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AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN, AND INDIA

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. O'HANLON: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining us. I'm Mike O'Hanlon from the Brookings Institution's Foreign Policy Program and we are here at a Brookings event in Carnegie space. We're grateful to our colleagues and friends at the Carnegie Endowment for hosting us today.

Vanda Felbab-Brown, just to my right, is another Brookings scholar who is an expert on Afghanistan. It's one of the six or eight countries, all in difficult parts of the world with difficult challenges, that she'd spent much of her career working on so far, including a couple of excellent books about counter-narcotics and about illicit economies, which is also the topic of her current research project. She wrote a book about Afghanistan called *Aspiration and Ambivalence* about a year ago and was going to be an election observer in last month's first round, until violence precluded that, which is a natural starting point for some of the discussion I know she's going to get into in a moment about what's been going on in Afghanistan these last few weeks.

Next to her is Ambassador Cameron Munter, retired Foreign Service officer, who spent about two of the more difficult years in about the most difficult place you could imagine as U.S. ambassador, to Pakistan in the 2010 to 2012 period, which, as you'll recall, included not only the Osama bin Laden raid, but a number of other challenges, to put it mildly, in U.S.-Pakistani relations. He has a distinguished career for which he received the Distinguished Service Award from Secretary Clinton upon his retirement in 2012. Notable previous assignments in Iraq, in Serbia, and in a number of other European countries, and here in Washington, too. And we're very grateful to have him here today.

And then, finally, Ambassador Teresita Schaffer, also affiliated with us at Brookings, also a former Foreign Service officer who spent a 30-year career largely focused on South Asia. She was ambassador to Sri Lanka. She also served in India,

Pakistan, and Bangladesh, and knows a great deal about the entire sub-region. And, along with her husband, wrote one of my favorite policy books, which is basically about how to negotiate with Pakistan, and that's not even necessarily her most famous book. She also wrote a stellar volume on U.S.-India relations in recent years, as well.

So our format today is that I'm going to begin with just some broad questions to each of them. They're going to initially speak about Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. All three know a great deal about all three countries, but we're going to ask them to speak sort of in order about one country: Vanda for Afghanistan, Ambassador Munter for Pakistan, Ambassador Schaffer for India. But then, in the second round of discussion up here, we'll go into some of the inner linkages, some of the other issues. And then once we're done with a little bit of that, we'll go to you for your questions and be done at 3:00.

So, without further ado, let me again, Vanda, thank you very much for your research and your insights and look forward to how you're going to frame this discussion about Afghanistan, where we stand in the counting process and the vote validation process right now, what you've been watching so far, and what you anticipate in coming weeks.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Good afternoon. Well, Mike, you mentioned that I almost went and ended up not going to Afghanistan to monitor the elections and this was, of course, because the run-up to the elections turned out very violent, with a very purposeful effort on the part of the Taliban to disrupt the elections. For several weeks, months beforehand they were issuing statements that elections -- official workers for the elections campaign, as well as candidates should be targeted and they, in fact, did engage in a great deal of violence and that people should not go to vote.

And, of course, it is fairly irrelevant whether I went or didn't go to observe and monitor the elections. The fact that (inaudible) is the one that has been very

impressive, namely just how many Afghan people turn up for the elections, with a turnout that was, in fact, greater than even the election commissions had expected. And one of the unfortunate outcomes of that great interest and motivation and wherewithal to vote, despite the great Taliban violence and despite really miserable weather during the time of the election, is that many of the stations, in fact, ran out of ballots and people could not vote, much to their frustration, having stood for hours and hours in lines, risking lives, and battling bad weather.

And I think the reason why many now are looking at the first round of the elections with great optimism, the people really came to understand -- the Afghan people understood -- that this is the single most important transition among several transitions taking place. The handover of power from the past decade, the system set up after the U.S. invasion and the rule of President Ahmed Karzai, and, potentially, the first peaceful transfer of power in the country ever.

From that perspective, the first round has gone very well so far. We have some preliminary results. They're not full. In fact, today we were supposed to hear more firmer preliminary results, but I haven't seen them yet, if they have come out. I don't see the numbers, but it seems that the two leading candidates are Abdullah Abdullah, a man of both Tajik and Pashtun origin, who is widely perceived to be, as a politician from the north, a Tajik representative; and Ashraf Ghani, who has the Pashtun credential. Abdullah has right now in the tally about 44 percent of the vote and Ghani about 33 percent, which likely means that there will be a runoff. There will be a second round in the elections because for someone to become the next president, he has to have more than 50 percent of the vote.

And, indeed, the political energy right now in Kabul is consumed by imaginings of a potential deal between Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani in order to avoid a runoff. And that is widely seen by many as a desirable outcome. I am quite

skeptical that the deal would, in fact, be struck. I think it would be quite extraordinary for either of the two men to concede, and particularly for Abdullah, who, amid great bitterness and controversy and sense of fraud, conceded before the second round in the 2009 elections against President Ahmed Karzai. So I don't think that this deal is likely and I think it's perhaps a questionable decision to be pinning hopes and to see a runoff as a problematic outcome. And the fear is, of course, that this will be divisive. I think it will be in some ways healthier if we go through the second round.

Now, the second round can be dangerous. The Taliban will be targeting the candidates. There is a possibility that one of them will be assassinated and that could set up a nightmare. But so far, so good.

I would add one more thing to my opening remarks and that is that as much as both Afghans themselves and the international community, Washington, are preoccupied with the election, both rounds are only one step really, or several steps, in the process of power transfer. Much still has to happen in the process of transferring power after there is a new man in the Arg Palace.

And it's a process that will go on for many months and even the bargains that will be struck to create the president, the debts that the new president will owe to our powerbrokers, will at some point be renegotiated. They will unlikely stay. And with the new man in the Arg Palace there will be layers and layers of institutions changing in a system that's still very much about individual patronage networks. So this uncertainty about what governance will look like, what power will be re-divided, will go for months after there is someone appointed as president.

And so the sense that as soon as we are over elections there is stability, apart from the insurgents, just political stability is premature.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you and let me -- just one quick follow-up. Should we be giving President Karzai some, at least, begrudging credit here, too, in the

sense -- you mentioned how well the Afghan people did. They braved the elements, they braved the Taliban, they voted in huge numbers, the security forces helped protect that process, but President Karzai, if he was trying to cheat, he didn't do a very good job, right? Because all the rumors were that he wanted Rassoul to win. It looks like Rassoul got 10 percent of the vote or less, the former foreign minister, who may now come in third. How do you read that and should we be giving President Karzai at least an acknowledgement, if not great applause, that he sort of stayed out of the actual process and that there wasn't, as far as we can tell, some big palace-led fraud campaign?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Well, you know, we don't, frankly, know about fraud respective of the Arg Palace. And, in fact, there are stories of rather substantial fraud coming up, including fraud that's potentially greater than it was in 2009. And so the key question about fraud to me is whether it's fraud that's acceptable to the Afghan people and Afghan politicians or whether its fraud that is so skewed that it is not acceptable. And so far the reaction seems to be quite calm.

I think it will get more difficult and we have to hold our breath on the (inaudible) process. President Karzai has repeatedly said that he is leaving. He doesn't want to stay as president. The impressive thing is that the elections were held on time for the first time ever, among difficult weather, and he seemed not to have interfered very directly in the process.

I am sure that he has to be very carefully judging what his future and, in fact, even physical survival will look like and that he is probably very active in the bargaining that's currently taking place. And credit needs to go to Zalmi Rassoul for his saying, despite the pressures on him, that he will accept the result, that he will not challenge the results. But as both Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani have said, that if they should not make it into the second round, they will reject that. They will challenge it. And Zalmi Rassoul, to his credit, said whatever the outcome, I accept that. So he

deserves a lot of credit.

MS. O'HANLON: Well said. Thank you.

Ambassador Munter, if I could go to you, and I know we're going to talk about the regional connections. And obviously there's a lot of interconnection between Afghanistan and Pakistan, but we'll save that for the second round. If you could please catch us up a little bit not so much on Pakistani elections, since it's been awhile now, but how you see Pakistan's politics doing a year on, into the new government. That would be much appreciated.

MR. MUNTER: Thank you, Michael. And thanks for all of you spending some time here in the middle of the day to discuss these topics with us.

I think that what Vanda ended with is where I would begin, which is that there's a process where we may all want to look to 2014, for the reasons of our own government, to look at this as some sort of break or some sort of goal after which there might be a different kind of situation. And I think we're going to be a little disappointed if we expect a sharp break in 2014. Now, despite whatever happens with the BSA in Afghanistan and despite whatever happens in the Indian elections, at least from the Pakistani point of view, there are ongoing issues and an overwhelming feeling that the government of Nawaz Sharif, which has been in power now for a year, that this is not a government that has chosen to or is capable of making bold decisions.

There had been a lot of hope after the Zardari years that there might be more purpose, there might be more of a focus if somehow the problems that Zardari faced due to his personality or the issues of the split government of Punjab being under the PMLN government and the rest of the government more or less led by the PPP Coalition, that somehow they would come out of this stagnation and this would somehow link up into the sense that Pakistan could get moving under Nawaz Sharif. I think the electorate, in giving him a fairly resounding mandate, had hoped for that, but what he has

shown, it seems, is that he is going to be timid or at least very careful.

And this seems to be matched also to the approach of the other real power center, obviously, the army, which even though there have been many rumors that have come up about impending military incursions into North Waziristan, something America has pushed for for a very long time, and is something that people in the country who are very much looking for a symbol of Pakistani governmental resolve against the militants, it doesn't seem likely that that is going to happen any time soon either.

So it's almost as if what you see in Pakistan, looking from the outside, is that Pakistan, rather than taking the initiative, rather than putting its imprint on what could happen in the region, is taking a wait-and-see attitude to see what will happen next door in Afghanistan. What will happen to the American presence in the region? What will happen next door in India? So, playing almost a tactical approach, seeing what kind of counterpunches it can take rather than taking initiative, as some had hoped. Hoped because there are enormous problems of governance in Pakistan, as you all know, enormous economic challenges, enormous long-term challenges. Just take the challenge of water in the region. If it's not dealt with in coming years, is going to be something that utterly, utterly changes politics in the country and will have a huge impact on India, as well.

Those longer-term things don't appear to be on the agenda. What appears to be on the agenda is stability, keeping things in the internal system of Pakistan stable; making sure that the alliances among the various powerbrokers remain; and, perhaps in Nawaz Sharif's case, trying to make sure that he doesn't get outflanked on the right by Imran Khan, so, therefore, putting a lot of credence into, at least in public, into the discussions and the negotiations with the TTP, with the Taliban, to try to at least convince the public that something is being done. Whereas, I think, most outside observers have a healthy skepticism about whether these talks are going to make a lot of progress.

So that, in other words, trying to work within the world that exists, rather than imagining a world that could be better. And I think that's, A, something that the educated classes find somewhat disappointing, somewhat deflating, after a large election victory that could have given this man who has twice been prime minister before another chance. He seems to be doing the same kind of cautious politics that he did before. And the new leader of the military, also, Raheel Sharif, also seems to be playing a very cautious game, as well. And so, sadly, for those of us -- and I count myself among them -- who had looked for new initiatives, whether in governance, whether in economic, and whether there are possibilities in dealing with the neighbors, which we'll turn to later, it doesn't look like that's happening.

My last point I would make is that I think that for those of us who are Pakistan's friends from the outside, we would do ourselves a favor -- even if Pakistan doesn't change much in 2014 -- to see the end of the combat role in Afghanistan, perhaps, as a chance for us to reconceptualize our approach to take into account regional issues. To try to not look at Pakistan as we have for so many years down the bilateral track, or at least to supplement that with a broader approach to Indian issues, Afghan issues, perhaps to break down some of the bureaucratic barriers that have limited India-Pakistan ties, or what others can do to help India-Pakistan ties.

That is to say, even if Pakistan doesn't show some of the leadership we had hoped for, it might be a time for us to try to come up with some ideas how we can support a future for Pakistan that is perhaps a little more bold than what we're seeing for domestic reasons.

MR. O'HANLON: You know, I've two quick follow-ups, if I could, in this introduction. The first one is really to give a sense, even though there haven't been big policy initiatives under Sharif, do you at least see some slight improvement, let's say, in the Pakistani economy or the stability of the country based on either trends against the

insurgency or the global, you know, partial economic recovery that's hurt them less than the great recession and the things that happened in '08-'09 had done to the Pakistani economy? That's my main question. But I have to admit, your last comment also made me wonder if you think it's time that we change the U.S. Government's organization and maybe, at least in the foreseeable future, in a year or two, think about eliminating the position of special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, or otherwise modifying our structures? I'd be very curious for your thoughts, if you want to share them.

AMBASSADOR MUNTER: No, I very much believe that it would be wise for us, not precipitously, but it would be wise for us to have a bureaucratic structure both in the State Department, in the White House, but also in the military and the intelligence community that does not make an artificial line between India and Pakistan.

Does that mean we have to go back to an Indo-Pak? No, of course not. But if we can look regionally, if we can structure ourselves regionally, I think it will help our thinking, and so that people at places like Brookings can give advice to people who are working on cross-cutting issues in the way that we've failed to do that. Because one of the critiques I've had in recent years is, if you look at AfPak and you've got American soldiers in Afghanistan, if you look through the lens of Afghanistan and you look at Pakistan, what you tend to see in Pakistan is the Haqqani Network and that's about it. In other words, that distortion that we've put into our policymaking has gotten in the way. And what you suggest, I think, if done judiciously, could be very, very useful.

Second, the point you make is, have things gotten better? Well, I got to Pakistan in 2010, and it went straight to hell. And I left Pakistan in 2012, and things have gradually gotten better. (Laughter) So the best contribution that I've made was, of course, leaving town.

That said, I do think that things have calmed from the period where we experienced -- the team that was with me in Pakistan -- we experienced the problem of

expectations at the end of the Musharraf era that I think had been pumped up too high, from our point of view and from the Pakistani point of view. And this is more on the bilateral track.

But also domestically, it's the end of the Musharraf era, we've got democracy coming back, a lot of things are going to get better, I think now we're much more realistic. We've realized that the imbalances of counterterrorism and of long-term commitment to the country, we paid the price for that in 2011. Now, I think, people are perhaps being a little more modest and little more realistic in what they expect and they're seeing that approach works a little better.

As for the economy, I'm a little less sanguine about Pakistan's ability only because I think Pakistan is in a -- not in a spiral, but in a trap based on the more autarchic sense of its economy. The fact that the economic powers of the country may make money -- the people who are there are doing well and when you see the sheets in Bed, Bath, and Beyond and they're full of Pakistani sheets, they're good quality sheets. These are people who know how to make things. But the kind of opening to the global economy that would make Pakistan really achieve a kind of prosperity that it deserves, that has not happened.

And Nawaz Sharif, as someone who is seen as the representative of that traditional business, in many ways was the kind of guy who might have been, had he been bolder -- had he and his advisors been bolder, the person who can push to see structural change in the economy that would open it up to the rest of the world and, specifically, even open it up to India, where the real advantages to both countries could lie. In principle he's for an opening to India, but it was going to take a lot more work by a lot more people to have that economic breakthrough or the change in the way that their old-fashioned economy, run by old-fashioned elites, therefore, then feeds a system of democracy, but a democracy that's not terribly responsive to constituencies. For that to

change, I think it has to open up to the world economy, and that they haven't done.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. And, Tessie, if I could ask you, now you're speaking about an ongoing process. In Afghanistan, at least Vanda had the luxury of talking about a completed first round. You're right in the middle of a first round that has, what, nine separate days in phases? But if you could just explain to us what you are able to discern and what's going on and what you expect, please.

AMBASSADOR SCHAFFER: Well, both Vanda and Cameron have talked about process, in the sense of talking about the dynamics of Pakistani politics and the Afghan election process. I'm going to talk just a tiny bit about process, but mostly about what I think we ought to be looking for. This election, like every other election India has ever had, is the largest to-date exercise in democratic electoral politics that the world has ever known.

In order to maintain order for all of the elections across this huge country, the voting this year is on nine different days, with a patchwork quilt as the illustration of where each phase takes place. It's not a sort of nice, neat orange line stretching across the map. The lower house of Parliament which is being elected has a membership of 572. India's elections are famous for being 572 separate elections. This year you actually have two parties with national elections that are competing. And this has been the case for the last three or four elections.

The outgoing government is headed by Congress, which has been around actually for over 100 years, but which was the party that brought India to independence and which has led or solely run most of its governments since independence, but which is widely regarded as having run out of juice during the most recent administration. And it's also been beset by scandal.

The other party with national ambitions is the Bharatiya Janata Party, BJP, Hindu nationalists, headed by Narendra Modi, the chief minister of one of India's

most dynamic states. Modi is a guy with a lot of baggage. The good baggage is he has done a very good job in developing his home state of Gujarat. He is a decisive guy. The bad baggage is he's also an autocratic guy. He comes out of the hardest line part of the BJP. And most importantly, he was chief minister at the time of ethnic riots in Gujarat 12 years ago, which left over 1,000 people dead. The only court case that was ever brought against him on those charges was dismissed for insufficient evidence to convict. Modi is the darling of the business community now, which I think mostly tells you a lot about how far Congress has fallen.

There is a third possible outcome, which is actually, in my judgment, more likely than it -- Modi is the candidate to beat. There's no question about that. The third possible outcome is that there might be a rickety coalition of regional parties. India has a number of parties that are represented in only one or at the most two states, which basically run on local issues. And if the BJP doesn't get enough seats to put together a winning coalition, then you could get a conglomerate of these regional parties, possibly with Congress' support.

What to look for as we get the election results, which will be on May 16th. First, I would say -- and these comments presuppose that there will be a BJP-led government of some sort. That's not a lock and I'll talk about the different possibilities later on. The first thing to look at is economic policy. Modi has made no secret of his beliefs that this should also be the heart of Indian foreign policy, but he has provided relatively few clues as to exactly what his economic policy would be. He's a big believer in growth. He has focused a lot on infrastructure and implementation during his stewardship of Gujarat. These would all be things that would be valuable to the Indian economy. He has proclaimed his enthusiasm about investment, including foreign investment, but not including foreign investment in multi-brand retail, which is one of those hot-button issues on the Indian scene.

What he does on economic policy will, to a large extent, set the tone for relations with the United States. The other part of that tone will be set by the fact that the United States revoked his visa on account of the riots in Gujarat nine years ago. And while we have reestablished contact with Modi, something that he agreed to when he greeted our ambassador with a beatific smile and a huge bouquet of red roses when they met in February, we don't know how much of a bad taste in his mouth that will leave, although he has also said publicly it won't have anything to do with relations with the United States.

Third thing to look for: Pakistan. Modi has a hard-line history, but in the one foreign policy speech he gave, he was lyrical in his praise of the previous BJP prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who, among other things, made a considerable effort to be the guy who brought peace between India and Pakistan. In Modi's formulation, Vajpayee had the right balance between shanti and shakti, peace and strength.

So we are left with one potential positive in the relationship with Pakistan. This is a guy who might be able to get the trade opening between these two countries unglued, always assuming that the Pakistan army is willing to get back on the positive side of that issue. They've been on both sides, but at different times.

One potential negative outcome, if there is a bad security incident, a bombing incident, or something else which could be traced to or laid at the door of Pakistan, that would be a situation where Modi's instinct would be a tough and military response. And one unanswered question: Does Modi have the desire or stomach for a kind of Nixon to China role? People fantasize about that. I don't think we have any way of figuring that out in advance.

Next think to look at: Afghanistan. He hasn't said much about the Afghanistan, Modi hasn't, but I think it is reasonable to assume that he would continue India's long history of maintaining as close relations as possible with Afghanistan. This is

based on the principle well-known by Machiavelli, Kautilya, and everybody in between that if the country next to you is a problem, the country next to them is your friend.

He's unlikely to be interested in a direct Indian security role in Afghanistan. Don't expect to see Indian troops replacing the American ones. But beyond that, I think he hasn't left us very many clues and a lot is going to depend, also, on what happens in Afghanistan.

The accent I put on continuity in Afghanistan will actually show up in other places, as well, if Modi is successful in forming a government. Indian foreign policy tends not to turn on a dime. In the party manifesto of the BJP there was a kind of Delphic statement about the need to reexamine and modernize India's nuclear policy, which currently is centered on no first use. After a certain amount of breathless press commentary, Modi himself made a statement to the effect that, no, I didn't say we were going to can the no first use policy.

I think you will see -- you will see -- some policy changes, but it will not be like flicking a switch. And most of the changes you're likely to see is in the direction the government leans on some kinds of issues, particularly in the economic sphere.

Modi does not have this election sewed up even though you would think so looking at the press. To my way of thinking, the most dangerous outcome of this election would be that rickety coalition I spoke about. Historically, that kind of government in India has not lasted long, has not made many decisions, and has been the prototypical weak government which is not able to deal with issues like its relations with Pakistan. And anyone who is hoping for moves towards peace in Pakistan had better hope for a strong or at least stronger government in both countries because it won't happen without that.

I consider a return of a Congress-led coalition extremely unlikely. I would say so do the leaders of Congress, who have let slip that they will be happy if they

get 120 seats, which is less than half of a majority.

But as far as how much Modi is going to be able to do if he's successful in winning an election, the size of his coalition matters quite a lot. And there the speculation on how many seats Modi's party and their closest allies will be able to win before they have to start looking for other coalition members ranges from 120 to 240 out of 270-some that they need in order to put together a coalition. Obviously the closer you get to that number, the greater is the magnetic attraction of the big party to people who want to be sitting in the government. And the greater is their ability to make bolder changes in policy, some of which we might welcome, some of which we might very much regret.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. I just have one clarifying question for myself. You implicitly got at it to some extent, but I want to sort of just set the baseline, and then I've got one more question for Vanda and Cameron before we go to you all. But the question, Tezi, is about the state of India's economy today, the basic economic backdrop to this whole election. And I'm reminded, whenever I think -- I think it was about two years ago, *The Economist*, a magazine for which I have a great deal of respect, had a cover which I don't agree with, but I'd be curious if you did, but they were basically saying India's going to rule the 21st century. India's going to overtake China not only in population, but in economic potential; that China's star is fading, India's is rising. That was before we saw India's growth rates start to slip a bit.

But I'd just like your take. In the context of this Modi, you know, campaign or Modi-dominated public portrayal of the campaign, is India sort of feeling its oats still? It feels like the last couple of years have just been a little bit of a blip with not quite as high of a growth rate? Or is India fundamentally doubting whether it really is a major rising power of the 21st century?

AMBASSADOR SCHAFFER: Actually, some of both. India's economy

grew at 9 percent a year up through 2009. Growth rates have been significantly lower since then, down to below 5 percent last year. Below 5 percent is still substantially above population growth, which is at about 1-1/2 percent. So if you're measuring it by the ability to deliver more to people, it still meets that test.

There is some sense that the worst of the recession-induced slowdown has probably passed. There are some longer-term problems that India faces, including the ability to deliver a rising quantum of well-trained people for a modernizing labor force, which is both an education problem and a business organization problem.

I think India is going to resume a higher growth path. It will do it somewhat more quickly in a Modi government not so much because he's magic, but because there will be some decisions made that might have otherwise have dithered and because there's a certain amount of business hype about Modi which will lead people to make decisions perhaps a little quicker than they otherwise would.

Will India overtake China economically? I'm not so sure. There's a lot to overtake, to start with. I mean, there's a difference of -- it's about a factor of 2 in per capita GDP, so I think they've got a substantial overall power deficit and a substantial economic deficit with China. China, if I'm to believe my China watcher friends, is just going into a period of choppy seas. India may be coming out of it, so the shape of those two curves may shift, but I'm very cautious about making long-term predictions about how is going to win that race in the next 100 years.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. And --

AMBASSADOR SCHAFFER: Fortunately, none of us will be around.

(Laughter)

MR. O'HANLON: Well, Vanda and Cameron, I just want to pose one question to both of you and then begin with Vanda and get you to talk a little bit about it. You both, I think, hinted at aspects of it in your first remarks, but how much does the

outcome in Afghanistan shape the likely future for Afghan-Pakistani relations? If Dr. Abdullah were to win, of course, he's associated with the Northern Alliance, which is seen as friendly to India and potentially hostile to Pakistan. So is this really an issue that we need to think about not only as a big choice for the Afghan people, but a big choice in terms of implications for Afghan-Pakistani relations? Or is that sort of -- you know, is it too soon to say and there are a lot of levers of influence both sides would have available, that we would have available, that might allow us to work with whichever outcome we get?

So how do you see Afghan-Pakistani relations going under the two likely scenarios: Ghani or Abdullah?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Well, I think that the first question that really needs to be answered is what will Afghanistan politics look like under either Abdullah Abdullah or Ashraf Ghani? And I was struck by Cameron's characterization of Nawaz perhaps imagining a better world as opposed to playing within the system. And that's the expectation that is laid -- associated with both Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah. But it might turn out that they will very much be playing within the system and whatever better world they can imagine, whether in terms of internal governance or external relations, will end up ultimately very hampered by very difficult politics.

And already, also, the moves that we are seeing from Ashraf Ghani, and particularly reaching out to warlords, reaching out to Pashtun powerbrokers who are not happy with where he is, such as suggesting for vice president -- having Dostum on his ticket, are very much indicative that there is these expectations that massive reforms will start materializing very quickly in a system of governance that's very problematic, that is widely seen as not satisfying elementary needs of people. It is often seen as a rapacious, capricious, mafia rule. And that both reformers coming from different reform backgrounds might find it very difficult to move the reforms out.

Now, that will have repercussions for Pakistan, as well as other neighbors or other regional powers. I think that for Pakistan the single worst outcome would be a strong government with strong pro-India inclinations. But short of that, they are equally concerned about instability, disintegration into civil war. And I think that they have accepted that whether it's Abdullah Abdullah, a man of Tajik -- associated with the Tajik politics particularly, or Ashraf Ghani, that they would be capable of working with them rather than being hostile a priori to the government.

Now, that said, massive issues exist between the two countries and negotiations with the Taliban will inevitably be on the agenda of the next president. And it's not going to be smooth, it's not going to be easy. It's not going to be smooth for Afghanistan-Pakistan relationship. And the difficulty here, I think, is that the Afghans love to expect that Pakistan can deliver and blame bad outcomes on Pakistani mischief, and that might be just too optimistic in terms of the strength of what Pakistan can actually do. And so there would be this difficult misalignment of expectations that they will have to manage regardless of who is the next president.

You can also bring India into it, but Abdullah has some very strong relations with India, has for many years been seen by the Indian establishment as their man. And that will be a burden for him that he will have to address because that's a difficult position for the Afghan president to be with respect to Pakistan. But interestingly enough, the Pakistanis have been reaching to Abdullah's people, there has been (inaudible) exchanges, there have been signals that it doesn't have to be an either/or completely hostile relationship. Ashraf himself has an extensive relationship with India.

But again, they will have to be their own man and they will have very a difficult domestic set of constraints to manage and very, very difficult decisions to make of which powerbrokers they bring in and with powerbrokers they keep out. And those powerbrokers they'll keep out will be heavily courted by the neighbors. And so it will

inevitably be a very complex intermestic management where what they do internally will strengthen or hamper their regional engagements, as well.

MR. O'HANLON: So not altogether without some hopefulness, but very sober, your assessment, Vanda. I'd be curious, Mr. Ambassador, how you see the implications of the election in Afghanistan for Afghan-Pak relations.

AMBASSADOR MUNTER: Equally as sober. I mean, the good news is, I think, that, as Vanda alluded, I don't think there's a master Pakistani plan, despite what you might hear from your contacts in Afghan intelligence. I don't think there's a master Pakistani plan to kind of restart the civil wars, send in the proxies to try to take over the country no matter what happens in the power vacuum that would develop after 2014. This notion of kind of a Pakistan that has this kind of vision -- I mean, the good news is they don't have this vision. The bad news is they don't have the vision. (Laughter)

I mean, I don't think that Pakistan has an attenuating vision that is a friendly or good vision. It's that they are waiting to see and to react to what they see as what's on the ground, kind of a realist, anthropological, reactive sense. And this goes, I think, for the army, the for ISI, as well as for the civilians, who, as Vanda said, I mean, civilians have reached out much more in the last couple of years to the Northern Alliance and to the people who are traditionally not known as friends of Pakistan. But I think the militarists are going to wait and see.

And what makes that very hard is that people, I imagine, in Afghanistan would like to have some sort of predictability from Pakistan, and I am not sure that Pakistan can offer that at this point other than the predictability that people might have of kind of a fantasy of evil Pakistani intentions. I don't think they have that, but I think they are going to be -- they're going to respond, say, to various warlords being brought in or courted by the people who may lose the election. They're going to respond to that kind of personality politics with their own sense of their own personality questions.

And in this sense, perhaps what's more important is not so much the result of the election, but the result of the next stage after the election, when the winner of Pakistan's -- of the elections in Afghanistan, having been acknowledged by the people who took part in the process, then have to reengage with the Taliban. And the way in which they reengage with the Taliban, we've all said, this process has to be Afghan-led, et cetera. If that works in some way, that will have a huge impact on what Pakistan is able to do either in a good or bad way. So that would be the key element. How did they, after assuming a successful election, begin the process of healing in Afghanistan and what opening is left to the Pakistanis?

Finally, I think what worries me quite a bit is that idea that there is the potential in a post-2014 world, assuming that the international presence not only is there, but, sadly, if the international attention flags somewhat, that people who live in the neighborhood will stay interested in what happens in the neighborhood. And my nightmare would be something along the lines of an Indian construction crew in Pakistan seeing a number of ethnic Pashtun in an area and saying those are a bunch of ISI proxies, where the Pashtuns are looking at the Indians saying these are a bunch of RAW spies, and then go after each other for reasons that we might not think are legitimate, but if there's no one to prevent that crash, the inadvertent crash of people who see themselves as enemies in Afghanistan, that Afghanistan could be, sadly, the place where the India-Pakistan misunderstandings get acted out. And it would be (inaudible) wise for India and Pakistan to renew their effort before something like this happens, to have the high-level kind of hotlines and other areas in which if something like this were to happen, they could at least try to deescalate.

So the two ideas are -- the fear is there's a vacuum, I think, of strategic planning; and secondly, there is the possibility of unexpected events, such as India, India-Pakistan competition in Afghanistan could get in the way.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Just one follow-up before we go to all of you. You talk about a lack of strategic vision in Pakistan towards Afghanistan, and more generally you talk about the vacuum, you know, the inability to fashion a vision. Is that because they essentially have within their government two conflicting visions, one of which is regional economic integration makes sense, it's good for all of our economic growth, et cetera; the other of which is, by golly, India's always going to be behind the tree, behind the rock, behind the mountain in Afghanistan? We know they're up to no good. In other words, the Pakistani paranoia/constant worry about India. And these two are -- and maybe even a little bit of sense that they should be dominating Afghanistan in a sort of regionally hegemonic way because Afghanistan's the poor mountain people to the northwest, you know, and they dared actually raise this notion that the border should shift and that Afghanistan should take some of Pakistan, you know, into its own territory and that attitude probably colors and influences the Pakistani.

In other words, to simplify, do the Pakistanis really feel fundamentally conflicted? On good days, they might want to get along with Afghanistan, maybe even India, and all grow economically together. On bad days, they want to dominate them or they suspect there's always bad things going on inside of Afghanistan and they just can't reconcile which of these two is the most persuasive or helpful.

AMBASSADOR MUNTER: I think you'll find representatives in both of those ideas in Pakistan, but the process -- and I know Tezi likes me to go beyond process to substance, but I'll still with process right now -- the process here that I'm more concerned about is not that there are competing visions, but rather that there's a habit of thinking tactically. And that, I think, is true of the civilians and I think it's true of the military. That is to say if something is good from the Punjabi-based or if there's a problem with the ethnic Pashtuns moving into Karachi that upsets the domestic political applecart in some way or if there are business interests that have to be balanced within

Pakistan, that will be what makes decisions about Afghanistan. That will be the domestic calculation.

And similarly, for the military, there will be that question of, yes, let's say we're past strategic depth as a concept, but we're still concerned what's going on on our border. If this particular warlord or this particular group of people is in power here and they are inclined to be friendly to us, we can respond with another move or we can actually talk to other people who might be friendly to us. But I don't sense a broader vision of how -- from the Pakistani military point of view, a vision of what ought to happen there. I think they believe in a broad sense, yes, we'd like to have a friendly country next to us, we'd like to have a country that we don't feel threatened by, but we'll have to wait and see what happens in the election, in the reconciliation process in order to decide that. So that I get back to the lack of vision as a problem rather than competing visions.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. It's very clear. Well, please, if you could get my attention, then wait for a microphone and identify yourself. If you like, you know, identify which of the panelists you at least like to begin the answer to your question. I think we'll take two at a time, and we'll start here in the third row.

And, Steve, did you want to ask, also? No, okay. Here in the third row and then we'll go up to the front for the first two.

MR. MILAM: Thank you. My name's Bill Milam. I'm a senior scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center. In a former life I was one of Cameron's predecessors and also one of Howie Schaffer's successors, so.

And that leads me to make one note here and that is that there was a fourth election a few months ago in Bangladesh, very problematical, that seems to have fallen off the charts, as perhaps I hope you're not ruling Bangladesh out of South Asia.

MR. O'HANLON: Never.

MR. MILAM: But I do have a question for Tezi in this regard, if you don't

mind shifting to Bangladesh for a second, and that is that if under the hypothesis that Modi wins a substantial -- or gets together a substantial kind of coalition, not a majority, but a coalition, what do you think Indian policy will be towards Bangladesh given that its policy in the past, during the election and before that, was relatively pernicious and unhelpful to both Bangladesh and to the rest of South Asia?

My second question is towards Cameron. And I have to preface it with saying that, Cameron, I took the election of a year ago in Pakistan to be vote for continuity, not the kind of continuity that would bring back the PPP, which was hopelessly ineffective, but the kind of continuity where there weren't big changes, only people were voting for a better economy, more economic action. That's my view. And I noticed that they haven't produced, and I agree with you, on the economy nor on anything else. You said something that I think I agree with and I think you said that you didn't think that there would be this move towards -- by the military into North Waziristan within -- you know, we will still be waiting for it a year from now, in other words, or some length of time from now. I agree with that.

Do you think this is because they're waiting to see what happens in Afghanistan? Or do you think that -- I'm more inclined to think that it's because they all of a sudden looked around and said wait a minute, what do we do when we attack North Waziristan about all their allies in Punjab and elsewhere? And don't we have a serious problem there and how are we going to handle that? And they haven't got a plan for that and they probably haven't got the capability. I leave you there.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. And we'll take one more before we go to the panel.

MR. ZEITLIN: My name's Arnold Zeitlin and I opened the first Pakistan bureau for the Associated Press many, many years ago. And, one, I want to second Bill's remarks about Bangladesh and I hope we'll hear more about that if not now, some

later time.

This is basically directed toward Dr. Felbab-Brown because the election in Afghanistan will mean the transfer of office from one individual to another. But will it actually be the transfer of power? Time and time again, you have today, and your colleagues as well, have talked about powerbrokers. So where will power rest once the decision about the election is made? And that includes references toward Taliban, which, of course, did not participate, but holds tremendous power in Afghanistan?

MR. O'HANLON: This is perfect, one question for everyone. So why don't we just work down the row, beginning with Vanda?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: You are right in the sense that the transfer of office inevitably is not the transfer of power. Nonetheless, I do believe that there is going to be a transfer of power. And I say so even because one of the fundamental questions really is what will be the role of President Hamid Karzai or post-President, ex-President Hamid Karzai? We know that he's building a massive compound for himself right in the midst of the presidential ground, indicating that he's willing to move maybe 100 meters away, but not very far from the center of power. (Laughter)

And, in fact, there is much speculation about whether he should have some sort of position in the next government, whether he should be named senior minister or advisor of -- perhaps given some sort of statutory role or hold power. So that's very much something to be worked out in the Afghan process: just how much power will be transferred away from him on to someone else?

The second layer of the power transfer, of course, is the negotiations between the powerbrokers and who the next man who will be the formal president will be. And that's still up for grabs, in my view. It can very well be that the next president is, unfortunately, very weak even as the expectation both domestically and from abroad is that he is going to be a decisive reformer, really challenging a system that is very

unpopular, lack legitimacy, and, arguably, unsustainable for very much longer. But despite this expectation abroad and internally, the next man as the president might likely be very, very constrained in terms of politics.

Nonetheless, the Afghan president is a very powerful office. And let's remember that one of the reasons why Hamid Karzai became president is because there was a broad sense he was a very weak man who would not challenge the established system of power. And although he ultimately ended up not challenging the system in terms of producing desirable reform, he was able to manage and accumulate a lot of power within the presidency to divide the -- to play a divide-and-rule and hamper others from accumulating more power than he had. And that's worth something that even a weak successor might well end up in the same position.

Now, how desirable that is with respect to reforms is highly questionable and I would say it's problematic. But nonetheless, there will be a transfer not just of offices, but transfer of power. And that will also involve not just the president and the national level, but it will, in a very difficult way, also involve layers and layers of appointments in the key ministries: in Ministry of Interior, which manages the police; in Ministry of Defense, which manages the army. And so it's quite possible that the accomplishments that the Afghan army has experienced will be very much challenged as layers and layers of appointments are being challenged or throw out.

And as many of the top of ministers and people underneath them really created personal networks of power, and if they go out, what will that do? How much will that tear up these institutions?

And then the third element of the renegotiation of power is, of course, the Taliban. And, again, that's something that we don't know. In my view, 2015 will be a very bloody, difficult year. I think the Taliban has every incentive to throw whatever they have to challenge the new government, to challenge the army particularly as the

relationship between the army and the new president is being negotiated. Let's imagine that the next president is Abdullah Abdullah, seen as Tajik, what does that do to Pashtun networks within the army, how much there is fragmentation within the army taking place at the time when the Taliban is going to throw whatever they can to show that the system is weak?

But they might not succeed. And if they don't succeed, if the army reasonably stays together and, yes, they take a beating, but they still stay standing, it might then be a much better platform for negotiation with the Taliban in 2016 than we have had at any point since the issue of negotiations came up.

So the answer is we don't know and it will be difficult, it will be messy, and it'll go on for months and months beyond the elections. And, in fact, I would expect that there will be several sets of negotiations, that there will be, first, bargains struck to establish someone as a president. And then, a year down the road or several months down the road, the next president will realize that he really doesn't like the bargain that he struck, that he owes so many political debts, that he's so hamstrung that he will have to renegotiate it and violate the terms of the deal. And then it will be a probably even more difficult second set of renegotiations as he is testing his power, his teeth, and either succeeding in becoming more effective and having more potency to his presidency or not.

MR. O'HANLON: Ambassador Munter.

AMBASSADOR MUNTER: Sure. Bill, to your question, I'm glad we agree on everything because I'd hate to have you as an enemy. But I think the point you make is right, that there is enormous hesitation on the part of the Pakistani army in part to go into North Waziristan not just because of the battle of North Waziristan, but because of the unforeseen or the suspected results of how the groups, the various groups, that we call under the militant banner within North Waziristan would call upon their allies

throughout settled Pakistan to hit the government where it hurts.

And so since many of the people in the higher levels of the army, I would say the core commanders, always seem to say we don't want to take this kind of -- any move until we're sure that the people are behind us. It's a very fuzzy concept. We want to have the people behind us while we do this. This was seen by various American critics as you guys are just chickens or you don't want to go in or you're actually on the side of the militants in Waziristan. They're your friends and you're playing a double game.

I don't think it's quite that simple. I think the reason is that it would be, A, a very difficult operation to go in, even with support, and it would be very difficult if the army is going into Miran Shah and a number of bombs go off in Lahore, and all of a sudden the civilians, such as, you know, Lahore's finest, the prime minister, say wait a minute, I didn't bargain for this. It's okay for people to die up in those hills, but I really don't want the overpasses that I built throughout Lahore all to come tumbling down because that's not part of the bargain.

So I guess I come back to the question of the primacy really of domestic politics at a time when we all wish there would be a little bit more vision for a foreign policy or at least a regional vision that Pakistan could do what it says it wants to do, which is to be a good neighbor. It's good neighborliness will not be, I don't think, because it has a way of extending itself, whether it's even watching as closely (inaudible), if that's your question. It'll be much more we will be hesitant to make any move, like moving into Waziristan, because we're afraid it'll have such an impact on domestic politics that we simply won't move. And if they don't move, that means that there will always be -- in any game, they'll be the second player to play the chess piece.

And so what can we expect from Pakistan if we're looking from India or if we're looking from Afghanistan? If the leaders after these elections are wise enough to have initiatives that allow Pakistan to move, if they read Pakistani policies well, it's a

wonderful opportunity for India and Afghanistan to lead them, if they're (inaudible) if they can. Because I just don't think that the Indian or Afghans are going to be on their back foot after some new Pakistani initiative. It's all about domestic politics, so I think we agree on that.

MR. O'HANLON: Madam Ambassador.

AMBASSADOR SCHAFFER: Bangladesh. Yes, Bill, they had a terrible election in December. For those who don't follow Bangladeshi politics on a regular basis, about two decades ago the Bangladeshis pioneered what was actually a rather brilliant way of managing hostile election environments by enacting a constitutional amendment that required the outgoing government to step down for the 90 days preceding elections to be replaced by a government of technocrats who were legally precluded from seeking office in the next election. And this would be the group that oversaw the election. Unfortunately, for both of the political leaders who have alternated in power in the intervening time, under this arrangement the outgoing government never came back. And both of these women had been looking for 20 years for a way of breaking that curse and hanging on to the chair that they rather liked sitting on.

Sheikh Hasina, the current prime minister, had a huge majority and, therefore, pushed through with no difficulty at all a constitutional amendment throwing out the interim government arrangement, bolstered by a Supreme Court ruling, which actually permitted them to use the interim government arrangement one or two more times, but said it was basically unconstitutional.

Under those circumstances, she would not agree to any election rules that included a non-party government and her principal opponent Begum Khaleda Zia wouldn't agree to any election rules that didn't include the interim government. Therefore, Begum Zia and her allies boycotted the election. Half the seats were awarded uncontested and the other half, 75 percent of them, when to Sheikh Hasina. So guess

what. Sheikh Hasina now has an even thumpinger majority than they used to.

During the run-up to the election, the United States continued to call to anyone who cared to listen and then to lots of people who didn't care to listen for elections that were free, fair, and inclusive. And some time after the election the United States Government continued to call for having the newly elected government resign and hold a fresh election, something which had about as much chance of happening as a snowball surviving a few years in hell. (Laughter)

The Indian government, on the other hand, basically stuck with its traditional friends in Sheikh Hasina's party. This has always been the party that was closest to India. And not incidentally, it's the party that has not, at least not in recent memory, allied itself with any of the Islamic parties. So the Indian concluded that Begum Zia's party allied with the Jamaat-e-Islami. It was bad news. And we're going to stick with the guy's whose overall outlook on life is more sympathetic to India.

I do not expect to see a significant change in Indian policy. The one thing that might change and that actually I hope does change is that you might conceivably have a government in Delhi that is better able to manage the mercurial personality and strong interests of the chief minister of West Bengal in using policy toward Bangladesh as a way of managing its relationship with Delhi. Now, if that sounds convoluted, it's only because it is.

The U.S. has pretty much dropped its call for fresh elections, recognizing that these weren't going to happen. Every once in a while, the U.S. Government still calls for more inclusive politics in Bangladesh. So far the tea leaves are not looking particularly good, whether they come from Sylhet or Sri Lanka. None of them look particularly good. And the Jamaat-e-Islami has been leading processions and the BNP, Begum Zia's party, is currently on a long march. They're trying to carry this out without basically getting them all arrested.

My guess is that you will see sputtering of Bangladesh's traditional confrontational politics for the next couple of years, following which they may well get beyond sputtering. And that will be the point at which we can see whether Sheikh Hasina is, indeed, going to go in the direction of something closer to a one-party state as her father had. I don't think the issue will be forced right away, but after a couple of years -- there's been a kind of life cycle of elections during which the political environment and the government's ability to make decisions has started out not terribly high, has dropped on a gentle curve initially, and has then fallen off completely by year four out of a five-year parliamentary cycle.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. We'll start a second round. We'll start with Garry and then we'll go to the -- well, actually Margie and then -- Marjorie after Garry.

MR. MITCHELL: Thanks very much. I'm Garrett Mitchell and I write The Mitchell Report. I want a question, I'll direct it to Dr. Felbab-Brown, but given the collective intelligence on this issue, any observations from the panel.

If you're about to become the next president of Afghanistan, you've got a lot to worry about, but the most obvious questions, it would seem to me, you'd be thinking about are what's the Taliban going to do? What's Karzai going to do? What are the neighbors up to? And how do I get a message to the world community that we're stable and we're moving ahead?

So my question is if you were serving as a political advisor to the next president of Afghanistan, what do you think should be on his agenda for the first 100 days?

MR. O'HANLON: We'll go here for the second question, please.

MS. SONNENFELDT: Marjorie Sonnenfeldt, retiree and interested observer. A very open-ended question. What should be the role of the U.S.

Government, I don't mean in the run-up to the elections, but in I presume trying to promote some positive steps forward after the elections? And by what instruments would we or could we do that?

MR. O'HANLON: Care to start?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Sure. I would answer that the other actor that the next president keenly needs to worry about (inaudible) the elections. Immediately, whoever the loser is in the runoff, but the broader set of losers that will be -- they are part of the mixture right now, so the key powerbrokers that are running or very much manipulating the scene from the background. And that will structure the domestic bargains that will enable or hamper structuring or restructuring governance. And so they are not exclusive. And, in fact, it's the politics that can blow up much faster and far more acutely and dangerously than the Taliban bombs can start blowing up after the man arrives in the Arg Palace.

Clearly, the next president will need to make a decision on the relationship with the United States and the international community. Both have said they will sign the (inaudible) security agreement. I think that our expectation in Washington is that they will sign very, very quickly. It might turn out not to be so easy, but presumably, with some haggling, they have inevitable interest to sign before they are completely scared of Washington.

But we are also expecting them to sign simply on the premise that the BSA, by the fact that there is a strategic deal, is good for Afghanistan and that whatever we put on the table they must take because it's definitely good for them. And whether it is 2,000 troops with very limited counterterrorism objectives or it's 8,000 troops which also includes some more broader support for the Afghan National Security Army, that irrespective of them, they have to take it and it's equally good.

I don't think that's the case. And we could help the next Afghan

president by being far more transparent about what is it that we will give them. And what is it that they get out of it other than our getting the capacity to target particularly dangerous terrorists? But they will need to come to a deal. And the more we tell them now, the more we are transparent about what it will look like, the easier it will be for them to put the political scene in place so they can sign very quickly.

And then they will need to take on some key reform issues, possibly very, very few to reassure the international community, which is losing faith, which is losing interest, that money continues flowing. There is already right now a big budget crisis in Afghanistan. The GDP this year came even lower than was expected and so soon key ministries in Afghanistan will not have money to pay their employees. The army is, of course, totally dependent on foreign funding, but it goes beyond the army. So very quickly, even perhaps before a new government is formed, there will need to be some immediate assistance package to tie up Afghanistan over at least in terms of very, very narrow payment capacity, and that will have to be reopened by the new president toward a more sustainable economic scenario. But, frankly, they will be in a terrible economic situation and there will inevitably be a big recession, a big economic hit. And the vision of a new Silk Road or mining will be a vision that's nowhere close to materializing.

So I think the easiest and very important agenda is to think about how to revive the economy without stepping too much on the toes of the powerbrokers to whom the next president will be indebted. But a year or two down the road, they will need to find the wherewithal to start stepping on those toes and redesigning those deals. Otherwise, we end up with the same slow morass, decrepitude in the political system, that's ultimately not sustainable.

AMBASSADOR MUNTER: If I could just try to get at your question which is sufficiently broad as to give us all kinds of (inaudible). But as I've hinted before, I think that one of the problems that has limited the American capacity to help Pakistan or

the ability of Pakistan and America to avoid misunderstandings is the old reliance on the bilateral relationship, the idea that we are going to be the people who are going to be doing things. And it may be a refreshing possibility that after 2014, with perhaps the bureaucratic changes that we've talked about in the government and with the difference of the way that we're dealing with Afghanistan that is less of a focus entirely on the American military mission and its success, that we may be able -- among ourselves, what can we do? We can actually reconceptualize the idea that we are dealing with a number of issues in the region and those issues. And since Americans are famously patient, strategic, thinking on the long term, you know, it may give us an opportunity to stop responding to crises as they come -- and believe me, I know all about responding to crises as they come -- that we may be able, using 2014 as a kind of a symbol, to try to think about how can we look at the decisions we're making about India, which have largely over the last years been independent, and different actors and different players, of the issues that we've been dealing with in the AfPak world that we can try to come up with priorities that have something to do with all three or all four. I hate to diss Bangladesh.

There's even other countries, believe it or not: China, Sri Lanka, who knows? That it would be wise for us to take this opportunity to think about the way we think about these regions, these places in the region.

Now, the problem we have is there's no drive to do this. There will be less drive, there will be less impulse to pay close attention once the number of troops, certainly the combat troops, are gone and the number of troops is either two or eight or whatever it is. There will be, I think, very strong reasons why most American policymakers will say, you know, that is so yesterday. You know, I want to work on Crimea. I want to think about real things, not what we go so tired of thinking about before.

So the danger and the probability (inaudible) that we will say let's let these guys solve it on their own and I think what all three of us have said is that they can do that, but it may not be in a way we like.

AMBASSADOR SCHAFFER: I think that for the past 10 years, 15 years, maybe even more, the U.S. Government has made policy towards Pakistan basically out of fear of the bad things that could happen if things go bad. And it has made policy towards India out of hope that good things would happen if we got things right.

Now, there are good reasons for both of these attitudes. Neither is a sufficient basis for policy, but you kind of still have to deal with those -- that basic structure.

Since we established the -- well, really since 9-11, even before we established the present bureaucratic structure, Pakistan has been joined at the hip in policy terms with Afghanistan. And it has -- although it is, in my judgment, the more important country for the United States in the long term -- Vanda may want to argue with that, but that's my view anyway -- it's been very much the junior partner bureaucratically in this setup.

So I would argue that the first thing that needs to happen, and I think in spite of the different ways we articulate it, that this is an area where Cameron and I agree, is that we need to start cultivating some aspects of the relationship with Pakistan that are not derivative of Afghanistan. We have done that kind of a transition with India in the sense that one of the more successful areas of our changing relationship with India is the way we both look at East Asia, where India is trying to expand its role and where, in fact, our interests align pretty well. So that's, in a sense, the de-hyphenation part of it.

What Cameron is arguing for is looking more broadly at cross-cutting issues. I think this is harder to do. I think there are some that some time down the road may lend themselves to this kind of treatment. In a well-ordered universe Indian Ocean

security would be one of them, but I'm not sure we're there yet. Afghan's security should be one of them, but I don't think India and Pakistan are there yet for reasons that have already been mentioned.

On other issues, and I'm thinking in particular of trade and climate change, actually the countries in the region are united in their opposition to some of the things the United States would like to do. So this may be a blow for unity, but it's not something that's likely to be a lead item in U.S. policy towards the region.

I think we've got our work cut out for us on this. I would love to see enough improvement in India-Pakistan relations that we could, in fact, build on the opening. And I still think that the best candidate for that is the trade opening that these two countries have been working on fitfully and inconsistently for a while. But if they were actually able to complete the first round of actions that they had supposedly in principle agreed on, I think that might unlock some possibilities for at least common consultations on issues where we really do have common concerns. I'm not sure they're quite ready for Afghanistan to be part of that, but, boy, that would be my favorite candidate.

AMBASSADOR MUNTER: Can I take that? One other thing to add is it doesn't necessarily need to be seen as only government-to-government work as I think Tezi's alluding.

AMBASSADOR SCHAFFER: Yeah, I agree with that, too.

AMBASSADOR MUNTER: In fact, we need business actors to take a big part in this.

AMBASSADOR SCHAFFER: Yes.

AMBASSADOR MUNTER: The lead has to come from the Pakistani -- say, on trade, the Pakistani and India governments, but what kind of cards do we have to play? We have American businesses who care deeply about India and who realize that a South Asian market is something that's quite attractive to them. So business.

We have academics who are very engaged in that part of the world. And one of the things I like best about Pakistan is there's an enormous philanthropic sector in Pakistan, much of it's secular, not religious, that matches up or is a great partner for American philanthropic interests. That is, you need not have the kind of legislation or the kind of bureaucratic structure only to be able to engage with a country with a lot of things that we have strengths in. So I think that underscores what Tezi's saying, is that we can do this and we don't just have to do it through the Department of State.

MR. O'HANLON: We've got time for one more round. We'll go to the woman in the green sweater in the sixth row and then we'll go here to the gentleman in the silver and black tie to wrap up.

MS. ROBINSON: I'm Kathy Robinson with Women's Action for New Directions and my question is primarily for Dr. Felbab-Brown. Women played a tremendous role in coming out for the vote. And what's the future look like and how will women play this role, increased role, in the governance going forward? And how will that shape outcomes in Afghanistan?

And if there are thoughts on how women leaders in parliament and elsewhere in India and Pakistan can play a role in helping promote women's further governance in Afghanistan, that would be great to know, too.

MR. ZARRABI-KASHANI: Thanks. Hanif Zarrabi-Kashani. I'm an Iran researcher at Brookings Institution, Saban Center for Middle East Policy.

And I was curious regarding a future trilateral relationship between India, Afghanistan, and Iran is being somewhat hyped and centered around Iran's Chabahar Port on the Gulf of Oman, which India's going to build. So I was curious, Indian and Afghan officials are talking about how this port will connect the two countries via Iranian railways and I was curious to know the panelists' opinions whether -- regarding limitations or prospects in terms of India and Afghanistan regarding this port.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. I'm going to take one more in the hope that maybe it works out one question per panelist, so right behind you. Yes, please. But this will be it.

SPEAKER: My question is for Teresita. I was wondering what you think will be the biggest implications for U.S.-India under a BJP government and specifically under Modi. Do you think there will be significant changes in the U.S.-India relationship or that things will mostly stay the same? Thanks.

MR. O'HANLON: Care to begin?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Sure. You are right that one of -- you know, I spoke about how impressive the Afghan people were in turning up for the vote and understanding this is the make or break moment for at least the immediate future of Afghanistan. And that, of course, didn't happen just on its own spontaneously. Much of it had to do with the work that Afghan civil society had performed, the mobilization they engaged in over the past two years really. And women groups played a very important role. They played a very important role in halting, for example, the removal of the quota for women in the electoral reforms that were being passed last summer. The quota was reduced from 25 percent to 20 percent, but it was because of the activity and response of women's groups and civil society groups that it wasn't completely slashed.

I think with both of the lead candidates there is a sense that women would be accorded a far greater role and a genuine embrace. That had been the case with the Karzai administration. As the legitimacy of Karzai as a reformer rapidly collapsed and waned, he increasingly embraced a very conservative religious ulema as his base of legitimacy. And one of the consequences was a major rollback of women's rights and very much a responsiveness to traditional sectors in society who have not been pleased by the opening for women.

Nonetheless, these sectors are there and will be there even under the

new president and it will continue to be a very tough engagement for Afghan women. Regardless whether it's Abdullah Abdullah or Ashraf Ghani, there's much pushback and much resentment and disquiet among traditional sectors about the rights that women have acquired. And many of these rights are flimsy. We have to remember that there is a constitution and there are rules, such as the quota for women, but in practice much of what a woman can achieve is still a function of what the male relative -- father or husband -- permits the woman to achieve. And then for women to have an independent social role is close to impossible without the approval of the males.

And that will take time and will not simply be a function of the laws, but will be a function of a long-term process of renegotiation of the relationship in society. And what will enable that is a thriving economy. The worst the economy gets, the fewer jobs there are, the greater the resentment against women having access to offices or access to jobs. The other very important factor is what happens with security and instability. The more unstable, the more of a disintegration toward intense fighting and contestation, the worse women issues will be in Afghanistan.

And the third factor is the attention and focus of the international community, which has been the principal supporter of women's groups. Women's groups would not and civil society broadly would not have achieved as much power and potency without international backing. And if that wanes because Crimea is the hot issue and everyone is tired of difficult, complicated, faraway Afghanistan, we will see significant negative impact on women's groups, on civil society.

But what you highlighted at the end is something very important, that it's important that civil society expand beyond looking at the West, beyond looking at the United States, and find interlocutors in places like in India or perhaps even in places like Pakistan. Some of the issues that women in Pakistan face are very much analogous to what women in Afghanistan face. What's to say they have to be divided by the Durand

Line in the same difficult, complicated ways that the two countries are divided? Maybe there can be natural alliances that can effects beyond the economic or social engagement.

My final comment, however, is that there is, of course, other aspects with civil society. It's not simply the (inaudible) and (inaudible) and pro-democratic women empowering civil society, but there are other groups that countries like Iran or like Pakistan are trying to cultivate. The Afghan future is sometimes fairly simplistically pinned as the virtuous youth that will rescue Afghanistan from itself, but there is also a youth that might look like the Muslim Brotherhood. That might be very good for the country. We cannot a priori assume that they are bad because they're Islamists, but the pro-Western democratic, like the young people that we so love to bring to Washington and that are very admirable, are a fraction of a much larger youth up for grabs which can go in really good directions, it can go in the really directions, or it can go in very troubled directions.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Mr. Ambassador.

AMBASSADOR MUNTER: I'm going to pass because the other two questions are questions I don't know about. Over to you.

AMBASSADOR SCHAFFER: Okay, the Iran question. India values its relations with Iran hugely for a lot of reasons, but one of them is that Iran has been willing to work with India to provide land access through the port of Chabahar. Actually I think the more relevant point is land access to Central Asia because that's kind of a back door to Afghanistan. But if transit through Pakistan continues to be impossible, then that will become an attractive feature.

What none of us talked about and it's too late to introduce the discussion now because it's a big one is what Iran's future role in Afghanistan is going to be. And I think that is going to be a big question having to do with Afghanistan's future.

If I could backtrack to what Vanda just said about women's groups and talking about other places that women's groups in Afghanistan might find useful to talk to and think about, don't forget Bangladesh. Two of the major international NGOs in Afghanistan are, in fact, from Bangladesh: Grameen Bank and BRAC. And there is an amazingly lively women's scene in Bangladesh, people who grew up with sort of house rules that were not different from what Vanda just described, but who have carved out a niche for themselves and who have also achieved acceptance on a scale that a lot of people would not have expected. So it's an interesting thing to look at.

U.S. relations if Modi wins the election. Modi's focus on economics and focus on economics as a feature of foreign policy will be very welcome in Washington. His history of bad relations with Muslims will be somewhat worrisome. His reaction to the fact that for nine years we would not issue him a visa may be a problem for him, although if he is prime minister of India, he will get a visa if he wants it. (Laughter) You heard it here. The technical term for this is that his inadmissibility would be waived. That makes it sound nice and bureaucratic, doesn't it? (Laughter)

You know, I think if you compare the guessing about a Modi prime ministership with a possible regional cum Congress coalition, the Modi one looks like actually the easier one to deal with.

Modi has been making some effort to position himself as an all-India figure during the elections. When we called on business leaders, oh, gosh, about a year ago, and they were all breathless about how wonderful Modi was, the second talking point always was that there were 27 Muslim legislative assembly members in Gujarat who'd gotten themselves elected on a BJP ticket. You know, I'll let you interpret that as you will, but it certainly is an indication that even before they were going at it hot and heavy in the election campaign, he was trying a bit to reinvent himself.

The other interesting factoid is that after the riots in Gujarat, which were

occasioned by an explosion on a train carrying Hindu pilgrims, there was another incident: a bomb went off in a Hindu temple. Not a dog barked. No riots, no nothing. Personally, I think that tends to point you towards two conclusions. One is that the chief minister had pretty good control of his law enforcement apparatus. The other is that he had concluded that rioting wasn't working for him anymore. That may not be morally uplifting, but if that logic still holds, then maybe that will save India from further horrible troubles like the ones they went through at that time.

MR. O'HANLON: And on that pragmatic note, we'll thank all of you for being here and please join me in thanking the panelists. (Applause)

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