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WHAT WE WON:
AMERICA'S SECRET WAR IN AFGHANISTAN, 1979-1989

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. TALBOTT: We got to know each other in the 1990s, when we were working on a part of the world that he's going to be focusing on here, which is to say South Asia, which included primarily for us at that time India and Pakistan, two countries that have an intense interest in Afghanistan, which is the subject of his new book.

And Bruce and I came to Brookings around the same time. He is a 30-year -- or 29-year, I guess, veteran of the intelligence community, not just at Central Intelligence Agency, but he also did significant stints at the National Security Council staff in the White House, working both on the Middle East and on South Asia. And he's not only a superb analyst, but I can attest that he is a very good diplomat and policymaker, as well. And he runs our Intelligence Project here in the Foreign Policy program.

So let's get started just with Bruce giving you the short version of what is a book much meatier than the thinness of it would suggest. It's got -- it's packed with information, a lot of which was new to me. And it has a very powerful thesis, which, Bruce, if you would share with the group and then we'll take it from there.

MR. RIEDEL: Sure. Thank you, Strobe, for being here. Thank you for that very kind introduction. Thank all of you for coming.

What We Won is a book about a successful intelligence operation. The war in Afghanistan, or more properly the war against the Soviet 40th Red Army in Afghanistan, that began on Christmas Eve, December 1979, and ended in February -- December 1979, ended in February 1989, with the retreat of Soviet forces across the Amur River back into the Soviet Union, was a global game-changer. One part of that is pretty obvious: the war ended the myth of the invincibility of the Soviet army. From 1942 on, the Soviet Union had never lost a battle. The perception was the Red Army was invincible. It was not. It was defeated in Afghanistan. And to add insult to injury, it was

defeated by basically illiterate Afghan tribesmen assisted by the United States Central Intelligence Agency.

The Soviet Union would probably have collapsed at some point anyway, but the Afghan war turns out to have been a precipitating event in making that happen. February 1989, the Soviets leave. Within six months, the Berlin Wall fell. In even less time, the Warsaw Pact as a military alliance had imploded.

For the United States it was a remarkably cheap victory. It's very difficult to know in retrospect exactly how much money we spent on the operation in Afghanistan. Covert operations are, by definition, covert and they don't publish how much money was spent. But a conservative estimate is that the U.S. spent between 3- and \$4 billion in arming the *mujahideen* in the 1980s. At its peak, the CIA task force that ran the operation in Afghanistan had roughly 50 people in it. I would submit to you in the history of the federal government there are very few federal projects involving so few people and so little money that had literally so much bang for the buck as this one did. Not only did the Cold War come to an end, but the threat of thermonuclear war, which had stood over the world during the Cold War, essentially came to an end, as well.

But in retrospect, while we can see it was a global game-changer in that respect, it was also a global game-changer in another respect: this was the beginning of what we now refer to as the "global jihad." I want to be very careful here. The notion that the CIA created Al Qaeda is, in my view, bad history. We did not create Al Qaeda. That's not how we operated in Afghanistan. The CIA in Afghanistan was the quartermaster of the war. That's a phrase Bob Gates gave me in an interview for the book. We didn't train anyone. CIA officers never went into Afghanistan. Not a single CIA officer was wounded or killed in the war. We had no casualties because we took no risks. All the risks were taken by other people, principally the Afghans and the

Pakistanis.

The book is organized to look at the different players in the war, starting with the Afghan Communists and then the Soviets. The Russians made almost every conceivable bad decision you could make in this war, beginning with the intervention to start it, which the CIA completely was surprised by. The Soviets' leadership was aging, ill, largely dysfunctional. The principal advocate of going in was the then head of the KGB, Yuri Andropov. He thought it was essential that they went in. Initially, the Politburo did not want to go in and then changed its mind.

The Soviets then made another disastrous decision in retrospect, which was to under-resource the war. The Soviet Union put in about 100,000 soldiers to win the war in Afghanistan. In contrast, when it went into Czechoslovakia in 1968, they used a half -million men. Now, anyone who looks at the map of Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan is going to see that the place where you needed a half-million men was not Bohemia and Moravia, but the mountains of Afghanistan.

That decision meant many things, one of which was they could not close the border with Pakistan, and Pakistan became the base for the mujahideen, but more than the base. Pakistan, and particularly its intelligence service, the ISI, was the general headquarters of the mujahideen. It provided the leadership. It provided the strategy. It provided the tactics.

And if this war was anyone's war, it was Zia-ul-Haq's war. Zia-ul-Haq was, of course, the military dictator of Pakistan in the 1980s. He is the person who made very critical decision about the war. He liked to tell his director of ISI, I want this to simmer just right. Don't let it boil too much, but always make sure the water is getting hotter and hotter for the Soviet Union. He made the decision to provide arms to the mujahideen. He organized the political leadership of the mujahideen to be essentially his

puppets. He decided which groups got which equipment. He decided that ISI teams would go into Afghanistan and actually command the mujahideen on the battlefield. He decided that the mujahideen would cross the Amur River and take the war into the Soviet Central Asia. And he decided when he wanted to bring the Stinger into the war. I know you all think it was Charlie Wilson's war. (Laughter) It wasn't. It was Zia-ul-Haq's war.

The other key outside player was the Saudis. The Saudis matched our 3-, \$4 billion dollar-for-dollar in government funds. That's well known. What's less well known is that they raised private funds, as well. Rich Saudis donated enormous amounts of money to the war. Again, it's hard to know how much, but probably at its peak Saudi private donations amounted to about \$20 million a month going to the mujahideen.

The man who organized that was the then governor of Riyadh Province, Prince Salman, who is today the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia and heir to the throne. There is, of course, another very famous Saudi who was involved in the story, and that's Osama bin Laden, and I spend a lot of time talking his role as basically the combat the engineer of the mujahideen. He built a base for the mujahideen inside Afghanistan with the ISI's help that was state-of-the-art. It had a modern hospital, it had a VIP hotel, and had miles and miles of underground tunnels filled with ammunition.

Just a brief word on the U.S. role. The U.S. role was a bipartisan, agreed war effort. It was initiated by President Carter. President Carter was caught off-balance by the Soviet invasion, but, within two weeks, Jimmy Carter devised the strategy that the United States would pursue for the rest of the war and he assembled the coalition of states to support it: Saudi Arabia; Pakistan; China; which was a key supporter of the war effort; Egypt; and the United Kingdom, and others. All were brought together.

Under the leadership of Carter and Brzezinski, the strategy and tactics of

the war and the grand coalition of diplomacy that supported it secretly was developed in the last week of December and the first two weeks of January. It had support from Democrats and Republicans. When Ronald Reagan came into office in 1981, he essentially just continued the Carter policy for his entire first term in office.

Then, in 1986, at the prodding of Zia, he decided to increase the heat and to bring in the Stinger. And the Stinger, of course, changed the battlefield dynamics. Whether it really led to the Soviet decision to leave is hard to tell from the archives. The Soviets might have left in any case. They were clearly coming to that decision, but the Stinger was obviously a force multiplier in that regard.

In that sense, this operation is something pretty rare in the history of the American intelligence community: a success story. There are lots of books about intelligence failures and a lot of them about CIA failures, but in terms of the objectives the two presidents provided to the CIA -- make Afghanistan a quagmire like Vietnam and then drive them out -- the CIA succeeded. That it didn't see the global jihad was coming I think is, in retrospect, a clear failure, but that's looking backwards and it's a little unfair to the people at the time to make those judgments.

MR. TALBOTT: In just a couple of minutes I'd like to open this up to questions that many of you have. And looking out amongst the group I see a number of people who are deeply knowledgeable and you'll get some good and even perhaps some tough questions.

I should have mentioned in introducing Bruce something that many of you know and that is that President Obama asked Bruce to chair a policy review on Afghanistan and Pakistan, so if you could kind of leap over this story to the lessons learned and maybe some lessons that weren't learned in our own engagement in Afghanistan.

MR. RIEDEL: I think there are a lot of lessons. The first thing I would say, though, is we are not fighting the Soviets' war. We did not invade Afghanistan unprovoked. We did not go in and kill the Communist leader of the country which we had helped impose on the Afghans before. We went into war because we were attacked by a terrorist organization based in Afghanistan, supported by the Afghan government.

Our war has U.N. legitimacy. The Soviet war was condemned by the General Assembly. The only democracy in the world that voted for the Soviet Union in the 1980s was India. Every other democracy was on the side of the mujahideen.

Their war encountered a true nationalist insurgency. The mujahideen were able to draw from every element in every ethnic and sectarian part of the country: Uzbeks, Hazaris, Pashtuns, Tajiks, universally. This war is much more a Pashtun uprising. The Taliban is a basically Pashtun organization. The one big similarity is Pakistan. The huge similarity.

Pakistan backed the mujahideen and the CIA in the 1980s. Pakistan backs the Taliban today. Rarely in one generation do you fight the same war over again, but on opposite sides. Essentially, that's what we're doing. And what I think is clear to say is it's a whole lot easier to win when Pakistan is on your side and you're trying to overthrow the government than it is when you're on the other side and you're trying to keep the government in power and Pakistan is trying to subvert it.

The other lesson I would say is that it's critical to define the mission. The mission that was given to the agency first by President Carter and then by Reagan was clear, understandable: turn this into the Soviet Union's Vietnam. And in that sense, it was relatively easy to do. It was probably going to be their Vietnam sooner or later anyway. All we were doing was being the quartermaster to make it their war.

If you have a mission that's more vague, like let's say trying to build a

moderate Syrian opposition that is both anti-Assad and anti-ISIS and which is going to support democracy and freedom, that's a whole lot more complicated covert operation. One of the lessons: Keep it simple.

MR. TALBOTT: What was President Zia's main motive for committing himself and his country to the extent that he did?

MR. RIEDEL: Zia was a true believer. I found a great quote about Zia in reading the memoirs of Benazir Bhutto. She reports that her father, Zulfikar Bhutto, who appointed Zia chief of army staff, went to visit him one time in his home, in his office in Rawalpindi -- in his home actually. And he comes into the house and the entire inside of the house is one picture after another of Mecca, the Kaaba, Medina. And he turned to Zia and said you've turned your home into a mosque. And it was really right. Zia was a believer. He believed in the jihad. He wasn't doing this purely for Pakistan national security interests. He was doing this because he believed it was every Muslim's duty to fight the godless, atheist, Communist menace and to defeat it in Afghanistan. Zia's a fascinating figure who has yet to have a single English language biography written of him. I think that's a big lacuna in the history of the second half of the -- South Asia and the second half of the 20th century.

We were lucky in the 1980s. There was a bigger evil than America for true believers to fight. It is conceivable you could get another Zia as a military dictator some day in Pakistan. And the problem is there's no more Soviet Union to direct his animus to.

MR. TALBOTT: Well, we know who killed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Zia. Hang the blighter, I think, was the line. Who killed Zia?

MR. RIEDEL: Zia's death, he died in the crash of C-130 just having left a demonstration of the new American main battlefield tank, a demonstration which was a

complete disaster. The tank didn't work and it missed the target when it shot at it. He died in the crash of a C-130 leaving there.

It is an open question whether it was an accident or sabotage. I think it was probably sabotage. Zia had so many enemies, including the Bhutto family, that it could have been anyone. There is no reliable answer. It is the big mystery of the war in the 1980s. And I think not only is it a mystery, it changed the course. If Zia had lived, the mujahideen, I think, more likely would have taken Kabul in 1989 or 1990 rather than in 1992. Zia was a much more clever general and manager of the ISI than either the ISI's successors under Benazir Bhutto or Mrs. Bhutto.

Benazir Bhutto came into office in 1989, 34 years old. She had no experience in international relations. She had no experience in governing anything. And she had an army and ISI that basically saw her as the enemy and her as the person they wanted to overthrow. You had a very dysfunctional -- the general headquarters of the mujahideen, in other words, in 1988, lost its commanding general.

MR. TALBOTT: And in the crash that you referred to, of course, and you make much of this in the book, the American ambassador to Pakistan at the time, Arnold Raphel, was also killed. In fact, I think I remember your saying at one point that the two casualties of the war were Spike Dubs, who some of us in the room remember as the American ambassador in Kabul, and Arnie Raphel.

MR. RIEDEL: Right. Both died in incidents that were clearly related to the war. Dubs was murdered by -- it's not really clear who -- some kind of Communist element that may have been doing the KGB or may not have been doing the work of the KGB; it's not very clear. And Raphel died in the accident along with Zia.

But their deaths are related to the war, but they didn't die in the combat during the war, and that gets back to the central point. From the American standpoint we

lost no lives fighting on the battlefield because we never put any boots on the ground. We were risk-averse.

It's interesting, the British were not risk-averse. The British part of the alliance was that every spring they sent two or three teams of British intelligence officers and retired commandos into Afghanistan to help train and assist the mujahideen with the Pakistanis' support. If you think about it, it is an extraordinarily brave thing to do for a British officer to go into Soviet Afghanistan to assist the mujahideen. There was no rescue force. If they got in trouble, there was no way out.

I had the opportunity in doing the research for the book to interview some of the British officers who did it on the condition that I not name them or provide, you know, any information that would identify them. But their stories of going behind the lines to support primarily Ahmad Shah Massoud, the "Lion of the Panjshir," are an extraordinary part of this whole campaign and showed that we could have done it differently, too. If we were not risk-averse, we could have sent people in. We decided not to.

MR. TALBOTT: Well, given the British historical experience in the 19th century with Afghanistan, I suspect they would have chosen exactly the side that they were on with the famous Kipling poem in mind.

MR. RIEDEL: That's right. That's right.

MR. TALBOTT: Because the Russians learned the hard way how true that poem was.

Just going back to Zia for one more question and then I hope some hands will come up. I think you alluded to this when you talked about how -- I think you characterize it in the book as Zia's mastery of the situation there. Had he lived, the defeat of the Russians would have been quicker and that might have sufficiently

diminished the time for the mujahideen to morph into Al Qaeda. Do you want to speculate a little bit on that?

MR. RIEDEL: I think that's probably true. Zia knew how to manipulate the mujahideen more than anyone else. He controlled the most radical factions, especially the Haqqani faction and the Hekmatyar faction. I think that he would have not made the mistake that the Pakistanis made in 1989.

They decided in 1989, once the Russians left, that the mujahideen had reached the stage in the development of a guerilla army where they could go from being guerillas to being a conventional army and essentially fight a conventional battle. That was a disaster. The Afghan Communists could not control rural areas of the country, but they could defend cities and use SCUD missiles and mass artillery and tanks to fight basically an infantry-led force. And it was a disaster which the ISI was principally responsible for.

I don't think Zia would have done that. I think he would have been much more clever. I think he would have done what, in the end, did in the Afghan Communist government: playing on the internal dissensions within it.

The Afghan Communist government fell apart in 1992 for a number of reasons. One, the Soviets stopped providing any economic aid; that was critical.

Two, the ethnic divisions within the Afghan Communist Party came to a head. The head of the Afghan Communist Party was a Pashtun named Najibullah. The most effective Afghan Communist fighter was an Uzbek, Abdul Rashid Dostum. Abdul Rashid Dostum was a brilliant commander of pro-Soviet forces back in the 1980s, a committed Communist, also a human rights abuser of monumental levels. Mr. Dostum, who is the first figure introduced into the book, will, of course, go on to have a conversion to Islam, democracy, and capitalism in the 1990s; become our ally in 2002; and is on the

culp of becoming the vice president of Afghanistan today.

MR. TALBOTT: And who's going to be the president? (Laughter)

MR. RIEDEL: Good question. (Laughter)

MR. TALBOTT: Okay, we finally stumped him. Let's see if you can do the same.

DR. WELLS: Hello. Hi, my name is Dr. Donna Wells. I'm an expert in the Russian language Internet. And while I was at Georgia Tech, I did a lot of research on Operation Jawbreaker. Do you think we will continue to rely on Pakistan for our intelligence operations?

MR. RIEDEL: That's a very tough question. I said in -- I alluded earlier that Pakistan now supports our enemy in Afghanistan. What to me is remarkable is we all know that and yet we continue to provide Pakistan with literally billions of dollars in aid every day. I don't think it makes sense myself. If Mr. Obama wants to turn over his foreign policy to me one of the first things I would do is stop military assistance to Pakistan. I think I would continue economic assistance.

I characterize our policy of providing military assistance to Pakistan in the last decade as essentially a bribe. Well, after 13 years, we know the answer: It doesn't work. Stop spending good money after bad. It was worth a try in the beginning, but it's not working.

On intelligence I think that we have to be very careful in our dealings with the ISI. We need them, there's no question about that, but we need to be very careful they're not picking our pockets.

MR. TALBOTT: Yes, sir, right there, and then the gentleman next to you, and then we'll take some from the back.

SPEAKER: What is happening in Pakistan right now, and they're

attacking Waziristan? Do you think it is true or is it just another false exercise?

MR. TALBOTT: You might give some context to it.

MR. RIEDEL: Right. It is definitely true that the Pakistani army is today engaged in a major military operation in the borderlands, in infamous North Waziristan, against the Pakistan Taliban. The Pakistan Taliban is the Frankenstein of the Taliban movement that has turned against Pakistan. It is very difficult as an outsider, especially one sitting on Massachusetts Avenue trying to figure out what's going on in Waziristan, to get much ground truth. My suspicion is this is a very careful operation that goes after the parts of the Pakistan Taliban that have turned on the Pakistani state, but very carefully does not go after terrorists and militants in that area which are long connections to the ISI, most notably the Haqqani clan, which also operates in this area.

So I think what we're seeing in Pakistan is the gradual realization that they've created Frankenstein. I think that, at the same time, they know better than any of us how big Frankenstein is. And a not unreasonable strategy is to try and divide the Frankenstein, which means in the end that, as Mrs. Clinton wrote in her book, Pakistan will continue to encourage poisonous snakes in its backyard on the hope that they'll only bite non-Pakistanis.

MR. TALBOTT: Do you think that the visit that the U.S. Special Forces paid to Abbottabad to get Osama bin Laden focused the Pakistanis on that problem?

MR. RIEDEL: What it clearly focused the Pakistanis on was that their air defense system and radar systems were insufficient. (Laughter) The Pakistani post-mortem on Abbottabad, which is secret, but which, thankfully, *Al Jazeera* published in complete on their website, spends more time focused on the question how did the Americans find Osama bin Laden than on the, I think, much more interesting question, who was helping to hide Osama bin Laden?

I think it did, though, help focus minds, particularly in the civilian government. I think you have to make a big differentiation here between the civilian government and the military. I'm going to be careful because I know your opinions on Nawaz Sharif are pretty strong. I think that both the Sharif clan and the Bhutto clan recognize that this policy of encouraging poisonous snakes in the backyard is ultimately self-defeating for Pakistan. Unfortunately, they don't control the people who run the snakes and who put them in the backyard, which is the Pakistani army and the ISI. And I don't think they're convinced yet that this is a mistaken policy.

MR. TALBOTT: How high up in the military command do you think it was known that Osama was there? And how high up in the civilian?

MR. RIEDEL: I don't think the civilians had a clue. I don't think President Zardari had a clue. And I don't think there's very much that he or Nawaz Sharif knows about how the ISI operates.

My take on who knew is based on my understanding of what the ISI is, and, in the interest of candor, I spent a lot of time working with the ISI, so I know them pretty well. The ISI is a professional intelligence organization. You do not get promoted in the ISI by blowing up the embassies of other countries or harboring international terrorists just because you feel like it that morning. You get promoted because you do what the boss tells you to do. It is a hierarchical organization. The director general of the ISI knows what's going on underneath him.

That doesn't mean that there can't be assets of the ISI that behave in a roguish manner. After all, if you're recruiting and running as your agents terrorists who want to commit suicide, you are not dealing with the most stable human beings in the world. They are going to do things you don't normally anticipate. What I do mean is that if the ISI knew Osama bin Laden was in that house, and I think the circumstantial

evidence is very strong they knew, then the director general of the ISI knew. And since the director general of the ISI in the period of time just prior to him moving into that house was General Kayani, I think General Kayani would have known.

MR. TALBOTT: The chief of the army staff.

MR. RIEDEL: The chief of the army staff, just retired chief of the army staff.

MR. TALBOTT: This gentleman here and then we'll go to somebody in the back.

SPEAKER: So my name is Wright. I'm a college student.

I was originally going to ask something similar to the previous gentleman on the North Waziristan operation. What I'd like to ask since he asked that question for me is, is the similar Pakistani policy relating to Kashmir, is there an overlap between the organizations that are running those same terrorist policies? And to what level is Kashmir an American concern? Obviously, arming the Taliban is an American concern, but what about Lashkar-e-Taiba?

MR. RIEDEL: Right. Partly in *What We Won* and partly in a previous book entitled *Deadly Embrace*, I've looked at this question. I said at the beginning Zia was a true believer. For Zia, the war in Afghanistan was not only an opportunity to fight the Soviet Union, but it was also an opportunity to create the cadre to fight a similar war against India and Kashmir. And the ISI networks that were built to support the mujahideen in the early 1980s, by the late 1980s are now supporting a similar jihad inside of Kashmir.

The main facility outside of Islamabad where all the equipment, all the weapons and ammunition that the CIA was providing to Pakistan, that the Saudis and the Chinese Communists and others were providing, was a dual-use facility. Part of it was

supporting the war in Afghanistan; part of it was supporting the war in Kashmir.

I'm a believer that Kashmir does matter a lot to the United States. I believe Lashkar-e-Taiba is perhaps the most dangerous terrorist organization in the world because if they carry out another attack, like the attack on Mumbai in 2008, they could precipitate a war between India and Pakistan. And a war between India and Pakistan is, to me, the most dangerous scenario that I can think of for going nuclear in our lifetimes.

It didn't get a lot of notice, but two days before Prime Minister Modi was inaugurated, there was an attack on the Indian consulate in the city of Herat in Afghanistan. That attack was carried out by Lashkar-e-Taiba. The United States Government has officially said that attack was carried out by Lashkar-e-Taiba. The intent of the attack, as best we can put it together, was to take hostages inside the consulate, hold those hostages for ransom as Mr. Modi was being inaugurated in New Delhi. Had that worked out we would have had an enormous crisis between India and Pakistan.

MR. TALBOTT: Quick question, but then the lady, if somebody could bring the microphone to her. I just wanted to pick up on the reference to India. What was the principal Indian motive for essentially blessing or supporting the Soviet invasion? Was it because of the close relationship between India and the Soviet Union or was it more related to India versus Pakistan?

MR. RIEDEL: I think in this case they were complementary. Indira Gandhi had gone to the Soviet Union in 1971 and signed the Treaty of Friendship, gotten Soviet support. She detested Zia-ul-Haq. She saw in him, quite rightly, India's nightmare and they overlapped very neatly.

That said, to be fair, I think her government was always uncomfortable with being in the position of being the only democracy supporting the Soviet Union in Afghanistan; had no illusions about the Afghan Communists. It was a marriage of

convenience. There was no ideological sympathy.

You know, an interesting question is why did -- what factors produced Zia's decision to bring the Stinger in? Why did he decide to get the water to boil? I think one of the big factors in that was Mrs. Gandhi was dead. She died just before he made that decision and I think he said, okay, if Mrs. Gandhi was around, I'd be very careful about boiling the water, but with her son, who's kind of a playboy and a flake, I don't have to worry about India anymore.

MS. BAXTER: Hi. My name is (inaudible). I'm a visiting fellow at Stimson.

I've had some -- for my research I've been to the archives and have looked at this region, but my basic research is on U.S. nonproliferation policy towards Pakistan during this time period. And from what I've found is that, you know, Zia was building this case for getting the Carter administration to upgrade the Bilateral Security Cooperation Agreement into a treaty. And the administration with Brzezinski at its head and Carter himself were dismissive of Pakistan's, or Zia's in particular, threat perceptions vis-à-vis India.

So while I don't dispute your opening statement that it was -- that United States does not take any part in, you know, spreading or a proliferation of global jihad and you could dismiss it as a simplistic, you know, bad history, this pattern has continued where various administrations have been dismissive of Pakistan's threat perceptions. And Zia's drive towards, you know, engaging so hardcorely [*sic*] with these mujahideen at that time had a very strong Indo-centric element to it, to which you have alluded to when you were answering questions.

So my -- you know, I just want to know as to how do you look at it. And does U.S. feel responsible that, at some point, had those threat perceptions been taken

seriously, Pakistan probably would not have had this orientation of supporting, you know, non-state actors, for example, which are such a menace today? Thank you.

MR. RIEDEL: The first thing I want to say is if you go back and look at the record of the intelligence community assessing Pakistan in the 1980s, and fortunately we have several declassified national intelligence estimates, they had no illusions. The intelligence community was telling first Carter and then Reagan, Pakistan is building a nuclear weapon. You are not going to be able to prevent them from doing that. It is supporting the war in Afghanistan because it believes -- its leader Zia believes in global jihad. Two presidents decided that it was more important to defeat the Soviet Union than it was to try to alter the course of Pakistani history.

I had the opportunity, thanks to Strobe's intercession, to interview Jimmy Carter on this, and he also provided me access to his private diary. And it's clear from that that well before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Jimmy Carter had decided that with all of his faults -- hanging Zulfi; torching the American embassy in Islamabad, killing two American Marines in the process -- Pakistan was too important in the Cold War for the United States to turn a cold shower -- cold shoulder to it and that we had to work with the Pakistanis.

I want to be very careful on this question of the global jihad. As I said, the CIA did not train Osama bin Laden. We didn't give him weapons. Interviewing a lot of CIA officers who were involved, Osama bin Laden wasn't on their radar screen until the very, very end of the war, which is an intelligence failure, by the way. We should have seen this important Saudi individual, but that wasn't the priority. The priority was killing Russians, not focusing on Arabs. That was a mistake.

But there is no question that the war itself created the intellectual environment in which the global jihad emerges. One of the figures I profile in the book is

a Palestinian named Abdullah Azzam. Abdullah Azzam in 1983 wrote a book called *Defence of Muslim the Lands*. It is the functional equivalent for the global jihad of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* for the American Revolution. It is the inspirational book that created the global jihad. Abdullah Azzam's closest partner was Osama bin Laden.

MR. TALBOTT: Yes, sir, and then Margie. Right there and then pass it down.

SPEAKER: Actually I have two questions. One, if I recall correctly, there was one leader in Afghanistan and his name was like Massoud or somebody that a suicide bomber killed.

MR. RIEDEL: Right, Ahmad Shah Massoud, yes.

SPEAKER: If Stinger had not been introduced, how much longer do you think this war would have dragged on?

And my second question is where was China during this time? How did they feel? Why did they feel that way?

MR. RIEDEL: Let me do it in reverse order. The Chinese were a critical player. The Chinese not only provided a lot of the armaments that the mujahideen used because, after all, China produced Soviet-style weapons, so a Chinese-made AK-47 looks a lot like a Soviet-made AK-47. Zia was determined during the war to take the war inside of Kabul. The CIA could not find a rocket-propelled weapon that could fire into Kabul from the insurgent-controlled territory. Zia went to the Chinese Communists. They designed specifically a rocket-propelled weapon that could be fired the 20 or so kilometers that were needed. Zbigniew Brzezinski deserves credit for bringing the Chinese into this effort, although they might have come on their own anyway, but he saw the Chinese as a critical player.

One other thing, the Chinese weapons were universally regarded by the

Afghans as the best quality weapons they got. The weapons that they got from Egypt they regarded as the worst quality weapons that they got. The Chinese did it because by 1979, the Sino-Soviet split had gone so far that it wasn't -- there was no Chinese affinity anymore for the Soviet Union. They wanted to see Russians get killed, too. They may not have wanted to see Communism come to an end, in which case the war had unintended consequences for them, too, just like it had for us.

Your first question about Ahmad Shah Massoud and the Stinger, the Stinger certainly was a change on the battlefield. Would the Russians have left anyway? There's a healthy debate about that question among Sovietologists. Some say yes, some say no. My opinion is this: Whatever the Stinger did, it probably accelerated the decision of the Soviets to get out. It may not have been the critical factor, but when they started seeing helicopters coming down so fast, I think even the Soviet general staff said we can't win this war. We need to either put in a half a million men or get out.

MS. SONNENFELD: Hi. Margie Sonnenfeld, friend of Brookings and of the speaker.

MR. TALBOTT: More than that.

MS. SONNENFELD: The speaker and the moderator.

MR. TALBOTT: A member of the family.

MS. SONNENFELD: Thank you. Going back a little earlier in history, it seems to me that it's not too long before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan that we had the Church hearings and the accusations of CIA as a rogue elephant. And the follow on to all of those controversies, reports that the CIA was in turmoil, disarray, disorganization, and was very much -- its operations very much hampered. And yet, it appears from your account that the CIA was operating very effectively in this particular instance. I'm curious to know how that may account and how those perceptions apply to contemporary times.

MR. RIEDEL: Right. There is no question that the CIA in 1978/1979 was an institution shell-shocked, I would put it, not only by the Church committee revelations, but by the war in Vietnam. After all, we lost our quagmire war. And for the CIA, that was a huge defeat.

One of the implications of that, I think, is the risk adversity that you see in the CIA operations in Afghanistan. CIA managers did not want to get stuck with being the driving force in a war that might not turn out to be a good thing. So they wanted to keep the CIA role as plausibly deniable as possible and they wanted to take as few risks as possible. They did not want to have new stars on the wall in CIA Headquarters. If you look back at the decision-making of the Carter and Reagan administrations inside the White House, the CIA is usually the one who's saying let's do less, not do more.

What's striking about that is that at the same time they were keeping the Congress fully informed, both sides of the Hill, both political parties. This was, by the late 1980s, a CIA that was also engaged in illegal, unconstitutional, covert operations in Central America and the famous Iran-Contra scandal. Bill Casey had a remarkable ability to compartmentalize how his operations were running. And to, on the one hand, run, I would argue, a very successful and completely legal, as much as a covert operation can be legal, a completely legal operation in Afghanistan while he was carrying out rogue, illegal operations in other parts of the world.

What it means for today, I think risk-adversity is a good thing in an intelligence organization. I think intelligence organizations should be the ones who say to presidents, yes, we can arm the Syrians, but you should realize there's a lot of downsides to what's going to happen and it's going to be really hard to keep a denial. I think the intelligence professional's responsibility is not just to say, yes, sir, we can do it, but to say, yeah, we can do it, but it may look a lot like the Bay of Pigs when it's all over. And I

don't know whether they do that today. I hope they do.

MR. TALBOTT: This gentleman and then this gentleman over here.

MR. DUFF: Hi. I'm Ian Duff with the Washington Institute's Military and Security Program. You touched briefly on my question in your answer to the previous one, and that is with the Obama administration's decision to begin supplying funds to the Syrian opposition, what particular lessons learned or successes or failures can we take from training and equipping the mujahideen and being applying it to future U.S. train-equip programs? And also, how can we avoid some of the intelligence failures that gave rise to the global jihad in the late '80s moving forward in the Middle East?

MR. RIEDEL: Right. The second thing I can answer pretty simply, and that is to have 360-degree awareness. Do not focus solely on the main enemy. Be aware of what's going on in the office next door to you in the ISI. To put it differently, spy on the ISI so you know what they're up to and have no illusions about them.

I think there are several lessons for Syria. First the lesson is this: Both the CIA and the military were very reluctant to send the Stinger. The military was reluctant to send the Stinger because it was the state-of-the-art, American, shoulder-fired, anti-aircraft weapon, and they didn't want to see that technology fall into the wrong hands. They predicted that if the Stinger was provided to the mujahideen it would fall into wrong hands. And we now know, in less than six months, probably in less than six weeks, both the Iranians and the Soviets had working Stinger missiles which they'd been given by different mujahideen elements. So first lesson, if you think you can provide weapons only to the good guys, forget it, it's not going to happen. The good guys will either give them away, sell them, or be penetrated by the bad guys.

MR. TALBOTT: Or turn out to be bad guys.

MR. RIEDEL: Or turn out to be the bad guys. Don't have any illusions

about that. The Reagan administration had no illusions about it. It knew from the beginning that was a risk and it was a risk they decided to take.

Lesson number two, keep the mission simple. Do not try to create a freedom-loving, democratic organization. You are fighting an insurgency. The people who are going to fight an insurgency are not likely to be Jeffersonian Democrats. If you don't like that, don't go down that road.

And lesson number three, you've got to find a Pakistan. Unless you want to do it with American boots on the ground, which I'd argue we don't want to do, you got to find someone who's willing to play the role of Pakistan and provide sanctuary for this insurgent movement. And there's really only two possibilities: the Turks or the Jordanians.

MR. TALBOTT: Sir?

MR. PAJRAQ: Farat Pajraq, I'm an Afghan American and I'm going to speak just as a citizen and sort of a historian. And some of my family, some others in Afghanistan, in the 1980s, saw the Afghan resistance as it took roots in Afghanistan as a national resistance against Soviet occupation. But the moment it became more of a religious war, it mostly had to do with the Pakistani ambitions or fears of Afghan nationalism and the tensions that existed because of the Durand Line and the future of the Pashtuns. And as a result, in the '80s, a large number of Afghan elite from -- you know, the tribal elite to the religious figures and others who were either assassinated or marginalized or forced out of the country, despite warnings that this type of an approach that President Zia at the time was pushing for would lead to some serious consequences. This would amount to a fanatical regime in the future of Afghanistan.

And I'm just wondering how much of that have you captured or have you noticed in your research, the kind of sacrifice and the damage that was done? And we

certainly closed our eyes because we had a bigger strategic interest: bringing down the Soviet Union. The more fanatic the fighters, the more effective they would be. But I'm just wondering -- and we -- I think Afghanistan feels the effect of that until today because some of the most tainted and fundamentalist elements of the Afghan society came to the forefront and we've been dealing with that.

MR. RIEDEL: First thing that I want to say in response to that is the Afghan people paid a horrific price. I said there were no American casualties. At least a million Afghans died. At least a million Afghans. Another 5, 6 million Afghans became refugees. Another several couple of Afghans [*sic*] became internally displaced people.

Afghanistan, the Afghan people defeated the Soviet 40th Red Army. We just gave them the guns to do that. They got very little of the benefits of victory. And a big part of that was that their revolution was sabotaged or subverted or drawn to the interests of their Pakistani neighbor.

And the figure who most epitomizes the concern of mujahideen about what was going on was Ahmad Shah Massoud, who was mentioned earlier. And Ahmad Shah Massoud, I profile him in the book. I was able to get access to an unpublished dissertation about Ahmad Shah Massoud that was based on extensive interviews with him. And it was clear -- it was very clear to him that the ISI was stealing the revolution for its own purposes. And he was and became virulently anti-Pakistan.

And we see it today in the presidential election. Abdullah Abdullah, who won the first round overwhelmingly, is the 21st century reincarnation of Ahmad Shah Massoud and his beliefs. And at the top of that list is the belief that Pakistan is not the friend of Afghanistan.

I just want to raise that point because I think we shouldn't finish today on Afghanistan without acknowledging that we are at a critical moment in Afghanistan

history. This election puts Afghanistan on a precipice. If it doesn't come out with a good ending, I would not be surprised to see Afghanistan split apart right now. I think the Obama administration needs to be in this game now 100 percent. Whatever you think of the rights and wrongs of the Iraq situation, for President Obama a disaster in Afghanistan after what has just happened in Iraq would be the most thorough indictment of his foreign policy there can be.

I don't have a recipe other than we need to have a thorough audit of this election. It is astounding to believe that there were 6.8 million votes cast in the first round and 8.2 million votes cast in the second round. That is the best ground game of mobilization in the history of elections, and it just doesn't add up.

MR. TALBOTT: I don't know if what I'm about to say is full disclosure or a parochial institutional plug, but I think that Ashraf Ghani is the first Brookings nonresident senior fellow to be a candidate for the president of his country. (Laughter) Just to drop that name in, as well.

I would like to ask a two-part final question, Bruce, and it has to do with two Russian leaders: Gorbachev and Putin.

With regard to Gorbachev, in your research did you find evidence that another motivation Gorbachev had for ending the misadventure in Afghanistan was that he had other fish to fry, namely to reform the Soviet Union? So that there was basically a domestic, you know, we have to fix our own country and get out of Afghanistan.

With regard to what our colleagues Cliff Gaddy and Fiona Hill call Mr. Putin, 'operative in the Kremlin,' 35 years after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, a post-Soviet leader, Putin, invaded another neighboring country, namely Ukraine. And there have been some -- there's some evidence and certainly some speculation that that could be disastrous or at least bad for Russia over the long run for reasons that relate,

actually, to Afghanistan.

I remember as a journalist going to Central Asia about three months after the invasion and being told by Central Asian authorities, who, of course, were Soviet officials, that the reason they had gone in Afghanistan was because there was -- it was the equivalent of a forest fire there and they wanted to keep the forest fire from jumping over into the culturally and historically Islamic parts of the Soviet Union. And Putin, of course, has justified going into Ukraine on the grounds of basically great Russian chauvinism, which I don't think probably plays very well in those parts of the Russian Federation that are populated by the descendants of Turkic people and Mongols and so forth, Islamic people in the Caucasus and elsewhere. And so I wonder if you've given any thought to whether maybe Mr. Putin could have learned a lesson from Afghanistan.

MR. RIEDEL: Well, first on Gorbachev. I don't think there's any question but that Gorbachev saw the war as, A, probably unwinnable and, B, a drain on Soviet resources and a barrier to his objectives of reforming the Soviet Union. So for him, getting out was an essential step to a larger (inaudible).

That reasoning was completely lost, by the way, on the American intelligence community, which was convinced when the Soviets left that the Soviet Union was not about to reform itself. It was about to become bigger and badder than ever before. There's nothing in the intelligence record at the end of the war that suggests the American intelligence community had even a whisper.

MR. TALBOTT: '89?

MR. RIEDEL: '89, that within two years there wouldn't be --

MR. TALBOTT: Their commander in chief had a different view of it.

MR. RIEDEL: The commander in chief, right. Ronald Reagan had a very different view than his professional analysts.

Putin, KGB officer, stationed in East Germany during the war, must have followed the war very, very closely. I don't think he has learned any of the lessons of the war. I think that he looks at it from a technician's standpoint, that if only we were smarter spies, we could have won.

Certainly from his handling of Chechnya, I don't see someone who is trying to diffuse Islamist sentiment against him. He's trying to do to the Islamists in Chechnya what the Soviet Union tried to do to the Afghan people in Afghanistan: drive them out of the country or kill them or so intimidate them that they will accept Russian authority. And I think in the long run that's not going to work.

It's very interesting, we now have a caliph, Caliph Ibrahim. In his first statement he identified two enemies of the Caliphate: Russia and America.

MR. TALBOTT: There's already an indication that the Crimean Tartars, particularly in the younger cohort, are radicalizing.

This has been a terrific conversation. I want to make three points.

One is this guy's written a book. Please get it, buy it. He will sign it.

MR. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. TALBOTT: And that'll be available right outside.

Second, we have a lot of good conversations in the Falk Auditorium. This one was distinctively a good conversation because of the degree of knowledge and expertise and experience that was evident from those of you who were good enough to ask questions, and I'm sure there were a lot of you -- there are a lot of you in the room who could have pushed Bruce in the very constructive way that those of you who did speak to him.

And finally, you can imagine, those of you who haven't met Bruce before, what a pleasure it was and what an education it was for an amateur like myself to spend

time with a real specialist like this and working on that part of the world.

So please join me in thanking Bruce and congratulate him on his book.

(Applause)

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