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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. O'HANLON: Good afternoon everyone, and welcome to Brookings at the University of California. Although not in California either. In any event, we're thrilled to have you today for a discussion on Afghanistan and Pakistan. I'm Mike O'Hanlon. I co-direct the Defense Center, or the Center on 21st Century Security and Intelligence at Brookings. My co-director is retired, General John Allen. You might have heard of him. He's doing something else today. But we have equally good talent I think you'll agree as you hear from them, Vanda Felbab-Brown and Bruce Riedel, to discuss this ongoing very important topic that -- or part of the world. I shouldn't say a single topic of course, that sometimes is overlooked as we focus on ISIS and other such matters. But remains central to American security and interlinked with many of the other hotspots and big issues that we debate today on American foreign policy.

Vanda is just back from a trip to Afghanistan, during which she was, in some general sense, part of the inaugural festivities and had a lot of opportunity to meet with various political leaders. And I think she can tell us a little bit about what her impressions were. We'll begin with essentially her short trip report, if you will, on what her impressions were during her time in Afghanistan just in the last couple of weeks. And largely about the politics under President Ghani. Have to practice to get used to saying that. Doesn't sound all that bad.

And in any event, big new opportunities, big new moments in Afghanistan's history going forward. And I'm sure that Vanda will touch on some security issues as she gives us her trip report. I may try to draw her out a little bit on those, and that will be a natural link into the ideas and thinking of Bruce Riedel, who will then speak on the Pakistan angle. And Bruce of course, as you know, is a longstanding student of

Pakistan and of counterterrorism and of the Middle East at large. And he will speak I'm sure about specific security issues along the border and the role of Pakistan in the Afghan civil conflict, such as it is. But hopefully he'll also be able to give us a perspective on Pakistan more generally under Prime Minister Sharif and where we stand in terms of its general progress and prognosis in South Asia going forward.

So after a bit of conversation amongst ourselves following these initial presentations, we'll then look forward to your comments and questions. So without further ado, Vanda, over to you.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Good afternoon. If I were to characterize what's been happening in Afghanistan over the past several months and immediate future ahead, I would perhaps use three terms. One is a great moment of opportunity. Perhaps a vast moment of opportunity in some ways. Another is precariousness, and the third is an extraordinarily complexity of collaboration.

And I'll come to these themes, particularly the complexity of collaboration and the moment of opportunity throughout the talk. We have just come out of a very hot summer in Afghanistan. Hot because of the difficulties in the political transition. The elections that at the beginning seemed extraordinarily hopeful. But then nonetheless, resulted in multiple risks, including potentially the risk of a coup, although there is wide disagreement among analysts and diplomats as to how close the country did come to a coup in July.

But certainly with great risks of a political paralysis that might yet materialize. And a summer that verged on multiple times on the verge of street violence, or at least was widely perceived as verging on the cusp of street violence, that many of the instigators behind the violence perhaps could not control in the way they envisioned they could control it. Nonetheless, the country was pulled back from the brink.

The second moment of opportunity, of precariousness, another second aspect of the very hot summer, was of course the delay in the signing of the Bilateral Security Agreement between Afghanistan and the United States, which was signed, but signed at the last minute. And in some ways signed too late, and I'll come back to that. And along with the BSA, also the SOFA with NATO.

And the third aspect of the very hot summer was -- has been the Taliban intensity of fighting over the summer and what that meant for Afghan security forces, standing more alone than they have stood at any point up till now. And once again, it didn't result in a catastrophe. The country did not go over the brink. It did not fall. But many of these aspects were hanging on a thread.

Nonetheless, we are now at the moment of exhale. A moment where a new government has been formed, a government of national unity, with a very intense involvement of the United States and the international community, particularly the United States. And one of the issues of collaboration is whether and how should the United States stay involved from now on. And there is a sense even among the Afghan people that out of this huge uncertainty of the summer, there is yet a way to come out and preserve and expand on the gains of the past decade, which are real. They are not sufficient, but they are real and they should not be wasted. They should certainly not be wasted by the Afghans, but they should also not be wasted by the international community, including the United States.

So the government that has been formed out of the prolonged electoral crisis, this so-called government of national unity, with Ashraf Ghani as the president and Abdullah Abdullah as the so-called chief executive officer, a position that is new, innovative. Certainly not part of the constitution. And that is supposedly going to head for some sort of ratification and codification in (inaudible) loya jirga in two years.

And of course the details of that arrangement, beyond who appoints what ministers and what kind of vice-presidents and what are the roles between the vice-presidents and the chief executive officers, many of those details are not worked out and will be a major challenge as the government goes on. And certainly as the loya jirga in two years comes up, if it comes up. How these issues will be renegotiated, negotiated, specified, will bring another moment of great tenseness and potentially not a moment of great crisis.

What of course is complicated for the government is now the need to collaborate across politic lines that became very heated, with a great sense on both sides, of immense sacrifice and slight. Both the Ghani side and the Abdullah side believe that they won in the elections. Both reject any sense that the other side won. And both believe that they were -- worked to come to this government of national unity.

There was fraud, widespread fraud during the elections on both sides. Whether one side cheated more than the other is hard to know and was never technically resolved. Ultimately what ended up happening was of course political negotiations.

And so the new government now has to balance and collaborate along a great many dimensions. One, it has to deliver on the key promises, and particularly for Ghani, this means delivering on an anti-corruption better governance agenda. That's something that's badly needed in Afghanistan, and indeed that's something that is -- has brought the system over the past decade to a profound legitimacy crisis. One that could easily unravel the system few years down the road.

But nonetheless, this would be extraordinarily difficult, even if he had sole mandate, given the context of corruption and given the pervasiveness of a patronage system and a political arrangement with the still weak center or at least the factor, if not the [inaudible] center dealing with periphery. But now it's very much

complicated by the fact that it is a unity government.

So the second aspect of the extraordinarily complexity and difficulty of collaboration is how much to move on corruption. Who to appease, whom to appoint in patronage positions. Who to risk pushing out of the system and having the power and the capacity and wherewithal to then crack down and act against those who are pushed out of the corruption patronage system, but nonetheless have a great capacity to raise very serious problems.

And of course the challenge for Ghani in particular is that he does not control a physical force. He has this broad mandate toward governance reform and anti-corruption. But the key task for him is to bring in the Afghan National Security Forces to be his physical force to act against the physical forces, the militias of many political actors around him and part of the National Unity Government.

The third aspect of this very difficult collaboration is on the Abdullah side, between him and the powerful men behind him who might not be happy with the deal that was struck. And who believe that they could have perhaps walked out from a better deal or even play outside of the system, throw the chessboard overboard. How he manages them will be critical for how the government can or cannot move forward.

And the fourth aspect of this collaboration is the role of the international community. It was very heavily invested, involved, a key broker in coming out of the political crisis and key broker of the deal. Down to a level of detail that borders on being a nursemaid to various actors in the negotiations. And it is a big question whether it's feasible and desirable for the international community, including the United States, to play this role.

Clearly at this point, the US is implicated. It perhaps might have been the critical actor avoiding a coup and avoiding paralysis, enabling the signing of the BSA,

but nonetheless it is implicated. But how much and in what way should it insist on implementing the terms of the deal and then being involved in the renegotiations of the deal? As its various aspects still need to be fleshed out or will be challenged.

And so if I want to be facetious, I can say that there are two risks ahead. One is that the government will fall apart. Perhaps fall apart very quickly and we're faced yet another political crisis. And the second is that the government will stay together. And in that case, what we can see is a political paralysis and real inability to move on the governance agenda, in particular on the anti-corruption agenda and perhaps even on the economic agenda in the context of a huge economic crisis. A part of which is immediate. The hedging of the past several months resulted in a fiscal crisis you might have read about, with people not sending taxes forward, not sending customs to Kabul, way beyond the normal levels affecting corruption, which normally is about 50 percent. What we have seen is much greater rates of usurpation of resources.

And perhaps now with the new government, there are ways to crack down on this. If not recover the money, at least raise the flows to the levels that have been customary over the past several years. But that also has many structural damage, including with the reduction of international forces, there will inevitably be a very difficult economic crisis. And dealing with that will be tremendously difficult under the most auspicious of circumstances, which we don't have.

But if I don't want to be facetious, and I want to be optimistic, I can say there is a third way to look at the government. That is to say that right now there is a government that has a mandate of perhaps 75 percent of the population. And that on both sides, at least nominally embraces the agenda of better governance and reform. And so if the two men can work together, they might be able to take on the very many difficult, powerful political actors, both on the outside and inside the government, and

work together towards a better deal. Whether they will find the strength and the wisdom to do that remains to be seen.

Let me now make a few remarks about the security situation. I mentioned already it was a very hot summer, with a lot of Taliban activity. And one way to look at the security is to say, well, things were good because despite a huge Taliban activity, despite the real number of Taliban attacks and really difficult contestations in places like Sangin, part of Kandahar, the Taliban at the end of the day didn't really walk away with much, if anything.

And the Taliban, despite throwing tremendous amount of resources into the summer and into the first phase of the elections campaign, trying to disrupt both, did not succeed. And this is in many ways the reading of ISAF, of NATO forces in Afghanistan. And to some extent it is a real reading. Other side of course is that people perceive the human security to be measured in ways that are far more complex. And simply the amount of activity, simply the amount of back and forth Taliban, Afghan National Security Forces pressure is sufficient to result in a great decrease in their security and really change their behavior. Increase hedging behavior, decrease the sense of freedom of movement. And that cannot be discounted.

Now nonetheless, what is critical and enabled by the BSA is that we continue helping the Afghan Security Forces. That we don't cut them loose and don't let them be on their own. There are limitations with what can happen after January 1st, 2015. Nonetheless, we can and should continue providing air support, as I argued in an op-ed with David Surney, who is sitting in the audience, as well as Ron Newman. The air support should move beyond being directed to NATO forces only and be critically focused on Afghan Security Forces.

We should continue providing intelligence, including signal intelligence,

that the Afghans will continue lacking. And work with them to continue, as much as possible, the engagement training beyond Kabul itself.

Let me conclude by saying that there is a lot that we still can do and should do. Now it's not the time to say it's over, it's all failed. There is a moment of great opportunity. Perhaps for the United States for a number of years, the moment of last opportunity to preserve and expand on the gains. But more and more we are going to be in situations where the Afghans need to make a major mental adjustment and stop asking what can the international community do for them. And start asking, what and how they will do for themselves.

MR. O'HANLON: Vanda, thank you very much. And before turning to Bruce and picking up the security dialogue and whatever other parts of the broad South Asia picture he wants to hone in on, let me ask you just a couple of quick follow-up questions on politics if I could. First of all, you mentioned that both sides, Ghani and Abdullah, both camps would allege the other committed a lot of fraud. Both, at least publicly, say they think they won. What's the word on the street? Is the outcome that we got, with a Ghani victory, even though it's a coalition government of sorts, it's still a Ghani victory, clearly so, is that what most people think really happened if the votes had been properly -- I understand why in Afghanistan itself, the UN doesn't necessarily want to be any more precise on its public disclosure about vote tallies. But nonetheless, do you have an impression as to whether the outcome here was really accurate? And that's going to set up my second question, so that's why I'm curious what you think on that front.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: I certainly cannot speak to what the majority of Afghan people believe. I did not have that interaction. I did interact with various actors, both in the political decision making as well as ordinary Afghans. And essentially they

believe that their candidate won. So one of the things that the elections did is really polarized, or politically engaged, depending on your take, the vast majority of the population. Many few people were indifferent. People became very mobilized and very passionate.

And so if they supported Ghani, they believe that Ghani won. If they supported Abdullah, they believe that Abdullah won. By and large, very few people are happy with the National Unity Government, or those that I had a chance to engage with. They believe that it's violation of what the elections were supposed to deliver. That there was supposed to be a clear victor and not this brokered deal. And they also believe that it's precarious and will likely collapse.

But they will follow that immediately by saying, "But the crisis was so huge, we were so close to the brink. Thank God we have the deal." What the audit did was identify the most obvious frauds. So if you had ballots and someone took 1 pen and checked 10 ballots or 20 ballots, 100 ballots with that same pen, something like that the audit would catch. If one were smarter about how to cheat, then it would be very hard for the audit to catch them.

MR. O'HANLON: So my second question, and I'm not asking you to divulge anything you were able to hear from him directly if you saw Dr. Abdullah, but your analysis of what calculation he made to accept the deal. Because I'm just trying to -- I'm still trying to sort this through myself. Did Dr. Abdullah decide to accept a powerful, but nonetheless number two position because A, the only real alternative was to plunge the country into civil war and he was a good enough man and enough of an Afghan patriot not to want to do that? Or B, that he felt that maybe playing the long game, he could be the next president of Afghanistan still, if he just bides his time? I think he's a relatively young man, in his early 50s. In other words, do you sense that he was choosing among

a variety of options and decided that in a very real politic sense, this was the best one?
Or -- how close did he come to making a different decision? If you see where I'm going --

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: I'm sure that Dr. Abdullah and his team were choosing among a variety of options. And as I said, there is a significant disagreement among analysts and observers of just how the country came to a coup and violence. Violence was threatened. Violence in a limited sense was instigated as a pressure tool. Whether the people behind Abdullah were willing to push it all the way over the brink is extraordinarily hard to know. The outcome is they did not.

Nonetheless, the leadership council that was meeting behind Abdullah included some of the crucial or most of the crucial (inaudible) or Northern Alliance power brokers. And they were at least indicating, whether they believe it or not, that their anchor in the system was much looser than was believed. Now this could be just bargaining tool obviously.

But nonetheless, I think that we need to step back and not think about Abdullah Abdullah as being the key decision maker or the sole decision maker and having to understand how much all his decisions or his choices are influenced, constrained, by the powerful men behind him who are far more powerful than he is. And indeed, I don't really believe that he senses that he has another option to run. He got very burned in the 2009 elections. He believed then that he won, that he was deprived of the vote. And he came to the election both with a huge personal sense of grievance, as well as with limitations to what his power is.

And what the deal allowed him is to some extent safe face and to some extent deliver to some of the key supporters. But it also left him looking very weak. And so what kind of political future he has beyond the current deal is an open question mark. And it depends ultimately on how he performs and how the National Unity Government

does. And again, there are two dimensions to this that stand in contradiction. On the one hand, he, just like Ghani, has to pay off critical power brokers without whose support and ultimate consent he would not have been elected. Or in this case he would not have been appointed and Ghani would not have been elected.

But in the same time, he needs to also deliver on the broader anti-corruption, broader, better governance agenda. And so these two mandates and the political realities stand in contradiction, and how they will be balanced, how they will be collaborated, what kind of sequential steps are taken. Do they both manage to deliver to both sets or three sets of audiences, also the international community? Or will they be just mired in the inability to collaborate and deal with the complexity that they're coming in?

MR. O'HANLON: Great. Fantastic, and I'm sure others will want to return to some of these questions in a little bit. But first Bruce, over to you, and please feel free to tell us about your overall take on where Pakistan is at this crucial moment. You've got a Modi government to its east. We've got a Ghani government to its west. Got a lot going on inside Pakistan itself. So not only the security implications for Afghanistan, but whatever else you would like to say about Pakistan today, we'd like to hear. Thank you.

MR. RIEDEL: Thank you Mike. I'd like to look basically at four features of the situation in Pakistan today, starting with the domestic political situation, turning then to the counterterrorism, countermilitancy operations. Third, to the relationship with India and finally, to the question of al Qaeda, not just in Pakistan, but throughout South Asia.

Let me start with the current political situation. Pakistan is in the midst of what is now a prolonged and appears to be open-ended domestic political crisis. It has, to a certain extent, paralyzed the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, although

he seems to be coming out of the worst moments of paralysis. But it has certainly reflected an increasingly dysfunctional political system inside the country.

Ostensibly the crisis is between Prime Minister Sharif and Imran Khan, Pakistan's most famous cricketer and sportsman. Mr. Khan charges that in the elections that brought Mr. Sharif to office, there was massive electoral fraud. Now normally in Pakistan that would be kind of, so what? There's always massive electoral fraud. But actually in this election, most outside observers thought that there was less electoral fraud than they'd seen in the past. And in any case, Prime Minister Sharif won in pretty much a landslide. Maybe not as big a landslide as Modi's, but by Pakistani standards, a landslide.

The major Pakistan opposition party, the PPP, has not complained about electoral fraud and has not joined in the campaign against Nawaz Sharif, led by Imran Khan. Who's backing Mr. Khan is of course, as always in Pakistan, very murky and hard to really get your hands on. But the widespread impression is that the Army is supporting Imran Khan's efforts. That's of course always the default position in Pakistan analysis, but in this case there's some pretty good evidence, including the statements of people very close to Imran Khan, that he is being coordinated and being loosely orchestrated behind the scenes by the Army.

That's kind of ironic since Imran Khan has been the most outspoken supporter of Détente with the Taliban and of getting a deal with the Taliban during a period when the Army is now, as I'll say in a few minutes, engaged in I think the most serious campaign they've ever had against the Taliban. But contradiction is a necessity of Pakistani politics, so it shouldn't obscure the fact that the Army may well be supporting Imran Khan behind the scenes.

The Army and Nawaz Sharif have not been friends for a long time.

Again, this is deeply ironic since Nawaz Sharif began his career as the protégée of Pakistan's third military dictator, Zia-ul-Haq was supported by the Army for a long time. But of course those days came to an end in the Musharraf era. The Army clearly does not like the fact that former dictator Pervez Musharraf is on trial, on trial for treason. It's not because they have any particular affection for Mr. Musharraf. I think Mr. Musharraf's sell by date in Pakistan is pretty much expired a long, long time ago.

But it's the principle of having an Army officer held accountable for a military dictatorship. There's really no end in sight right now to this confrontation. There's no reason to believe Imran Khan is going to stop demanding that Nawaz Sharif step down, and there's no real reason to believe that Nawaz Sharif is going to step down.

Beyond the immediate situation, I think there's also a deeper malaise in the Pakistani political system. A kind of a stagnation, and I'll give you one way to think about it. If you look back at every Pakistani election since 1988, it's basically been a contest between two people, Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto. The Musharraf era didn't really change that. And the fact that Mrs. Bhutto's been dead since 2007 hasn't really changed it either. We're still basically facing a contest between these two people.

And I think many, many Pakistanis, especially young Pakistanis, increasingly find this very frustrating. And that's why Imran Khan gets some affection. That's why Qadri gets some affection. People are looking for anything that's different. They've explored whether Mr. Sharif or the Bhutto family can solve Pakistan's problems, and in both cases we pretty much have the answer. No, they can't solve Pakistan's problems. They can nibble around the edges.

I don't see any sign that this deeper malaise, stagnation is going to change any time in the future. Let me turn secondly to the counterterrorism, countermilitancy campaign. Now the Pakistani Army, after much agonizing by the prime

minister, finally embarked on a very serious counterterrorism campaign this year. I think it is probably the most serious countermilitancy, counterterrorism campaign in the country's recent history.

There's good reason for it. According to the latest numbers out of the government of Pakistan, Pakistan has suffered 55,000 casualties in militancy and terrorism related incidents since 2001. With the exception of Iraq and Syria, there are probably no places in the world that have suffered more grievously from terrorism in the last decade than Pakistan. It's having results, the Pakistan Taliban, the TTP is increasingly splintering. We've even seen some of the splinters now associating themselves with ISIS in Iraq and Syria, showing I think a great deal of strain on the organization.

But despite this counterterrorism, countermilitancy campaign, the basic schizophrenic response of the Pakistani National Security system towards terrorism remains. They fight terrorists who target the Pakistani state, like the PTT, occasionally groups like Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, the extreme Sunni sectarian group. But they continue to support other groups, like the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani Network, Lashkar-e-Taiba and others.

There's really no reason to believe that that schizophrenic approach is likely to change. Pakistan thus continues to be both a victim and a patron of terrorism at the same time. We do have a new director general of ISI, Lieutenant General Adkhtar. The 21st director of ISI came into office just recently. His career path doesn't suggest he's going to be a dramatic change from the past. He is Chief of Army Staff General Sharif's, no relationship to Prime Minister Sharif, just another purposeful effort in order to confuse everyone, that everyone would seem to be having the same last name who counts. So he may be closer to the chief of Army staff than ever before, but there's no

real sign that he's going to change the direction of the organization.

Just to keep in mind something about the ISI. The ISI is an organization of 100,000 employees today. That makes it one of the largest components of the Pakistani system. It actually has more people in its command structure than the Pakistani Navy and Air Force combined have under their structure. And according to the Pakistani Finance Ministry, its budget is larger than that of the Pakistani Navy.

Thirdly, the tensions with India. We've seen a sharp increase in tensions with India in the last few months. I think they started at the end of May with an attack on the Indian Consulate in Herat in Western Afghanistan. That attack was carried out by a squad of very heavily armed terrorists. The Department of State has subsequently said publicly that these terrorists came from the Lashkar-e-Taiba group, so-called Army of the Pure, that attacked Mumbai in November 2008.

Thanks to the very effective work of the Indian Consulate's own security guards, all of the terrorists were killed before they could enter inside the consulate. We can tell from equipment that was captured on them and from other pieces of information, that the intent was to take members of the consulate, diplomats hostage, and then have a hostage crisis going on precisely at the moment that Narendra Modi was being inaugurated in New Delhi and precisely at the moment as Prime Minister Sharif was attending the inauguration.

In other words, whoever commanded this operation, intended to create a global crisis between India and Pakistan and a crisis for Prime Minister Sharif at the same time. Again, if you go back and look at the Mumbai operation in November 2008, the hallmarks are very much similar. That was also intended to provoke a crisis with India and also intended to undermine then President Zardari.

Nothing happened of course because the terrorists were all killed. But I

think it sent a clear signal to Prime Minister Modi of things to come, and since then we've seen a real spike in violence along the line of control in Kashmir, a spike in violence that we haven't seen really in more than a decade. It's not entirely clear what's driving this. But if you look at where most of the attacks seem to be -- where most of the fire fights and artillery shelling are carrying out, they're not in the traditional areas of infiltration. They're more in the areas around Jammu, which is not usually where these kind of incidents take place. It suggests again, that there are forces here who want to create a confrontation in South Asia.

Prime Minister Modi is of course a polarizing figure for Muslims, not just in India, but Muslims throughout South Asia, Muslims around the world. The things that make him so attractive to Indians of course, make him a very optimal target for Islamic extremist groups looking for a figure in order to rally things against.

Making any kind of predictions in Pakistan is always a dangerous business, but I would predict that we will see a major crisis between India and Pakistan within the next 6 to 12 months, which will be perhaps the most dangerous crisis we've ever seen between India and Pakistan because I think that there are clearly forces that want to make that happen.

But let me conclude by looking at al Qaeda. What is referred to in the American and national security bureaucracy as al Qaeda core, or the original al Qaeda that is in Pakistan and has been in Pakistan since they were driven out of Afghanistan in late 2001. As you will remember, the president established that the goal of this policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan is the three Ds, disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda. He laid those out in his March 2009 speech and continues to be the number one priority of the United States and the reason.

I think we are seeing early signs, but significant early signs, that the

regeneration of al Qaeda core has come under tremendous pressure. The killing of Osama bin Laden, the drone strikes, did succeed in disrupting al Qaeda's activities in Pakistan considerably and to a certain extent, in dismantling it. But it clearly did not defeat it.

I think there are three examples that I could point to of this regeneration. First of all is the announcement by Ayman al-Zawahiri, the emir of al Qaeda, the head of al Qaeda core, of a new al Qaeda franchise for the Indian sub-continent. That's a little clunky phrase in English, the al Qaeda Indian sub-continent. Believe me, in Arabic it sounds much better. I will just refer to it as al Qaeda in India, although of course what al Qaeda means is traditional India, all of the territory including Pakistan, Bangladesh and the rest of the region, including well into Burma.

Within days of the announcement of this organization, it carried out an extraordinarily audacious and bold attack on a Pakistani naval base in Karachi. Now the intent of the attack, as al Qaeda India has now told us, was to hijack a Pakistani Navy frigate. A Chinese built frigate armed with surface-to-surface or sea-to-sea cruise missiles. They intended to hijack this ship. They had insiders inside the Pakistani Navy that they were working with, with the intent of taking it out to join the anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden and then sneaking up next to an American ship and firing the cruise missiles into it.

It may have been a fantastical plot. The idea that you could actually hijack a Pakistan frigate, which has a crew of several hundred people and they would not be witting of what was going on or you could control them, may be a dream, a fantasy. Or maybe more accurately a nightmare. But you have to give them credit. This was an audacious, bold plan. There is probably nothing since 9/11 quite of the magnitude of this plan. And they did succeed in carrying out an attack inside the Navy yard, and they did

succeed, as I said, in recruiting several active duty navy employees.

There's a lot about this attack that's very murky. The Pakistan government, I think for understandable reasons, has not been terribly transparent about what went on in Karachi at the time and there's more to come. But this definitely represents some degree of resurgence and regeneration and resiliency by al Qaeda core.

Secondly of course, there's the ultimate evidence of resurgence and resiliency, which is the fact that drone strikes have now started going back up again. Drone strikes in Pakistan almost ceased in 2013, but in the last month or so we've seen a rapid increase in drone strikes from CIA bases in Afghanistan against targets, which are being identified in the press as including al Qaeda targets.

For the third evidence of the regeneration is the so-called Khorasan cell that's operating in Syria, part of the al-Nusra group, which is a key al Qaeda franchise linked to Zawahiri, which I would describe as al Qaeda's attempts to bring together the best and the brightest of their people and put them in the most lucrative operating area under the command of Ayman al-Zawahiri in order to carry out attacks on the United States of America.

In short, I think we see not unexpectedly a regeneration, a resiliency by al Qaeda core, which raises serious questions about what's going to happen once most NATO and American forces are outside of Afghanistan.

I would make just two recommendations today. Recommendation number one is that whatever we do in Afghanistan post-2017, we retain a unilateral counterterrorism capability, which is a euphemism for unmanned area vehicles or drones that can carry out operations across the border. I think if we lose that capability after 2016, we're going to come back to regret it even more than we regret what's gone on in

Iraq in the last six months. And to retain a unilateral counterterrorism capability in Afghanistan means requiring some kind of American military presence. Otherwise you're going to leave this capability vulnerable to a Benghazi type operation.

And the second recommendation I would make is that we should take our Afghanistan and Pakistan policy off the egg timer. We're now saying that the egg will be perfectly finished by January 2017 and we can bring all American forces home and basically walk away from that. That too hearkens back to the mistakes that we made in Iraq. This I think will be an even bigger mistake. I think there is every reason that we should condition what we decide to keep in Afghanistan post-2016 on conditions in the area, especially in Pakistan, but also in Afghanistan. It is not likely to be a large burden, 5000 or less American forces on the ground. Something that I think the United States should certainly be able to afford.

Finally, I think it would be a remarkably poor legacy for the president to leave his successor, he or she, without the option of having some American presence in Afghanistan in February 2017. It would be a lot harder to go back in, a lot harder to negotiate a new bilateral security arrangement with a future government of Afghanistan than it is to secure the gains that we've already made that Vanda elicited and spoke about before.

One last thing I want to say, I just want to congratulate the people of Pakistan on the Nobel Peace Prize. If you lose faith in the future of Pakistan, just think of that young lady and all that she had done to demonstrate that Pakistanis do want a better future and they do want to fight extremism and violence.

MR. O'HANLON: Bruce, thank you. Thank you for finding an uplifting ending as well. You were characteristically clear, which is really, really too bad 'cause almost everything you said was incredibly depressing. But I just have two quick follow-up

questions for you. One is on the broad subject of the economy of Pakistan, and I wondered if you had any comment there. I'm hoping that you might say there's at least as glimmer of better news, at least compared to the effects that the great recession in the United States and other such global dynamics had from I think 2008 through 2010, '11, where things were particularly poor. Is there anything to say that's even slightly hopeful about Pakistan's economy?

MR. RIEDEL: I think there is something very hopeful to say about Prime Minister Sharif's plans and strategy for the Pakistani economy. I think he gets it, that for Pakistan to be a success story, it has to stop being in a state of semi-permanent hostility with India. That it has to reach out to the government of India. That's why he went to the inauguration of Prime Minister Modi. I'm sure that he's hoping that Prime Minister Modi will be the Nixon of India, the one able to make a deal on Kashmir that no one else has been able to make.

I think he also gets it that Pakistan in some ways is perfectly situated. It sits at the nexus between the two most important economies in Asia, China and India. And if it can somehow build on that geographic fact, it could be a big beneficiary of it. But that means controlling the forces in Pakistan that want to stay in perpetual enmity with India.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. And the other and final question, you implicitly got at this a bit when you mentioned that Pakistan continues to tolerate, condone, even support the Haqqani network and the Afghan Taliban and also Lashkar-e-Taiba. But I wanted to ask a little more directly, what do you think Pakistan's strategy is now towards Afghanistan, to the extent that there is -- I realize there's more than one strategy. Maybe that's the first thing to say and the first thing you will say. But has it evolved at all as they've now seen the United States and NATO prepare to more or less

leave in coming years?

MR. RIEDEL: Well, typically there's a schizophrenic Pakistani policy. There's the policy of the Pakistani civilian government, which espouses friendship with Afghanistan. And then there's the policy of the Pakistan Army, which supports the Afghan Taliban, has supported the Afghan Taliban ever since 2001.

Leon Panetta in his new book, repeats what former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Dempsey said, that the Haqqani network is a veritable arm of the ISI. I think the evidence of that is now well established. The hot summer that Vanda talked about, I think was planned by the Quetta Shura and the Haqqani network, with input from the ISI.

If I were in their shoes and I was looking at the situation, I would say victory is in sight. Just wait. It's coming. The Americans are going to put the egg, I hate to keep using the egg analogy, they're going to put the egg right on your plate. I think they're misreading the situation though. I think that the Afghans are going to fight very hard not to let their country fall back under the control of the Taliban, and that what we will discover is that the falling like a ripe apple analogy doesn't work out. That even if we do all the wrong things, the Afghans are still going to resist, and they'll look for another patron.

And the other patron is right there now, India. And there are others who will help them as well. But India in 2017 is not the India of 1997 or 1998, which could do very little for the Northern Alliance. It's a completely different country. The attack on the consulate in Herat, which follows a previous attack on the consulate in Herat, which follows an attack on the embassy in -- the Indian embassy in Kabul, which followed a previous attack on the embassy in Kabul, shows that the India/Pakistan conflict has been for a long time exported into Afghanistan. I wouldn't be surprised to see it exported even more into Afghanistan as the NATO, American role diminishes, because power abhors a

vacuum, and other powers will seek to come in, in our place.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Vanda, unless you want to comment there, I'll go to the audience. But anything you want to add, playing off of Bruce's comments?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Perhaps pick up on whether victory for the Taliban is in sight. I think it would be surprising if they decided to make any conclusions at this point. In many ways, the future looks optimistic for them. However, the Taliban itself is aware that the most dangerous and bad outcome for them is a protracted civil war. And this is indeed what they would like. They might be able to capture large parts of the south and perhaps the east. But they will face an extraordinarily difficult contestation, Kabul and north of Kabul.

In large areas we are already seeing hedging, perhaps even accommodation with the Taliban, certainly a waiting pattern, even as they turn some areas, previously very peaceful areas in terms of violence. Now a lot of the violence that's going on is not Taliban linked. It's linked to various power brokers in and out of government who instigate various forms of violence, both by militias and by criminal actors in order to pre-position themselves for the huge patronage changes and order of magnitude patronage changes that might be coming in Afghanistan.

So a lot of the insecurity is not linked to the Taliban. Nonetheless, they have a capacity to make people not side with the government, at least in the south. And one of the outcomes of the elections was, in the second half particularly, very intense ethnic polarization, really resurrections of ethnic identities and ethnic hostilities. How much that will calm down remains to be seen.

The Ghani government has announced as a key priority to negotiate with the Taliban and bring peace. So make a deal that President Karzai has not been

interested, able and willing to make. Now for that to take place, there is a lot of negotiations that the Ghani government needs to do with his partner in the government, with people behind him, with Afghan society more broadly, and ultimately they need to have a taker in the Taliban.

I would be surprised if the Taliban did more than engage in talks, which they get out of, being part of the talks, but if they were willing to come to any sort of deal before 2016. On the military front it's really next year and the year after that are the crucial years. And if the Taliban essentially feels that they are where they have been this year, they are not really further, then they might become very interested in a serious negotiation. And of course even at that point, between the cup and the lip, there is a universe, in the case of Afghanistan, a universe of problems, universe of negotiations.

But nonetheless, the immediate future in my view is one of intense fight along the lines that we have seen this summer. The big question though, the big question mark and one that we can clearly influence, is what happens to the Afghan forces? And how quickly do we leave them high and dry? Do we cut financial support for Afghan security forces? If that were to happen, the force would, in my view, either fold very quickly or its components of that would just fracture along patronage lines that runs through it.

Are we going to be willing to help them with some of the critical enablers which they lack and which they will not have for a number of years or not? They are taking extraordinarily high casualty rates that are probably not sustainable. Will they find a way to reduce those casualty rates?

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Let's take three questions at a time, and if you could, I'd prefer that you ask one directly to -- just one question and then post it directly to one or the other. Now in some cases there's an obvious follow on question or

it's better to pose to both, that's okay. But see if we can start. My friend here, second row, and then we'll go to Gary and then we'll go here in the middle.

MR. SCHNEIDER: Mark Schneider, International Crisis Group. Thank you both. I'm going to pose one question just to make two points. One is that tomorrow we're coming out with a report on Afghanistan's political transition, which tracks very closely Vanda's statements. It does raise though -- the question really is for Vanda, which is, given the commitment of President Ghani and to some extent Abdullah Abdullah as well, to go after corruption. What does that do to the -- essentially their political constituencies and their major supporters who might well be the targets of that effort? Are they going to be -- are they going to do both? That is to maintain the support and still go after the corruption effort? And my only point about Pakistan that Bruce, that was excellent, we're looking at that question for the next report next month on the impact of Pakistan's decision making in Afghanistan.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Gary.

MR. MITCHELL: Thanks very much. Garrett Mitchell. I write The Mitchell Report and I'll pose this question to Bruce. And I'm concerned about the report (inaudible) for the first time in a long time (inaudible). Some of us have been in this same place in the last week. Last week was ISIS, Iran and Syria (inaudible) Afghanistan and Pakistan. I don't think it's cynical to say that one has to look hard and long to find anything that looks like good news. More to the point, it seems to me there is a team that emerges and re-emerges in all of these discussions (inaudible). We have said over some period of time, using a series of words (inaudible), dismantle, dislodge (inaudible) you name it. The Taliban, al Qaeda, ISIS and others, and it appears that just when we think we've got it done, they come back. Sometimes in the same form, sometimes in a different. But they come back.

AB, they are operating in countries [inaudible] countries that we talked about, where there are profound domestic, political, seemingly (inaudible) problems, the kind that both Bruce and Vanda have talked about today in Pakistan and Afghanistan, we heard about (inaudible). But it seems to me that at some point, we have to ask ourselves whether we are -- whether we're kidding ourselves and whether we have gotten ourselves into one of those situations where there is, on the one hand, an imperative that says, we've got to hang in there and we've got to keep slaying -- all that stuff. And yet for every cow that you slaughter, five more pop up elsewhere.

I don't mean the question to sound facetious. I really do believe that it feels like that's the situation (inaudible).

MR. O'HANLON: Okay, and then here in the middle, please.

SPEAKER: My name is (inaudible). I am with (inaudible) program. My question is for Bruce. You mentioned that there are -- that Afghanistan might reach out to other countries outside the United States if there is a withdrawal of the United States from the region. So first, is it they are willing to go to the (inaudible) like he mentioned? What's the American policy on that? And what if they reach out to somebody else, like Iran or other countries, and what would -- kind of what should we do about it or what (inaudible)?

MR. O'HANLON: Great. Vanda, you want to start?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Sure. Mark, the government overall, and particularly President Ghani, does face anti-corruption and more broadly, better governance as the core issue. They need to do both objectively and with respect to their constituencies. Both of them, including Ghani, have a multitude of political constituencies. There is the popular support for Ghani, the young Afghan generation, the people who are just dissatisfied with the previous order and who supported him because

of his technocratic skills and because of the promise of anti-corruption.

He needs to deliver something to them, and he needs to deliver not only for his political reasons. He does not have a constituency other than that, except in the second phase he very much developed a Pashtun constituency, with perhaps interesting involvement of the Taliban in the Pashtun constituency. But whether he'll be able to maintain the Pashtun constituency beyond the elections is not clear to me.

So elements of his core constituency are the people who want to see changes in corruption and abuse of power. He has of course international community breathing down his neck and saying, all of our aid in one way or another will be influenced if not conditioned by what he does on anti-corruption. And the reopening of the Kabul Bank is very interesting, where until essentially his inauguration he was saying that he will go after the corruption sins of the past. Then at the inauguration the message was, I'll go after corruption looking forward. Sort of saying, by the way, I understand I cannot go after everyone.

And then we have seen the opening of the Kabul Bank, a wider set of indictments, clearly responding to the international community, which was very concerned, particularly Washington and the White House, that he would not reopen Kabul Bank.

So again, he faces this extraordinary collaboration. But the reality also is that many of the key men around him are very much insiders of the old system. Ultimately he has crucial support from former President Karzai and people who were insiders and part of the patronage and part of the balancing. And he cannot ignore them. I think that he can perhaps use two strategies. One is to be appointing people to positions that seem like political payoffs, but with limited capacity for usurpation of resources.

It's a risky game, but one that he might have to rely on. And then certainly move in a sequential way. But let me conclude by bringing Kandahar, which he wouldn't have won if he didn't have Kandahar, if he didn't have the Karzai family -- or at least parts of the Karzai family ultimately supporting him. And there he faces a huge rival or a huge danger, thorn in his side, General Raziq, who is not part of the Taliban. He is not part of the Northern Alliance. He is a key Pashtun constituency. But if he doesn't handle him well, he is a man that is very much liked in Washington because he kills Taliban.

He is feared in Afghanistan because there are allegations of his drilling holes in people's heads while they are still alive. And he has a hand in many criminal and legal racket in Kandahar. He is the symbol of the old system, of corruption, power abuse in Kandahar, yet is crucial, most crucial for bringing Kandahar to Ghani. How is Ghani going to deal with General Raziq? Is he going to appoint him somewhere higher up? Give him more than three stars, which the young man now has? And say, okay, I'll take you out of Kandahar. And as well, is he going to agree to a deal like that?

Again, it's probably not the first fight that the president should take on. But I think it's symptomatic of the issue that he will have to be dealing almost province by province.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Bruce?

MR. RIEDEL: One very brief comment on Afghanistan. Of course the other warlord that Ghani has brought back to stature is his Vice-President Abdul Rashid Dostum, a man who's probably up there in the world class, premier human rights abusers of our time, who started out as the darling of the KGB and is now the vice-president.

I'm going to reverse the two questions I got. One on, is India willing? Yes, I think India is quite willing. India has been supportive of the then Karzai

government for a long time. Provided a lot of economic assistance. Helped build the crucial highway linking the Afghan Ring Road to a highway that takes you to the Iranian ports on the Gulf of Aden, which was first of all, economically the smart thing to do. And secondly, had to piss off everybody in the ISI, which for an Indian bureaucracy, if you can come up with a proposal that does both of those, you're guaranteed a promotion.

I think they'll be willing to do more. We have been a restraining factor on the amount of military activity. I think we don't get much of a vote anymore. Iran is an interesting question. Prime Minister Karzai is only the latest of a large number of foreign heads of state who we have discovered was taking money from the Central Intelligence Agency. But unlike every other head of state, when it was revealed that he was taking money from the CIA, he came out and publicly said, "Well, so what? I'm also taking money from the Iranian Intelligence Service and the British Intelligence Service. And you know what, I actually should be given more because I really do something for all of you."

I think it's an example of the fact that for a long time the Iranians have been our secret partner in Kabul, and I think we will continue. It may be less secret in the future. We have tolerated it for a long time. The reason Herat is one of the most successful parts of Afghanistan is because the Iranians have such a large presence there. You have to give the Italians credit. They picked exactly the right province to take over. I think we will see both of them playing a bigger role, and I wouldn't be surprised to see other players as well.

Gary's very important question. We have been at war with al Qaeda and al Qaedaism now since 1998. It is by far the longest war in American history. If you overlapped our war against al Qaeda with the Civil War and called the attacks on the American embassies in Tanzania and Kenya a Fort Sumter, we would now be at the end of the second Ulysses S. Grant administration, and the rebellion would still be in

Fredericksburg.

Why? First of all, the incredible resiliency of this idea and its various sub-organizations. We have inflicted horrendous blows on them, al Qaeda and Iraq being the best example. And yet they have been adaptable, a learning machine and resilient. They're not cows, they're vipers. But they are very, very good at what they do.

I think part of the reason this exists is because we have, over the course of the last six years, neglected part of our own strategy. I think when the president came into office, if you go back and look at 2009, he clearly articulated a strategy that I think had two major components. I'm oversimplifying, but two major components. One was the hard power strategy, drones. We were going to go after them. We were going to search the leadership down to the ends of the world and bring them to justice.

And secondly was the soft power strategy. We were going to attack the narrative, the ideology of al Qaeda. We were going to reach out to the Islamic world. We were going to demonstrate that we are not the enemy of Islam. We were going to promote Israel, Palestine peace. We were going to promote reform, democracy and change in the Muslim world. Maybe not with a lot of hullabaloo, but we were going to be on the side of reform and change.

And we were going to look at other conflict situations that created support for Islamic extremism. But if you look back on it six years later, again to oversimplify greatly, hard power is on steroids. We're now fighting six wars, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, Syria and Iraq. And in fact we're also supporting the French in a seventh war in North Africa.

The soft power side has atrophied. There are still bureaucrats in the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security, producing memos on countering violent extremism and arguing with each other furiously. But at the top, we

don't even talk about it anymore. And part of this is the Arab Spring of course, because the Arab Spring said, put your money where your mouth is. Are you on the side of reform? Or are you on the side of the counter revolution?

And from the standpoint of I think most people in the Islamic world, the answer is very clear. We're on the side of the counter revolution. We support the (inaudible). We support the (inaudible) dictatorship. Maybe not enthusiastically, but we in practice continue to support them. And I think that that has hurt us terribly in the ideological and narrative battle. And I think at the end of the day, that's where the war on al Qaeda is won, not in the hard power arena.

I don't often like to cite Don Rumsfeld as getting it right. But he actually did get this one right. That we can't defeat al Qaeda if we're actually inadvertently recruiting more people for it than we're killing.

MR. O'HANLON: Vanda.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Well, a few comments. One specifically on Afghanistan, but I think it's quite symptomatic of many of the areas that Bruce mentioned. And that is that the United States' policy, strategy has come to operate I think under the assumption that we can have our cake and eat it too. We can leave a limited counterterrorism force in Afghanistan that does nothing for the Afghans and -- which we can use to fly drones and kill people in Afghanistan or Pakistan.

I don't believe this strategy is really sustainable. At the end of the day, it produces huge risks and troubles for the local countries, which might -- for whom the enemy might be very different. And specifically in the case of Afghanistan, any government, including the Ghani government, if they are serious about negotiations with the Taliban, the only thing they get out of a limited US presence is provoking Pakistan and all the ISI Taliban tangles this brings, as well as resurrecting morale and purpose for

the Taliban. Why should they put up with it?

And in different ways applies to other countries. And beyond Afghanistan, the strategy that I believe has emerged or is emerging, is one of essentially limited engagement that relies on offshore air platforms and that believes, in my view incorrectly, that building up, "partner capacity" will produce alignment of interests of local actors with US objectives.

And these partners can be local militias. They can be militaries of other countries. Perhaps they can even be governments of other countries. That in my view is a dangerous assumption, an incorrect assumption, where there might be a moment of cross section of interest. But by and large, we should assume that that moment will dissipate, and that we will provide capacities to actors who will not be aligned with our interests. Who at the best might do the minimum necessary to beguile us, to trick us, who will continue prosecuting their own agenda, which will be different than ours.

And so in my view, this cake that we do very little and we build up partners who will carry the water for us, cannot be sustained. And the strategy really needs to be married to a political vision for each of the players. What is the political vision in Somalia, beyond relying on Ethiopia and certain group of Darot to feed us intelligence on so-called Shabbat targets, some of whom are Shabbat targets, others who are not.

What is the strategy in Nigeria? And how can one have a strategy with a partner like the Nigerian government, like the Nigerian military? But anyway, where we choose to be engaged or not, I don't think we can do it in the absence of a political vision for the country, or political aspects for the country. And those are by and large devoid, absent from US policy because the notion is that we don't do state building, incorrectly called nation building abroad.

MR. O'HANLON: Okay, let's do another round, starting with Dave Setney and then woman here in the second row and then actually we'll take the two gentlemen in the back row. So it'll be a group of four, and that may wind up being it, but my apologies to others. David, over to you.

SPEAKER: Thanks Michael, and I apologize for not following your instructions. I have two comments and two questions. The first is on the longest war. I know Native Americans who would disagree. So just a comment on that. Secondly, on the Afghan government and the political system and the elections, Dr. Felbab-Brown and I travelled along with Nassir Ranu a week and a half ago. And I agree with her conclusions, but my sense is that very strongly, Afghans are putting the election process behind them. That the kinds of discussions that we're having today, the kinds of reports maybe being issued today, are very -- are becoming very quickly irrelevant in Afghanistan as people are looking to the future and putting their hopes in the government as it is.

The same thing happened in 2009 where we and Europeans spent a lot of time after those elections worrying about the past. And the Afghans, with of course exception of Dr. Abdullah, put it behind them much more quickly. And given the activities of Dr. Ghani, President Ghani so far, he's making a great start. He has been incredibly active. You can look at his website today, you'll see the picture of him doing a video conference with the governor of host, the first of his 34 videoconferences with governors that he's going to be doing.

My questions are first along the lines that was just raised. One of the things that I came away from Afghanistan concerned about is the emerging possibility of Daiche, the Islamic state being active in Afghanistan. People are talking about the attraction, ideological attraction of Daiche to young people. Not just recruiting pamphlets or people springing up, but a real ideological conflict. I know there are some who think

that because al Qaeda and Daiche are at odds, that weakens them. I think maybe if you have two competitors struggling for the same ideological space, it might actually be a bigger problem for us. And I'd like to have comments from anybody on the panel about that.

I would note that President Ghani in our meeting with him raised that, saying that he thinks in the next six months it's going to be a much bigger problem in Afghanistan than it is now. The whole Daiche phenomenon and its attraction.

Finally for Bruce, you mentioned, and I think chillingly so, the possibility of a Pakistan, India confrontation in the next six months. I would be very interested in your personal views on the new Indian National Security advisor and the role that he may play, Ajit Doval, given his history with Pakistan -- with Afghanistan, Kandahar and other places. I think he might be -- prove to be a pivotal figure in that.

MR. O'HANLON: In the second row please.

SPEAKER: Hello. My name is Anna Shari. I work for Senator Bernie Sanders. I do his foreign policy portfolio. My doctoral dissertation was actually on Afghanistan. I lived and worked there in 2012. So my question is for both of you. Both of you mentioned the need for engagement, continuous engagement over the coming years, support to the ANE and so on. However, in the Congress, Afghanistan is not even in the top three priority list anymore. So how do you think this process of engagement can continue when the Congress looks at Afghanistan as a war that's drawing down, it's almost over? Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. And the two gentlemen in the back.

SPEAKER: Hi, my name is Amir Najan. I'm a student at (inaudible). My question is for Professor Riedel. There was a tweet a few weeks ago from Zabiullah Mujahid, and it was revealed that he was tweeting from Sindh, which he subsequently

denied. My question is, is there a way for either the Afghan government or the US to capitalize on knowing his relative whereabouts? And on a similar note, how much of the resurgence of the Taliban and the forces with which they have been acting or fighting in Afghanistan this year, how much of that is attributable to what's been going on in Waziristan?

SPEAKER: Thank you very much for the presentations. One request, could you do this once every four months? The second --

MR. O'HANLON: We're doing it too often or too infrequently right now?

SPEAKER: I won't comment on that. I'm not facetious enough to do that. But I thank you. The question that came up here from the staffer to Bernie Sanders is relevant to my real question. That's the cycle the American political scene is in, the '14, the '16. And if you were to comment, what is it that could go wrong in our popular sovereignty approach to supporting whatever level of support is needed for two years out, five years out, ten years out? I note the commitment to Korea is still ongoing. And they didn't get to democracy until 1988, and that was a student led effort. So my question to you is to focus on the American political scene and just give us your impressions of what could go wrong in terms of the required support. Whether it's a man who leads us in '17 or a woman who leads us in '17. Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: Bruce, shall we start with you and then give Vanda the last word for the day?

MR. RIEDEL: Sure. I'm going to take some, but not all. I'm going to pass on the questions about individuals because I don't think it's really appropriate for me in this forum to do that. I do want to say one more thing about the whole question of partner capacity and Gary's question and Vanda's point.

The poster child for this strategy was supposed to be Yemen. Yemen

was the example of a country where with a very light footprint of Special Forces, drones and occasional air strikes and with the support of a post-Arab Spring government and with the help of the Saudis and others, who were supposed to create a stable environment which would disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

So what's happened? Today the Houthi rebellion took the largest port in Northern Yemen, Hodeidah. They already control the capital. Now the Zaidi Houthi movement is not a mortal threat to the survival of the United States, but it is a pretty serious threat to the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, our partner in Yemen. And it is certainly not the outcome that we envisioned.

It gets back to the challenges of state building that Vanda has so eloquently discussed here. I think Yemen -- I don't recommend spending an awful lot of your time thinking about Yemen, but once in awhile think about it because it really is the poster child for the strategy the president is now trying to implement in Iraq and Syria. It doesn't look like it's working out very well.

ISIS's ideology. Everybody likes a winner, you know. Look at sales of Seahawks' paraphernalia. Went through the roof last January and February, and ISIS' stuff is going through the roof now.

MR. O'HANLON: Yeah, but nobody likes the Cowboys in Washington even today. [laughs]

MR. RIEDEL: That's true. That gets back to the whole Native American thing that David was referring to. Everyone likes a winner. This is a group that is extraordinarily good at using social media, with a leader who I would argue is certifiably insane, if he really believes he is the Caliph.

But nonetheless, has established himself as a very charismatic figure for

that small minority of people who want to be terrorists and go out and kill and butcher people. There is a popular perception now that the Islamic state and al Qaeda are engaged in a war with each other. When I look at it, I don't see much manifestation of that. In fact if I would characterize it, the two of them are trying to ignore each other. They don't talk about each other. The Islamic state doesn't criticize Ayman al-Zawahiri anymore and Ayman al-Zawahiri doesn't criticize the Islamic state.

There's a lot of chatter in the Jihadist web world between the two. But at the top, they're basically taking the posture, let 1000 flowers bloom and we'll see whose garden is the prettiest in the end. Can it be attractive in Afghanistan? Sure it can, for the same reasons that splinter groups of the Pakistan Taliban are now looking to the Islamic state. It's the go to movement these days.

Last thing I would say is about the question of engagement that you brought up. Yes, it's a very serious question. But on the other hand, the Congress votes additional assistance to Pakistan every year. I think they're going to get \$298 million in FMF this year. That's a sizeable amount of money. There doesn't seem to be much opposition to this in the Congress. I continue to find that puzzling.

If I was in the Tea Party and I was looking for an example of foreign aid that's going to people who aren't really our friends, this would be my example. And yet -- so engagement -- we may not have engagement, but we may be on auto pilot long enough to continue to have the necessary support. It'd be nice if we had a White House that was out there pushing actively though for engagement post-2017 in Afghanistan.

In the absence of this, and this is the last thing I promise I'll say, there is a perception in the region that I hear whenever I travel out there now, that the United States is leaving. It's not just leaving Afghanistan. It's leaving South Asia and Central Asia. We've lost interest. We're going back to the 1980s when we basically didn't care

what was going on. And that's a terribly debilitating perception.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you Bruce. Vanda, over to you.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Let me start with the ISIS, Deiche question as well. I guess point out two aspects beyond what Bruce has said. One is of course that as much as there is a risk that ISIS will try to campaign in Pakistan and Afghanistan, perhaps it's already, it's also very advantageous for Afghan political actors who fear abandonment very much, to play that card. To point out to the ISIS dangers.

And our political -- our analysis and the feed that it provides to political decision makers, will need to be very much aware of the dynamic of that reality, both that there is a chance and basis, as well as there is an advantage in playing that card. This is of course happening at the time where our visibility in Afghanistan has collapsed dramatically and will continue to collapse. It's not a good place to be for policy or for engagement.

The other point I would make is that ISIS is popular now. Now it is the winner. And that's not surprising. The key test for me is whether they will be able to translate the immediate (inaudible) into sustainable power on the ground. Or whether they will act like many aid group, including al Qaeda and various parts of Pakistan, including -- and really over reach in the brutality they impose on the population and not deliver enough of governance to offset it.

And in a place like Afghanistan, they will have a lot of competitors. Indeed, if you look at the various factions and elements of so-called Taliban in Afghanistan, there is a clear difference in how brutal they are, how capable or not capable they are to respond to population's pushback and moderate themselves.

And so where we have seen the greatest anti-Taliban uprisings, much as they have fizzled out in Ghazni and in Ulgar. It was a reaction to external Taliban, far

more so than simplistically the Southern Taliban that comes from the community and reacts to the sense of grievances, power abuse from either local power brokers or the central government.

And so ISIS will face not just in Afghanistan, in every single environment this challenge. Yes, right now they have (inaudible). Can they translate that into sufficient responsiveness to the populations, is a big question mark. And you are of course absolutely right David, that the Afghan people are looking to the future.

The question to me is, what kind of future they can believe in and whether the government will be sufficiently able to satisfy that interest and anchor those who might not have stayed in the future in the same way. And that's a key challenge for the government in an open verdict. And this of course being Afghanistan, the future is never free of the past, and the past and sense of old grievances, perhaps going decades, slights that span generations, all this influences the mindset, even if not necessarily the decisions.

And yes, Afghanistan is very low on US agenda. To a great extent that's unfortunate. It is the outcome of a White House that has embraced and then perhaps thrown out Afghanistan as well. That does not speak sufficiently about the commitments and the accomplishments and the risks. It's also the reality of the fact that there are huge burning crises which are arguably far more important than Afghanistan.

But the fact that Afghanistan is not number one and appropriately should not be number one, doesn't mean that the response is we do nothing, especially when the engagement that can be very meaningful and in fact made critical difference, is a limited engagement. Such as retaining a force after 2016 that is focused on counterterrorism, but that also gives a stake to the Afghan government in tolerating the force. Such as continuing with levels of economic aid that will come down from the huge

slush fund that was flowing into the country. But they are not cut to a level that it debilitates a new government that's reform minded and that has committed itself to reform.

These are not huge burdens that we cannot tolerate. In fact we have the capacity quite easily to tolerate these burdens, particularly if we understand that the outcomes in Afghanistan are not just about Afghanistan. Are not just about the Afghan people to whom we made such promises and in whose lives we are so implicated. But that it has implications for Pakistan.

Afghanistan in a civil war will be like an ulcer bleeding into very crucial Pakistan. That this has implications for regional actors, like Iran, like India, like China, like Russia and the geostrategic competition. That it has implications for the global audience. This is the longest war. This is the war of extraordinary commitments. Do we walk away and say, okay, it's over, we are no longer interested? We don't care what happens in the country, particularly where the costs are limited. Those would be very wrong choices to make.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you all very much for being here. Thanks especially to Bruce and Vanda.

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CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

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

Carleton J. Anderson, III

)Signature and Seal on File)

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