of the rising powers with all its massive internal difficulties. It's still enormously more prosperous, more powerful,

doing much better than Pakistan is. And so Pakistan for decades has continued to see Afghanistan as the fallback territory to which to fight if they got into a conflict with India. And I'm not persuaded that it has broken with that view, which is one of the reasons why it continues to support, or at least tolerate, Taliban safe havens in North Waziristan and other territories; why it continues to divide insurgents between the bad ones that target Pakistan and the good ones or at least tolerable ones that are externally oriented and why it is unwilling to break with these insurgent assets that it has cultivated and continues to support them and provide them with various assistance in Afghanistan. Its recent role in the negotiations notwithstanding, and we are happy to talk about the recent latest phase of negotiations.

MR. NEUMANN: Especially if we knew anything.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: But the more instability there is, the more the fact that these various countries can agree on the common goal, nonetheless means that they will be drawn into some of the fights among each other and within the Afghan political space and that they will almost guarantee that there will not be a stable outcome. So the Obama administration set out to transform its relationship with Pakistan from a dysfunctional transactional relationship of the Bush years, and instead ended up arguably with the lowest point, at least of the past decade, if not two decades, far from any sort of strategy partnership. And in the international space, we are as far away from any joint consensus, any joint framework on Afghanistan as we have ever been, and we are increasingly seeing various countries -- Iran very prominently, but even others -- cultivating their proxy friends in Afghanistan. Perhaps even providing arms to various actors in Afghanistan and preparing, just like every other actor in Afghanistan, for major instability, hedging their bets in a way that almost guarantees a good, stable outcome will not be achieved.

MR. INDYK: Okay. Let's go to the audience. Please, when I call on you, wait for the microphone, identify yourself, make sure there's a question mark at the end of your statement. So let's go to there, please. Yes, you. Put your hand up again so they can see you.

MR. PLATT: Aaron Platt. Just a question.

Are there any stabilizing factors going on here?

MR. NEUMANN: It's your book. You get first shot.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Well, I would say that ultimately the most stabilizing factor and the most important one is that Afghans do not want a war. They are tired of a war. They are afraid of it. Whatever difficulties the past decade has brought, it has brought significant improvements to many, not to all, but many certainly experience greater social and economic opportunities, and sometimes even greater security than during the Taliban era. And we are seeing activism towards preventing a war. There are very few actors, if any, that desire a civil war. And even the Taliban, if you sort of look at interviews with Taliban detainees, for example say their biggest nightmare is a real long, protracted civil war out of the 1990s with the north.

And so the question is then whether we can generate enough structure -- security structures and political space to capitalize on this general willingness not to see great insecurity, not to see this integration of war, or whether ultimately both Afghans and we will end up prisoners of the hedging. Prisoners of the collective action problems and the security dilemmas that are mushrooming throughout the entire country.

MR. NEUMANN: Do you want to -- just keep going.

MR. INDYK: Can't find any more stabilizing factors?

MR. NEUMANN: No, I can. But keep going.

MR. INDYK: Yes, please. Up at the front here.

MR. HERIOT: Judd Heriot, documentary filmmaker.

Clarity of purpose. When the administration was always asked why we are in Afghanistan, their answer was to deny al-Qaeda a safe haven. I always found that to be unconvincing because al-Qaeda can be anywhere. So my question to you is what was our original purpose for introducing armed forces into Afghanistan? Was it that narrowly focused or did we back into something more complicated?

MR. NEUMANN: You know, Otto von Bismarck said the two things you should never let people see being made are policy and sausage because each is disgusting. (Laughter)

I think you ask a question of the origin. Well, I didn't get there until 2005 (inaudible), but when the Bush administration went into Afghanistan, it went in -- first of all, remember had the Taliban government been willing to expel al-Qaeda, we would not have gone into Afghanistan. That was the demand made. When they didn't and we decided to kick out the government and al-Qaeda, we actually went in with a very narrow focus. But the narrow focus didn't work very well. Many of the problems we have now were part of the narrow focus. We wanted to --

MR. INDYK: What was the narrow focus?

MR. NEUMANN: The narrow focus was hunt al-Qaeda and hunt terrorists. Well, one of the problems was our forces in Afghanistan needed logistic support. They needed intelligence. We actually built up some of the warlords and reprehensible characters because we needed that kind of support. That's one of the problems Vanda talks about in the book about what happens if you have that narrow purpose. But anyway, I won't track you through the next 12 years. But we had an accretion of policy not connected to means. The early Bush years talking then a lot about democracy and things, although there was never a policy review that committed to that

as a holistic policy. By the time we began to really decide that this policy -- that the policy needed a lot more state building, Iraq had gone on and that sucked up all the energy. But you had a rolling series of developments. Nowhere do I think you have a single clear purpose -- to contrast, a single, clear purpose. Bush won. First Gulf War. Kick the Iraqis out of Kuwait and stop the war. Now, we spent 10 years dealing with the aftermath of that clear purpose, but you had a clear purpose. You had a clear decision. You weren't going to let the policy goals move. Held to that. Paid different prices, but held to it. There was no similar kind of single clarity in this policy.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: If I could add, I think that both the Bush administration and the Obama administration put denying al-Qaeda safe havens and countering weakening al-Qaeda as the most important objective and prerogative, but I think where both really struggled was what does that mean for broader policy? Can you achieve this objective simply by surgically somehow killing the al-Qaeda terrorists or do you need to leave behind some sort of stable government in Afghanistan. In both administrations, the policy oscillated between the two. One of the things that has interestingly changed is how the strategic question continually unresolved in my view resonated in interactive with the U.S. public. The Bush administration originally I think hoped for a very quick in and out intervention. Then it discovered it quite couldn't do it, and now that it was in Afghanistan having toppled the Taliban regime, it needed to resonate with the U.S. public and talk about much loftier goals, such as democracy, such as women's rights.

Now, what has interestingly changed by the time that President Obama took over was that these objectives, these loftier goals no longer resonated with the U.S. public, and so the Obama administration always in its public speeches talked in extremely narrow, anti al-Qaeda terms. It never dared uttered the word state building or

nation building. It never dared to talk about goals that would give a state to the Afghan people. So all the public speeches were simply about anti al-Qaeda, about denying safe havens in a way that was bound not to resonate with the Afghan people. But it also set us up to the moment when there are right now not very many al-Qaeda operatives when bin Laden has been killed when the public reasonably asks why should we stay anymore? Why should we bleed anymore? Why should we continue devoting great, great expenditures while the country, the U.S. is hurting so much internally?

MR. INDYK: Behind. Up at the front here. Just up at the front.

MR. COATS: Warren Coats, the International Monetary Fund.

I very much appreciate the discussion and agree with the tone and substance of it. I'm a bit disturbed by the fact that, however, that it has all been in terms of the United States and Afghanistan. No mention of what will be a continuing role of the international community.

MR. INDYK: What's the role of the international community, Vanda? Or Ron?

MR. NEUMANN: Well, you have a series of commitments by the international community. Whether they can hold if the United States changes its own policy I think is very dubious. We tend to be the lynchpin. There is also a difference in NATO and in the United States. The United States sees Afghanistan as a security question. Many of the European countries of NATO have seen it as, first and foremost, an issue of NATO solidarity in relations with America and secondarily a security question. And yet NATO's solidarity has held far better than I think many people thought it would a few years ago when the debates were so intense about going in.

So I would say it's a sort of symbiotic relationship. I do not think the United States has any longer the resources to sustain a positive policy in Afghanistan by

itself without the additions, some of which are already pledged at the Tokyo Summit, at the NATO Chicago Summit. Those contributions are essential. On the other hand, those contributions are neither sufficient by themselves, nor will they hold without the United States.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: I guess I would agree with that idea. Of course, (inaudible) appoint the role of the international community. And one can reasonably ask what is the international community? There are very many actors, one side of which is the coalition of the United States NATO countries -- Australia and a number of actors that have been key actors. But of course, the other members are India, China, Russia, Iran, Pakistan, not all of whom have had a positive role in Afghanistan. There have been clearly very important multilateral institutions, including the International Monetary Fund, and I would posit that one of the reasons we are seeing the prosecution of the Kabul Bank, a massive and quite outrageous (inaudible) was precisely because of the role that the IMF played.

MR. NEUMANN: Absolutely.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Sometimes willing to take on Washington to say some impunity just cannot be tolerated. Some abuses are just too egregious.

I would, however, agree that the United States is sort of in a key leadership position. If the United States cuts and runs, the willingness of other partners to sustain either military or economic commitments will be very, very severely undermined. And so while they will have an interest to continue engaging in Afghanistan, that doesn't mean that the engagement will be robust enough without the U.S. And there are very many ways to engage. I think one of the things that's fascinating is to see what's happening with the negotiations and the fact that so very many actors -- be it Germany, be it Turkey, be it Japan, be it Pakistan, be it the United Kingdom -- all are

trying to be in some position of leadership and activity on negotiations. And perhaps there is some need of the international community to coordinate itself. One of the very difficult aspects of the past decade where very often there have been conversations about coordination but fallace coordination, but streamlining, for example, our economic engagement and consistently demanding to hold the Afghans accountable. Not transferring money in a way that serves our domestic or bureaucratic objectives or not transferring money without letting -- basically, letting the Afghans sort of off the hook on monitoring would be critical. So one of the things that's, of course, key for IMF is will they move to the objective of moving on budget? Which would be extremely helpful but is hampered by the fact that there is such tremendous and outrageous corruption in Afghanistan. But will we be able to live up to the Tokyo commitments and move on budget yet remains to be seen. We have been promising that for a number of years and haven't achieved what we have promised.

MR. NEUMANN: And it's going to get you back to implementation. Piece by piece. It won't be an either/or question.

MR. INDYK: Diana.

MS. NEGROPONTE: Diana Negroponte, Brookings Institution and a colleague of Vanda's, so this can't be a tough question.

Vanda, take us to post-2015. Take us to the priority given to governance. Can aid and other advices on tax collection, banking, maintenance of medical services continue to do their work without security? What level of security will be necessary for that kind of domestic support to continue post-2014?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Well, the very simple answer is that no, we will not be able to continue with economic engagement beyond (inaudible) technical capacity without security. The far more problematic and difficult question is how much is enough

security? And it's an answer that changes with time and changes with administrations. One of the things that *Aspiration and Ambivalence* talks about is how we have often put such security restrictions on ourselves, that we (inaudible) ended up being locked behind the HESCO bars which are those big sandbags that protect embassies and compounds and PRT (provincial reconstruction teams). And we have really isolated ourselves fundamentally from the Afghan people and ended up being reliant on very problematic interlocutors who naturally, above all, serve their own interests, often very narrow and parochial interests, and were feeding us information that promoted these interests as opposed to promoting the well-being of the Afghan people.

We have been telling the Afghans, perhaps not quite fairly, that even if we significantly diminish our military presence, we will continue robustly to be engaged economically and with respect to Syrian presence. Whether that will, in fact, materialize depends critically on security. The more insecurity there is, the more limited our engagement, the less helpful our engagement, the more will be locked up.

At the same time, however, a lot of money has gone into Afghanistan in the absence of sufficient security and without security the monitoring that was necessary. And lots of this money was counterproductive. So the fact that this money will be turned off is, in my view, no loss. In fact, it is good. Nonetheless, even economic development, whether it's large economic development like the Silk Road, like exploitations of minerals or very concrete discrete economic development projects in a particular district are critically influenced and dependent to a great extent on security.

MR. NEUMANN: Let me just break that a little differently. It's not a disagreement at all. There are certain kinds of advice in institutional development which are particularly focused in the capital and in some regional areas. Those can, I think, unquestionably continue because you have a sufficient level of security most of the time.

There are some grass roots things that some NGOs, like Global Partners for Afghanistan are able to carry out even now in very unsafe areas like Lagman and Wardak and others. In between, no, you're not going to carry out the kind of stuff we were doing in the districts over the last year, which I think has fallen heavily into this problematic area of too much too fast, wasted, kind of looks like -- looks like the curve on a rollercoaster train with a long, slow ramp up, a quick passage over the top, and a steep drop.

There is underneath it this thing -- I just want to come back to reinforce a point Vanda made because it's not just about advice. It's about fundamental capacity to know what we're doing and that is getting our diplomat -- a certain number of people out and circulating. This is a big issue and it's going to be a Washington issue, particularly right now, post-Benghazi. The politicization of that issue is raising the risk profile for senior policymakers to let people go out. So one of the big issues that is going to have to be -- well, it doesn't have to be, it would be nice if it were joined in Washington -- is leaving enough space for people on the ground, not just in Afghanistan but in a great many countries, to make very difficult decisions about how much to move around, how to make risk-benefit tradeoffs, understanding that when you make those decisions sometimes you run out of luck, sometimes you get it wrong, and sometimes somebody will die. But if you take every loss as a dereliction of duty at the top, the result will be to freeze our people so nobody moves, so we stay institutionally stupid and we make bad policy. And that balance is very tough that Vanda just put her hands on, but it is absolutely critical, and that does need to be infused into the Washington debate or the reaction to Benghazi will be a loss of intelligence, not in a technical spook sense but intelligence in a thinking sense across the world.

MR. INDYK: Well said. Let's take one down the back there. The lady with her hand up there. Yes, you.

MS. KHARAS: My name is Rachel Kharas. I'm just curious. Given the history of the fluidity of alliances and kind of the concept of my enemy's enemy is my friend, I guess what are your thoughts on given a civil war, the different alliances that could be made and the different players as far as the Northern Alliance and Hekmatyar and how does the Taliban, you know, kind of factor into that?

MR. NEUMANN: As many shapes as you have on a kaleidoscope.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Well, I will start by saying that I do not want to leave you with the impression that I believe that civil war is inevitable. I do not believe so. I think there are still things that we can do and there are things that we will do, decisions that we need to make that will influence how much stability or instability there is in 2014.

I also want to stress that if there is major instability, the civil war in the initial phases will not look like the 1990s. You will see some pockets of areas of stability, some areas where local powerbrokers will be dominant and secured, other areas that are going to be very hotly contested, perhaps not between the Taliban and the government but between other powerbrokers, other areas that the Taliban already *de facto* controls or will perhaps control more visibly but that will fundamentally not change.

One of the things that characterizes Afghanistan is that everyone hedges and has historically hedged on as many sides as possible, naturally so for a country and a population that has lived in such very traumatic war situations for several decades. So what we are seeing today is similar hedging taking place, including by members of the Afghan army. We hear about commanders, not infrequently, of leaking some weapons and some intelligence from ISF to the Taliban in the local area, developing accommodations with the Taliban. We hear of families sending one member to the Afghan army while there is one son to the Taliban and one son to the ALP, local warlords, local powerbrokers militias so there is some chance that whoever will emerge

on the winning side in that particular area will be as much friendly inclined as possible to the family.

I think the only thing that we can say with certainty is that if there is great instability, the alliances will be extremely fluid and that has very important implications for our national security interests. Can we rely on the northern alliance or any powerbrokers to prosecute our interests? Or will they behave in the same way they have behaved up to now? Very narrowly, very parochially putting their own changing interests at heart. And that then has implications for whether we can rely on prosecuting our goals via offshore, via of air, via drones, by relying on these local assets that we have cultivated, or whether we in fact need to strive towards greater stability in Afghanistan because we cannot trust that these local assets will have any sort of allegiance, any sort of loyalty to our interests, but will not behave in this very fluid hedging and switching of sides that is Afghan I would argue as any behavior.

MR. INDYK: Yes. You agree? Okay. Let's take one last question.

Here.

MR. GRINDSTAFF: Peter Grindstaff.

MR. INDYK: I didn't even see you back there.

MR. GRINDSTAFF: Karzai. This word hasn't been mentioned much.

The leadership he has, the future of Afghanistan after Karzai and narco traffic. When we first went into Afghanistan --

MR. INDYK: Did you put him up to this question?

MR. GRINDSTAFF: No. I'm asking Vanda. In Afghanistan, everyone thought that problem is going to go away. Where is it now?

MR. NEUMANN: Who told you that?

MR. INDYK: Vanda, do you want to start us off?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Sure. I think that one of the things that *Aspiration and Ambivalence* talks about is that we have -- the dominant females, we have underemphasized governance. But when we focus on government -- governance, we have often chosen to define it in ways that I think are not fundamental to the Afghan people and not fundamental to the problem, and that is the drug trade. We have become preoccupied with the drug trade being the epitome of poor governance. But as I would argue, the epitome of poor governance is power abuse, usurpation of resources, the ability of powerbrokers, including powerbrokers associated with the Afghan government, to get away with murder literally. You know, it was inevitable that there would be drugs in Afghanistan 10 years after the intervention and several decades after the intervention. Everything that we know about what drives the cultivation (inaudible) and how they can be countered would have told us that this would be the case in Afghanistan.

I think that one of the sort of positive developments during the Obama administration was its willingness to break with bad policies in Afghanistan, again, some of which Ron fought very hard when he was ambassador, and more broadly (inaudible @ 1:24:08) with 40 years of ineffective counter policy -- of counter narcotics policies that says you win insurgencies by crop eradication, whereas poppy eradication drove the population into the hands of the Taliban. How we implemented the existing policy of interdiction and now (inaudible) livelihoods, it's far, far more problematic. And I think quite poorly executed in many ways. But Afghanistan's future does not hinge on poppy. We can make our lives far more difficult if we now go out rapidly and on top of that start demanding that we impoverish the population further and further throw them into the hands of the Taliban by once again insisting on crop eradication. Instead, we should have a better role development or development policies and smarten up our interdiction policies.

MR. INDYK: We're out of time. I have a closeout question for the two of you which only requires a number. What would you advise President Obama in terms of the number of troops he should withdraw?

MR. NEUMANN: You didn't pay attention to my starting comment.

MR. INDYK: How many troops should he withdraw next year?

MR. NEUMANN: Oh, next year.

MR. INDYK: Next year.

MR. NEUMANN: I would say that if you have a number --

MR. INDYK: A number. A number.

MR. NEUMANN: No. (Laughter) Because that's the whole problem with Washington right now is it doesn't want to work through this systematically. First of all, what is the endstate? What is that number to do what missions? Then, how do you connect the next year's number to that? And then go back and argue again because it will probably be gold plated and trim it. Personally, I have a lot of sympathy for the keep most of the 68,000 through this year because I see a task of having a lot of advisors out. The last two years has been the period of building quantity in the Afghan army forces. You can't move -- you don't have a chance of moving from quantity to quality without a significant advisory presence. You need enough backup that when you get in trouble you can get people out of trouble. You need the ability for the Afghan forces now. They have to be pushed. They have to be pushed forward. But they need to be in a position to get a bloody nose without getting a broken head.

MR. INDYK: Sixty thousand.

MR. NEUMANN: Sixty, 68.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Two components to the answer. One is the number only as much matters as the mission. If the purpose is solely for the forces to sit

on bases and protect themselves, the number can be very small. If the mission is to help stabilize the Afghan government, the number is considerably larger. And to get the answers you should buy *Aspiration and Ambivalence* and read it.

MR. INDYK: Great answer. Great answer. There it is. Thank you both very much.

(Applause)

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