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COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM: IMPROVING OUR STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. BYMAN: Welcome. I'm Dan Byman. I'm the research director of the Center for Middle East Policy here at Brookings. I'm also a professor at Georgetown University. I'm delighted to welcome you.

The Charlie Hebdo attacks grabbed world attention, but for those who were already paying attention they were simply a reminder of a longstanding and continuing problem that (inaudible) the United States and really the world in general has had with violent extremism.

What we've seen with the latest violence has really been part of a pattern, which is that Muslims of all stripes have condemned the violence. Scholars of Islam have as well, making clear this is not about Islam.

But at the same time, there's been a demographic, there's been part of the population that has found the violence very exciting. The recruitment and radicalization, as a result, has continued. We've seen people find the ideology in the organizations involved appealing.

President Obama and American allies, of course, were concerned about the latest series of attacks, and so the decision to convene a summit on February 18 to try to counter violent extremism is an attempt to go after root causes of terrorism, to try to stop people from joining groups and thus stop the problem in the first place.

This sentiment is welcome, I think, to people who have long complained about the United States and allies' focus on the problem only in it's last stages. The difficulty, of course, is that once you go beyond the immediate problem of terrorism and terrorists and start to go to the problem of radicalization, you get into a very analytically and programmatically muddy area. It's hard to know what works and what doesn't. Even the very concepts themselves are difficult to understand. You have a lot of ideas that

look great on paper but in practice often fail to produce the benefits we all hope for.

I, at least, am hoping that the summit coming up will produce more than this. We'll start to set the United States and its allies on track towards more effective and more sustainable long-term programs. Part of why we can be in this panel here at Brookings is to try to shed insight into these ideas of extremism and radicalization.

As you know by your very attendance here, we really have a great group of people here to talk about this. The first person that's going to speak, who is immediately to my left, is Bruce Riedel. He directs the Intelligence Project here at Brookings, and he is a long-time expert on terrorism. He's going to speak today on really the war between the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda.

Our second speaker is Anastasia Norton. She's now at Monitor 360, but for many years she worked on recruitment and radicalization issues for the U.S. Intelligence Community. She's going to speak on the radicalization life cycle and also how to go after terrorist ideology, in particular in the information sphere.

Our last speaker today is Will McCants. He directs the Brookings project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World. He worked on radicalization issues while in government, and he's a leading scholar of Islam.

We have very different perspectives, and together they'll give us a sense of the extent of the problem, but also ways that we might go in the future to try to improve things.

Without further ado, let me ask Bruce to kick us off.

MR. RIEDEL: Thanks, Dan. As Dan indicated, I'm setting the stage here, setting the scene.

Seventeen years ago this month in 1998, Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri and a then largely unknown group calling itself Al-Qaeda declared war on the

United States of America. More specifically, they said that it was the duty of every Muslim around the world to kill every American man, woman, and child and America's allies. It got very little attention in February of 1998. It got a lot of attention later that year, particularly after the attacks on our embassies in East Africa and got even more attention after September 11th.

For the next 16 years, Al-Qaeda and particularly its two leaders, Bin Laden and Zawahiri, dominated the dialogue about the global jihad. They were the centerpiece of the global jihadist movement. Don't get me wrong -- the global jihad never had a unified chain of command. They were not the equivalent of the Secretary of Defense running the Pentagon. There were always dissents, differences of view, there were always arguments within it, but they were the dominant voice. In particular, Ayman al-Zawahiri, because he was the idealogue of Al-Qaeda, was the dominant voice. He was the authentic voice of what is Al-Qaedism, what does it intend to do, what is permissible, and what is not permissible.

Today, we have a different situation. For the first time really, in the history of Al-Qaeda, there is a challenger. A very, very active challenger Islamic State. Now ironically, it is, of course, the mutation of an earlier Al-Qaeda faction, Al-Qaeda in Iraq, and if we look backwards we can see the seeds of the differences go back to 2004 and 2005, but it's only been in the last year that the division became open.

The other thing I would say about the division is there's no question right now who's winning. The Islamic State is winning hands-over-feet over Al-Qaeda. More and more formerly Al-Qaeda-oriented groups are pledging their allegiance to the Islamic State. How long that will last is hard to say, but right now they look to be the winner and that's having an important impact in places like in Sinai, Libya, and Syria, and even as far away as Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Let me step back for one minute. What was the authentic voice? What was what Zawahiri was proclaiming? What was the narrative? What is the narrative, the ideology of Al-Qaeda? In 30-some books and hundreds of audio messages, Zawahiri laid out a pretty coherent world view.

The world view was simply that the world of Islam is under siege and has been under siege roughly since Napoleon went into Egypt at the end of the 18th century by what he calls the Zionist-Crusader conspiracy. Sometimes when he's talking to his Pakistan, South Asia constituency, he calls it the Zionist-Crusader-Hindu conspiracy, but mostly it's just Zionist and Crusaders.

The objective of the conspiracy is to divide the Islamic world up into small states which can be manipulated by the Zionists and the Crusaders for their own ends, their resources can be extracted at sub-prices, and they can be used against each other in order to keep the Muslim world under the control of the Zionist-Crusader conspiracy.

Israel takes a prime place in this narration. Israel is a weapon of the Zionist-Crusader conspiracy to defy the Islamic world. That's why it took Palestine because it divides the Islamic world of Africa from the Muslim world of Asia, and Israel was, of course, permitted to get nuclear weapons, unlike any other country in the region, in order to be the military hegemony and policeman of the region.

The only answer in Zawahiri's worldview to this problem is jihad. Everything else will not work. Particularly soft-power exercises advocated by groups like the Muslim Brotherhood, inclusive politics, democracy; those things all won't work. The only thing that will work is jihad.

The Al-Qaeda movement sees itself as a vanguard movement, not a mass-space movement; as knights under the profits banner, as one of his books wrote,

heroic people who are out there setting the example. The fact that they actually engage in mass murder and kill more Muslims than anyone else is, of course, not part of the narrative.

The Arab Spring, or at least the beginning of the Arab Spring, was a profound challenge to Zawahiri's narrative because for a brief moment it looked like jihad was not the answer. That Twitter, Facebook, demonstrations, peaceful resistance was the answer. Of course, within 6 months Zawahiri was saying, no, I was proven right. Jihad is the only answer.

That's the narrative, and it was very strong, very appealing. It survived the death of Osama Bin Laden. Zawahiri is not a charismatic figure. He doesn't carry the weight that Osama Bin Laden ever carried. But the narrative remained dominant until the challenge that arose last year from the Islamic State.

Now, part of the challenge in the Islamic State is not a grand narrative struggle. I would call it a pretty petty personality struggle; a turf war in some ways. The Islamic State is, of course, the mutation of Al Qaeda and Iraq founded by the Jordanian who went by the name Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Zarqawi and Zawahiri never got along with each other. We know that from their correspondence. Zawahiri always saw Zarqawi as too ambitious, as too ruthless, as too violent, as too bloody. That's saying something when you're coming from the (inaudible) that carried out the attacks of September 11. That friction was always there, but it was minimized up until last summer.

The announcement of the expiration of the caliphate, of course, is a profound challenge to Zawahiri. If Abu Bakr al-Husseini Al-Qurashi Al-Baghdadi is the Caliph Ibrahim, then al-Zawahiri is no longer in charge of the global jihad; neither, for that matter, is Mullah Omar nor is the king of Saudi Arabia, whichever one, the last one or the current one, the right ruler of the Islamic world. The caliph is the right ruler.

There is personality and turf war issues involved here, but there is also a profound, ideological split. Al-Qaeda under Zawahiri always argued the time is not ripe to take territory. It's not right to build the caliphate. We are still a vanguard movement. It's too soon to move on to the final phase of the war against the Zionist-Crusader conspiracy.

The caliphate is saying, no, the time is ripe. This is the moment to strike. The argument goes this way: We defeated the one superpower, the Soviets in Afghanistan, and the second superpower is on its knees now bleeding and its lost its will. Look at what its own people say about its leadership. This is a power in recess, and we can take our moment.

Al-Qaeda's argument to that is all you're going to do is play into the hands of the Americans. The more territory you take over, the more they can bomb, the more they can go after you.

We're going to see over the course of 2015 which of these turns out to be the winning argument.

There's one other profound, ideological difference, I think; another part of the war within the global jihad. That's the business of sectarianism. Al-Qaeda never like Shias, but it never saw Shia as a principle enemy. They were a secondary enemy. Part of this, of course, reflected the fact that Bin Laden and, even more important, Ayman al-Zawahiri come from parts of the Arab world where there aren't a lot of Shias, especially in Egypt. It's not that kind of front-burner issue that it is in Iraq, Syria, or Bahrain, whereas, of course, for an Iraqi-based organization it is a front-burner issue.

For the Al-Qaeda in Iraq and now the Islamic State, the Zionist-Crusader conspiracy has always had a third member: The Safavids, the Shias, the Iranians, so the Zionist-Crusader-Safavid conspiracy.

What does all this mean for us? I think it means a couple of things. For one thing, there is a very intense rivalry and competition going on. We're seeing that rivalry and competition manifested not just in trying to get supporters for you, to get other groups to join either Al-Qaeda or the Islamic State, it's also going to be manifested literally on the battlefield, and not just the battlefields of Iraq and Syria and the Sinai, but, I think, on the global battlefield.

Part of the Paris Operation was an effort by Al-Qaeda to say, hey, we're back. We're back into play. Don't forget about us. We can still do big things. This hideous display of barbarity that we saw with the Jordanian pilot is also a way of saying, you think you're the bad guys? We can think of things that no one else has done before.

But there's also opportunity here. In studying counterterrorism over many years, one of the best ways to defeat a terrorist organization is to have it defeat itself, to have it eat itself, to have it fight internally. You have it come to the point where it begins to regard the members of the terrorist organization as potentially enemies. In other words, to build a sense that there is a conspiracy within the conspiracies and to set factions against each other.

The Palestine Liberation Organization, which knew quite a lot about terrorism and then, over time, got to know a lot about counterterrorism, was superb at this. This is how they destroyed many of their enemies over the years from more radical groups, setting them against each other.

What does that mean in terms of operational effect for our efforts? I think it means that we should put a spotlight on the differences between these groups. We want to bring these differences to the surface. Not only that, we should bring any of their correspondence between each other, especially any private correspondence, to the surface.

We did that in 2005 when we intercepted the correspondence between Zawahiri and Zarqawi, and we were able to demonstrate to the world that even Al-Qaeda thought that Al-Qaeda in Iraq was behaving recklessly and with a bloodlust; an almost death cult rather than any kind of political agenda.

That, of course, means putting out into the public domain some of the information which is traditionally regarded as intelligence information, but I think that's in our interest right now.

We've done this in the past. We did this to the Nazis in World War II. We got very, very good at this to the Communists in the Cold War. By exposing the differences within those movements and exposing what they were really up to and exposing who they really were, we were able to counter their message.

Let me just leave you with one final example. Who is Mr. al-Baghdadi? Is he really what he claims to be? Is he really a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad? Is he really a member of the Hashim family, a member of the Quraysh tribe? If he is, isn't that an odd coincidence that two out of the three most recent leaders of Al-Qaeda in Iraq both claim to be descendants of the Prophet Muhammmad?

I don't think he's any of those things, and I would like to see our government, other governments, and especially Muslim governments, put out information about who these people really are because I believe he's probably a lot like Abu Musab al-Zarqawi: A petty thug, a murderer, a drug addict, who was radicalized in jail and then built a narrative around himself to try to set himself up as something that he wasn't.

It's in our interest to diminish all of these groups by demonstrating that they aren't what they say they are. They're not knights under the prophet's banner. They're criminals and murderers.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you, Bruce. I think that's a great way to kick things

off for us.

Anastasia, if I could ask you to continue from a very different perspective?

MS. NORTON: Absolutely. Thank you, Bruce. That was very interesting.

I'm going to start by talking about a couple conceptual frameworks that really guide my thinking on countering violent extremism. I think it goes without saying I'm speaking from my own perspective here.

The first conceptual framework that I think is really important for helping us become more effective at countering radicalization, countering violent extremism, is a systems approach. What I mean by that is really thinking about terrorism as a system that requires particular inputs to be successful, to thrive, to grow, and to produce outputs or attacks.

I think we can decompose this system in a couple of different ways, right? We can think about the different roles that a terrorist system requires to be able to operate successfully. They need leaders, they need foot soldiers, funders, propagandists; you can think of a whole plethora of different roles that are required for this system to really operate effectively. That's, sort of, a loose organizational structure.

The other thing: Terrorist groups really do require inputs, right? They need a safe haven. They need innovations in technology, whether communications technology or different methods of attack that they can continue to gain the attention that they need. They need money. They need the input of new recruits. We can think of all of these different components that a messaging strategy, for example, can be directed against.

I think too often we give lip service to the idea of a no-one-size-fits-all

approach, right? We can all say, yeah, we need something that is tailored and very specific to these different components. But then we often turn around and try to create a one-size-fits-all approach.

The first piece of this, I think, is really taking seriously the way that this terrorist system operates, looking at those components, and understanding the connections between those components. For example, you can imagine that a fundraiser is motivated very differently than, say, a foot soldier or a leader.

The indigenous population that Al-Qaeda is able to attract or the ISIL is able to attract had very different grievances. Al-Qaeda's job is to try to link their global agenda to those local grievances, but that is not necessarily an easy thing for them to do. There are lots of places where a local agenda and Al-Qaeda's or ISIL's global agenda just does not mesh. I think it's our opportunity to really highlight that space in-between. That's the first framework.

The second is really an influenced deterrence framework. I think too often when we're talking about counter-radicalization or countering violent extremism, we very quickly slip into this frame about talking about we need to change someone's belief or we need to just counter their ideology.

We're actually all in the business of trying to change behaviors, and that's for a very specific reason. When we slip into this countering belief frame it's problematic on a couple of different levels. One, how do you actually measure a change in belief? That's very difficult, if not impossible, to do.

Secondly, I'm not convinced that belief actually drives behavior in all cases or really in any case. I can think of lots of things that I believe that actually have no impact on my behavior. For example, I believe it's a really good thing to work out every day and I need to get to the gym. I can tell you I've been a little busy. I have not been to

the gym in months. I have a strong belief in that, but I'm not able to let that translate into my behavior.

I think oftentimes belief and ideology are used as a way to justify behavior. That belief piece often comes after the fact. I think that's something that's very, very important to keep in mind.

The other problem with this belief discussion, when we talk about changing belief, we immediately slip into this idea of credibility, and then we end up spending an inordinate amount of time talking about who the U.S. government couldn't possibly be credible with the audiences that we're hoping to influence. I think that's the wrong focus. I don't think we have good data on this, but I think we need better data on this.

I think that the message in many cases matters a lot more than the messenger. If I hear something on Twitter and I have no idea who it is that's saying it but I agree with that message, it doesn't matter that Will tweeted it. If I agree with that message, it's going to resonate with me. I think we need to do a lot more work looking at this idea of credibility and thinking about on what messages might the U.S. government or U.S. government messengers be credible.

I think we very quickly can slip into this problem where, because it's a U.S. government messenger there's no way they're going to be credible, and I don't think that's right. I've seen messages that don't actually don't necessarily have an attributed messenger actually have a lot of impact.

I'll talk a little bit at the end of my comments about my time at CSCC. I was able to spend a year and a half at the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, and it really did shift my thinking on this idea of credibility and messenger. I think that's another thing that we really need to keep in our minds.

Another piece of the influence framework that I think is very, very important to keep in mind is the idea that people are motivated differently. Generally, we see that motivations coalesce around three broad categories: You see ideological motivations, social, pragmatic motivations, and then psychological motivations. Everybody is generally motivated somewhere within those three categories, but it differs considerably.

I think part of our role -- and Bruce brought this up in his comments -- the more that we understand the narratives that are coming from groups like ISIL, like Al-Qaeda, the way that they are able to tailor them to specific audiences, the more we understand that and then can map that onto the narratives of the populations that ISIL is interested in influencing and looking for those spaces in-between, the places where they don't map well. The more we can highlight that gap, I think the more effective we can be in our communications. Part of our job is to be able to identify those places where there is absolutely no overlap between what ISIL is hoping for the future and what a local population is hoping for the future or their local grievances.

During my time at CSCC, I remember a huge campaign by Al-Qaeda in the Arabian peninsula, so this is probably around 2011, 2010 timeframe, and Ansar al-Sharia was becoming really prominent in Yemen. They had a whole propaganda campaign showing their humanitarian efforts in Yemen. They were very strategically keeping out any brand related to Al-Qaeda. If you looked at the Ansar al-Sharia propaganda, it didn't look like it came from AQAP at all. We knew it did.

The digital outreach team, part of the CSCC, spent a lot of time trying to link this Ansar al-Sharia propaganda and show the true face of this. They made some spoofs crossing out Ansar al-Sharia and adding in AQAP. This is really an AQAP message. They say they're bringing you light and hope for the future, but a regime under

AQAP would actually look like this.

Being able to highlight and underscore what an Al-Qaeda, what an ISIL future, looks like can be used as disconfirming evidence for the kinds of narratives that they're trying to put out there, the ways that they are trying to connect with their local communities.

The company that I'm with now, Monitor 360, actually spends a lot of time thinking through and doing these expert interviews to get at these narratives. CSCC was able to draw on some of this work. Specifically, I remember a Shabaab master narrative report that looked at the master narratives of Shabaab and then the narratives of the local Somali population.

One of the things they found and uncovered in this analytics was that Shabaab had this very strong narrative of rule of law and punishment whereas the Somali people were very interested in this idea of entrepreneurism, and they were really wanting to become entrepreneurs and really push that. One of the things that we did at CSCC was to highlight the gap that the impact of this strong interpretation, this very extreme interpretation of Sharia law did not really allow for an entrepreneurial spirit. Being able to uncover those gaps and really spotlight those is a really important piece of what we can do as strategic communications.

I'll probably just end with that, and I'll answer questions at the end.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you. Will, if I may turn it over to you to wrap this up.

MR. MCCANTS: Okay. I'm the (inaudible) road part of the discussion mainly looking at domestic radicalization here in the United States.

It's not really a problem the U.S. government worried about a lot until around 2009, 2010, when there were a number of young men from the Minneapolis, St.

Paul, San Diego area that started to travel abroad to join up with Shabaab in Somalia. The U.S. government became seized with the idea that radicalization of the domestic Muslim population of the United States was a real thing.

Now, it turns out if you look at the numbers they're really tiny. It's hard to draw any firm and fast conclusions about there being the trend. But nevertheless, the government became really worried about this and tried to think about ways to put in place programs to staunch this radicalization, to stop mainly young Sunni Muslim men from traveling abroad to fight for terrorist organizations in the orbit of Al-Qaeda.

The main effort was to set up basically an outreach initiative to the American Muslim community, but particularly in locations where they were seeing a lot of people traveling abroad or recruiters active in the United States trying to encourage people to travel abroad. This outreach effort, on behalf of the government, was being led by law enforcement, and it quickly became apparent to the Muslims who were receiving the outreach that there were some problems with it.

One, that the face of the U.S. government that they were interacting with was the law enforcement face of the government. Immediately it put people on edge. Then a slow but steady trickle of new stories started to come out: Reports that these meetings were being used for intelligence gathering, that folks were going through in the parking lot and gathering up license plate numbers or creating lists of people who refused to go to the meetings, those sorts of things, which, of course, again put the communities even more on edge that they were under some sort of cloud of suspicion and that this was not a real effort to work with them to solve the problem.

In the meantime, the community was also terrified that its young men and women were getting involved in this stuff. They understood that there was a real problem there, but they worried about how to deal with this problem given that if they

started talking to law enforcement that their sons and daughters, that their friends, would quickly find themselves wrapped up in some sort of sting operation and that they would end up under a cloud of suspicion and that the government would start to build cases against them.

It just cultivated a sense of paranoia in the American Muslim community and in some ways ended up being pretty counterproductive to what was initially framed as an intelligence effort really to gather information because the target community that they were hoping to gather information from all of a sudden started shutting itself off because they worried about what would happen.

This approach hasn't really changed since then. Now the government is talking about adding some new components to this effort to treat the root causes of radicalization. As Dan hinted in his opening, among folks who study terrorism and radicalization, root causes is one of -- I don't know if it would be termed one of the most contentious issues. Most researchers sniff at it because nobody's been able to identify what the root cause is.

Usually, particularly when you're not working in a country with an insurgent environment but you're talking about a stable country like the United States, it's really hard when you have just a couple dozen of people who are being radicalized to tease out some idea of what is driving them to embrace these things when there are peers who share all of the same socioeconomic, psychological, ideological factors who don't end up embracing it. It's a real problem and is why most researchers are very skeptical of this sort of thing.

But nevertheless, the government believes that there are things called 'root causes' and mainly the usual poverty, underemployment, lack of education. They're trying to put programs in place, as I understand it, to address those, and these are being

piloted in several U.S. cities under the belief that these are going to staunch the radicalization that's happening. My safe prediction is that it won't end up mattering too much because it's very unfocused. They're targeting large populations when you're really talking about a small number of people.

Aside from the practicality of it not working, the other big part of this -- the problem is that it just doubles down on something that's already mistaken in this approach, which is that the American Muslim community deserves suspicion and that this effort, this outreach effort, now coupled with the effort to retool social services to make sure people don't radicalize continually sends the message we are terrified of you and we are worried that you are going to become suicide bombers or something worse.

You have only to look at the numbers of people who get involved in this stuff in the United States to know that American Muslims are not really interested in Al-Qaeda's message. Sure, there are a small handful of people who do get really excited about it, but by and large, American Muslims don't care.

Even though they have been very disappointed in American wars abroad, even though they have been very discouraged by America's outreach effort to them, still they don't really get too wound up about Al-Qaeda's message. There's a real mismatch here in terms of what the policy is designed to combat and the outcomes. It also alienates a segment of the American population that doesn't need to be needlessly alienated.

I think there is a better approach, and the United States is -- I don't even know if we're ready to take baby steps in this direction, but there are precedents in other countries that one can draw on. One is to be much more focused on those people who are actively celebrating terrorist propaganda in this country but have not yet broken the law. I use the clunky term law-abiding supporters, but what it means basically is that

these are folks who consume propaganda. They tweet about it. It's on their Facebook pages. Sometimes they have blogs devoted to it, but they done anything criminal yet.

Now, usually the approach of the U.S. government is to monitor these folks and then to start building cases against them, which I think is fine. But I think there needs to be an intermediate step for these law enforcement efforts to have real credibility, and that is we need some sort of intervention program that is targeted towards these young men and women who have professed some sort of aberration or love for Al-Qaeda. It's someone to worry about, but they haven't done anything wrong yet. Get community leaders involved. Get local law enforcement involved. Give these young men and women a chance to back away from this stuff before they end up ruining their lives because otherwise they're going to go away for dozens and dozens of years for trying get on a plane and go support a terrorist organization abroad.

The intervention programs that you might design would really have to be tailored toward each individual. As Anastasia said, I don't think there's a one-size-fits-all here. There's a number of different things you can do depending on that particular person's own circumstances and what makes them vulnerable to these kinds of messages, but it is very targeted on these individuals and not the entire community.

There's a number of upsides for doing this: One, it avoids alienating that community, which is just good policy when the American government's interacting with its citizens. Two, it's somewhat more measurable than our current approach. the stuff that's just -- the hug-a-Muslim campaigns that are focused on the entire community, you can't even assess the effectiveness of these sorts of things because that population hasn't done anything yet that you can really measure.

It makes better use of limited government resources, and then finally, this is for the folks that are really hyped up about gathering intelligence, I think it makes

your intel-gathering operations more effective because it demonstrates to the community, if you talk to us, your son or daughter or your friend is not necessarily going to go away for life, that we are going to try and do something to pull them back from the edge. I think that will encourage more people to talk, not less.

Now, there's huge downsides to this thing, which is why the U.S. government is very wary of doing anything in this regard. The main downside is it's political dynamite. If somebody goes through one of these intervention programs and then later carries out some sort of mass shooting, anyone involved in this program, their career is done. It's over. In our political culture we cannot tolerate yet these kind of initiatives. They're very politically toxic.

But I think we're starting to take some baby steps and not always driven necessarily by the executive branch. I would draw your attention to the recent case up in Minneapolis of Abdullahi Yusuf who is a Somali American man who tried to go abroad last year to fight for ISIS. He's an 18 year old. They stopped him at the airport. He's been charged. He faces 15 years in prison for going abroad to join a designated terrorist organization.

The judge in December said to his defense, if you guys can come up with some sort of halfway option to try and turn this young man's life around, we might be able to work out a different deal than him going away. Now, the U.S. attorney objected strenuously to this because the incentives in law enforcement, the FBI, Department of Defense, they run the other direction. It's making cases.

Nobody wants their butts on the line for this kind of thing going wrong, but with the ruling still pending this young man is now going through a program that has been used on gang members, other folks who have gravitated towards violence, to try and get them engaged positively and civically in local politics. We'll see how it goes, but

this is just a baby step in that direction.

Now, if you look at the U.K., they have a much more vigorous version of what I'm talking about called the Channel program. Now, there's all kinds of stuff that's been wrong with the Brits approach to preventing radicalization. I think this is one of the things that's gone pretty well because it's very focused on people who have actually demonstrated some sort of interest in militant propaganda.

The Channel program identifies young folks who are interested in this propaganda. They triage them based on 22 different risk factors, so it's not just one. It's not just wearing a certain kind of clothing or looking at a certain thing. It's 22 different things. They have a panel of experts drawn from across the government that vets it. The person is routinely reassessed to see if they pose a threat anymore. This program has worked in the British context. It's the sort of thing I would like to see more of in the United States, but I think for political reasons right now it's difficult to do so. That's why I hope at the upcoming summit it's something that can be broached so the political space can be created for these kind of programs to be piloted in some of our major cities.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you, all. Before I open up for general questions, I'd like to ask a few of my own.

Bruce, if I could kick things off with you. You said, I think rather powerfully, that the Islamic State is now a winner. It's doing very well not just in successes in Iraq and Syria, but also around the Muslim world. Should we think of an attack by a group calling it the Islamic State in Libya or in Pakistan or elsewhere, should we think of that as an Islamic State attack in the sense of somehow Baghdadi or the organization is behind it, is furthering this, or is this what we used to talk about with the, kind of, ideology of it where it's a bottom-up process and organizationally quite distinct? Depending on your answer, how should that affect how we think about it from a

counterterrorism point-of-view?

MR. RIEDEL: That's a very good question. It's difficult to know what you don't know, and what we don't know here is what are the behind-the-scenes machinations between Islamic State leadership and Syria and activities outside of the Syria-Iraq battlefield.

In the case of Egypt, we have pretty good information that the Islamic State reached out to the group in the Sinai Ansar Bait al-Maqdis. There was communications between -- I don't want to say Baghdadi, but something calling itself core Islamic State and this group. That there was competitive conversations going on with Al-Qaeda and in the end they chose to publicly align themselves with Islamic State.

I suspect when you get further away, like Pakistan and Afghanistan or Indonesia, it's much more aspirational. If the Islamic State is on TV, they must therefore be the really important people, and there's a much more diffuse relationship.

Here again, I think we benefit from the more -- as a government and as a coalition and I think there's a very important part here for our Muslim allies, in putting a light on these kinds of things. How do these things work? I think that can be done in a way that protects intelligence sources and methods while at the same time putting a lot of information into not only the American public's domains, but the Muslim public's domains about the nature of who these groups are.

I think the timing now is particularly propitious. This outrageous act of killing the Jordanian pilot has create an opportunity, a moment, to say look, these are who these people are. They are not who they claim to be. Look what they do to other Muslims, and then let's open up more about who they are, where they come from. What is their objective, as Anastasia said, compared to what most Muslims want? What are they really going to deliver in the Sinai? I don't think they're going to deliver the

caliphate. I think they're going to deliver mostly misery.

MR. BYMAN: Anastasia, you talked about changing behavior, but most of our efforts, as you say, have been about ideas. What would be some of the practical things we could do to change behavior that would be relatively low cost and doable, in your view?

MS. NORTON: Specifically in the communications realm, one of the things that I think we can focus on -- as Will mentioned, we spend a lot of time trying to think about these root causes: What is it that pulls people into terrorist groups? What are the things that motivate them?

I think the more that we understand the things that create disillusionment -- we've got lots of people who have left terrorist groups, who have departed from places like Syria and Iraq and have come back home. Getting really in-depth information about what created the disillusionment, what causes someone to disengage, that's, sort of, the goal when we're talking about something like recruitment.

Then in the intervention programs that Will mentioned, being able to use that kind of data to help shape what our conversations are to encourage someone from radicalizing in the first place. I think John Horgan in particular has done some really, really interesting work about why people disengage, why they leave these groups, what is it about these groups that is unappealing and that turns people off.

We can use that to then shape our counter-radicalization programs, not just our intervention programs in terms of what we do with them when they come back or the reintegration.

Again, I'm always going to lean towards that very in-depth data that we can get from people who have been through this process. Radicalization, disengagement, these are all processes. It's hard to figure out where someone is in that

process, but we can absolutely talk to them about their narratives around why they joined, why they stayed in, why they left, what was it, and then use those to help us really tailor our efforts, whatever those may be whether in the information space or in intervention.

MR. BYMAN: Fantastic. Will, if I may, I want to put you on the spot slightly and take your points and maybe -- I'm going to say sharpen, but maybe exaggerate them.

If I heard you correctly, you were saying basically U.S. countering violent extremism programs aren't worthless because that would be just a waste of money, but they're backfiring. They make the problem worse. If you want to have violent extremism, invest in U.S. programs.

Since your alternative, you claim, is politically very difficult, would a good first step be to zero out the budgets of these programs and then maybe start to reinvestigate the more-tailored, focused ones that you advocate?

MR. MCCANTS: Look, I'll bite. Yes, I think the first rule for anybody who is working in this nebulous field of countering violent extremism is do no harm. That's the first rule. I think we are better off just having a pure law enforcement approach vice this alternative that we have now.

I'm not saying that the alternative is driving radicalization. I don't see that either. I just think it's needlessly making people feel alienated and making them less likely to talk. If the whole purpose of your outreach is to get people to talk, then yeah, I think it's counterproductive. Yes, given the small dividends that our current approach has paid, I think I would be totally comfortable zeroing it out.

If it were to change, I would hope it would be more in the vein of this targeted approach. I mean, there are other pitfalls with that as well. I mean, we rub up

against free speech issues and these kinds of things. You have to be careful with it in the American context, but yeah, compared with the current approach, I wouldn't mind just having a law enforcement approach.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you.

MR. MCCANTS: Yeah.

MR. BYMAN: I'm going to open it up to the audience. My only thing is I would like you to identify yourself and also please wait for the microphone. Raise your hands up, and we'll go from there. Please. Yes, sir. Over there.

MR. TYLER: Hi, my name is Zachary Tyler. I'm from the Center for Strategic and International Studies. I wanted to pose a question to you, Dr. McCants.

If the number of American Muslims radicalizing in the United States is very low and we have scant resources for the types of intervention programs that you've suggested, are there other groups inside the United States that might be more deserving of this kind of attention? I'm thinking of far right-wing groups, racist, white-supremacist groups, etc. Thank you.

MR. MCCANTS: You want to do a couple or do you want me to answer?

MR. BYMAN: Why don't you go ahead and start with this one and then we'll go from there?

MR. MCCANTS: Yeah, sure. I think if we're going to have these kinds of intervention programs, you should do it across the board for any sort of extremism that you're worried about. We do this for gangs in places like Boston. We can certainly do it for far-right groups.

Incidentally, there is a local group based in D.C. but doing a lot of its work in Maryland called Word that has tried to setup -- it's a private NGO that's tried to setup one of these initiatives to combat religious extremism of all kinds in working with

local law enforcement. If we can encourage more of those kinds of efforts for the better, it's a question of them having access to regular grant funding from the government so it's not just a one-off effort.

That said, it also has to be, again, politically safe for local law enforcement to get involved with these kinds of initiatives. They have to be encouraged to do so. There has to be some, sort of, points given for someone who's really willing to take these kinds of risks. Incidentally, if you look at the British document about Channel from 2012 one of the last sections in there is fascinating. It's just called 'Risks,' and it talks about who assumes the risk for this project: What risk law enforcement assumes, what social services assumes -- I think having that kind of very frank discussion is the necessary groundwork for these kinds of things to work.

MR. BYMAN: I think I'm going to follow Will's suggestion and do a couple questions at a time so we can get more on the table. Yes, please. Yes.

SPEAKER: Hi, just tell me if you don't understand my English, my little bit poor English.

I come from a country where I lost five or six of my friends (inaudible). First, I am from al-Hara, it's a U.S. TV channel here in Washington. I come here in January. I lost five or six of my friends. At that time the terrorists killed them. For me, the question is very simple: Isn't it possible to fight radicalism starting from the school's education system, mosques, information, media, and everything before -- I mean, I see this as a priority because I remember that radicalists come from this weakness in how to indicate, how to teach, how everything. The schools still produce radicalists right now in all the 24 Arab countries which I know. Thank you. Thank you very much.

MR. BYMAN: Yes. The one behind you.

MS. FIK: My name is Murshak Fik. I'm a Syrian American and a Muslim

American. My question is actually for the entire panel, and it's something that I noticed throughout everyone's very wonderful speeches, and that is that I didn't really hear anything -- I mean, specifically related to ISIS. I didn't hear anything that really contextualized the role of governments, specifically tyrannical governments, in the production of terrorism within the Middle East.

I went to Syria in 2013 and lived in a refugee camp to deliver humanitarian aid, and there was this one moment where we were in a car and there was a traffic jam, and a man looked at me and he said, when Assad was president, we didn't have traffic jams. This is the democracy that you want for us where we have traffic jams?

Obviously it's a terrible understanding of what democracy is, but when you come from these countries that I have lived in and that I have spent time in and you can't access Amazon.com or BBC.com and that's the type of education or lack thereof in these countries -- but what is your take on that and the role of governments, tyrannical governments, in the Middle East in producing terrorism?

I personally feel that they have a huge responsibility in this regard. I also fear that if we ignore the role of these governments and the vacuum that currently exists in Syria, then I don't think that we'll ever be able to properly address ISIS or any other terrorist group that tries to capitalize on the capital or governmental vacuum within the area. Thank you.

MR. BYMAN: Okay. Can you just hand the microphone over to the woman right in front of you? Thank you.

MS. OUDRAAT: Thank you. My name is Chantal de Jonge Oudraat from Women and International Security. I have one comment and one question.

One comment is the opposition of engagement of communities in a more-targeted approach; it seems to me as a little simplistic. I think it's not an either-or

question. I think we should really do both.

Then a particular question for Anastasia, maybe, is the role of gender where we're looking at countering violent extremism or preventing violent extremism, and the role that notions of femininity and masculinity play in radicalization and in recruitment?

MR. BYMAN: Thank you. What I'm going to do is go across the panel and ask them to respond as they see fit to the questions they want to respond to. Anastasia, may I ask you to kick us off?

MS. NORTON: Sure. You want me to start with the gender question or any of them?

MR. BYMAN: As you will.

MS. NORTON: Okay. Actually I did have a particular comment on government's role in producing radicalization. I think this really is related to the terrorist group's ability to draw on and understand the local population's narratives and their grievances. The more that extremist groups are able to really understand and draw on those local grievances and then give a 'here's what you do about it' kind of answer, I think the more likely we are to see local populations becoming more radicalized.

Again, I think that's why we need to spend the time really, really understanding these indigenous local narratives and the extremist narratives. Looking at how extremists are trying to do that kind of communication and really try to separate those and figure out where are the gaps, where is that delta, how do we shine a spotlight on that. Maybe democracy in Syria creating more traffic jams, maybe that's the narrative that people are hearing and that's the narrative that groups like ISIL are going to be drawing on. The Assad regime has created this horrifying situation for you, and here's the answer.

But if we can show the ways that this ISIL narrative does not fit with the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of the Syrian population, I think the more effective that we're going to be on that. People in Syria want rule of law. They want security. They want to traffic jams. There are ways to get at that, and that's what we need to highlight. If the others have comments on that question?

MR. BYMAN: Or just in general if you have additional thoughts. Will, do you want to chime in?

MR. MCCANTS: Yeah, I mean, this goes to the root causes question: The point about education, bad governance, that sort of thing. I put these in the category of things I'm not sure directly cause terrorism, but would be good to fix and can't hurt to fix.

The problem is it's really tough to change some of this stuff. For people that are grappling with the issue of radicalization, a lot of these factors like bringing democracy to the Arab world, that's a little difficult to do as we've seen over these past few years. We don't have those sorts of levers we can pull.

It's also the case that a number of people who have gotten very excited about Al-Qaeda and about ISIS are from the west where they've received excellent educations, where they live under democratic governments, but they have still gotten excited about the propaganda. It's not as simple as that. I completely agree with Anastasia that these are factors that enable terrorist organizations to move with ease in these societies, but our ability to do something about it is very circumscribed.

If I can just say something about the question on gender, if you look at the women who have been recruited into ISIS, what I have found fascinating is the number of similarities between them and the men who have joined in terms of their motivations. There was a report that came out last week or the week before that looked

at a number of their Twitter accounts, and it was fascinating comparing how they described what they were doing, their reasons for being there, and how much it tracked with the men.

I think what startles people most and perhaps shouldn't is there is also an equivalence in the bloodlust, which I think people tend to view women as the softer gender. I think if you look at the number of the recruits to ISIS, it really belies that stereotype. They are every bit as bloodthirsty as the men who get involved in these organizations.

MR. RIEDEL: I've been in a traffic jam in Assad's Syria. I remember it distinctly. It was February of 1982. I got off the airplane at the airport and was going into the capital, and all the highways going in were (inaudible) with tanks, armored personnel carrying artillery. We now know they were on their way to Hamas. That was Hafez al-Assad's solution to the problem of traffic jams. The son has not fallen very far from the tree.

This is a big problem, and it's related to the problem about education. The United States, the United Kingdom, The European Union, we have all been stakeholders in a political system in our world which valued stability and order over everything else which translated into police states. Some of them are relatively benevolent police states, benevolent as long as you weren't a Palestinian in Jordan or a woman who wanted to drive in Saudi Arabia. Others were extremely malevolent: The Assad regime, the Gaddafi regime. We have been a stakeholder in that, this country and our allies.

February of 1945, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and King Ibn Saud famously met on the Great Bitter Lake in the Suez Canal and fashioned a partnership which 70 years later President Obama just reaffirmed in Riyadh in a very big

way.

There is no simple solution to it. Will made reference to it. I'll make it more explicit. We tried to see if we couldn't nudge the reactionary governments in the Bush administration in the right direction. That got us nowhere. We briefly tried at the beginning of the Arab Spring to jump on the bandwagon of change. That hasn't produced a very positive outcome either.

I think we made a huge mistake when the coup took place in Egypt in not saying flat out, this is a coup d'état. The democratically elected government may be a flawed government, but it should be removed through the next election, not through a coup d'état, but that's water under the bridge now.

The heart of the problem is not really an American one either. It's an Arab and Muslim one. Arabs and Muslims have got to come up with an alternative to the police state system that isn't the chaos in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen today. I think they'll get there. They will get there. It's going to take a long time. We need to have strategic patience on this front.

I also liked something else that Will said: Let's do no harm. We've demonstrated in our foreign policy in the Arab world and in the Middle East in the last decade and a half that our capacity to do harm is enormous. I'm still looking for the example of where we did something good that had some positive outcome. There are some. We've made some positive moves in Afghanistan in terms of gender, in terms of education. We should focus on where we've done things right, and as you rightly put, don't do stupid things.

MR. BYMAN: We'll take some in the back, please. Yes, in the back.

MS. DUNNE: Hi, Caroline Dunne with DAI. Looking at it from more practical and perhaps less theoretical perspective, with the stepping down of

Administrator Shah from USAID and the fact that now Deputy Administrator Lenhardt will be taking over potentially as a new, permanent replacement, what should USAID in particular be doing new or new roles or approaches they should be having towards development programming to fight ISIS or perhaps CDE in general?

MR. BYMAN: In the very back.

MS. SHUCK: Thank you. I'm Wusma Shuck, visiting scholar of the Josh Stone Law School. I have a comment and a question.

My comment is expanding on Anastasia's analogy with going to the gym. I guess, being a Muslim, I would say that yes, ideally every Muslim wants to go to the gym because it's healthy or whatever, but not every Muslim wants to have a six pack. That's not the ideal, which is mixed up by the radicals in the west, that every Muslim or everybody living in the Muslim world, and we are talking about 1.6 plus billion people, that they want to have six packs, which is probably another thing which is defined by ISIL or Al-Qaeda or these extremist organizations.

My comment is yes, you need to differentiate what a small fraction of people want to have the ideal six pack, and they're actually working on that goal as well.

My question is to Bruce or maybe anyone else on the panel. Since I came to the U.S. 6 months ago, I have found a very interesting parallel between Pakistan and the U.S. in terms of foreign policy. I'm from Pakistan.

When we look at the think tank debates, the think tank has a different policy, but the government formulates a policy that comes out in a totally different way. There's a huge gap between what government does and what the think tanks suggest in their policy outputs to the government, and so is the case here.

I have been going to different talks, talking to people, and a lot of people from the State Department, from think tanks, they criticize the U.S. policies in not only

Baghdad, but generally in the Middle East. Why is this gap not bridged, and do you think there will be a day when this gap will be bridged? Thank you.

MR. BYMAN: Yes. Back there, yes.

MS. MARAN: Hi, my name is Durian Maran. I am reading from my phone because I took some notes. I just wanted, hopefully, some clarification from Bruce and Anastasia. I heard -- maybe I misheard -- different views on what would be effective and what's going.

Anastasia, you talked a lot about the message versus the messenger not being so important. It's not really who is delivering the message, but what the message is.

Bruce, I got the impression that that is not really your viewpoint. Leadership in Al-Qaeda and elsewhere depends on a certain level of credibility, and if all we do is unveil, unmask them, then that credibility will be enough.

Maybe you can clarify those two points? Do you see a meeting point in-between your two views or am I just missing something? Thank you.

MR. BYMAN: Great. I'm going to ask our panelists to respond at this point. Bruce, this time if I can ask you to kick a few off, please?

MR. RIEDEL: Sure. I thought what you were going to say is that Pakistan and America are alike in the role of great families in politics. (Laughter) We both seem to be caught in a dynasty system.

The interplay between think tanks and government is a subject that think tanks spend, I think, an inordinate amount of time thinking about. (Laughter) We do have impact. Our ideas are adopted by this government sometimes. We tend to be, by definition, an adversarial role because if we thought everything they were doing was perfect, why would we hold a meeting like this? We could go to the Republican National

Convention or the Democratic National Convention and be the amen chorus.

The history of the United States is that think tanks, I think, do play a role, but often there's a lag time. I don't know whether that lag time is getting bigger or smaller.

I think the good news about Pakistan is that you're having these debates. I don't think Pakistan had these debates under Zia-ul-Haq, under General Musharraf. That's progress. That's enormous progress.

I said before that all Arab states are police states. Pakistan is a police state too, but it's a very strange police state in which the media does say things that are often quite outrageous. For example, Pakistani media has been much more critical of the Saudis than the American media has been. American media has hailed King Abdullah as the great reformer. The Pakistani press has been saying, huh? What's the reforms? We don't see them.

On the question of the difference, I don't think there's a big difference between us. I'm suggesting that one of the tactics we can use against ISIS and Al-Qaeda, because they are feuding with each other, is bring that feud to the surface. Make it more apparent. Use their arguments against each other in order to help unveil who they really are. I definitely agree with their bottom line. It's the message, not the messenger. To put it differently, this is not about the media. This is about the message. I'll define it a little bit even more strongly: It's about deeds.

You know when I said the AL-Qaeda narrative is that we support regressive, authoritarian regimes? Yeah, it's pretty hard to argue with that. Show me where we aren't doing that. That, I think, is the problem. Do we support a two-state solution? We just voted against it in the United Nations Security Council. How are we saying we support a two-state solution? Deeds matter.

In the Clinton administration, when you had the Oslo process, I loved being invited to go talk to Muslim American groups because I could say, look, we're actually delivering justice for the Palestinian people. We're actually protecting Kotsovos. We're actually doing something on these fronts.

If I was in the Obama administration and I got an invitation from a Muslim American group, I'd say, I think I'll send my deputy. (Laughter)

MR. BYMAN: Will?

MR. MCCANTS: Yeah. On the USAID question, I don't know a lot about the inner workings of USAID, but I can say having been in government when the administration was trying to pull USAID into the countering violent extremism work, it's not a good fit.

It's not a good fit for a number of reasons. One is that when people find out that their aid money is being given to them because they're considered to be some sort of terrorism risk, it's off-putting. The other thing is that institutionally, USAID isn't really capable of delivering the very small, targeted, quick-turn programs that one might want to use. USAID does these big, multi-year projects, things like building dams, and it's difficult for it to do these kinds of things.

I know this probably makes some people annoyed and some folks in Congress cheer, but I don't think USAID is really suited to this kind of mission. The development work that it does may pay huge dividends in the far future in countering violent extremism, but those links are going to be impossible to prove, and they should be doing that work for its own sake and for other goals.

MS. NORTON: Just one more thing on the message, messenger divide. I don't think messengers are the only thing that matter is basically my bottom line on that, and oftentimes we just put all of our eggs in that basket.

We try to identify the credible voices and then everything's going to be solved there. It ends up putting a straightjacket around U.S. government communicators in many cases because they're, sort of, assumed that there's no way they could have behavioral impact on an audience that they want to speak to or no way that they could be credible on a particular issue. I think we need to be really, really careful about that, and we need really good data, not just anecdotes, about when does message matter more than messenger and vice versa.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you. I'll take a few more questions, but we have to wrap up. Yes, please. Yes, wait for the microphone.

MS. FRIEDMAN: Yeah, I'm Jane Friedman from CQ Press.

In terms of Charlie Hebdo, which we haven't really talked about here, and you've dismissed basically the root causes approach. Is that also applicable to France where the situation of millions of Muslims is totally different from the situation of Muslims in America? They've been completely isolated and the unemployment rate is huge. There's no real hope of integration. Would the root causes approach work in France, and are the French really able to apply it?

MR. BYMAN: Great, thank you. Let me squeeze in one more. Yes, please.

MS. PERLMAN: Thank you. I'm Diane Perlman, School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason, also conflict analyst and political psychologist.

Along the lines of that, the whole frame of counterterrorism suggests going after the symptom and not the cause. From a systems perspective, when you do that you create a positive feedback loop and you escalate.

Also, one root cause in 2003, my colleagues and I were all writing out (inaudible), going on the radio, and lobbying Congress predicting that it would cause

escalation of terrorism. In terms of root causes, people don't really think it's poverty, that it has to do with humiliation, as this woman suggested, moral outrage and having basis in Muslim identity, sovereignty, dignity -- issues like that. (inaudible) tortured said that's also a radicalizing force. Also fear; people are more dangerous when they're afraid.

I prefer to use the frame of terror reduction. we need to reduce terrorism, reduce fear, reduce tension, and deal with basic human needs, legitimate goals, just grievances.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you. Yes, one last question.

MS. MINACHE: Thank you. Hi, my name is Jessica Minache, and since you brought it up, Bruce, I feel the need to bring up the big elephant in the room oftentimes. I just came back from doing my masters in Israel. I studied counterterrorism and international security, but I went there for more strategic purposes, if you will. I wanted to be there and study the conflict and go to the territories on the ground, see it with my own eyes.

The reality is that it's pretty horrific, to say the least. I know that we oftentimes try to downplay it or I hear it all the time here in D.C., New York, wherever, but even me personally in my own life, I have many Muslim friends, many Middle Eastern friends, connecting here with (inaudible). I also went to Jordan. I was visiting a refugee camp and connecting with people, but there is no trust with the local populations on the ground. Absolutely none.

When it comes to the issue of the messenger versus the message, the reality is that we can spin it any way we want to, but it does matter. Maybe if you're not from there, but if you are from the United States and you are an American, it matters. It makes a difference. There is no trust.

What is the long-term strategy that the U.S. government or Americans

can create or formulate to really tackle this issue and really create trust in the population and also the issue of the support for Israel because it's a real factor? Thank you.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you. We have a lot on the table, and I'd also like to give our panelists a chance to wrap up and make any points that they feel should be raised but haven't come up. Both to answer the questions and to give any last remarks they might want to add, let me ask them all to comment again. Anastasia, this time I'll begin on the far end.

MS. NORTON: Sure. On the comment about the root causes and really thinking about is France different, I think any time that a government or a community can show disconfirming evidence for how the extremists are talking about why these grievances exist, any time you can do that to show that, yes, the Muslims in France are mistreated, they're not integrated, there are issues with how they are able to integrate with society, and then the terrorist group framing of that is all about the West is at war with Islam and that is the problem. Anytime you can show disconfirming evidence of that and really prove and show people that that's absolutely not true, that is going to have an impact on radicalization; it's going to help.

While I absolutely agree with Will on spending a lot of time trying to think about root causes and what causes terrorism, it's more about how people understand their grievances and react to those feelings of humiliation.

MR. MCCANTS: Yeah, on the root causes question, in the literature root causes is usually shorthand for socioeconomic factors that push people to engage in terrorism. It's the stuff I've read. From my (inaudible), the societies I've studied, the politics I've looked at, it's so variable that it doesn't have any sort of firm causal effect on terrorism.

Now, it is certainly the case that people's political grievances can drive

some of them to terrorism. If that's what you're identifying with root causes, then I might buy into it. But if you look, say, in France, a number of the people who have gone to fight for ISIS have come from -- it's not a class issue. It's not people who have necessarily been disenfranchised. Sure, there's plenty who have. A number of the attackers in those attacks have. But a number of those who've gone to fight for ISIS haven't. You can't draw it to root causes if by root causes you mean socioeconomic factors.

Alienation and the lack of a feeling of solidarity or belonging to a country like the Muslims' experience in France can certainly have an effect, but in my mind that's not root causes. If you differ with that that's fine. I just think it's a question of terminology.

On this issue of can you trust the messenger and how does the United States become a better messenger, in the short term I don't know how we become a better messenger because the security arrangement, the global security arrangement that the United States has invested in over the past 50 years requires it to be the hegemony in the Middle East. Being the hegemony does not make you beloved among the people who live there.

If we want to change that, and there's a number of reasons you could argue that we should change that, it could have a beneficial effect in terms of not making us such a target for terrorism, but I don't see that happening anytime soon.

Also on this question of credible messenger, I think, for most Americans Bin Laden is not a credible messenger in any way. It's not someone you would think of as a credible messenger. But going to what Anastasia is saying, there were a number of his talking points that resonated very strongly with certain political communities in the United States. For example, his talking point about, hey, we never went after Switzerland. That has been repeated over and over since he uttered it 10 years ago. To

Anastasia's point, you don't have to be loved by the audience for them to receptive to a message if that message resonates with a preexisting worldview in politics.

MR. BYMAN: Bruce, please.

MR. RIEDEL: I spent 4 years in Belgium, which every Belgian will tell you, we're not France, but I lived in a frankofilen part of it. Soon after I got there, I kept hearing a French phrase which I hadn't learned in college French: (Speaking French). I didn't know what it meant. It means literally the Arab on the corner. It's a very derisive terminology. It means they're the people who clean streets. They're the underclass.

Unfortunately, that is the reality for many, many Muslims in Belgium, in France, I think in Germany. In France it's particularly difficult because it involve the legacy of the French colonial period in Algeria. The French colonial invasion of Algeria in the 1830s bordered on genocide. They just weren't able to kill enough to successfully eliminate the native population. The Algerian War of the 1950s and '60s, horrific. The scars of those things are a part of the fabric of French life.

We should be very thankful we have no similar situation with our own Muslim communities. I think Will is quite right that they do not feel that level of alienation from us. Most American Muslims were like the rest of us, watching the Super Bowl on Sunday night, not planning how to blow up bombs in Boston.

I will take on the elephant in the room. Yes, here's where I plug one of my books: *The Search for Al-Qaeda*, published 5 years ago, makes the case that at the core of the narrative of Al-Qaeda is anger about Israel and Palestine. If you study the life history of Ayman al-Zawahiri and Osama Bin Laden, that's what their lives are about.

I don't know what Baghdadi's life history is about and I don't know whether he has a life history. I don't even know if his name is Mr. Baghdadi. But his rival, the head of the Nusra Front, uses the No Dagir Mohammed al-Golani. I think he is

trying to tell us a message here about what he is motivated about, what to do about it.

The position of the American government has, over the years, congealed into the message that we have to let the parties negotiate a solution. I can tell you, I've been in the room. It isn't going to work. It is not working. As brilliant as Martin Indyk is, and he really is a brilliant guy, as brilliant as Dennis Ross is, they are not going to bring the parties to the table.

The international community, it seems to me, has an obligation to tell what is the best way to get there. The Security Council resolution that we vetoed last December was not a perfect resolution, but we should have engaged on it. We should engage on a timeline and platform through the United Nations that offers real deadlines. That's what we need in this thing. Real deadlines. The chances that that will happen between now and November of 2016? Zero.

We are going to see an electoral process in this country in which the only issue upon which I think every candidate from left to right will agree on is, I love Israel more than the other guy, and I will do whatever Israel wants, no questions asked, no doubts about it. That's the unfortunate reality of American politics.

MR. BYMAN: I was hoping for a provocative and informative presentation and discussion, and I think that's certainly what we got. Before you leave, please join me in thanking our panelists. (Applause)

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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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