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THE GLOBAL REFUGEE CRISIS: MORAL DIMENSIONS AND PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS 2016 RICHARD C. HOLBROOKE FORUM

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PARTICIPANTS:

Panel 1: Moral Dimensions:

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LEON WIESELTIER
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Panel 2: Practical Solutions:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. INDYK: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to Brookings. Thank you very much for joining us this afternoon.

I am Marin Indyk, the Executive Vice President here at Brookings. We are very honored to have the opportunity to host the Holbrooke Forum, here at Brookings.

We've been meeting over the last two days, and we'll go on as a sign of the seriousness of the commitment of the people involved. They are even going to deliberate tomorrow morning, something that's never happened in Brookings' history. But nevertheless we are indeed honored.

Richard Holbrooke was a good friend of many of us here at Brookings, we've hosted him many times in this room, in his various positions that he held in the U.S. Government, and hosted him for private deliberations during the time that he was the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. And he's a personal friend of mine, Strobe Talbott's, and many other members of the Brookings' family.

So, we were especially glad to have the opportunity to join with the American Academy in Berlin, which was established by Richard Holbrooke, and which is a unique institution that promotes U.S.-German relations by bringing intellectual scholars, historians, artists, and public officials to Berlin to engage with their counterparts in Germany.

And in Richard Holbrooke's memory, the American Academy established the Holbrooke Forum to promote his particular way of dealing with crises in international affairs. The Holbrooke method which we've been discussing was a very activist one, but it was based on a holistic approach brining in experts from every dimension of the problem and developing practical actionable solutions to serious problems that had a humanitarian dimension to them.

Of course he's remembered or the great work that he did with the Dayton Accords and the crisis in Bosnia. But as Gary Smith, the founder of the American Academy with Richard Holbrooke, reminded me the other night, "Richard regarded migration and the problem of refugees as a burning issue for him." And there is no doubt in my mind that he would have wanted the Holbrooke Forum to be focused on refugees, as we have been over the last two days, and we have many experts here from Europe, United States and elsewhere that bring their experience with refugees to bear on this critical

crisis.

This afternoon we have two panels, the first is one in which Leon Wieseltier and Michael Ignatieff will discuss the moral and policy implications of the refugee crisis that we face at the moment. But before I bring them up on stage to begin that session, which will be followed by another session that will focus on the policy implications, we wanted to show you a short video, some of you may have seen it, but it's one that brings home, I think, the human dimension of the human tragedy of this current refugee crisis, so let's look at that for a moment. (Video playing)

SPEAKER: Thank you, I want to start by saying a special welcome to the Academy's president, Gerhard Casper; to the Academy's chairman, Gahl Burt; and to the Forum co-chairs, Harold Koh, Nader Mousavizadeh, and Michael Ignatieff.

The forum that I described to you is titled The Global Migration Challenge Crisis; it's challenges to the United States, Europe and the global order. We wanted to start this discussion today with a conversation between the Leon Wieseltier and Michael Ignatieff, to place the crisis that was so vividly portrayed in that video, in the context.

Michael Ignatieff along with Harold Koh, and Nader Mousavizadeh; has organized the Holbrooke Forum for several years now, he came to my attention because of a great biography he wrote of Isaiah Berlin, during the time that he was a professor at Harvard, and director of the Carr Center for Human Rights and Policy. After that he served as a Member of Parliament in the Canadian Parliament and then leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, and leader of the Opposition. Unfortunately, Michael is no longer the leader of the Opposition, because he would have been Prime Minister of Canada today, but Canada’s loss is our gain.

Among his other major publications: “The Lesser Evil: Political Ethics in an Age of Terror”, and his most recent, “Fire and Ashes: Success and Failure in Politics”, I'm writing a book about success and failure, too. I've long admired Michael's intellectual contributions, and it's a real pleasure to have him with us on the stage this afternoon.

As it happens, Leon Wieseltier is the Isaiah Berlin Senior Fellow in Culture and Policy at the Brookings Institution. Many of you know Leon very well, because of his incredible hair which I've been trying to emulate, but he's actually known for far more important things. In particular, he was the

famous Literary Editor of The New Republic from 1983 all the way up to 2014. He is the author of several books, including the widely acclaimed “Kaddish”, which was published in 1998. He has been the Godkin Lecturer at Harvard University, and the Gruss Professor in Talmudic Civil Law at Harvard Law School. We are honored and delighted that Leon had joined us here, that The New Republic's loss has been Brookings' gain.

SPEAKER: You took in a refugee.

SPEAKER: And we discovered how much we can benefit from absorbing refugees. Leon has been working on an essay on refugees, which we will be publishing as a Brookings essay, and I wanted to start by asking him, to just give us a kind of detailed synopsis of the argument that he is going to make there.

MR. WIESELTIER: Thank you my very good friend. I've been told I can speak for 20 minutes, and I'll go through some things rather quickly. First, I wanted to say about what we just watched. I would say two things about that, both of which I'm sure I'm not the only one, the feeling is not mine. The first one is that when I see those scenes, I feel shame and anger at the failure of our country and other western countries, in not having done anything significant to prevent that.

Secondly, and this may sound banal, but it isn't, when I see that footage I'm reminded again, that what we are dealing with here is an emergency. Now we need to rethink or refresh our sense of what an emergency is. If you understand that this is an emergency, you will understand, firstly, that the discussion of refugees should not be absorbed into the discussion of immigration, because refugees are very particular kind of immigrants, and there is an urgency there that puts them in an entirely different category.

Secondly, if you reflect on the fact that it's an emergency, you realize that the discussion of refugees must not be absorbed into the discussion of intervention, because whether the talks in Vienna get restarted or don’t get restarted, whether a political solution in Syria is possible or not, the hundreds of thousands of poor people that we are talking about cannot wait upon the results of any attempt at a political solution.

And finally, if you reflect on the fact that we are talking about an emergency, you will come to ponder the question of whether or not the United States Government is intellectually and

operationally at all prepared any longer for emergency action. The idea of emergency action is something that we have to revisit and think more clearly about, because that is what -- there are crises in which it is wise to escalate, but there are other crises in which you don't really understand the problem, unless you go in whole at the point -- at the most urgent point.

In my research, well, for this essay, but generally I've been thinking a lot about this question, and I recently read -- I got a hold of the full folio of the papers from the Evian Conference in 1938. You will recall that the Evian Conference was a conference called by President Roosevelt, and 1938 was one of the darkest years in European history. It was the Anschluss in Austria, the question of Czechoslovakia, the Sudatenland, the Munich Agreement and Kristallnacht, not a good year.

And a great many Austrian and German-Jewish refugees were produced, and the President thought there should be a conference because, as a friend of mine here at Brookings many years ago used to say when he read an interesting article in the paper, it was a conference-building measure. I thought I'd go look at the papers, and I just brought one thing, the letter that Roosevelt sent to Myron Taylor who was the man he -- the former president of U.S. Steel who was a close friend of his, whom he appointed to be chairman of the American delegation to Evian, he writes and tells them what an honor it is to be appointed to this.

And he tells them that his task is to expedite and facilitate the immigration of refugees to those countries willing to receive them within the provisions of their existing legislation, period. In other words, the mandate of the emergency conference at Evian was to accept the existing legal and political conditions regarding refugees, as given, and to learn to work within them, which of course is why the Evian Conference was a notorious failure.

I'm not going to trouble you with any more of those documents, but I did bring, you have to see it, among the documents from the Evian Conference I found the menu and the wine list. I want you to know that as they were discussing the fate of these refugees they were eating (inaudible) in the de les de Sole de Douvres, and the wine was Chateau Latour 1920. I thought, these are the kinds of things that come to the fore at moments like this.

The panel that follows us will be about policy, which is just as well, policy, at least over certain kind is not what I do. I would like to talk a little bit more about the philosophical, and moral, and

even cultural dimensions of the debate about immigration -- about refugees. Sorry, I just committed the sin that I said I shouldn't commit.

I would like to frame this debate so that we can understand, conceptually, how it is that we are even debating whether or not to honor the rights, and remember refugees have rights, we haven't discussed that very much, but this is not just a matter of compassion. They have claims upon us because they have rights. How is it that we've arrived at this point in the debate?

I want to discuss it in terms of two themes. The first one of different approaches to human identify, and the second is different approaches to the nation state, because both of them, I believe, are implicated in this very primary, fundamental discussion. In the philosophical literature but, generally, even in our culture, there have been two dominant conceptions of human identity. One of them we could call cosmopolitan, and the other communitarian.

Of course the cosmopolitan notion of the human person prefers those attributes of the human person, that are universal to all people, that are universal to all people. In other words, the features of the person that matter most and make the personal morally significant, are those features that do not distinguish him from others, but that unite him from others, meaning what we refer to, somewhat tritely, as common humanity. The idea of common humanity has a history too, but we are not going t go into that.

The communitarian conception of the person by contrast, prefers those attributes of the person that distinguish people from each other. I say this non-pejoratively, but simply regards the societies, the cultures, the families, the specificities and peculiarities of the history of the individual, as more decisive for the formulation of his or her identity.

Now, when you get into the refugees debate, a lot of the discussion and the literature about refugees really is a debate between cosmopolitanism and communitarianism. So, for example, if one comes to talk about different priorities as regards solidarity and welcome, solidarity and welcome. According to the communitarian view of the person, our primary obligations of solidarity are owed to those like us, like ourselves.

There is a famous medieval Jewish commentator who once wrote, "The poor of your city and the poor of another city, the poor of your city come first." That was not meant to -- he was not

espousing selfishness, greed, prejudice, nothing of the sort, it was simply, it was his way of creating a hierarchy of values that would determine his moral behavior towards others. Whereas, the cosmopolitan idea of the person, insists that our obligations are to all people universally. All people universally.

This has a very distinguished tradition in our culture; it probably goes back all the way to Pericles Funeral Oration. Remember where he says, "The gates of our city are thrown open to the world, and we expel no foreigners." But the person, the figure who really, really formulated this was Kant, who, in 1795, actually declared that hospitality was a universal right, was a universal right, and Weltenburger recht, or the right a universal citizen, of universal citizenship, and he insisted that the right of hospitality with he had said was not a right to membership, it was a right to dwell in a place, was a matter of right, not a matter of philanthropy.

This notion that hospitality is an obligation, and that refugees have to be accepted as a matter of right, then has a long and very interesting history; in the 1930s, a famous jurist who won the Nobel Prize, a man called René Cassin, once actually argued for what he called the right of domicile, the right of domicile; the people, et cetera.

And Jefferson, actually, I was doing some research, twice, Jefferson had various -- We were talking about this the other night, Jefferson's views on refugees and others did not have -- were not glorious in their beginnings, but his thought developed and in his first inaugural, and later again, he used the term hospitality as one of the obligations of the new country towards all the peoples of the world.

Again, you see there are two approaches here, and again, I'm not trying to provide a beautiful history for Trumpism, that’s its own problem. I merely wish to point out that there are two -- There is a real philosophical debate at the heart of what we are discussing here. For example, according to the cosmopolitan view of the person, there is a presumption of inclusion. There is a presumption of inclusion, the burden of proof falls on those who wish to argue that we should exclude people from our borders.

Whereas, according to the communitarian conception of the person, there is a presumption of exclusion, that is to say, and I'll get back to this in the discussion of the nation state in a moment, but we, of course, as a sovereign people have the sovereign right to decide who will live with us, and priority should be given to people who are most like us, who are most like us.

This is sometimes based on a view of culture. Many people believe, I think quite rightly, that every culture has a right to develop, and to develop un-interfered with, and so on. And there is a kind of ideal of cultural -- people believe that homogeneity leads to a communitarian case, that homogeneity is kind of a condition for the flourishing of culture, and that the presence of people from different cultures, represents some sort of impediment or interference in the growth of the native culture, in the growth of the native culture.

Whereas, according to the cosmopolitan view, it's quite the opposite, the cosmopolitan view recognizes that in fact, cultures have all developed in relationship and in collision and in cross-fertilization with other cultures, and that the kind of homogeneity that some people recommend would actually represent the decadence of culture, and the death of a culture, because of the failure of it to be stimulated by foreign influences.

So those, about identity, when we talk about who to accept, who t olive with, why to live with them, sameness and difference, all these questions that are broached by the debate about refugees have to do with this cluster of ideas about identity. They also have a lot to do with thinking about the nation state. The idea of the nation state; the idea of the nation state developed in the late 18th early 19th Century in Europe, primarily in Germany, but not only.

The idea of the nation state was that every nation should incarnated in a state, and every state should exemplify a nation, and basically that the political -- Ideally, that the political boundaries and the cultural boundaries should coincide, should coincide. Now, of course they never do coincide, and so the theory of the nation-state, and the nation states that were built on this theory develop this problem that became known as the problem of minorities.

The problem of minorities, you know, minorities -- I'm not saying that all nation states are doomed to treat minorities unfairly or unequally, what I am saying is that minorities are problematic according to the philosophical conception of the nation state, and this kind of nationalism which was the foundation of European nationalism, and by the way, was also the foundation of Zionism. Israel imported this theory of the perfect fit, as I like to call it, into its idea, its conception of nationalism.

Again, in the definition of the nation, according to this conception, ideally the nation should homogenous, or as homogeneous as it possibly can be, and it's in this culture of the nation state

that one hears of natives and foreigners or of the same and the other, in which sameness and difference become deeply, deeply problematic; deeply, deeply problematic.

Because of this, many writers and thinkers about refugees, if you would study the philosophical and the historical that are on refugees, have come to a conclusion which I think is incorrect, and I'll get to in a moment, which is that what stands in the way of doing justice to refugees is the nation state. That in fact, as long as we have states that are built upon exclusivist ideas of who should live there and why, refugees will always be intrinsically problematic and fraught figures; intrinsically problematic and fraught figures.

Hannah Arendt made hay out of this. An Italian philosopher that some of you may know called Giorgio Agamben, made a great deal out of this, but there is this idea that the solution to the refugee problem must somehow be found outside the nation state, because the refugee emergency represents a kind of invalidation of the nation state.

This position reached its absurdity in 1949. I wrote something down to read to you: In 1949 a group of geniuses including Einstein, Russell, George Bernard Shaw, Huxley, Mauriac, geniuses, all of them, signed a letter to the Secretary General of the United Nations, in which they said that the United Nations should, "Reconsider their attitude to the refugee problem." The reason they should reconsider their attitude, these geniuses wrote, "Is because there are no national solutions to this problem."

What they wrote was, "By sheer force of events, refugees have acquired the feeling of belonging to a community larger than one nation. Indeed history made them citizens of the world, and they should be treated as such." Now you have the acrimony of universalism, and of this idea of world citizenship.

Reading their letter, you would almost think, so for the refugees, their statelessness was kind of a lucky break, right? That morally and historically they've been promoted to some higher state, and we had to have to wisdom to follow them. Now the International Refugee Organization which was established by the U.N. General assembly in 1946, immediately shot back at this letter with a brilliant retort.

I still haven't found out who wrote it, but what they wrote in this letter in return was, "Here

are people to whom you say be proud of your statelessness, remain this way and become the first world citizens. But stateless persons know all too well what they desire, to stop being stateless, not out of sentimentality, but to obtain asylum, a passport, a work permit or access to a hospital."

Now this powerful reply to the idiotic idea of the geniuses, right, raises the next turning of the screw, as it were, which is to say that whatever the -- Two points, (1) whatever the limitations of nation states are in the matter of the other and the same, no solution to the refugee question can be effectively found outside of framework of nation states.

Nation states are the only entities that have the power and cohesion, and may lack the will, welcome to Washington, but they may lack the will, but this problem can only be solved by nation states. No international organization, and certainly no fantasy of world citizenship of (inaudible), right, that will not save anybody, anybody. But having said that, I think it's very important to add that the refugee crisis represents nothing less than a challenge to us, but especially to Europeans -- and I'll get to this distinction in a moment -- to revise their classical notion of the nation state.

The theory of the perfect fit, according to which the nation should be incarnated in a state, and the state should exemplify a nation, what it lacked, and what Europe has always lacked; all the way back to the Albigensian massacres, was any natural understanding of, and familiarity with multi-ethnicity, with multi-ethnicity.

So, for example, when the new Polish President, or Orbán, or Lepain, or some of the other villains in Europe right now, when they get up and say what they do, when they utter their xenophobic, or nativist sentiments, they are not betraying a European tradition, they are actually fulfilling a certain European tradition, not the only European tradition, but what they are saying is rooted in the philosophical and cultural and political history, of Europe.

Whereas Trump, if you pardon the expression, or Cruz, whose name I think we are going to have to learn to speak a little more often, what they are doing, is actually defying, defying a philosophical consensus in this country, and it's a philosophical consensus that exists, not for high-brow intellectual reasons, but because we are a country, it took a long while to get to this and the consciousness of it didn't really kick in till the 1960s, but we are a nation state in which the nation is defined multi-ethnically; is defined multi-ethnically.

And so it seems to me that in the European case, there will be only two possible outcomes to the refugee crisis in Europe right now, because of the magnitude of this exodus, because of the numbers. Either Europe will discover multi-ethnicity in some real way, and either de facto, or I mean, either in actuality or intellectually, revise its idea of the homogenous nation incarnated in the state, and really develop some new sense of multi-ethnicity for their -- or we will see a revival of European fascism.

As far as I can see, the only two real outcomes are a new consciousness of multi-ethnicity, pluralism or fascism. I really don't see, because the numbers of these refugees in certain countries in particular, the size of the minorities and the problem of minorities.

Remember, the minority treaties after World War I, and the moral working of a nation state with minorities, was always premised on the idea, and Israel now is experiencing this threat, that the minority would not be so big, that the majority would actually feel endangered by it. Because when the minority crosses a certain threshold, and I don't know what that threshold is, things turn ugly, because the system is not philosophically or politically equipped for a multi-ethnic understanding, et cetera, et cetera.

And so to conclude, I guess what I would say is this, that when we think about this problem and you look at the debate, we get caught in this old, old, ancient dichotomy between universalism and particularism, and what I wanted to say to you, is that I think that there is no more tiresome and obsolete dichotomy than that. There is no such thing as pure universalism, there is no such thing as pure particularism.

If a pure universalist existed, or a pure particularist existed, they would be both be absolute human monsters, and the only avenue -- access that we have to the universal, is through the particular. And the reason that we must cherish the particular most, is not because it's ours, that's a trivial reason, the fact that something is mine, doesn't recommend to anybody but me. It's not because it is ours, but it is because through the particular that we may intuit and reach to and attain the universal.

And when you think about these concepts in this way, you begin to see at least, philosophically, I think, how to move towards policy thinking about the refugee crisis, though I'm perfectly aware that Kant's writings of 1795 have absolutely no bearing on what Denis McDonough is now thinking. Thank you very much. (Applause)

MR. INDYK: Thank you, Leon. I think we've just been treated to a unique,

contextualization of the refugee problem. I'm going to ask Michael to respond, and then I will come back to you, Leon, and ask you what it means for policy. Michael, please?

MR. IGNATIEFF: Thank you. What I entirely share with Leon, although I've argued with him for 30 years, and we could argue some more, what I entirely share is that this is a definitional moment about who we are, what societies are, what the United States is, what its traditions are. The refugee issue is not a humanitarian crisis, it's a definitional crisis, and I think in that sense we are on, as they say, the same page.

And let's look at some of the facts, in this room there are distinguished German policymakers who are dealing with a situation in which they had a-million-plus arrivals in 2015, and there are 2,000 to 3,000 people arriving as we speak, like right now. Secondly, there are, every week, people drowning in the 8-kilometer space between Turkey and Greece, and so there isn't any more fundamental encounter with our values, with our conscience, with our self-definition, than children dying at sea; and the banalization of children dying at sea.

So it is definitional of who we are. The thing I see very clearly is that in the United States the Syrian refugee crisis is seen fundamentally in the first instance, as a kind of Middle Eastern problem. The world, the order of the Middle East is collapsing, and it has produced a humanitarian crisis. In Europe, the situation is seen in very different ways, it's seen as a huge inflow of persons that are challenging the boundary conditions of the nation state.

I think that you've agglomerated Europe excessively, Eastern Europe, the Visegrad countries, the Poles, the Czechs, the Hungarians, frankly Hitler and Stalin did the genocides in those countries, and they are now essentially mono-ethnic, and they have, ironically, gone back to the state nation definition that you have, and won't take anybody in. They are beneficiaries of the European Union, but they don't -- are not prepared to accept any burden sharing.

Germany, which invented all this stuff, is actually -- at least in West Germany -- accepted a cosmopolitan and multicultural identity in one of the most astonishing historical transformations, it's one of the most heartening historical transformations the world has ever seen in my view. If there's a hero in this story, it has been not just Chancellor Merkel, but ordinary Germans, who have said, this is the definition of us.

This is the time to show ourselves and the world we are different. This is the time to welcome, and they problem they are facing, and this is, I think, a policy issue relevant to Brookings, they built that postwar Germany on the Marshall Plan, on American involvement, on NATO commitments, on George Bush, Sr.'s leadership in the reunification. On Dick Holbrooke's work to get the Balkan sorted, the entire German identity we are looking at, postwar, was built in conjunction and collaboration with the United States.

And in 2015 the Germans are looking out across their parapet, as 3,000 people a day are streaming in right now, and they are saying, our chief strategic ally is a bystander. Our chief strategic ally is willing to take in 2,000 people from Syria since 2011; not 2,000 a week, not 2,000 a year, but 2,000 over four years. Talk about self images of a country, this country, and I'm not a American, I'm a Canadian, I'm next door, I love you guys, but your self-image is: We are the land of multicultural welcome.

We are the country with a great refugee welcome record. We are the country that when UNHCR wants us to take, you know, 65- 70,000 a year, we do. The United States has a great tradition, but over Syria it shut down --

SPEAKER: And before.

MR. IGNATIEFF: -- and this is creating, this was the burden of the Holbrooke Forum discussions, which I'm sharing with you, is that the Europeans are looking with utter disbelief at the fracture of the transatlantic partnership that built the Europe that they grew up in. You've got the United States, the most powerful, the strongest country in the world, who has decided on the refugee issue that you simply cannot take any risk whatever.

It's not merely that you can manage the risk, you can't take any risk. A country that sends a strategic message to the world, that we are so frightened that we can't remain committed to the things that make the whole world like us, is a great power in serious trouble, and a country that will not support its allies, as it faces its biggest challenge to their identity, to their cohesion since the Second World War, is not a serious country.

I say this with affection. You can't be more pro-American than I am, but if you hear anger here, there is anger, and I'm not authorized to speak of the Holbrooke Forum, in this room there are 25 people who will take a different view, some will take me outside afterward and say, you went way too far.

I don’t give a damn.

I've got one time to be in public with you, and I see what the Germans are doing, and they are looking at the United States, there is nothing going on in the Syrian Peace Talks, it's as if the United States won't actually take ownership of that. The Russians are marching on Aleppo. They encircle Aleppo, if you like the starvation and the other times, you'll love the starvation in Aleppo, because it's a big place.

So, the Russians are changing the—are actively creating refugees every single day. Mr. Kerry and Mr. Lavrov are in these pleasant discussions, the United States used to be able to understand that if you want to get a diplomatic solution, you’ve got wield some force here, to change the dynamics that force people to settle. At the moment we are looking at a situation which Assad thinks he's going to win, and Putin thinks he's going to win, and the who will the price are not in this room. They are the people in Aleppo and everywhere else.

And the other secondary people who will pay the prices will be the Germans, and the Italians to a lesser degree. And this is where we are. Now, I think there are things that we can do, I think there are solutions, I think the United States has been asked by the UNHCR to take 65,000 refugees. It's a big number, I know you are all saying, oh, I can't do that, but that’s what big countries do, that’s what great countries do.

They say, okay, let's find a way to stand up in front of the world, and say, we are not going to have refugee policy in the United States dictated by IS actually, that’s not what great countries do. We are going to stand up, and we are going to take leadership here, if the Germans can do it, we can do it.

Secondly, we are going to deal as a great country with another scandal in the story, which is that UNHCR is about 50 percent funded, and WFP, the World Food Program is about 40 percent funded. You ask why there's a refugee flow last summer; it's because they cut the food ration in every single town. Now, that’s fixable. Big countries can fix things like that. Those were two things, immediately in policy terms that the United States can do, and can do it actually now. Sorry, I'm steamed about this. (Applause)

MR. INDYK: Okay, Leon. Michael reminds me of a -- in hearing what my beloved friend

says; I'm reminded of a joke from Prague during the communist period, about a man walking down the street, and he sees in the ally over there, there's another man and he's vomiting his guts out, and he walks over to the man, and arms around his shoulder and says, I share your analysis.

MR. WIESELTIER: Look, I've said, for a long time I couldn't agree with you more. You know, people talk about David Cameron presiding over little England. I've said for a long time that Barak Obama is presiding over little America. That's what we've become in the world. One of the many reasons, and we'll get what could be done in a minute, why American policy is such a scandal, because American policy or the lack of American policy, is one of the reasons that this refugee population even exist in the first place.

We did absolutely nothing, nothing. Rather we did only things that wouldn't have an effect. You know, in the old choice between action and inaction, this White House has pioneered a third alternative which is inconsequential action. So they will only do something as long as it doesn't decisively affect an outcome. We'll send 50 troops, we'll send 5 troops, we'll send meals ready to eat, we'll send rusted Humvees, but nothing that might have an impact on the outcome.

I think that the larger problem that you described, you are absolutely right. You are absolutely right. I mean, Germany, we are lagging morally behind Germany, this country is right now, which is not sentence that I ever expected to utter, I have to say. There was a time, actually a few years ago when the French went into Mali, when I thought we were lagging morally behind France, which is another sentence I thought I'd ever (crosstalk).

But I think you are absolutely right. I think there is some, you know, I think it was Roger asked Samantha this morning; Samantha Power (phonetic) is here.

SPEAKER: Well actually (crosstalk).

MR. INDYK: Oh. Sorry. And she said what she said, and you can't know what it is. It's anything you think. Look, I think 65,000 is a large number only because we are, because the White House has capitulated to political realities, not because they are harsh, but because the capitulation to political realities serves their purpose of nonintervention.

In other words, you know the poll numbers we always hear are bad on this question. The poll numbers on Obamacare were terrible, before the President went out and decided to sell Obamacare,

they were terrible, they were terrible, but the White House always cites bad poll numbers, and war-weariness, and so on, because they have other reasons which have to do with their views of the role of the United States and the world with the nature of foreign policy after Iraq, with the impact of the projection of American power abroad, historically.

With the question of whether the United States has any moral right whatsoever to be in anyway directly, or indirectly responsible for an outcome in another country, but they have their -- What is it the economists call them, they have their priors about foreign policy, and so they can hide behind these bad poll numbers. You know, usually, I mean, what we are talking about is an absence, and it's the tritest term in the world, but we are talking about a complete abdication of leadership.

A complete abdication of leadership with the -- given the suffering, the magnitude of the suffering in Syria, and of the refugees, given the historic role of the United States in helping by not acting, to bring this about. Given the fact that the American people, even in this insane moment, are not a bad people, and do not like to see beheadings, and do not like to see children's bodies washed up on a beach, and are affected by moral considerations, and do have resources of empathy, to which they are prepared to consecrate their material resources. There is what to work with in this country, there is what to work with in this county. This is not Trump's and Cruz's country.

MR. INDYK: But you've got 30 governors who don't want to take the (crosstalk).

MR. WIESELTIER: I know the patterns. Do you know what? Then every morning of every day, the President and Schumer, and Reid, and the other governors, and archbishops, and rabbis, and mullahs, and ex-Presidents from both parties, and every celebrity who ever won an Academy Award, and Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, and everyone else, every day of every morning should get up and re-legitimate the idea of refugee assistance and our humanitarian obligations.

This is, you know, we are a republic of opinion. We govern ourselves by our opinion, and the quality of our self-government is determined by the quality and the content of our opinions about things.

MR. INDYK: Okay. Michael give us --

MR. WIESELTIER: Oh, you didn't like that?

MR. INDYK: I loved it, Michael. I loved it. (Laughter)

SPEAKER: We liked it.

MR. INDYK: You are so sensitive.

MR. WIESELTIER: I know. I know. I know. Thank you for knowing that.

MR. INDYK: Michael, give us your take on the impact of this on the transatlantic relationship?

MR. IGNATIEFF: Well, I think I've said that when I talk, I don't want to -- the German policymakers in the room can speak for themselves, they don't want to be identified. I want to salute them for their leadership and their participation in the Forum over three years, but what you get from them, is very tough what they are getting is, Europe is breaking apart on this, so burden-sharing among Europeans is breaking down.

That is, the Eastern Europeans will not take a single refugee, and will not contribute to refugee relief or (inaudible) the Poles, the Czechs, et cetera. The Greeks simply can't handle their borders, so the Germans have to deal with the consequence of that. The Italians are essentially passing them on north to the Munich train station. The Germans are desperate for European-wide solutions, and are not getting solidarity within their own community.

So that's an indictment of Europe, and it's a criticism of Europe, and that's not America's fault, that's just the situation, it is in a sense the return of the nation's state, and the nation state returning as razor wire.

SPEAKER: Mm-hmm. That's right.

MR. IGNATIEFF: And everybody understands that in an atmosphere of terror, there is a return of the sovereign. I mean, it bets back to your points about nation state. The imperative demand of every country, to their sovereign is, make us safe, and that means, control our borders; and that's a European-wide problem, and Europe will have to find solutions that are compatible with -- their internal open borders will have to be -- have an external border, namely the Mediterranean which is secure, it's a huge problem.

But again, America could help in terms of security in the Mediterranean area. Let's not forget that the ill-conceived Libyan intervention has created an extraordinary situation in which, as an American policymaker said to me last night, there is 135 miles, of the Mediterranean coast in Libya, which

is now in the control of IS.

SPEAKER: Except that now, they are new (crosstalk).

MR. IGNATIEFF: So, folks, again, the sense of America as a bystander here thinking this is a European problem, you have a national security threat on the southern frontier, of the Mediterranean, which is simultaneously, and at the same time, a refugee -- exporting, so the idea that you can just leave the Libyan problem to Italy to manage, is in national security terms, catastrophically short-sighted, so that's another area where the United States will want to work with its allies, on simply the national security piece.

The other thing that came out very clearly in our discussions, I don't think this is breaking any confidences, is that Germany is desperate to get a bilateral agreement with Turkey to manage the huge flows out of Turkey, but getting that agreement with Erdoğan, it would be very, very helpful to have NATO's most powerful alliance partner, talking to the Turks simultaneously.

There are things, in other words, that America can do to make life easier for the Germans, stabilize the borders, get an agreement with Turkey, the same follows through for Lebanon and Jordan. There is a lot that the United States needs to be doing here, I've specified some of these things, and that the significant fact about this, this is my headline, is that the refugee crisis is not a humanitarian crisis. It is a strategic and national security challenge to the United States and to the coherence of the alliances that it has created since 1945. It's that fundamental, and somehow, in this town, that penny has not dropped.

MR. INDYK: We are going to go your --

MR. WIESELTIER: One, one thing. It's short, quickly. Just to add to what you've said, the most egregious failure in some ways, on the part of those who support immediate assistance to the refugees, liberals, democrats, humanitarians the White House, all, is there absolute cowardice in the face of the argument about security; absolute cowardice. The President of the United States should be explaining to the American people why the refugees that we admit are not -- which should be obvious -- wearing bombs under their coats. That, as you've said, that we are going to have to manage a certain amount of risk, but compared to the magnitude of our moral obligation and so on.

I mean, some of you have heard me say this before, but between 1880 and 1924, the

United States admitted 4 million Italian immigrants, 4 million. We got Enrico Fermi, Joe DiMaggio, Frank Sinatra, Antonin Scalia, and Al Capone. Right? Now I don't know anybody who thinks that—

MR. IGNATIEFF: That it wasn't a good deal?

MR. WIESELTIER: Well, around here the deal breaker is Scalia. (Laughter)

MR. INDYK: Okay. We are going to go to your questions now. We don't have a lot of time, so I'm going to take three questions. Please, identify yourself. Please make sure you ask a question, we do not have time for speeches, and we'll take them in three. Over here, please. An Italian, by the way.

SPEAKER: Both Italian and German, and European for that matter.

MR. INDYK: No problem.

SPEAKER: Thank you. By the way, Leon, that's for you, you were hinting on the fact that we should be careful not conflate narratives with reality. Just I made some back-of-the-envelope calculations; the U.S. is hosting about one refugee for every 1,200 U.S. citizens at the moment, while the U.K., Italy, France and Germany are doing that to the ratio between 1 to 200 or 1 to 400. So in terms of generosity, it's important that we become of what the facts are.

My question for Leon there; I enjoyed your analysis of what's going on in Europe, but I think there are three elements that I would like you to elaborate upon. One, is the fact that what we have in Europe, is that in Europe we have the birth of the nation state with a piece of (inaudible), but also what we have is probably the most advanced experiment in the world to move beyond the nation state from Germany onwards. So that is a challenge, an interesting challenge, but a challenge.

The second problem we have a mismatch today in Europe between politics and policymaking, politics still takes place at the national state level, but policymaking, increasingly, has to be supranational in Europe, and we lack the (inaudible) European public sphere to recompose this gap between politics and policymaking.

Third and final point that I would ask, if possible, to elaborate upon; I think we have another challenge in Europe, in that most of the world still functions according to realists' politics, still along those lines. While, within Europe we moved beyond that, we are basically enjoying the perpetual peace of Immanuel Kant, and so we struggle to recompose what we have within Europe with the world

outside. Thank you.

MR. WIESELTIER: I would say—Oh sorry. You are going to take a couple others. Never has Immanuel Kant got such an airing in this room.

MR. INDYK: Maybe we could get him to Brookings. What do you think? Yes, please? Can you wait for the microphone?

SPEAKER: I'm sorry this is not a question, but --

MR. INDYK: No, no, no. We have to have to questions. That's the rules here. You have to ask a question.

SPEAKER: No, no, no, no. I was talking -- It's a question.

MR. INDYK: Oh, it just became a question.

SPEAKER: It's a question.

MR. INDYK: What's the question?

SPEAKER: I just want to say for Mr. Ignatieff, I was a refugee a long time ago, didn't go through what they went through today. I'm from Lebanon, and in 1976 we had to leave because of the war, we took a boat and all that. And so I'm a little bit nervous I don't know why, excited I think, because it's not every day you get to say thank you, and Canada took us. They were so nice, I was 14, I didn't speak English and all that, but we went to Canada, Kitchener, and they were so wonderful. It was just a feeling that, you know, we were on a boat, the family, there's five us kids, and we don't know where we are going. We are French educated, because we used to be a French colony, you know, and of course we go to English Canada.

MR. INDYK: Thank you. So, the questions is --

SPEAKER: I want to say thank you for Canada.

MR. INDYK: -- what's Canada doing? We'll get to that one.

MR. IGNATIEFF: The question is, isn't Canada wonderful? (Laughter)

MR. INDYK: Andrew? Please, Andrew?

SPEAKER: One very brief comment and one question. The comment is, Michael --

MR. INDYK: Comments need to be really brief.

SPEAKER: It is. Michael, I think you spoke for all of us in the Forum in your conclusion,

and all part of your (inaudible), in taking the argument forward in that way. The question I'm left with is a really difficult one, and it's mainly for Leon, but you can decide. I'm all for the notion of the state as a multicultural entity.

And that's what we have in many countries now, but what worries me, or one of the many things that worries me about the present crisis, is actually, some of the multicultural countries, including my own, and to the extent it as a multicultural country, have been very restrictive in their policy on taking refugees, and some of the countries that are built on something more, of an ethnic or linguistic basis, and that actually includes Germany, and some of the countries in the Middle East, have been more generous in taking refugees than we have. So there's a little bit of a problem for your thesis.

MR. INDYK: Okay. Go ahead.

MR. WIESELTIER: Just a few things, and Quickly, I think as Martin says, there's something of a paradox here. The real question, the interesting question is; what is the role of multiculturalism in the creation of a multi-ethnic society? Multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity are not the same things. Multiculturalism is a particular interpretation, and a particular set of cultural and social policies, and that have a lot to do by the way, with the integration and absorption of immigrants.

I've often thought how different this country would be if between 1880 and 1924, when the great Italian, Jewish, Irish, immigrations happen. If those people had arrived to a state that was both multicultural and a welfare state, things would have been very, very different, so there's a lot to be said about that. But I'm glad you asked that.

I have to say to my friend here that -- I'm going to say something heretical, especially in the light of what's happening in Europe now, I'm not one of those people who worship at the shrine of the European Union. I have to tell you. I think that one of the things I have been seeing and struck by in recent years with the various crises that have been afflicting Europe. The Greek crisis, the Euro Zone crisis, the refugee crisis is that the nation states that compromise the European Union, have a way of reverting to themselves in times of crisis, and they behave as autonomous nation states, and in conformity with -- if you pardon the expression, they are national characteristics, and I know that's a terrible notion, and we have to define it, and et cetera, et cetera.

I don't think Europe -- Europe looks like perpetual peace, like a good cup of latte on any

market square on any afternoon, in times of peace. But it wasn't 20 years ago during the Bosnian crisis, when Europe did not look like a region of perpetual peace. And I think that what matters most to me in terms of justice -- and I'll get to something beyond justice, or before justice in a moment -- is not the European Union, or the survival of the European Union, but the justice or injustice that is done to the refugees and to the various populations of the various states, that seems more primary to me.

I mean, when my friend, Tom Friedman, wrote a column a week or two ago, and he had been reluctant to come out ardently for the refugee cause, and finally he did, because someone told him that the crisis is this dagger pointed at the heart of the European Union. I thought to myself, that's what gets you going? I mean, there were dead babies on the beach, et cetera.

The final thing I would say actually is that the urgency that Michael and I are expressing and the anger and the frustration, that we are expressing, are entirely -- derive not only from the high idealism for which we are both famous, but also from a very cold-heated kind of realism.

As Michael said, this is a strategic crisis. I mean, the consequences of the Syrian refugees, they could destroy Jordon, they could destroy Lebanon, they could damage Turkey, they could damage all sorts of European societies if they are properly absorbed, and justly absorbed. American alliances are falling apart because of this. The damage just proliferates. I mean it's the perfect storm. So, even from the standpoint of the most cold-hearted, (inaudible) in calculation, right; there is no reason not to --

MR. INDYK: What do you mean (crosstalk)?

MR. WIESELTIER: All right. Martin prefers that curse Kissinger, okay. Somebody tweet that. Okay. It's just a (crosstalk) --

MR. INDYK: No. Please don't do that.

MR. WIESELTIER: But in any case I think that both idealism and realism command us, and as I said with what – when I begin to think -- not to begin -- to act urgently, to commit emergency action. And the question is, as I've said is, are we intellectually or operationally prepared? One of the things I keep noticing is that bad fortune and bad actors, forever have to jump on us in this period. We are always playing catch up to evil always; and et cetera, et cetera.

MR. INDYK: That's good. Michael?

MR. IGNATIEFF: I can't better that exit line and I'll even forswear a temptation that surges in my patriotic breast as a Canadian to give you a lecture about how wonderful we are. I just want to thank somebody who has a happy memory of their welcome to our country. Thank you.

MR. INDYK: Ladies and gentlemen -- (Applause) I think you've been treated to a very special conversation here. And I feel privilege to have had the chance to moderate it. Thank you, to both of you. (Applause) Stay in your seats.

We are going to move directly into the next panel, so just hold on, and we'll be with you in a moment.

(Recess)

PANEL 2

MR. INDYK: Okay. Thank you, all. We're now moving to a more policy focused level of this discussion. Joining me on the panel today, we have three diverse experts. Beth Ferris, who ran our internal displacement project here for nine years as a senior fellow in the Foreign Policy Program, is now research professor at Georgetown University and a non-resident senior fellow here at Brookings.

It doesn't say it here, but she is also advising the Secretary General on humanitarian refugee policy at the moment.

Bruce Katz is a centennial scholar at Brookings, after 20 years in which he did an amazing job building and running our Metropolitan Program, our Urban Policy Program. He has now been appointed our first centennial scholar.

When you came in through the doors this afternoon you probably noticed our banners. This is our 100th year as an institution, and one of the ways we are celebrating that is by establishing the centennial scholars, who are our best scholars, giving them a chance to rise above their programs and spread across the institution. Bruce is working with our scholars that drive some of the issues that relate to cities and his passionate belief that the 21st century will be a city driven century.

Why, you might ask, do we have Bruce on the panel today, because cities have a critical role on the issue of absorption of refugees.

Tamara Wittes, Director of our Center for Middle East Policy, who is a senior fellow here in the Foreign Policy Program, has led the way in terms of our work, not just on dynamics in the Middle East, but also political development and democracy development in that very troubled region.

I want to start with Tammy, and ask you, Tammy, to focus at first on the drivers of this refugee crisis, the drivers being the turmoil in the Middle East, and of course, in particular, in Syria.

Today, there are 70,000 new refugees from Aleppo, on the Turkish border, and one gets the sense that we are just in some ways in the middle of this crisis, by no means, at the end of it.

Give us a sense of where things are going in terms of the conflicts that drive this refugee crisis.

MS. WITTES: Sure, Martin. Thanks. I want to start with just one that relates to Europe and refugees and migration more broadly before we get into the refugees from the Syrian conflict specifically.

Obviously, the exacerbation of the war in Syria and the rise of ISIS are the major factors driving this vast refugee flow that we have spent the last several days talking about, but migration from the Middle East and from North Africa into Europe has been a challenge for the European countries for a long time.

It has certainly been exacerbated by the Arab uprisings of 2011 and the breakdown in order across the Arab world.

There is a long legacy here that Europe is struggling with and Arab states are struggling with in dealing with this challenge. It was the great misfortunate of the Arab peoples that they went through this historic transformation and this up-ending of their region in the middle of a global recession. Both the United States and the European states faced tremendous challenges in trying to respond to these events in a way that was at all concomitant with the scope of the challenge.

Back in 2011 and 2012, the Europeans made a set of commitments to these states in transition, as they were then called, that were summarized as more for more. If these countries do more in terms of stabilization, political reform, economic reform, inculcating the changes that would be necessary for human flourishing than Europe would offer more, more mobility for people, more money, and more access to markets.

I think looking back at the track record of the last five years that the Europeans have not done a very good job of fulfilling their end of that commitment, although a number of Arab states have slid over the precipice, others have done quite a bit of work, and I see the Ambassador of Morocco here in the front row. I think that country certainly falls under that category.

We can talk a lot as we did in the earlier panel about the roles of American leadership and the example, the negative example, that the United States may be setting for European countries, but I think we have to realize those are a legacy for Europe here as well that it has to reckon with.

Now, look, on the geopolitics, there are twin challenges that are driving the violence, that are driving the refugee crisis. I think we have to really reckon with the nature of what's happened and the obstacles that it presents.

What happened in Syria, what happened in Libya, and to a lesser extent in other parts of the region is that leaders who ruled by squelching and destroying every independent social institution that might present a challenge to their rule were challenged from below, and when they were challenged, they responded with violence.

It was a break down in the social contract that preceded these uprisings, but it was the violent response of these leaders that broke these states apart. That created a demand for non-state violence as a response to the violence from the state.

The outcome that we have in many parts of the Arab world today is a breakdown in order, a breakdown in authority, but fundamentally, a breakdown in social trust. In Syria, a breakdown in social trust in what was before the war one of the most diverse cosmopolitan societies in the Middle East.

The degree of destruction of social trust means that even if the conflict were to end tomorrow, the barriers to refugee return, refugee resettlement, the reconstruction of a stable social and political order are tremendous.

I think one of the things we need to think about, we who are engaged in developing recommendations for funding or implementing work with refugees, we have to think about how we can preserve where we can and rebuild where we must social cohesion for refugees and IDPs where they are.

What this means in practice is that we have to think beyond food and shelter and livelihoods which are all urgent and important, but refugees and IDPs need to feel safe in the environment, the community where they are living now, and they need to either create or embrace a set of basic rules about how to live together and how to live in that community. That's true whether they are still in Syria, whether they are in camps in Lebanon, Turkey or Jordan, or whether they have now moved into European countries where they are trying to integrate and resettle.

To feel secure, they have to rebuild social trust. That means that our focus on practical needs, on education, on jobs, is important but insufficient. They need skills and platforms for dialogue, for conflict resolution. They need the tools for establishing and cultivating a sense of citizenship, and to be sure, I think some of the NGOs and governments that are working with refugees both in the region and increasingly in Europe are working on this and contributing to this, but it is right now a very, very small piece of the overall picture.

I would encourage us to pay more attention to it going forward. I've heard in recent days actually that some European countries are asking NGOs who are interested in working with refugees to think about things like citizenship education, and I think that's going to be a tremendously important part of the puzzle.

MR. INDYK: Thank you. Beth, broaden the lens for us to the question of refugee policy in the institutions that deal with refugees, what's your take on what is being done and what needs to be done from that community?

MS. FERRIS: First of all, I want to say how much I appreciate that we began by talking about some of the big ethical and moral questions. I agree very much with you, Leon. I think in 10 years, we will look back on what's happening with Syria with real shame. I think that's across the board, whether it's the United States or Europe. Nobody is doing enough in terms of either resolving the conflict which has produced this large number of refugees and IDPs or in actually meeting their needs and thinking long term about that.

I know there is a lot of information about the numbers, but half of Syria's population has been displaced, 7 million inside the country, and that's a very loose figure. We really don't know. The

possibilities of getting good estimates are very limited. About 4.6 million refugees in the surrounding countries, these countries have been incredibly generous and hospitable, but they have done their part.

They are crying for help. They have been crying for help for several years saying, you know, we can't do this alone. We have social tensions and economic costs, don't have governmental capacity to even register or process or provide assistance to the refugees.

Most of the refugees in the region are not living in camps. When you have a refugee camp, you can have a U.N. official and the government in charge. You know who is responsible. You know who is not getting food.

When the refugees are dispersed, as they are completely in Lebanon, mostly in Turkey and Jordan, when they are living in urban centers, and nobody is watching, nobody knows what malnutrition is, there is no accountability of who is actually responsible for finding them and meeting their needs and so on.

Those who are displaced within Syria, much more vulnerable. Questions of access, I think, are scandalous, in terms of the U.N.'s and other non-government organizations' ability to actually deliver assistance, humanitarian, impartial, life saving assistance.

You read this week in the New York Times that the U.N. has made 113 requests to send in aid convoys and less than 13 have been successful. Something is terribly wrong. Then you have the populations that are trapped or besieged that can't move, that the U.N. euphemistically calls "hard to reach areas," half a million people, we think, I mean, the scale of suffering.

Leon, you said this is an emergency, and indeed, it is, but this has been going on since 2011, and there is no end in sight. We have to think of this as a protracted long term situation, to work now for solutions.

Kemal Kirisci and I have been working on this for several years now, and are publishing a book in the next month or so on Syrian displacement and the political consequences.

It seems like every time we go back to the region, there's less hope. Refugees and government officials are expecting this to last 10 or 15 years. It's time that we no longer work as business as usual.

In terms of some of the policy options, clearly more money is needed, but frankly, that's the easy part. We saw yesterday in London impressive pledges of over $10 billion made to work with Syrian refugees and Syria on a multi-year basis. It's not enough but certainly I think people are stepping up to provide some financial support for this horrendous crisis, which is occurring in the midst of simultaneous mega crises in other parts of the world, in South Sudan and Yemen, the level of destruction is horrendous.

The humanitarian community is stretched to the breaking point. It's not just money, it's people and energy and who can figure out and think through all of these different crises at the same time when the lack of political will -- it is a shame 2,500 or so Syrians have come to the U.S. The U.S. is a country of immigrants, proud tradition of refugee resettlement.

It's a shame the way in which the refugee issue has become securitized. As you mentioned, Michael, this isn't about terrorists. This is about the victims of this conflict that we have been unable to prevent or stop, looking for a place to be safe.

UNHCR next month is convening a meeting to look at what are being called "alternative safe pathways" for Syrian refugees. Maybe it's hard for the U.S. to go from 2,000 to 200,000 refugees and resettled in a year, but maybe there are ways we can ask our universities to offer scholarships to Syrian students.

Maybe we can tweak some of our immigration policies to enable Syrian-Americans who have lived here to bring not only their kids and spouses but their uncles and their grandmothers. There may be ways that we could encourage Syrians to come to the U.S. without going through this laborious time consuming process of refugee resettlement.

There are things that can be done to really allow the United States and other countries to exercise responsibility in a coherent way.

I think one of the tragedies of looking at the refugee situation, particularly in Europe, but I think it's a global issue, is the lack of burden sharing or responsibility sharing. It has become almost if somebody arrives in your country, it's your problem. That wasn't how the international refugee regime was constructed. This was to be a collective response.

When you arrive in a country, it isn't just that country. You should feel that you have the support of the world when you allow people who are fleeing conflict and persecution, unspeakable violence, to find safety. We have lost some of that responsibility sharing that needs to be put back together somehow.

We have been talking about some of the legal instruments. I don't think it's time at all to reopen the refugee convention that is viewed as one of the few binding instruments we have, but maybe it's time to do something else, to find some other way of expressing a collective responsibility for this unspeakable tragedy in Syria, which could hopefully apply not just to Syria but to the other mega crises we have. Thanks.

MR. INDYK: Can I just follow up with one quick question? Michael and you have said UNHCR is only getting 50 percent funded. Is that right? You say the money is the easiest part. Why in the midst of this crisis, if it's true, do we have this funding?

MS. FERRIS: If you look at the U.N. appeals, and they come by agency and they are collective appeals for work both inside Syria and the surrounding countries, and last year, it was between 45 and 55 percent funded, and that has been pretty much across the board, but the amount of money being mobilized is tremendous.

There is a gap. It isn't enough to meet the needs, but compared with any other crisis in the world, you know, it was only five years ago the total budget for all humanitarian work was 2 or 3 billion, and now we have $10 billion for Syria.

The growth has been enormous. It isn't enough, and more could be done, and more could be done from non-humanitarian players, because these are long term issues. We need urban planners and we need agricultural development and not just distribution of immediate relief.

MR. INDYK: Which is a good segue, Bruce, tell us the role of cities. I think the import of what Tammy was saying was these refugees are not going home any time soon.

MR. KATZ: Absolutely.

MR. INDYK: The challenge for the cities that are receiving them is how to absorb them.

MR. KATZ: First of all, it's great to hear Leon and Michael, that was really wonderful. My perspective might be somehow distinctive. Myself and a whole network of urban practitioners, lawyers,

corporations, philanthropies, NGOs, unions, faith based, we believe refugees don't come to nations, they go to cities.

Cities are on the front lines of global migration of refugees. You go to any nation and you say what's the share of people in your nation who are foreign born, it will be two times in our major cities or three times.

When we talk about all the services, the public goods that have to be delivered, whether it's education or employment or housing or citizenship or literacy or financial services or access to medical services, in many countries, those are designed, planned, executed, managed at the city level, and in many countries, they actually are financed at the city level, because of devolution of responsibility.

Cities are not governments. They really are networks. Any healthy city, any prosperous city, any thriving city, basically addresses migration, refugees, or frankly any other issue, global pressing issue, whether it's climate or competitiveness or social mobility, through networks.

As I have been thinking with Bruce Jones in the foreign policy team of how to think about the European refugee crisis, frankly, the comparable situation in the United States is what happened after Katrina. Large numbers of people leaving New Orleans and moving to Houston, about 150,000, in rapid time.

If you asked the folks in Houston who basically adopted on a dime with frankly some Federal help but no Federal direction, what they felt is they were able to do three things, and I think it fundamentally does apply to the European urban situation.

One is they focused on safety and sanctuary and security in the immediate term. Those are all the things that we all know are needed, food, shelter, transitional housing, shelter, and security. Then what they had in Houston, and this was primarily done at the non-profit level, so this gets back to civil society, was triage. They understood that if the message went out that we have unlimited needs and unlimited problems, the ability to sustain the voluntary contribution would not last.

They were able to essentially assess, map, and price based on individual families and their needs and their capabilities the path forward. Then they basically had recovery, which are all the things I talked about before, job training, education, get the kids into school every day, first day, structure for the family, for the child.

Obviously, less of a language issue in the post-Katrina situation, but many similar issues.

The Houston example is, I think, a global case study of how to rapidly adapt as a community. At the end of the day, yes, cities don't get to decide the big questions, right. They decide it either by national governments or others. You just need to adapt, and they have to adapt fairly pragmatically and fairly quickly.

When we look at the European situation, there are many tactics frankly that are going on in German cities, Swedish cities, Danish cities, British, there are many tactics that we can look at that frankly are good models that can be replicated, adapted, tailored across borders, but I think really the essential question is this issue of collaboration across sectors, across disciplines, across jurisdictions, for the international community and the leadership community to understand that you can't really have these conversations without city leadership present, with what is happening on the ground in real time, best practices that can be quickly replicated, but also talk about the un-movingness of the response.

Houston was able to respond very, very fast. I can think of many cities in the United States that would not have had the breadth and depth of the collaborative culture or frankly the wealth and the resources in the private and civic sector, not the public sector, the private and civic sector, that were able to basically help tens of thousands of people in rapid time.

There are many other long term issues around segregation and integration and so forth, but at the end of the day, those will also be decided mostly at the city and metropolitan scale.

The success or failure of this crisis is really owned on a daily basis by tens of thousands of people starting with electing say the mayors, city council, but really cutting across many disciplines and sectors.

I think the quicker we recognize that and the quicker we begin to understand what works, the better off we will be. Thanks.

MR. INDYK: Let me go to Tammy for a minute and ask, in Lebanon and Jordan, the expectation was the way in which they have been swamped by Syrian refugees, that this would destabilize them. That is still, I think, the conventional wisdom. Why hasn't it happened?

MS. WITTES: That's a great question and I think the answer is quite different in the two cases. In Jordan, I think the government at a national level has worked very hard to try to manage the

flow, which means at times they have closed the border when there are a lot of people who are desperately trying to get out, but they close the border when necessary so that they could manage intake, and two, they tried to establish refugee camps on a large scale very quickly, partnering with U.N. agencies.

The Za'atari refugee camp is now, I think, the third largest city in Jordan. It is run in partnership, which is actually unusual for the U.N. Usually, the U.N. runs these camps and the local government supports and helps. These are a joint project of the Jordanian government and the U.N.

Now, that also allows the Jordanian government to be pretty diligent about certain things it thinks are important for national stability, including controlling access in and out of camps, the flow of individuals in and out of the camps. It is extremely difficult for refugees registered and living in a camp to get permission to work outside the camp, for example.

Going back to my opening comments, it's been very important to them to try and keep politics out of the camps, and we have seen in other cases conflicts that have produced mass refugee flows that the conflict can get replicated inside the camp or it can be insulated inside the camp and then re-emerge when people return. The Jordanians are aware of that.

Of course, the problem is you can't escape the politics, and these people are dealing with a tremendous amount of trauma, personal trauma and as I was saying, social and communal trauma, if they don't have the ability to debate issues, to talk about their future, to decide together how they want to live, which means politics.

When and if they go back or if they stay where they are, conflict could easily erupt within that refugee community, and that's why I think it's so important that we focus on these issues now.

In Lebanon, I think the situation is quite different. Let me just interject that you still have, I think, a majority of the refugees in Jordan outside the camps. Is that right? So, everything I have just said still only applies to a minority of the refugee population.

In Lebanon, the vast majority of the refugees are not in camps. They are living in local communities. They are living on the economy. They are relying on handouts from NGOs. Lebanon, of course, has its own bitter legacy of civil war which creates a certain degree of sympathy, a certain degree

of awareness to the danger, and there have definitely been movements that have tried to exploit the movement of people across these borders, to provoke sectarian tension within Lebanon.

The Lebanese amazingly have resisted this, and the Lebanese government is essentially a non-player. It barely exists because the factions within Lebanon which are defined along sectarian lines can't agree on who should run the country.

One result of the long political stagnation and sectarian division in Lebanon is that Lebanese rely on their government far less than any other Arab citizens. They have evolved community based institutions, civil society organizations that pick up a tremendous amount of slack. That gives them perversely a degree of resilience.

MR. INDYK: Beth, in terms of the displaced problem which you referred to in Syria, that doesn't get a lot of attention because they're not coming across borders or knocking on the borders of Europe. What is happening to those? What is the international community able to do about the displaced that are still in Syria, this 7.5 million, I think you referred to?

MS. FERRIS: It's the responsibility of national governments to care for those who are displaced within their country. There are a few government programs. The Syrian-Arab Red Crescent --

MR. INDYK: The Syrian government is taking care of displaced that they are responsible for displacing?

MS. FERRIS: Yes. (Laughter) To establish shelters and the Syrian-Arab Red Crescent Society has done a good job in terms of distributing relief. The problem is the people who are living in non-government controlled areas. There is cross border aid that's coming in to provide some assistance. Very little is known about how effective that aid is, are there mechanisms in place to ensure some accountability for all the food and medicine, but it's extraordinarily dangerous, very dangerous for international staff.

Virtually all of the aid being distributed inside Syria outside government controlled areas is by Syrian organizations or Syrian staff of international organizations. It's almost a process of transferring risk, too risky for white Americans to go in so a Syrian American or a Syrian NGO will take that responsibility.

We really don't know, Martin. We don't know how much aid is getting through, what the needs are. Sometimes you read humanitarian reports, we made 26,000 aid deliveries inside Syria, but that aid delivery could be one time, or a bucket. Getting information about sustainable continuing assistance to people, we just don't know.

MR. INDYK: Bruce, as you were talking about cities, I was thinking Paris, Cologne, San Bernardino, the cities in this crisis come to your attention because of the security challenge, but can you tell us about cities, do you have cases like Hamburg, I think is one, where cities are actually coping effectively with this refugee challenge?

MR. KATZ: I think "coping" is the right term because there are a lot of challenges. I wouldn't say cities are completely on their own. A lot of the issues that they face, particularly as in the Houston case, large volumes of people moving in very, very fast, you have multi-dimensional issues.

In Hamburg, I think part of the response that we're very interested in is how does Germany realize the demographic dividend of refugees, right. Hamburg is hitting a demographic wall. It needs skilled workers, and the Germans are incredibly good at apprenticeships and vocational education. Now, in Germany, that is primarily run by the Chambers of Commerce and private corporations.

It's not really a government program like it would be in the United States. Obviously, it's government supported. The success of the German apprenticeship model is that it is truly business led. I think what we are seeing in Hamburg -- and this is not just with the refugee issue of the moment, it's with immigration over time -- is the ability to absorb, train, skill people for what is obviously a very large manufacturing and production sector in Germany, which is about double what we have in the United States.

There are many other issues not just in Hamburg but in Nuremburg, in Munich, that are more at the pre-K through 12 level, because again, education and structure for children and structure for young adults is fundamental.

There are many good cases, best innovations that you are seeing emerge out of German cities that I think will be quite familiar to Americans because it's sort of more natural, I think, to understand that so many of these responsibilities devolve down.

I think the challenge right now for us looking at the refugee issue, whether it's in Germany or whether it's in other European countries, is not the ability to sort of capture and chronical sort of best strategies, it's the volume of what's hitting these places, and it's the unevenness of civil society, frankly, and the strength of different sectors to sort of absorb and adapt.

That's why I think when I talked to my friends in Houston, what they basically have counseled is you could have -- I'm sure to some extent given recent events -- we already have compassion fatigue, and the way in which we have been able to guard against this in an American natural disaster situation is by really having this very structured assessment, mapping, and pricing of what the recovery looks like, so you can keep everyone sort of moving on task against real measurable outcomes and real metrics. Otherwise, you will begin to have a drift, and you will begin to have other voices begin to invade and change the conversation.

MR. INDYK: Let's go to questions. I'm going to come to Kemal Kirisci also. Leon, go ahead.

MR. WIESELTIER: I just wanted to quickly ask how would you compare the success of the integration and absorption of Katrina refugees in a place like Houston to the success and absorption of Central American refugees, refugees with whom the people in that city would not share kind of fellow national feeling or fellow cultural feeling?

MR. KATZ: Well, I think the Houston situation was really quite difficult because some of the individuals and families who were displaced were high poverty and were from families who had deep intergenerational challenges that frankly had not even began to be dealt with in New Orleans, but now had to be dealt with in Houston.

I think it was an interesting kind of displacement compared. I think frankly there is sort of a central question of what is a welcoming city, right, and a welcoming city in Houston is defined, literally defined, by the business and civic and political class. It is not about who is already there in the city, but who will be there.

Houston sort of almost defines itself as a city of the future. Whether it's people who have been displaced by a natural disaster or whether it's Central Americans or Mexicans, it's a certain kind of

cultural norm that exists across the leadership class, which is not uniform in the United States by any stretch.

MR. INDYK: Do they want Syrians in Houston?

MR. KATZ: I think the people in Houston would, I don't think the Texas Governor would like it. (Laughter)

MR. INDYK: Kemal, do you want to give us a Turkish perspective? Kemal Kirisci is our Turkish senior fellow here.

MR. KIRISCI: Something that struck me across the previous panel and this one is that a kind of, dare I say, Leon, cosmopolitan communitarianism, I sense, that it's the discussion and debate and effort to extract lessons seems so American centered.

Bruce, you were talking about cities, and you named a list of cities, but I think to me there are cities like Beirut, cities in Jordan, that I go to see, not in Lebanon, but there is a city like Gaziantep, which really struck me, it looks impeccable, there is not --

MR. INDYK: Explain to the audience what you're talking about.

MR. KIRISCI: Say that again.

MR. INDYK: The city.

MR. KIRISCI: Gaziantep, I'm just assuming that if you are following the news, Gaziantep is very close to the city and border, and is considered a little bit as like New York is for the U.N., or Geneva is for the U.N., it's the seat in Turkey. It's the seat where all NGOs and international and local NGOs are operating.

I think there is a lot of experience there that could be extracted and looked into, but there is a problem there, and the problem is what I try to define as cosmopolitan communitarianism. I think we need to develop skills on this side of the fence, if you wish, skills to communicate with these people, to build bridges, and to try to come to a common experience and common denominator there.

MR. INDYK: Thank you, Kemal. Yes, please, over here. Wait for the microphone, please, and please identify yourself.

QUESTIONER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Armed. Actually, I'm Syrian. I left recently because of the war in my country. The city you were saying, it's the city where I studied my college, and Aleppo is my home town. So, you know what I have faced in my life.

Technically, I can say I'm a refugee because I came to the U.S. based on the fact that I have war or we have war, and without this war, I would rather stay there because I have my own projects and my own dreams and everything.

My question is maybe this is a good city where they can accept, you know, because of the diversity, they can accept Syrians, they are welcome, I never faced any problems. However, I have friends who live in Texas and South Carolina and the other states, who are suffering a lot.

My question is when we are talking about 65,000 Syrians who should come to the U.S. because the U.S. Government said so, but when we hear that almost 33 states said we cannot accept Syrians, even though it's not legal to say that, but they have enough of a hostile environment to say that, how we can convince those Americans that Syrians in general are not people who do crazy things, like me, that can sit here. I'm Syrian.

How we can let them know that Syrians are not as bad as they can think. Of course, is a lot of percentage, but not all of us are as bad. Thank you very much.

MR. INDYK: Who wants to take that?

MS. FERRIS: Maybe I will, but first to say Kerry has said we will be taking 10,000 Syrians this year, the 65,000 figure comes from elsewhere.

MR. INDYK: What is the 65,000? That is what UNHCR wants us to take?

MS. FERRIS: Lots of numbers are floating around, and I'm talking about 10 percent of the Syrian refugees should be in need of resettlement, but how that will play out, I don't know.

I think we need to change the narrative to counter the phobia, anti-Islamic, it seems to be coloring so much of the public debate, and we need to go back to basics. This is who we are, a nation of refugees. Look how we benefitted, look at the economic benefits. The research is really clear on this, countries benefit from refugees, although in the short term, there can be a higher -- we need to have those debates about these kinds of issues and not make it about some of the racist and anti-foreign sentiment that we are seeing.

MR. INDYK: Tammy?

MS. WITTES: First of all (speaking foreign language).

MR. INDYK: Tammy just welcomed you.

MS. WITTES: I said welcome. I'm glad you are feeing welcomed in Washington. I think, too, we have to think about how we as a society define threats. It is so striking to me that the degree of suspicion, Islamic phobic rhetoric, that we are facing in the United States today is far greater than we faced in the period immediately after 9/11. It's just amazing. We have to ask ourselves why that is.

MR. INDYK: Why do you think it is?

MS. WITTES: I don't know the full answer. Let me give you one thing that I think is an important factor as a policy person. Our government in thinking about the Syrian crisis and its response to the Syrian crisis is fixated on Islamic state. The Islamic state is the only reason why the United States, why the Obama Administration, has shifted from a posture in which it saw the Syrian war as something in which it didn't have any significance stakes to a conflict in which it does see stakes, but I don't think it's news to any of you in this room that that view, that ISIS is the crucial problem and the crucial issue in Syria and must be the priority in addressing the Syrian crisis, that view is not shared by anyone else engaged in the Syrian conflict. Not the Iranians, not the Russians, and not the Sunni Arab states, and none of the neighbors.

They are far more concerned about the survival of the al-Assad regime and the Iranian presence and control over Syria than they are about ISIS.

You might have heard Defense Secretary Ash Carter the other day talk about our so-called "coalition." I'm sure that is an unintended expression of the frustration that the Administration feels at realizing how alone it is in prioritizing the Islamic state issue.

What we are talking about is the domestic echo of that on the Islamic state, that disproportionate focus leads us to think about Syria and about Syrians entirely in the context of this extremist, violent movement, which has carried out exactly zero attacks on American soil.

San Bernardino was al-Quota inspired, we now know. I don't mean to say it's not a threat. I mean to say that our government has to accept responsibility not only for a degree of myopia in

its understanding of the geopolitics and national security threats in Syria, but also for the consequences of that myopia here at home.

MR. INDYK: Okay. Let's take Eric and then we will go over there.

MR. SCHWARTZ: Thank you very much. I'm Eric Schwartz, and I'm honored to be part of this. I'm Dean of the Humbert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota.

Having spent most of the past 30 years here in Washington on national refugee policy and now being in a community that hosts anywhere between 30,000 and 70,000 Somali Americans, thousands of Hmong Americans, I have a much deeper appreciation of the role of cities actually as political supporters for this enterprise.

I think there is a reservoir of support outside of Washington, not everywhere, but in many places. I think that is my first point, but the second point is in national policy, there has been far more political support in financial and budgetary support, from that part of our government, that sees refugee policy as an international expression of humanitarianism, and that is the Department of State, than there has been in the Department of Health and Human Services. As a result, that reservoir of political support in the cities, you know, is fragile, and is deprived of the kind of resources from the domestic agencies that could really powerfully support the whole concept of refugee resettlement.

To put it very quickly, HHS and the Office of Refugee Resettlement is underfunded, and does not have political muscle that the State Department has.

MR. INDYK: Eric, is it right to conclude from that in the case of the State Department, it can set quotas and bring people in through executive authority, but if HHS can't get the funding from the Congress, than it can't do what's necessary at the local level?

MR. SCHWARTZ: Absolutely right. There is a negotiation that goes on within the government, but fundamentally, that's absolutely right.

MR. INDYK: Bruce?

MR. KATZ: I think this is actually reflective of a good portion of our domestic policy, where Washington has been on a frolic and a detour for quite some period of time. If you go to any American city and you're dealing with housing, affordable housing, which is really growing, you are

dealing with infrastructure, education has always been a local and state issue, you're dealing with after school, pre-K, it just goes across the entire board.

Washington may be something of an investor but it's an unreliable investor, and this is just sort of one case of many points. The question is whether that network of cities, and I would put Minneapolis/St. Paul as the sort of vanguard find of the continuum of humanitarian cities, right, how do you create sort of that coalition that begins to argue and advocate for smart, reliable, and consistent Federal engagement.

I live in a world where frankly a lot of American urban leaders, and I'm not just talking about the elected officials but broader segments of private, civic, university, labor leadership, and I have concluded we are in a structural change in the United States right now as to who really invests in the future of the country and in regard to disasters, and that requires a different kind of view about how do you finance these particular interventions.

MR. INDYK: Yes, please, over here.

MS. BHABHA: I'm Jacqueline Bhabha, I'm also part of this, I'm a professor at Harvard University working on human rights. Actually, my question is very much in the same vein. You pointed to the paradox that it is cities who receive the refugees, it is cities who really bear the responsibility, but it is the Federal Government that makes the decisions and sets policies.

If the Obama Administration wanted to increase support, domestic support, for a more generous resettlement policy, how could they do that? If you were advising the Administration on how to build support, how to counteract the 30 Governors and mass who come out against, but to build a coalition of humanitarian cities, and to build the resources within those communities?

How could they proceed differently from what they have, given the kind of obsession with ISIS and the zero tolerance of risk?

MR. INDYK: Just hold on, we are running out of time. A question here, and then there is a lady we will go to, and then we will have to close.

MR. COHEN: I'm Roger Cohen, I'm a columnist with the New York Times and a Board member of the American Academy. I guess this question is mainly for you, Bruce, and it's following up on

our Syrian friend who asked a question, 1.3 million refugees or so have been absorbed in Sweden and Germany alone in the last year and a bit.

Yet, it's two incidents, one in Cologne and one at Stockholm Station, more or less mirror images of each other. In one case, "Middle Easterners," asylum seekers, who in fact have been in Germany for some time and are not part of the recent wave, who attacked women on the Azib, and in the other, hooded thugs who went after refugee children.

The question is what can one do about perception? In the United States, you might think Europe is just awash of anti-Semitism, refugee ghettos all over the place, open conflict in the streets. You stroll through London or Amsterdam or Berlin, of course, the Turkish community has been in Germany for decades now and has integrated fairly well, but what can be done -- these two incidents really dominate the debate.

I'm interested in what you think can be done to illustrate ways in which 1.29 million refugees have actually begun living in European societies without major incidents, and tell me, I was just very puzzled by your remark, surely Americans are responding to the acts of ISIS, to the beheadings, to Paris, to San Bernardino, but I think the woman there did pledge allegiance to ISIS, unless I have it wrong.

They are scared, and that's what they are reacting to, and that's what the latest wave rather than the government, is the U.S. Government supposed to not consider ISIS a threat? I didn't really follow your reasoning. I'm sorry.

MR. INDYK: Okay. Last question.

MS. WINNICK: Thank you. My name is Hannah Winnick. I'm a program director at the Heinrich Boll Foundation, which is the German Green Foundation.

My question is for you, Beth. UNHCR published a report last week on sexual and gender based violence that women and children face along the migrant route, and once they arrive in Europe and even in German refugee camps.

From your experience, what kind of policy recommendations would you make to try to prevent that?

MR. INDYK: Okay. Bruce?

MR. KATZ: Just in response to the two questions, I think what the President needs to do in a situation where you can no longer go to Congress in any sort of regular order is to basically do what he did prior to the Paris climate conference, which is to engage with private and civic leaders, to make investments, and in some of those cases, those were market oriented investments, and in some cases, they were philanthropic, and what a good portion of the country knows needs to be done.

It's sort of sad. We have come to the point where wealthy individuals or wealthy institutions have more discretion than the President of the United States with regard to immigrant integration or with regard to climate, but that is the reality of the country in which we live.

So, the President has to be almost a philanthropist in chief, but outside the usual sort of mechanisms.

With regard to Roger's question, it really gets back to Leon's question. Some cities over a period of time because of the consistent action and language and dialogue by political business and civic leaders have created certain norm's around immigrants in the United States, so when things happen, because things always happen, the broader body politic basically have those norm's in mind and treat these incidents as an exception.

In other places, and not so much cities but the other states, frankly, there are different norm's that have been created. So, we are in a fight over who controls the debate. I think increasingly in the United States with regard to -- we can call it many different things -- progressive values, progressive ideals, but norms are being created within our major urban centers, which by the way fundamentally drive our economy and fundamentally drive the wealth of this country.

So, I think we just have to consistently reinforce the ability to occupy the high ground and to have sort of a broader consensus.

QUESTIONER: Like in London.

MR. KATZ: Like in London; absolutely.

MR. INDYK: I think you referred to the most humanitarian cities, we need a humanitarian cities coalition.

Tammy, quickly.

MS. WITTES: Roger, look, of course, ISIS has horrified Americans, the beheadings horrified Americans and they have frightened Americans, and that's understandable, but the question that we were asked was not why are Americans afraid of ISIS, it was why are Americans afraid of Syrians. Why is the lens through which Americans think about this war, ISIS.

That is why I was making the policy point I made. Of course, there are a whole lot of other factors, too, including a bunch of political candidates who see a lot of advantage in hyping this threat because it appeals to base instincts of their base constituencies, so that after 9/11, a Republican President can visit a mosque and nobody has a problem with that, but this week, an American President visits a mosque, and a Republican Presidential candidate tells me he is stoking the vision for doing so.

I think in a way your question reveals the extent to which ISIS is the frame through which we are now thinking about the entire Middle East, Muslims, Arabs, a whole lot of people in the world, including people here in our own society, and to me, that's a big problem.

MR. INDYK: Beth, close us out on the policy question on women.

MS. FERRIS: The journeys are dangerous. We have heard about the drowning's and gender based violence that always occurs, it occurs in those places, among other refugees, on borders, the normal way of life is disrupted. That report and also one by the Women's Refugee Commission that came out a couple of weeks ago make a whole series of recommendations.

It is really just being aware. If you see people running towards you, the first thing is you don't think of how do we prevent sexual and gender based violence, just like often we didn't think about what do we do about those kids who seem to be alone. I think the humanitarian enterprise is about identifying those needs and being aware and taking action early. That will come, I'm convinced.

MR. INDYK: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you. You have been a great audience. (Applause) I want to close by also thanking the American Academy in Berlin for giving us the honor of hosting this forum. Thank you all very much.

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