THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

FALK AUDITORIUM

MIDDLE EAST CRISES AND CONFLICTS -- THE WAY AHEAD

Washington, D.C.

Thursday, October 5, 2017

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. O'HANLON: Good afternoon everyone and welcome to Brookings. I'm Mike O'Hanlon with the Foreign Policy program and I have the privilege of moderating today's discussion on crises and conflicts in the broader Middle East region. We have an all-star panel to help us through that set of subjects which, of course, are interrelated but also involve a number of specific and distinct countries and conflicts. So, we hope today's discussion will provide some insights on some of the conflicts and broader concerns that are afflicting the region but also, perhaps, some new ideas on what to do about them.

We're going to do in terms of procedure today, is to begin with a couple of questions that I'll pose working down the panel. Taking stock first of where we are on some conflicts and getting people's quick briefing on how things look in regard to the specific country or problem they're most expert in. And then I'll take a second round of questions which is to assess current strategy as well as to propose improvements to that strategy where necessary for whichever country or concern the person is most interested in. That will be American policy but also broader NATO and European policy towards these conflicts broader regional strategies within the Middle East region as well. And then we'll look forward, after some discussion, to your questions and comments.

Let me begin at the far side, General John Allen batting cleanup will help tie things together but we'll work starting on the panelists closest to me. Let me introduce each one of them briefly. General Allen, as you know, was coordinator of the international campaign against ISIS in his last government job before joining Brookings roughly two years ago. Before that, he had been the commander of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. Although we're probably not going to look that far east today unless your questions bring us in that direction. Of course, he is now the newly named president of Brookings which we're all thrilled about. Adding to my joy is the fact that this is not a Washington job subject either to Senate confirmation or to Dan Snyder's deliberations and therefore, he will begin on November 6. Next to John is Mara Karlin who is also a Brookings scholar, a non-resident scholar but she is not too far away in her other job which is at the School of Advanced International Studies across the street with Johns Hopkins University. Until late last year, she was a high ranking Pentagon official on the subjects of strategy and force development. She is just back from a

recent extensive trip to the broader Middle East where she went among other places to Jordan and Iraq. Moving again closer towards me is Dan Byman, our long standing colleague here in the foreign policy program. One of the nation's preeminent experts on counterterrorism as well as many other subjects within the broader Middle East. And counterterrorism will essentially be his initial subject today but he'll be able, I'm sure, to range far and wide as we talk about specific countries as well. He's also a professor and dean at Georgetown University and we're just thrilled to have him here. His most recent book from a couple of years ago is essentially a primer on Al-Qaeda, ISIS and everything you need to know about terrorism. Very well written and very accessible book that remains quite timely. Last and certainly not least, our visiting nonresident fellow from Italy, a little further than Sise but here for the week and here periodically throughout the year with us is my good friend, Federica Saini. She is a scholar in Italy a historian, a trained nurse. She has written on Libya from many vantage points over the years including contemporary challenges facing that country but also a fantastic historian on early epic periods in Italy's modern history.

So, again with your permission, is what I'll do is begin sequentially starting with Mara looking at Iraq and Syria. Then I'll come to Federica and we'll talk about Libya and then Dan talking about counterterrorism and then John Allen stitching it altogether. So, without further ado, Mara, the floor is yours.

MS. KARLIN: Thank you. It's really a treat to be here even if I only had to walk across the street. So, as we look at the situation in Iraq and Syria, there are a couple of issues that I'm in particular, noticing having been to the region pretty recently. On Iraq, there is really two pieces that I'm looking at. Number one is, what will this soon to occur military victory over ISIS, how will it manifest, what will it look like? There is a number of different pieces within that. Reconciliation, what will political reconciliation amongst the different parties look like. What will stabilization and reconstruction look like. Having spent a lot of time walking around places like Mosul, I can tell you there is profound destruction, entire blocks that are destroyed, hospitals. For those book lovers in the audience, the Mosul University Library which held 2 million books was torched by ISIS, for example. And you are seeing a lot of people who have been displaced, millions in fact, internally across Iraq. What will it look like as they start to go home. What kind of faith will they have in Baghdad's ability to reestablish some sort of sovereignty

throughout its territory and just fix all of this profound destruction.

And then, of course, inherent in that, there is this pesky referendum that recently occurred up in the north. Where you see a pretty decent swath of Iraqi Kurds supporting a different type of future for themselves and one that is much, much more loosely tied to Baghdad, indeed, their own country. When I was there, a lot of Kurdish leaders seemed to be surprised at the tumult and uproar that this referendum had caused. Probably unsurprising to many of us, the leaders in Baghdad were not terribly excited over this referendum. Thought it came out of the blue and thought the timing was inopportune to say the least.

So, what will happen going forward? It seems to me, we have some pretty terrible options. If you look at what an independent Kurdistan might be it would probably be no doubt land locked but also surrounded by neighbors that aren't excited about it. Afghanistan comes to mind and that's not a terrific geographical place to be in. Although alternatives like confederation might exist but that may, in many ways, be the worst of all worlds for Baghdad.

So, moving beyond the Iraq piece as we turn to Syria very briefly. Not only do we see a humanitarian catastrophe that only worsens as we're all familiar with over the last few years but increasingly the question will be what does reconstruction look like for Syria and who plays a role in that and who can be most relevant in that. It is a pretty dire situation where one of the better options happens to be the authoritarian strong man who has been responsible for the murder of many of his people perhaps staying in power. I'll stop there, thanks.

MR. O'HANLON: Mara, amazingly concise and helpful. I'm going to quickly give you one follow-up on Syria which your questions sort of raises in my mind. Do you, as you talk about reconstruction, begin to anticipate the war winding down? Is that sort of what is happening? I mean, we know that Assad has consolidated control of some parts of the country but there is also the whole northwest up and around Idlib which is still a hornet's nest. There is still a number of towns in the east where ISIS either has some hold or competition between Hezbollah and Assad on the one hand and U.S. affiliated forces elsewhere. But would you still think of the overall conflict as beginning to wind its way gradually down?

MS. KARLIN: I think that's the case. In particular, talking to many interlockers who are

going in and out of different parts of Syria, that is really their observation also. I don't know that we will sit here a year from now and say the line has been drawn but we are increasingly on a trajectory where, as you noted, Assad has consolidated increasing control and is getting an increasingly comfortable. I think for any of us who have spent years thinking about this issue, we can't help but reflect on how different that conversation is from say five years ago. With the question of what Assad's future would have looked like was much more open and dynamic.

MR. O'HANLON: So, I know we'll come back to these questions as we get into Dan and John's thoughts on counterterrorism in the broader region. But first, Federica, I would love to get your sense of just how we should think about Libya today. Again, welcome to Brookings, wonderful to have you here. I know the subject we've asked you to address is not necessarily so happy but look forward to your wisdom.

MS. SAINI FASANOTTI: Thank you, first of all. The situation in Libya is incredibly difficult. On one side, we have some good move from the international community and we had a new special (inaudible) for Libya from UNSMIL with Lebanese and very well prepared men. So, it is moving in a very good way. It seems that it has been accepted by the international community. The point of (inaudible) is in this very moment, to be united all together. One of the most, the biggest problem in Libya has been division not only on the terrain in Libya but between the external actors who are playing the game on the chess board.

On one side, we have the program, the international program of (inaudible) which is very good and on the other side, we have the real Libya. So, the terrain, what is happing right now. In the very few days, in the last few days, we had many clashes of every kind. Militias, Benghazi for example and in Tripoli. Tribal, one tribe against the other. And then we had a huge attack in Misurata, made by ISIS probably. So, the situation, even though the international community seems this time to be aligned, on the ground the situation is very difficult, incredibly in the very last week. We will see. Libya is always a surprise.

MR. O'HANLON: So, a couple of additional points before we go to Dan, if I could. Thank you for laying the picture so clearly. You mentioned to me earlier that Libya is in a strange place where even though it doesn't really have a state, it does now have a fair amount of oil revenue coming back.

Could you explain about that but I think also why it is not getting to the people and why it is not getting where it needs to.

MS. SAINI FASANOTTI: Okay in Libya there are, the point of Libya is that in my opinion, is not a state. When we talk about the failed state, I also wrote about a failed state last year. The point is that Libya has never been a state since the (inaudible) empire. So, not a state in those times, not a real state during the Italians and with the Gaddafi was a strange state as well because of not investing anything. On the contrary, it pushed for division in the country and it did not build anything about administration, institutions and so on. So, the country is completely to be built from nothing on this side. On the other side, we have some institution like the Central Bank of Libya or the knock. The society that controls the revenues from oil. Oil is fundamentally Libya. It is the richness of the country, there is nothing else. But on the other side, everything is disrupted. So, even though Libya is one of the best producer of oil in the world with the best oil, Libyans usually do not have now fuel. For example, in Saybajest two days ago the elders of the city (inaudible) so in the desert in the south. They said that they are going to stop two very important oil fields in Indiaria because they don't have nothing, no fuel. So, here we are.

MR. O'HANLON: One last question just to complete my basic understanding of Libya and then we'll move on to Dan and John. When the United Nations or other international agencies talk these days of the countries that are at the most acute stress and risk for humanitarian purposes where the greatest number of people are at risk, they don't tend to include Libya on the list that I've seen. I know Libya's got a smaller population.

MS. SAINI FASANOTTI: Yes, 5 million.

MR. O'HANLON: But they talk about Yemen, they talk about Syria, they talk about Somalia, Central Africa Republic, parts of Nigeria, these are the areas that we're hearing the most discussion about. That leads me to ask you, is Libya finding a way to scrape by even though there is no real central government with any control or power, there is no real agreement on its political future. There is no real functioning state and yet somehow they're averting the worst or is it even more dire than I suspect and that I've appreciated when you actually look on the ground. It just sort of escapes people's attention because it is on the periphery of the broader Middle East but things really are almost as bad as

in Yemen or Syria. Can you help me understand that?

MS. SAINI FASANOTTI: No, no the situation right now as not so bad as in Yemen or in Syria, of course. But anyway, you have to think that the population is a tiny population in a huge territory because Libya is as big as Alaska. There are only few cities all around the country where you can live. Anyway, Libyan's are used to doing alone by themselves. For example, in the (inaudible) all tribes that are (inaudible) during the Italian occupation. But all these tribes and villages, they are used to do by themselves. Since the time of Gaddafi Italians and so on. So, for them, even though there is no state, they can do by themselves in a way.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. We'll come back to Libya as we come back to other countries as well. Dan, over to you, to give us a broader lay of the land on counterterrorism challenges in the region.

MR. BYMAN: Well as with most problems, there is some good news and there is some bad news. If you look at the most important groups from an American perspective, there is actually a lot of good news. So, al-Qaeda for many years, has been largely inactive as a core organization. It has been unable to conduct significant international attacks. Those that have been done or tried have largely been through its affiliates, not the core organization. And heavy pressure on the core group has largely succeeded. We have a fair amount of evidence from within the group to support that. It has been more successful though in spreading its branches at a regional level and I'll come back to that point.

If you look at the Islamic State, as Mara began saying, there has been significant military successes. Territory issuing dramatically and part of the appeal of this group was that it was a winner and it is no longer a winner. It has been extremely hard, we've seen recruitment dry up dramatically, we've seen fundraising drop dramatically and that creates, from a U.S. perspective, a benign cycle where the group gets weaker as these successes continue and the weakness makes the successes easier.

But the caveats are the eternal question from the Middle East which are, what's next. One thing the United States has historically been very good at is to feeding adversaries in fixed territories and it has been not nearly as good at the question of governance afterwards. So, we've seen the Islamic State or its predecessors go underground in the past, notably in Iraq at the end of the last decade. And then we emerged when the conditions were right. Right now, in their own propaganda, they're making

that point. We've seen al-Qaeda adapt to U.S. pressure and try to spread its network to different affiliate groups. What makes this, I would say even more concerned in the long term, is the speed at which the Islamic State itself was able to reestablish itself as the Syrian war broke out. It shows how deeply rooted many of the ideas in the broader Jihadist world have become. So, it was able to tap into very deep roots that have been planted by previous generations and it was able to harvest that. The Syrian civil war has added to that so the next time there is a crisis, and I think we can all agree there will be another crisis in the Middle East, the next time there's a crisis, other groups may be able to take advantage of that.

And they were also able to take advantage of that by very skilled use of information technologies and the rapid dissemination of these technologies have proven a major boom to these groups. I would say the United States and more broadly, global governance, hasn't quite figured out and to what degree it wants to regulate these technologies. And the technologies are often moving much more quickly than is policy. So, I think, right now, the United States is really getting ready to regulate MySpace. We're really able to regulate platforms that people don't really use that much anymore. It's really hard if you have ever worked in government, to be able to move very quickly in response to an emerging problem. But that's going to be a constant challenge.

Another very troubling event has been the ability of terrorism to shape politics in the west. In general, in the past, we've seen terrorist attacks happen but they've often led communities to come together. Many of these attacks have not been terribly affective but they've led us to come apart. They played into very deep schisms in the west, in the Europe and the United States that have often been Muslim communities demonized by non-Muslim communities. But more broadly feeding into anti-immigrant sentiment. This has had a profound impact on the nature of governance in a number of countries including the United States. That's a profound impact of terrorism beyond lives lost. It's a strategic impact. It's something that it goes beyond what at least I think we've seen in the past.

The last thing I'll say, which is to me very troubling, is that the Middle East is consumed with civil wars. So, of course, Mike mentioned Yemen and, of course, we've heard about Syria and Iraq and we've heard about Libya. We could add to this if we want to expand the region a little bit if we want to talk about Somalia, if we want to talk about Afghanistan, if we want to talk about parts of Central Asia. Even the countries that are not in deep civil wars have a lot of stability problems. Terrorists feed on civil

wars. It is a tremendous advantage for these groups. They're able to gain space to operate, they're able to (inaudible) as defenders of communities, they're able to bring in fighters. It's very hard to be a terrorist group by only going after terrorists. You have to solve broader problems of society and governance that are allowing these groups space to operate. That is an exceptionally difficult problem and one that has gotten worse (inaudible).

MR. O'HANLON: One quick follow up to you before I go to General Allen. Is there one place in the Middle East where the current al-Qaeda or ISIS presence worries you the most? So, we see ISIS sort of in retreat in the east of Syria, certainly in Iraq. We know that al-Qaeda has some presence in Yemen, we know that the al-Qaeda derivative has some ongoing presence in northwestern Syria and then we know that some of these groups have had toe holds in parts of Libya and elsewhere as well as the Saini. Is there any place where, as you point out, there are longer term concerns about where it could reappear? But this sort of broader Jihadist movement, is there a place today where it is stronger than people commonly recognize?

MR. BYMAN: I'll give three answers to that which is kind of cheating. One is that even as the Islamic State has been hit hard in Syria, the Syrian branch of al-Qaeda, which there are debates about the level of alignment but I'll go with that for the moment, has been very successful in integrating itself with a range of rebel groups. And it has very deep roots and it is poised to pick up a lot of the pieces from the shattering of the Islamic State.

Yemen has benefited tremendously from the civil war there and in particular, the Saudi and UAE operations there which has enabled this group to again, gain some space and some ability to operate. I don't think the al-Qaeda group in Yemen is incredibly strong but stronger than it was several years ago.

And the last country I'll name is actually not in civil war which is Tunisia. Tunisia has a democracy and it is a very fragile one. It also has a Salafi problem and a violent Salafi problem. And the largest number of recruits for the Islamic State are Tunisia, from a per capita point of view. So, I'm tremendously worried that many of these people will return and they'll inject violence in an already fragile situation and take a country that, for now, is limited success and turn it the other way around.

MR. O'HANLON: Excellent for laying out the background so well. John, over to you

please, to go where you'd like to tie these pieces together, present your thoughts on the broader region and if you like, to begin the policy discussion as well about where we should be going next.

MR. ALLEN: Sure, thank you. It's great to be on this panel with such good friends. Dan, every member of the panel has already touched some of these issues. Dan hit a couple of them hard and I want to reiterate what he said. I'll start with a story. I was the deputy commander of the central command in the late winter of 2010 and the early months of 2011 which is what has been the so called Arab spring. I have a little experience with these things called tsunamis and a tsunami is not a single wave, it's multiple waves. I would really rather rename the Arab spring to the Arab tsunami. Because what is happening and what has happened is as we watch, literally, the fire of the Arab tsunami burns its way across North Africa coming towards us in the Middle East. We did the analysis on it, what we discovered goes to Dan's point. Because al-Qaeda at the time was attempting to make the case that what was happening in this broader collapse, if you will, of governance across the region, was a direct result of the success of Salafi Jihadists doctrine and the spread. The truth, of course, was al-Qaeda was attempting to sprint out ahead of what was, in fact, a broad failure of governance and societies across the region. Spurred in many cases, again to Dan's point, spurred in many cases for the first time the wide spread use of social media. We watched this very closely because as Tunisia came apart, the capacity for that level of success of societal disintegration was vastly magnified by virtue of social media. Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, all of those things were conveying that in one country after another when the society rose up, it was achieving affect.

And the problem with so many of these societies was the failure of governance and the failures of society to deliver on the expectations of a mega trend which has occurred in that region and is occurring broadly across the world, which is that a large portion of all those societies were age roughly 15 to 29 or so. And these young men and women had real expectations for their futures, because in many respects, they had been exposed in some extent to another to what 15 to 29 year olds were achieving in other countries as well. So, no access to education, corrupt judiciaries, predatory security forces, the failure of inclusivity, an absence of the rights for women and virtually no economic prospects and we began to see what should have been self-evident to us all along.

Dan hit it right on the head, it was a tsunami. But Tsunamis are characteristic by not the

first wave but by multiple waves. It is the damage of the follow on waves that is really the lasting damage. I think we have not seen the end of what began as what was called the Arab spring. Because across this region, in virtually every one of these countries, we haven't seen a major repair or a major change of the conditions under which so many young men and women were radicalized and so broad away, pushed into the arms of extremists and then ultimately became violent extremists or terrorists joining Daesh or al-Qaeda or (inaudible) or (inaudible). So, that's my fear. My fear is that the unhinging, if you will, of the societal links within the governments across the entire region. Across North Africa, across the Middle East and again my own experience in the Middle East but also my own experience in Afghanistan, it unleashed a whole series of forces and it has left for us, generally weak governments that in the broadest sense have not really been able to repair the deficiencies or remain very weak on the one end of the spectrum. But on the other end of the spectrum we find that the civil wars have created in and of themselves, incubators for the expansion of Salafi Jihadism but continued and expanded social instability as well.

That's the broader Middle East, if you will. The challenge, of course, is much bigger than that. There is a strategic challenge to this and that is because so many individuals from North Africa and, I think, Dr. Saini will touch this later. We have no idea yet how many refugees could come out of North Africa if there is another collapse societally across the Maghreb or the deeper end of the Sahel. But what we have seen is that the large numbers of migrants and refugees that have come out of the civil wars in the more localized traditional Middle East have destabilized what we know in many respects is Europe today. It has been a direct blow upon the cohesion of the European Union. It has polarized politics, it has forced polarization of the political spectrum. In many cases, seeing nativists, neo-Nazi type organizations emerge because of the presence of large numbers of people of color now being inserted into these societies which is unfair in many respects. But it has also brought with it, waives of violence and waives of terrorism. And those of you who have been to Paris recently or those of you who have been to almost any of the major European cities, what you have seen are paramilitary police or paratroopers et cetera, guarding large scale public areas or synagogues or other spots like that. So, there is a strategic implication to this.

So, let me hit a policy issue here and that is, I think, as a country but more broadly as a

community of nations, we've failed to recognize that this broad continuous failure of the addressing of these underlying causal factors, permits the subsequent waives of the tsunami. And in an environment where for all intents and purposes, we've declared war on Islam by saying we're going to be oriented on fighting radical Islamic terrorism and that's the wrong term for it. This is Salafi Jihadists terror more so than radical Islamic terror. In that term, we inappropriately paint Muslims as the problem or Islam as the problem and that is not the problem. It is a doctrine that has the capacity to spread into disaffected populations. Because we haven't solved the underlying problems that exploded in our faces with the so-called Arab spring. So, if war is our only option than war is all we'll ever have at a time when we're cutting the State Department's budget and USAID, et cetera. And at a time when we should be leading the community of nations, from my perspective, in a broad based approach to stabilize countries and to help countries that are in distress to begin to address some of these societal issues which can turn around this vast radicalization engine which drives the fighters into the arms of Daesh, al-Qaeda and these other groups. That's the problem that I see, Mike, and I'll just make more focus on this and Dr. Saini can comment if she'd like.

I think the U.S. has a huge blind spot on North Africa. I don't believe that we fully understand what's happening in Libya. I don't think we fully understand or fully appreciate or fully embrace at a policy level what we can do to stabilize Egypt. If Egypt goes over the edge, we are all in serious trouble. And there are other elements within North Africa that demand our attention immediately. So, this continuous strategic approach that sees the Middle East on blocks, one separate from the other instead of seeing from where the Atlantic washes the coast of Morocco all the way across the Middle East perhaps to Afghanistan to try to create one comprehensive and cohesive approach within which then there will be more focused functional strategies. Until we're able to do that as a community of nations led by the United States, we're just going to see one subsequent waive of the tsunami after another and each one will be progressively worse because we have not been able to recover from the previous one.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Let me ask you, John, one more question on that and then we'll just work down the panel with the same question really for anybody and everybody. Don't feel the need to solve every problem in the Middle East with your specific next points but if there is one burning recommendation that you've got, one specific thing that we're not doing and we really could do better, one

or two things like that, I'd like to hear it and then that will be a good way to start the conversation with the audience. But John, as you lay out the need for integrated strategy, I guess my question would be, is there one or maybe two main areas where you see that we're doing things inadequately now in addition to the lack of a bigger vision that you talked about already. Is it in terms of economic assistance, is it in terms of our diplomatic relationships with some of the countries, is it in terms of how to think about the Muslim brotherhood and find some moderate ranks among that broader group in the region and work with that. I just don't know if there are specific things that you would want to add to your list as well.

MR. ALLEN: The answer is yes. It's all of those things. The first and foremost from my perspective, while I am interested in political stability or I'm interested in our diplomatic relations, those are very important and those can be enhanced although right now we're having some difficulties with that but we will fail if we don't work at an economic solution in many of these countries. Because economic stability generates opportunities that many young men and women would never be able to have on their own. There is this wonderful statistic and I think the World Bank put it out. It's that 129 million young men and women become 16 every year. Roughly 80 percent of them live in developing countries with fragile governments. So, the likelihood of that swath of the youth, finding for themselves, a future in that country and being unable to leave it or if they do leave it, I think we know where they're going. Being unable to leave it, they are hugely susceptible as a population to radicalization. If I were to want to say where we must consider at the grand strategic level, a broad direction, it's at the economic level of this. And if we can change the economic prospects, then the politics can cure itself as we've seen in other places and the diplomacy becomes easier. If we do not ultimately address the economic issues then I think we'll get ready for the next wave.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Mara, over to you and you've got an equally impossible challenge of trying to talk about both Iraq and Syria. So, if you prefer to take one or the other, whatever policy advice you would offer at this time.

MS. KARLIN: Great, thank you. I would agree with John's diagnosis, I think it is spot on with the spectrum we see regionally. I very much appreciate his policy prescription that at the end of the day, it's economics we need to worry about. I think if both of us were still sitting in our defense hats we would have said, thanks for all of the funding, $600 plus billion, maybe just direct a little bit more of that to

the State Department or USAID because it can really have a much bigger effect on that front.

The concern I have right now and perhaps my biggest recommendation would be surrounding Iran. I think the issue about recertification and what to do with the nuclear agreement is a little bit of an inconvenient distraction. When the other challenge Iran poses is really up in our face at this moment in time. Which is, Iran's destabilizing and meddling behavior across the Middle East. And just to take one case study which makes it extra hard, you could look at Iraq. So, Iranian supported militias, have played a pretty substantial role in the rollback of countering ISIS. That makes the challenge there a lot harder. I can you they are still very much put together and still a presence across the country with their graffiti, with their flags, with their personnel manning checkpoints. So, that's a real challenge. There have been times over the years where the nuclear challenge posed by Iran and the meddling behavior challenge have bled into one another. This is a moment where we sure should focus a little bit more on the latter because the Iranians are having some tremendous gains across Iraq, across Syria, of course, and more broadly regionally.

MR. O'HANLON: So, one follow up before we go to Dan and then Federica. You're implying, I think, that there are actually ways we can compete with Iran successfully inside of Iraq, that it's not over. Sometimes you hear American's talk as if we've already lost Iraq to Iran. I think I hear you saying that's not the case, and there are a lot of things we can do to at least be a viable alternative. Could you mention a couple of the specific ideas going forward, should we be thinking about an indefinite security arrangement with Iraq where we commit to be there long term with training and other kinds of assistance or either economic aid as well that, of course, Iraq's economy has really been in the tank because of fallen oil prices and the war. Do you feel like we should be coming up with an aid package that is comparable for what we give to Afghanistan and Israel and Egypt but also for Iraq? I'm just curious as to what kind of policy ideas would support your vision.

MS. KARLIN: Absolutely and what that looks like. Part of it is making sure we keep working with groups like the counterterrorism service. Part of it is ensuring you have some sort of meaningful integration of these various militias into the Iraqi military. I think economic assistance and a long term security relationship would also be key. Some of it is really playing a presence and playing a role. The Iraqis often feel like Iran looks to them like their little brother. Those dynamics are a lot more

complicated, I think, historically than ours have necessarily been. I think that provides some important opportunities.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Dan, over to you and on the broader counterterrorism challenge and any specific countries you want to talk about too.

MR. BYMAN: I'll tackle one aspect of my remarks which is right now I think if you wanted to design a policy to alienate American Muslims and to a broader degree, Muslims in Europe, you would do what we're doing right now. A lot of that is simply rhetoric. Is the rhetoric from the top that is welcoming or is the rhetoric from the top that's hostile and I think we know the answer to that, unfortunately.

Another question is in some of your policies. Do you go through elaborate lengths to create, I'll say, restricted policies on immigration that are not at all rooted in threat analysis, yes. Are you looking at different kinds of violence and treating them equally, no. So, right wing violence in the United States gets a lot less attention, right wing violence in Europe gets a lot less attention than similar violence done by Jihadists. So, it's not that you don't treat one seriously, it's that you treat them both seriously. What I would say about all of these is these are more in our power to fix. I would love to solve the civil wars in the Middle East problem. I'd like to put more resources to it but even if we do it's really hard. This is one that is much more doable.

I would say, just to focus on Europe for one quick second, I'm especially worried about the refugee problem in Europe. Because I think Europe's policy at times has seeds of its own destruction. Which is taking in large numbers of people and then treating them very poorly. I worry that it's going to be a self-fulfilling prophecy where the people are admitted and then there are hostile policies against them, they're not given the resources they need and then 10 to 20 years from now, we're going to see problems in that community. It's in part, ironically, the community is going to be radicalized by coming to Europe, not that they came in and radicalized Europe. I worry about that tremendously, I think it's a threat to Europe, I think it's a threat to the broader international community.

MR. O'HANLON: That's the perfect segue for Federica to talk not only about Libya but about Europe. So, over to you, my friend.

MS. SAINI-FASANOTTI: Well, I've lived in Rome for 15 years and I moved just one

month ago to Milan. I've seen the transformation of the city in the last year and a half. Because of the flocks of migrants there has been really a wave. The city has changed its face. So, Italians that normal people citizens, are trying to interacting with these but these (inaudible) really a huge problem. A problem of integration, first of all, for these people because these people are not happy, I guess, to leave their countries. So, there is always a reason, it's not just division. Now, let's move to another country. Let's immigrate and move you know where. But the point is that now we have a problem of security and handling these persons because they have different habits, traditions and often they do not have houses. So, now there is a problem with Italians who are waiting for public houses and maybe they see that these kinds of public houses they were waiting for years maybe, they are going to migrants. So, I've seen in the last few weeks, really clashes between police, migrants, people who are waiting for their public houses.

So, my point is that until now, I haven't seen a real strategy. The point is always strategy. It seems that our politicians are not able to give one and everything seems to be wrong in Europe in this very moment.

MR. O'HANLON: One follow up on that and then you may want to offer a thought or two on Libya, I realize. As I understand it, refugee flows into Italy have been actually much less the last few weeks. So, are you suggesting that that's probably going to be a temporary blip and they really could get big again or are you saying that even if that part of the problem is beginning to be well addressed the number of immigrants who are already in Europe just are going to have to be taken care of in a much more systematic and better way. Or even if flows were to stop tomorrow there would still be huge problems.

MS. SAINI FASANOTTI: It would be a huge problem anyway. Because we had years with hundreds and thousands of people coming without a stop. So, this is a problem anyway. We are trying to give an answer to the stop that, for example, in August was really big. I think that migrants are just people who want to leave Africa and just waiting in the shores of Africa. They are just waiting in Libya and this can be an incredible problem. The last problem of Libya because they are disrupting the social fabric also in Libya. Because they come from the Sahil or in the sub-Saharan zone, (inaudible) is in a huge crisis in the last few years has been. The situation is not just, my point is the situation is not just Libya but is Africa, all Africa. I think we've forgotten Africa for too many years and now all the problems

are coming out.

MR. O'HANLON: So, I've got one more question for you and then I'll invite anybody on the panel who wants to make an additional point or even ask a question of each other to do so, and then we'll go to all of you for your thoughts and questions. Even though Africa in general is a concern, specifically back to Libya. I've heard you say and read you and a lot of Federica's writings are on our website if you Google under Saini, you can find her stuff and it's great. One of the things you've taught me is that this government of national accord in Libya, this centralized child of the UN or the international community is really not particularly viable and not likely to become very viable and therefore we might be better off thinking of a more regional strategy, not formal partition of Libya but more of a confederation of relatively autonomous regions if I understand you correctly. Could you just speak to that question, what should be the political vision for the future of Libya?

MS. SAINI FASANOTTI: Well, I should have the crystal ball. I think my idea that I always discuss with Michael is because I'm probably the only one who thinks like this. But because Libya already had a federal state, a federal constitution during Kind Edris in the fifties. But my idea is something a little bit different. Observing the country and looking at all the differences, tribal, ethnic, whatever, I think that yes, we have, of course, to have a state, a nation. But giving strength to the regions, to the local powers because in a nation that does not exist, you cannot just work on the top. I think that was the problem in the last six years in Libya. Because Libya is not like other countries like Tunisia, for example, if we want to talk about (inaudible) which has always been a nation. In every moment with its problems and so on but a structured nation. Libya has always been a kind of a (inaudible) governed in a strange way by the (inaudible) in a violent way by the Italians. In a roughly way, ruthless way by Gaddafi but always without giving the responsibility to the Libyans. Now, I think it's time to give them this choice. They have to choose what they want to be. So, my idea for them is bottom up and up bottom policy. But, of course, really complicated, articulated and so on but really in the end they have to think for themselves. The question is when it will (inaudible).

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Anyone else want to chime in on these many questions that are on the table before we go to the audience for questions. Anybody have a thought or additional question for anybody else?

MR. BYMAN: I'll ask a question. I don't know if either John or Mara want to take it on but has Assad won? I was someone who very early on in 2011 was calling for strongly opposing his regime for aiding the opposition, I've always been fairly firmly on that side. It looks like a genocidal dictator has won a war. And it's an open question to me whether the opposition side can seriously be restarted, what the broader strategic hopes are, is it to keep them alive or is it actually getting some victory. Is it to drive outside to the negotiating table or do you accept that the wrong guy won the war and go with that. I am morally as well as practically troubled by any answer to those questions.

MR. ALLEN: Let me take a crack at it. Time doesn't end at any particular moment so I don't know who wins in Syria. What I would say that Assad would appear to have the upper hand in some respects right now but he's not going to win in the end. Because you're exactly right, he's a genocidal dictator and the march of time typically catches up with those guys in some form or another. The problem with Syria has been, I think, the massive policy catastrophe from the United States perspective on this issue. Had we supported those elements within the Syrian population and they've been called a number of things, free Syrian Army and we are providing some support to the Syrian democratic force or whatever it is being called today. Had we provided that kind of support some time ago, had at the crossing of the red line, had we taken a different action in August 2013, I think we'd be in a very different place today. But one of the complicating factors of Syria beyond the difficulties of the United States informing a policy, we had having lived this painfully, we had a strategy in Syria to defeat the Islamic State. We had a policy aspiration ultimately to see the end of the Bashar al-Assad regime. We had no connective tissue between our strategy and our policy aspiration. The connective tissue was empowering those elements of the Syrian population that desired to be free of him, to have political context, diplomatic capacity and the military means by which they could both assist us in defeating Daesh but also defending themselves from the regime until such time as they became a countervailing political force. There's where the failure occurred. We never connected the strategy with the policy aspiration. That's the difficulty.

The other problem about Syria is Syria has been a chess board for the cold war of the Middle East, in many ways. And so, you find elements within the many different militias. One is being supported by one Gulf State, another is being supported by another Gulf State. The one militia is being

supported against the other militia. The one militia is being supported against Daesh, the other is being supported against Bashar al-Assad.

So, many of the fractures of the Gulf States and their problems are also playing out on the ground in the Syrian civil war where we not only are able to see a decisive end to that but we also see that it is going to be very difficult, even in Bashar al-Assad were to declare victory that we would see the violence end. I think the violence is going to go on for a very long time. And, of course, the Russians deserve a lot of credit for the crisis that we see there right now. That is, they have frozen in place this genocidal dictator. Not only have they frozen him in place, they've empowered him ultimately to inflict as much pain as he feels he can because he is not being held accountable for it. As much pain as he feels he can on those elements in Syria that still desire not to be governed by that regime. And the Russians have enabled him to do that. So, until that ends, we are going to see violence. I just don't see that we're going to see any kind of comprehensive political solution in the near term.

MR. O'HANLON: Mara, do you care to add anything?

MS. KARLIN: I think in a word I'd probably answer yes to what you have to say. I sure hope that's only in the short to medium term and in the long term what we do see is that the bad guy doesn't win. The largest reason I actually blame for this comes down to Libya. I think when the Syrian uprising first broke out there was a plastic moment to shape what was going to happen and the future of the Levant on that front. And had the conflict with Libya not already been in motion and already not started to look a lot bumpier than many had thought, I think the U.S. response probably would have been a little different. For all of these reasons, I think what we will see over the coming years is there will still be disputed areas but on the whole, I suspect when we're sitting here five years from now, Assad is still in power. He is facing some challenges to be sure but he is still sitting pretty in Damascus, unfortunately.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Let's go to you and I'm going to take about three questions at a time. Please wait for a microphone, identify yourself and we'll start here. I would prefer if you could ask a question and direct it to one person.

MR. EERILY: My name is Adam Eerily. I'm a think tank rat like most of the people here. My question is to everybody but if I had to pick, John and maybe you Michael of Daniel. On the tsunami point, the question would be, are governments in the regional capable of governance along the lines that

you suggest are necessary. Bearing in mind that their primary motivation seems to be staying in power or preserving the privileges of those to whom they owe their power.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. These two on the fourth row.

MS. MEGAN: Hi, I'm Megan, I'm from Search for Common Ground. I have a question for John as well. The crisis in Yemen, no one can deny that there are so many human rights abuses going on and a lot of the peace process has been blocked by regional actors like the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Iran. I was wondering what your thoughts of what American policy makers can do as well as the international community can do to try to break through those problems.

MR. SHORE: Stephen Shore, my question is about Turkey, which I think has gone unmentioned. Is there a role for Erdogan to play and is the role he is playing, that which we would like him to play.

MR. O'HANLON: So, why do you we start, General Allen, with you. Take whichever questions you would like and then we'll just work down the panel to see what is left.

MR. ALLEN: To the ambassadors point and he was very helpful to us for a long time in the Middle East, so thank you for your service there. There is no clean answer to this question. Each one of those governments if very different. Each one of those governments has its own relationship to the populations. What I would propose is that the kinds of remediation which we would seek to achieve in each one of those states is going to look different by virtue of what both the state has the capacity to absorb but also what risk the state is willing to take in making these changes. I would also stipulate that the change will not be fast and if we can earmark and target certain of the institutions of these states. None of these states want to be unstable and many of these states will be very happy to have a strategic relationship with the United States and the community of nations that can solve some of their stability problems. If we're able to agree with those states and it will be different with each one, on what aspects of societal instability we can address. I think we have a hope of making some progress there. There will be some states that will be utterly resistant to any foreign assistance. I think those we isolate, those we contain if necessary. It will be those that go over the edge first and we'll see, as you pointed out, the second wave or the third wave et cetera.

But as you do, I know a number of the leaders in the region and we're seeing efforts in

some of the countries for genuine reform. But that reform is both limited by political capacity, risk aversion potentially to the speed with which reform can occur. And that's governmental reform, by enlarge, but there are elements within these societies such as improved medical care for the populations, greater access to education, a broader approach to the role of women in societies that they are willing to undertake but don't really have the capacity or the expertise to do that. What I would propose is that there isn't a single cookie cutter approach to all of them, each one is different. It will require that we have sufficient knowledge ourselves with our international partners to be able to provide the nuance support to each, to incrementally change those factors that cause instability. It's not going to be a short term process. We didn't arrive here last Thursday and we're not going to solve it next Tuesday. It's going to a be a generational issue but it's got to start and if it doesn't start than we'll have successive waves. And we'll see what Europe looks like in 20 years after another couple of waves of millions of migrants if we have a major failure in the Sahel.

On Turkey, we have seen a major change, I think, in where we thought Turkey would be. When I began the process of being the special envoy to the global coalition, I remember a conversation in the sit room one day where we said, look we see no options in Syria. Syria was just impenetrable in the context of there was no American foothold, we weren't sure whether Turkey was in the game or not in defense of the Turks. The Turks weren't sure whether we were committed to the game or not. It turns out we weren't really. And then I was dispatched to Ankara to work with the Turks to try to get our strike fighters out of the Gulf and into Turkey. And that's where we began to see the combination of the coalition working closely with the Turks on issues of control of the flow of foreign fighters going in and coming out et cetera. We began to see real opportunity begin to unfold. But that was ultimately eclipsed, I think, by the Russian intervention into Syria and the sense by the Turks that judging the commitment of the U.S. policy to Syria. Their continued stability both in terms of their continued stability vis-a-vis the region and their continued stability vis a vie their persistent conflict with the PKK was best served ultimately by creating stability in Syria which was judged by the Russian relationship with Bashar al-Assad. I don't know what is in President Erdogan's thinking on the particular issue. If you judge by the conduct as opposed necessarily to the rhetoric, Turkey, of course, is very interested in stability. It's internal stability and regional stability. Regional stability, I believe, was judged not going to come out of

American policy. It ultimately is going to come from the Russian and Cursian and its support for the Syrian's. If that stability kept Turkey stable, my sense was that they were going to line up on that. Best I can do on that one.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Mara, any further thoughts?

MS. KARLIN: Sure. Your question, Ambassador Eerily, reminds me of Russian literature. All of these governments are unhappy but each in their own way. I think that is notable, particularly when we are in this dynamic period across the region. You probably remember in 2002 when a group of Arab scholars came together and said, hey this region has these three gaps, these three deficits. This knowledge deficit, this freedom deficit and this female deficit. When we fast forward to where we are today, those all look very different than they did, I think, as John was absolutely referring to. So, that's a pretty bumpy trajectory invariably. Some of these governments are doing a better job at it. They do all want to stay in power and they are all constantly making deals. I think we could probably same the same thought about U.S. governments and European governments too. But the long period of stasis that we saw along those three key lines, no longer exist and that dynamism is up in the air.

On the Turkey front, it has unfortunately become an old refrain now that saying Turkey is backsliding into authoritarianism means we should get rid of the backsliding in the into in that statement. I think we see some really profound problems with Turkey these days and we see that vis-a-vis Europe and vis a vie the Middle East which are inconvenient at best. If we look just specifically at some of the issues we've talked about here, what worries me profoundly is how their treating the Syrian refugees. How much tougher their lives are becoming right now, pushes to have them get forced back into the Syria and what they might play out as.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Dan.

MR. BYMAN: I see part of the problem in the Middle East as the CC problem which is, our hope for many Middle Eastern countries is they'll have a kleptocratic, somewhat incompetent repressive dictator who has basically declared war on part of his own population. And that is a relative success. If you were in most Middle East countries, you'd happily trade places with that. One thing we used to talk about many years ago were the three R's in the Middle East. We'd talk about rhetoric, rent and repression. That these governments had a degree of revolutionary legitimacy that they drew on.

They had revenues going into the state that they could sprinkle among key groups to buy off descent. And then they beat people up, put them in jail or killed them if they didn't pay attention. I think we're down to one R now and that R doesn't work too well in many countries. So, these countries have to have a new system or they have no system. My hope in 2011 was that this was a transition point to a new system, that the legitimacy would be restored and that as a result, these governments would be able to have real economies that were not dependent on a relatively small number of natural resources but it's been the opposite. It has been the failure of institutions.

So, I think there is a tremendous failure of governance. What I worry about and here, I'll put my professor hat on. As a professor, we talk about regional contagions. You can have a country that is doing reasonably well but it gets swept away by the forces in its neighborhood. And given the sheer number of civil wars and their range in the region, I worry about how they're going to affect neighbors that would otherwise be stable but are kind of trap by the etties (?) that are created by the larger ways.

MS. SAINI-FASANOTTI: Well, I'd like to add just a few words as a historian. There was the (inaudible) of Ethiopia was a member of the Sevolia family who in 1937 said, democracy is a very dangerous tool to handle. It was referring to taking a kind of democracy in Ethiopia in those times. So, I think that all these nations trying during the Arab spring, for example, in the Middle East to have a kind of democracy and the mistake has been maybe done by the international community that did not understand the difficulty of these kinds of processes and the danger. So, I think that every country has a long way to go and I'm referring in this very moment on Libya, for example, to reach democracy in the right way for the country. Which is different by the others, of course.

MR. ALLEN: I think Federica couldn't be more right and this is an important point. We often mistake in the U.S., seeking to implant democratic processes in countries that have no democratic institutions. We've got to be very, very careful in this plan that the ambassador would be interested in hearing, we've got to be very careful about conditionalizing what we would want to do to help them change the human condition to improve the lot of women. To improve the capacity of civil society, et cetera. Be very, very careful about conditionalizing that on the embracing of democracy or a democratic process. We've gone to the process before and it hadn't worked out because democratic institutions didn't exist and when the vote occurred, it completely disrupted, in many respects, the outcome. This doesn't

mean we aren't committed to democracy. We have to be committed to democracy. But there are going to be some aspects of how we can support that can lead others. And so, while we should emphasize that where we would like to see democracy take root, we've got to be very careful about conditionalizing the support that we could offer to these countries that can fundamentally or even profoundly change the human condition in that regard. We did not get to the one question and I would ask if anyone would want to talk about potential U.S. policy penetration into the Yemen civil war and how we might make a difference there.

MR. O'HANLON: Yes, we'll see if we can get to that. I agree with you. I think I'll try to weave that into a second round of questions from the audience. But Fede, you wanted to add one quick note, I think.

MS. SAINI-FASANOTTI: Yes. Talking about democracy, when everything in Libya happened in 2011, immediately the international community looking at the rebels against Gadhafi said okay, we have to help them. Without thinking just for a moment that Gadhafi had a huge bunch of followers in the country. Without understanding that there was a real civil war because Gadhafians still nowadays, Gadhafi had the idea of Gadhafi has a huge bunch of followers. So, that was the first mistake. Why are you deciding to help one side, I know that it's very difficult what I'm saying but why you are deciding to help one side or the other. Because behind Gadhafi, there was a population. It was a civil war. So, we have to pay real attention in every kind of just in the idea of entering into such internal dynamics. We have to help, of course, but pay very much attention.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Go ahead.

MS. KARLIN: If I could just add one addendum to that from a very selfish Washington point of view. Which is that the moment in Libya also played into broader dynamics. Because I think a U.S. perspective was that the British and the French said we had to go in. They were very fast and far ahead. And then, as the conflict started, of course, suddenly the U.S. military had to play a role that wasn't quite expected, things were a lot bumpier than had been thought and suddenly next thing you know, you're sort of embroiled in this. So, that legacy is profound on the internal side but also on the kind of bilateral and even multilateral side.

MR. O'HANLON: Let's have a second round and then we'll come back here and also

introduce the Yemen question.

MS. SONNEFELT: Marjorie Sonnefelt, friend and admirer of Brookings. I would like to congratulate General Allen and congratulate Brookings for making such a choice. Thanks to all the panelists, they are very important contributions and I was glad that Mara brought up Iran and General Allen brought up Russia. Is it possible to comment further on how the United States might handle, try to manage either or both of those? There is enough there for two more hours.

MR. KRAVITZ: Thank you very much. I concur with the comments on Brookings, General Allen and the panel. Alexander Kravitz from Insight. I'll address the question to General Allen. To pick up on, you refer to the fractures in Syria that are being the support of different Gulf actors. Even though this isn't a crisis, I wonder if you could talk about the Saudi Qatar differences and the implications of how we could close that and what are the implications if we don't.

MR. GRIFFIN: My name is James Griffin and it is a question for President Allen and Mike.

MR. ALLEN: I've never been called that before. It's actually frightening.

MR. GRIFFIN: I was wondering if you guys had any suggestions for how to roll back Iran's sort of green tendrils sort of trying to grasp over the region.

SPEAKER: Hi, I'm (inaudible). I'm just adding my question to the previous gentleman's question. Have the Qatar clashes given any impact on (inaudible) and Libya and maybe (inaudible). Also, I (inaudible) Palestinian's had a meeting in Gaza, I think that's the first time in three years. So, did they have anything to do with the Qatar crisis? Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: This time we'll work the other way to relieve the burden a little bit on General John since a lot of the questions were targeted to him but maybe some of them can be partially addressed along the way. Let me begin since one or two were towards me. I'm just going to say one thing. A piece of the way to think about our challenge with Russia which a couple of you mentioned. It also picks up on a subject that Mara mentioned in passing in her opening thoughts which is, how do you imagine beginning to rebuild Syria. And I think there has to be a way that we do this that is at least not incompatible with Russia's interest. Because Russia has got too good of a foothold now and pushing them out is going to be too hard and reopening the whole war to push out Assad and Russia is not

realistic in my judgement.

So, what I'd like to see us try to do is to work harder at developing a strategy and actually, John Allen and I have written about this, where multilateral aid organizations and the United States can try to help reconstruction occur in parts of Syria that are not under Assad's direct control in the first instance. And try to create, thereby, not only humanitarian relief but even some beginnings of governance structures. It doesn't have to be a permanent concept of creating autonomous regions or confederation within Syria. But it's way to, in a sense, help the Sunni's in Syria but at the same time, recognize the power realities that Assad's still in position that Russia is still behind him. What we can hopefully aspire to is a situation in which we start to use economic leverage over time to try to help cajole and push Assad out of power. Because he's not going to get this big aid package in areas that he controls as long as he is still president by the concept that I'm articulating. In other words, maybe it sounds hopelessly complicated, I think it's a nuanced approach that's realistic. Use economic leverage to try to help those parts of Syria where we have some influence and access and over time, use that as a more indirect way to incentivize Assad out of power in Damascus. It recognizes that Russia's role isn't going to go away even if we wanted it to.

That may be something that others agree with or not but I think it's the beginning of a realistic way to think about how we work with Russia or at least de-conflict our approaches inside of Syria. Fede, I don't know if you want to comment on any of the questions. We'll just keep working down the row until we get to John.

MS. SAINI FASANOTTI: Well about Qatar, for example, in Libya, Qatar has been a real regional problem there. But exactly like on the other side because Qatar has always supported the Tripoli part. On the other side, we had Emirates, Russia, Egypt and all these actors in places like Libya, so disruptive, so weak, solving problems are really like bomb. So, the impact of the proxy war, let's say, between Qatar and Emirates and Saudi. Libya has been really disrupting and it has (inaudible) the Russia hand and Egypt has completed spoiled the normal process of reaching a kind of democracy there. The regional actors who supported Syria Nika, gave a lot of power to General Attar, for example.

So, all these actors inside and that was one point of Mr. Salamay is just to be united in trying to solve the real problem of the country or the countries it depends where we are. And not acting

for just our national interest like Emirates, for example, against Qatar or Egypt because it's historical, the interest of Egypt in Syrian Nika and so on.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Dan, any comments?

MR. BYMAN: Sure, I'll try to engage both the (inaudible) question and the Yemen question. Part of what the United States has done historically when it has done its job well as a leader is save allies from themselves. This could be in Asia, this could be in Europe which is to somewhat dispassionately sit back and say, what you are proposing is actually quite stupid and hurts your own interests and we're going to push against it. The dispute between Saudi Arabia, UAE and gunner hurts all of them. If the goal was to move the gunneries away from the Iranians, it has backfired. They are moving closer to the Iranians, in some degree, out of necessity. So, this is not something that certainly serves U.S. interests but doesn't serve the interests of the states involved and part of the traditional U.S. goal was to walk people back from the brink and I hope we can return to that. I don't think that's a very difficult demand.

Yemen is a little harder. I remember many years ago, a colleague in government described Saudi Arabia's attitude towards Yemen as similar to the U.S. attitude towards Cuba under Castro. Which was, it shouldn't matter but it really just got under our skin. It was really far more important that it deserved to be in a political sense. In Yemen, a lot of what the Saudi military effort depends on, and there are varying degrees of U.S. logistical and intelligence support and we do have considerable influence over that. I always interpreted the U.S. indirect support for that as really, I'll say, an exchange with Saudi Arabia for cooperation in other areas. That's not a reasonable exchange in some ways but it has been self-defeating for Saudi Arabia. They are at present, I'll say militarily at the limit of what I think they can accomplish and it's time for the United States to push them into negotiations there. And do so behind the scenes, the Saudi's are an ally, we're not trying to embarrass them but we want to work with them in a way that makes things better for Yemen but also, I think, would serve Saudi interests.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Mara.

MS. KARLIN: On that latter point, I think Dan is just spot on as he is talking about the Qatari, Saudi, UAE dynamics. At a geo strategic level, really, really unhelpful that they somehow can't prioritize the common challenge they face with Iran over their kind of petty squabbling with one another.

That's where we are and the U.S. can be helpful in terms of active diplomacy in trying to remind them of that. But I would caution policy makers to just remember these dynamics. At various moments over the years, there has been a desire for Gulf unity and Gulf security dialogues and what have you, all of which are really great endeavors except that in practice we see instead, the prioritization of petty squabbling and just terribly unhelpful disunity.

As it relates to the Iran question, Marjorie, it's a very, very good one. It's curious that the bad behavior that Iran has exerted over the years is right now not the top concern of the White House and others. Not least because frankly, the history of the United States has with this bad behavior is pretty personnel. From U.S. Marine barracks and U.S. embassy being blown up in 1983 and 1984 to more recently Iran helping train and equip all sorts of nefarious groups to kill American service men and women in Iraq.

So, what can be done on that front, there's a lot of things. First and foremost, frankly putting on a professor hat as Dan had, I would really like someone to do some great studying on the power projection capabilities that Iran's militias like Hezbollah have learned over these last few years in Syria. I think we're used to worrying about groups like Hezbollah getting enhanced training and getting more sophisticated equipment. But the last few years have actually been a water shed moment where you've seen a force have to actively fight different types of conflict and have to bring together other sorts of violent non-state actors. So, I'd like to see some really good studying on that front.

I'd also like to see the United States taking more steps working with its colleagues in Europe and across the region to try to stem the flow of fighters and weapons through various efforts like searching maritime shipments, searching air shipments to try to stem those flows.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. General Allen, over to you.

MR. ALLEN: Just a couple of points and Mara really hit it well. One of the things that I think the United States need to be and I think we are in many respects, needs to be acutely attuned to, is the instability of the region as a result of Iranian nefarious action as it relates directly to the security of Israel which is, of course, our closest ally in the region. The question should be asked in the end and I found myself doing this when I was at Cent Com, disregarding the political rhetoric, disregarding the public statements, mapping the activities on the ground to see if it's creating a strategic mosaic which, in

the end, puts Israel at a fundamental and profound disadvantage. It's hard for American's necessarily to see that may be forming because you see Yemen in isolation, you see the instability in Jordan potentially in isolation, you see what's going on in Syria in isolation. They seem to be individual pictures but if you glue them all together and you think about the work of Ashraf Ghani who is basically the single point of reference on much of what has happened from roughly the western third of Afghanistan all the way to Gaza. It's probably useful for us to think in terms of the large strategic picture in outcomes in Iran in setting the conditions ultimately for the strategic disadvantage of Israel and it's worth thinking in those terms, at least considering it in those terms.

The other piece that I would say with respect to Qatar and the Emeritus and Saudi Arabia, the President very early along in this process, offered his good offices to bring the key actors into the west wing with the idea of mediating a solution to this and put the Secretary of State on the mission, he had the mission to do this. As I recall, H.R. McMasters sat on this stage some time ago and sort of took us through this. The principle problem with Qatar, if you listen to the Saudi's or the Emeriti's or the Bahrainis, remember it's four parties, Bahrain and Egypt. When you boil it all down, it's Qatar's support for political Islam. What that has done is it has really polarized a segment of the states in the region against Qatar in that regard. Such that we see with respect to the six parties of the GCC, we're beginning to see some, perhaps, permanent fragmentation there which is never good. We will never see the Kuwaiti's enter into once side or the other, even though to his great credit, the Emer of Kuwait sought to be a mediator in this process as he has done in the past. He should get a lot of credit for that. And we're never going to see Oman align itself on one side or the other.

So, what we end up seeing are a couple of partners that are outliers. We see Qatar on one side, we see the Emeriti's and the Kingdom on the other side. So, we see the fragmentation of the GCC and the we see, as Dan alluded to it, we see rather than resting Qatar from the grip of Iran, which is part of the objective here, it has pushed Qatar deeper into the arms of Iran but has also created a relationship between Turkey and Iran with respect to Qatar's security that I don't think anyone had anticipated either. To the extent that the Turks were building a brigade sized base camp in Qatar and as this process began to unfold, the Turks attempted to push legislation through the parliament to accelerate the deployment of a brigade of Turkish infantry into Qatar at the moment of this crisis. I think we can all imagine where that

would have ended up.

Happily, the President was very clear with all the partners. He didn't want to see any steel flying through the sky in the Middle East. This is going to be a political issue, it's going to be an economic issue, it's going to be a diplomatic issue but no shooting. Because almost anywhere where something comes down, it's going to land on an American much less the civilian populations.

My view if I were to advise Doha or to advise Abu Dhabi or to advise Riyadh would be take the President up on this. If the President says he's prepared to be the source for mediation, let's take him up on it. This is an opportunity for the American's to deliver on a desire to remain engaged in the region and to help our friends and partners ultimately unsort this. Because this doesn't seem to be going anywhere very fast and this is economically very costly to these countries as time goes on. This is the chance for the United States to become involved.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. I know we're getting close to the end of our time but I'm going to take two quick questions from the back of the room.

MR. SACKS: There is a question about the Palestinian, there is a summit meeting basically a reconciliation meeting in Gaza now, the Palestinian authority government. A very large delegation of fata members coming from (inaudible) including the Palestinian prime minister. I don't think it's a direct result of the crisis in the Gulf but it is certainly related to it. Qatar in the past, has been a supporter of Hamas but now we've seen the dynamics in the Gaza strip that are very different. You've seen the Hulan's of high official of fata actually supported by the UAE or by some people in the UAE who had contact with the Hamas government there trying to bring reconciliation. I think there are two different aspects. One is what it does to the possibilities of Palestinian reconciliation which is perhaps outside the purview of this panel. I think it's very important and very consequential. In the wider scale things, I think ironically, it's a consequence of how little attention there is given now to the Palestinian issue. If anything, in the past, we used to say Middle East and Middle East crisis, we were talking about the Israeli Palestinian conflict and you'll notice until this question, the issue hasn't come up. So, if anything, my answer would be no, it's not a consequence so much of the regional affairs. It's, of course, influenced by them, the Palestinian's are a small entity and therefore influenced dramatically. But, if anything, it's a symptom of the reverse. I don't think that's necessarily good for Palestinian's or anyone else but I think

that's the reality we're in today. The Middle East crisis is no longer Israeli Palestinian.

MR. O'HANLON: By the way, that was Naton Sacks who is the director of our Middle East center here at Brookings and is the cosponsor of this event today. So, thank you for that. Sorry we ambushed you but that was a great answer. I'll take the liberty of extending about five minutes. We'll take a couple of more questions in a lightening round and then final responses from the panel here. In the very far back please. I'm going to try to give the back of the room a chance.

MS. TARA: Hello, my name is Tara and I'm an attorney here at Brookings. As an Egyptian young woman who participated in the revolution in 2011 and maybe that question will be for Dan, I was really having aspirations of how Egypt will act during the coming 10 to 20 years but definitely I was disappointed. So, do you think Egypt's role in the Middle East is going to be improving in a sense, stronger hopefully? Thank you.

MR. ELLIOTT: Connor Elliott. Intern at the Department of State. You touched upon the current budget issues for the Department of State and USAID. There has been a lot of talk about the links being made between Tillerson and Mattis and the strong cooperation between the two departments. I was wondering what possibility you think there would be for the U.S. military to act in the void of USAID and other policy acting groups for the Department of State within the Middle East.

MR. SCORGIZIAN: This is Tom Scorgizian. This question is for General Allen. First of all, thank you for your service and congratulations for being director of Brookings. When you mentioned the so-called Arab spring and then used the Arab tsunami, how do you think this will affect your understanding of Arab world or Middle East and in particular, the Brookings understanding of Arab world. Because at Brookings for a while, it was one of main leaders of supporters of Arab spring. Second point, you said Islamic -- we are not trying to be against Islam or Muslims, we are trying to be more precise and say, Salafi Jihadist terrorism. How you deal with this terrorism considering the terms that you use, military approach and political understanding.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you sir and John over to you please.

MR. ALLEN: Sure. Well, I want to make sure I'm very clear on this issue. I don’t express support one way or the other for the Arab spring. What I support is the causal, the reasons that the Arab spring occurred were a direct result of causal factors at a societal level. I absolutely support and

in my position of leadership here, I would like to facilitate serious thinking on how we go about the business in a systematic way of helping these countries to address those issues so that if we have additional ripples, they are inconsequential compared to the improvement ultimately at the societal level in so many of these countries. To create stability in those countries, to create stability in the region and to create stability in the larger strategic sense of the word.

The Arab spring was symptomatic of something that was largely of function, of failures of governance and failures in society. So, we should learn from that and we should seek to create prescriptions and assistance that can address those issues. So, we should be very attentive to what happened in each one of these countries because they're all different and there will be different levels of willingness ultimately to remedy these problems over time. That's an important contribution this institution can make is to think very seriously about these causal factors. Recognizing, of course, the demography of the region is in many respects, the great liability of the region and ultimately more broadly at the strategic level. How does that demography's aspirations for the future, how do we satisfy that. Otherwise if we don't than it's one ripple after another or its one wave after another. I think it's very important that we pay attention to the Arab spring, the reasons for it and how we can prevent it or at least reduce the effects of it in the future.

The question about the military and I've had some practice at this in a couple of places. The thing you learn is that in major uprisings such as in Iraq or in Afghanistan or Bosnia or in other places, and I don't like the term but we use the term because it's very important and that is, you can't kill your way out of these issues. They didn't start typically because of a military problem. It started because of societal failure. And it ultimately evolves into an active insurgency and the insurgency takes on either criminal or terrorist complexion to it and that begins the process of instability. The military may necessarily be used as I found myself in at least Iraq and Afghanistan, may be used to buy time. May be used to create white space where we can both train indigenous forces in the way that we want them to be, non-predatory and capable, while we address the societal issues that can create stability in the region.

So, the military has a role in these but the military isn't the solution in these. The solution ultimately is empowering the Department of State which has always been the leading edge of American influence.

We don't have to be very explicit about the capacity of the United States military. It is enormous. It is the most powerful military on the planet. But the great power of the United States has always been the beacon of its governance and the capacity of its aggressive diplomacy. I mean that in a positive sense, not in a hegemonic sense. So, we should be empowering our diplomats. We should be empowering the foreign policy mechanisms of the United States. And empowering the USAID and other entities that can come to the assistance of countries that want to change these desperate societal problems. The solution is not the military solution, the military is an enabler ultimately to the solution. The solution is at the economic, the societal and the political and diplomatic levels.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you very much.

MS. KARLIN: So, taking that question about the U.S military substituting potentially for USAID or the State Department. I agree wholeheartedly with John's comments and I might emphasize three points as to why the U.S. military shouldn't play this role from the most superficial to the most important. The most superficial, it's actually really expensive to pay for people to be in the U.S. military compared to Foreign Service officers or USAID workers. Number two, the optics are pretty terrible. We don't want the U.S. military engaged in development projects. Finally, and most importantly, the U.S. military is an extraordinary institution. It is built to fight and win wars. If we do not use it in that way, it will no longer be as capable in doing so. And at the end of the day, that is the priority it must have.

MR. ALLEN: Let me add just one thing to Mara's point. We don't want the military to be involved in diplomacy but over the last few years we absolutely have. Because when the time came to move quickly for the processes of stabilizing society, moving and development, we didn't have any other options. So, the U.S. military had to bear that burden in the absence of the real capabilities in other places. That's not to diminish what the eight USAID professionals and the young Foreign Service officers who sweated in 130 degrees in Iraq or Afghanistan have done for us. But they're not numerous enough and the institutions don't have the expeditionary capabilities to do that. So, in Ramadi when we're on patrol and a young sergeant picks up a tomato from an open market and says to me that this tomato is the many Iraqi Dinars today and if it goes up five Dinars, then I can expect that there will be X number of IED blasts within a couple of weeks because no one can afford the tomatoes anymore but they can afford to plant IED's to put food on the tables. This is where we find young Marine sergeants having to do both

development and fighting at the same time. As Mara says, we don't want, we don't want that. Let's empower the entities within our government that are organized and equipped and manned to do that sort of thing. That's the United States State Department.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you very much. Dan.

MR. BYMAN: Briefly on the Egypt question, I had hopes in 2011 too that Egypt would play a significant leadership role in the Middle East and do so in a positive way. It's not capable of doing that today. Egypt depends heavily on both open and indirect support from Gulf governments. It has a low level civil war in parts of its country. And in other parts of its country it's repressing significant parts of its population. The legitimacy of its government is questionable and its ability to project power in a military sense is questionable. So, Egypt is still a major country in the region. It is still relatively stable but that's about as low a bar as you get when you're comparing to other countries in the Middle East. I would love to have a more optimistic perspective on Egypt but I will simply say that prospects that are less bad than they are for a number of its neighbors.

MR. O'HANLON: And Fede, over to you for final words.

MS. SAINI FASANOTTI: Okay. Well, as an Italian, we are very close to Egypt. We had many problems in diplomacy last year as you probably know. We are trying, I think, our diplomacy to understand how to deal with Libya in this way. But until now, as Dan says, Egypt is being really problematic, disrupting and is in many ways, a strong leader. In the end, all the strength is just synonymous of weakness. What it is doing in Egypt is really bad, in my opinion. So, I really hope for you, that situation will change but not in the same way of the Arab spring.

MR. O'HANLON: Thanks to all of you for coming and please join me again in congratulating President-Elect Allen and thank you to the panel.

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