THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS

THE CHANGING ROLE OF AMERICA'S MILITARY: A DEBATE

Las Vegas, Nevada

Monday, December 11, 2017

Introduction:

ROBERT LANG
Executive Director, Brookings Mountain West

Debate Panel:

SUSAN B. GLASSER, Moderator
Chief International Affairs Columnist
POLITICO

MAHSA SAEIDI, Moderator
Reporter, KTNV Action News

JOHN R. ALLEN
President, The Brookings Institution

MICHAEL C. DESCH
Director, International Security Center
University of Notre Dame

EUGENE GHOLZ
Associate Professor of Political Science
University of Notre Dame

MARA KARLIN
Nonresident Senior Fellow, Security and Strategy, Foreign Policy
The Brookings Institution

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. LANG: Good evening. And welcome to Greenspun Hall Auditorium. I'm Robert Lang. I'm Executive Director of Brookings Mountain West. And tonight, it's our pleasure to host a convening by the Brookings Institution and the Charles Koch Institute, in partnership with POLITICO.

In a moment I'll turn over the stage to Susan Glasser, POLITICO's Chief International Affairs Columnist, and Host of the Global POLITICO podcast.

First, I want to acknowledge some folks who are in the audience here. Starting with Jim Murren, who is the CEO of MGM, thanks for coming out. Next to him is Tom Kaplan, who is a Managing Partner at Wolfgang Puck. And finally, Will Ruger, who is the Vice President for Research and Policy at the Charles Koch Institute.

We have the privilege of putting this event on tonight. This is going to expand the discussion on this critical area and this public policy issue. Here to guide us in that conversation and debate, hopefully, please welcome Susan Glasser to the stage. (Applause)

MS. GLASSER: The debaters are here. Thank you everyone, for coming out. Also, I should especially thank you, I'm told you've chosen not to go to the rodeo in order to be here tonight (laughter). So, we are all grateful to you for taking the time.

I am going to jump right in here this evening, and go ahead and introduce our panelists to you, and introduce this really unique event that we are having here, on *The Changing Role of America's Military*. It is a debate; we want it to be a debate, so I have the privilege of welcoming you to the second installment of this series, which is cosponsored by an unlikely couple, Brookings Foreign Policy and the Charles Koch Institute.

It's a series of debates on America's changing role in the world. And what a pleasure it is to be here in Las Vegas. Of course, I want to thank our host here at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, as well as our audience online, and those joining us from around the world.

I hope that you will have questions. We are going to ask you to submit those. I'll talk in a second about the role of our local partner, KTNV Anchor, Mahsa Saeidi. She wants you to think of some really provocative ones, because we are going to have a whole big Q&A section.

Let me tell you a little bit about how it's going to work this evening. I'm delighted, first of all for POLITCO to join as a partner in this ongoing series of thematic debates. It's taking debates that we have in Washington around the United States, and the goal is to foster a vigorous, civil and constructive national discussion on the future of American foreign policy. Just because it's civil doesn't mean it can't be a real debate, and that's what our evening participants are here for.

But let me tell you a little bit about how it's going to work first. Tonight's debate focuses specifically on the changing role of America's military in the world. It will proceed in five different segments, 25 minutes of debate moderated first by me; then we'll go for 20 minutes of question and answer moderated by Mahsa. She's already collecting questions, so get them in while we are doing the first section. Then we'll come back, and we'll have another 25 minutes of formal debate, and 7 minutes for closing statements.

To keep the conversation moving our debaters have been asked to limit their answers to just 90 seconds. We've got a clock, they've got a clock right there too, so help me keep them in line. Meanwhile, the audience in the room and, of course, all of you online, are encouraged to submit questions on Twitter, use the hashtag AmericaInTheWorld, our audience in the room will also be able to submit questions.

Now with that, let me introduce our debaters. From left to right for those of you in the audience: General John Allen assumed the presidency of the Brookings Institution in November. He's a retired U.S. Marine Corps four-star general and former commander of the NATO International Security Assistance Force, and all the U.S. forces in Afghanistan. Following a nearly four-decade military career, serving in a variety of command and staff positions, General Allen was both senior advisor to the secretary of defense on Middle East security, and then he served as the special presidential envoy in recent years, to the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL.

Joining him from Brookings, is Mara Karlin, a nonresident senior fellow in the Center for 21st Century Security and Intelligence at Brookings, and also an associate professor of the practice of strategic studies at the Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies. She served in national security roles for five U.S. secretaries of defense, advising on policy spanning strategic planning, defense budgeting, and the Middle East, Europe and Asia. She earned her PhD in International Relations, right where she's back teaching, at Johns Hopkins SAIS. Now we have Team Notre Dame you could say.

MR. DESCH: They fight in (crosstalk).

MS. GLASSER: We are not voting at the end of this, but you are allowed to express your sympathies. Mike Desch is a professor and director for the International Security Center at the University of Notre Dame. Previously he was founding director of the Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs, and the Robert M. Gates chair in Intelligence and National Security Decision-Making at the George Bush School at Texas A&M. He has also taught at the University of Kentucky, and has worked on Senate staff at the State Department and Congressional Research Service. Dr. Desch received his PhD in political science from the University of Chicago.

Finally, and this debate we could also be calling, Three doctors and a general; we have Eugene Gholz, an associate professor of political science at the University of Notre Dame. He served at the Pentagon as senior advisor on manufacturing and industrial base policy. His PhD in security studies comes from MIT.

I would also like to introduce Mahsa Saeidi of KTNV Action News right here in Las Vegas, who will be combing through those audience questions on Twitter, and for all of those here in writing. So, get your questions in if you haven't already,

Now, I'd like to jump right in. We have a big set of questions and issues to debate today. We are asking you to step back for a moment from the day-to-day details of the intricacies of military policy, and answer for this audience of informed Americans and for those listening online: what are America's natural national interests? And what are those interests that the U.S. military should serve? Are we meeting, adapting and changing to the world as it is today and not as we'd like it to be? Why do we need to have hundreds of thousands of troops forward-deployed around the world? Why should we spend more on defense than the next eight countries combined?

General Allen, Doctors Karlin, Desch and Gholz, thank you so much. And here we go. I'm going to jump right in actually, Dr. Gholz, with you. Back in 1997 you and two colleagues wrote an article entitled, *Come Home America*. You argued that the United States should significantly roll back its commitments around the world. In light of what you argued, it was a paucity of international threats.

Well, 20 years later, after 9/11, after the war in Iraq, do we still have a paucity of threats? How do you define U.S. national interest today; not to mention the role that the U.S. Military should play in serving them?

MR. GHOLZ: Thank you. Excuse me. It's a pleasure to be here. And I just want to thank all the sponsors of the debate, and I think that's a really great question

to start us off.

The core idea of the article, as you point out, 20 years ago was that we had mobilized our level of commitments to defense based on a set of threats that we faced in the world, the Cold War, which was a very serious and challenging international environment for the United States that lasted for decades. And we were struck that the collapse of our opponent in that conflict, the Soviet Union, did not lead to a commensurate change in the American strategic posture, or the level of investment, or change of our alliance posture around the world.

It seemed that we had created a set of defense structures to defend our interests, and our core interests are in protecting the security of America, and the freedom that we enjoy here, and our way of life, and the prosperity of our country, and we also desire to protect and help many people around the world. But there's a priority of our interests, right. And so the core things that we were interested in are exactly the same thing that I think almost everyone on the spectrum debating U.S. strategy is interested in.

Security, prosperity and liberty, but when the threat situation changes dramatically we would expect the steps the United States has to take to achieve security, prosperity and liberty might also change dramatically, and that's why we were interested in a strategy of restraint.

MS. GLASSER: All right, well, we are going to have to come back to you on what *Come Home America* really means. But Dr. Karlin, do you think that's a realistic strategy for the United States, looking at the world today?

MS. KARLIN: First of all, thanks so much for having me. It's really a treat to be out here. I think in some ways, Eugene is correct, right. It's security, it's prosperity it's liberty, and that all makes a lot of sense. What I find terribly curious though

is that the security environment has changed markedly since the 1990s. Right? We have a revanchist Russia, we have China that's blustering about the East China Sea, the South China Sea. We see terrorist groups like ISIS and potentially ISIS 2.0. So, I do find it a little curious that the same arguments one would have made in the '90s apparently still resonate today. Moreover, I would argue that we are looking at counterfactuals right now, and I don't know that playing the game of what-if is terribly useful.

MS. GLASSER: All right. Dr. Desch, let's not play the game of what-if. Let's talk about the elephant in the room, Donald Trump. One year ago (laughter) -- One year ago you wrote that Donald Trump's "America First" foreign policy might really be a foreign policy that focused on our national interests narrowly defined and curb our enthusiasm, once and for all for trying to run the world. What do you think one year later? Are we out of the running-the-world business? Should we be?

MR. DESCH: No. No. We are addicted to primacy, and running the world. And, you know, Donald Trump was, from the very beginning, from the first foreign policy address he gave at the Center for the National Interest in the summer of 2016, of two minds on his vision for American grand strategy. You may recall the first half of that speech was basically the sort of neoconservative boilerplate about the essential role that American deep engagement and assertive leadership would play in fixing all the world's problems.

The second-half of the speech, which sounded like it had been written by a completely different author, raised some problems with, you know, the approach to the world that the United States had taken since the end of the Cold War, and proposed a different set of policies. A more restrained approach to America's role in the world.

And I hate to say it, but this sort of schizophrenia that you saw in the Trump administration before he even won the election, continues today. So, I think we

are still addicted to Empire, and despite some encouraging words at previous periods from the President.

MS. GLASSER: General Allen, after your long career in Military Service, and especially overseeing many of our troops in some of the world's hot spots, did you see yourself as an Imperial Leader of a Force that was addicted to primacy, sir?

GENERAL ALLEN: No, not at all. And of course let me just preface my remarks by saying, it's wonderful to be here. I want to thank the sponsors. But I also want to remember the good people of Las Vegas for the tragedy that they've gone through. You remain in my prayers, and you will always will.

You know, I served overseas for most of my career, a good bit of it in combat. I can tell you the many times where, as I became more senior, when I would meet with the leadership of the various countries, whether they were in East Asia, or in Southeast Asia, or in the Middle East, or in Europe, while there could be a sense by some that we are addicted to power, there was a very clear need in the minds of so many of these leaders that the American presence in the world was a stabilizing presence.

And in many respects it was a beneficent presence. It was a presence that facilitated a world order that gave the capacity for global economic intercourse, but largely was a presence that benefitted the world order, and benefitted humankind.

Now, we've had some problems and we've had some spectacular policy failures, but that doesn't lessen the importance of the United States in the world today, and it isn't just about the military presence in the world today, it's the presence of the United States as a transformational Force in the world today. And I believe most of our partners, whether they are our allies or just our trading partners, would feel very similarly, that there is an important role for the United States in the world today as a transformational power.

MS. GLASSER: All right. Dr. Gholz, has General Allen persuaded you, first of all? And second of all I want you to go back to that first question and give us the answer to: should we really come home? Do you actually still stand by that article from 1997 today?

MR. GHOLZ: I absolutely do. I think we should come home. No, I have not -- the General has not persuaded me in his first 90-second remark, that would be rather sudden, that's asking a lot.

MS. GLASSER: That's (crosstalk)?

MR. GHOLZ: Yes. So, I think it's not at all surprising that the General found that many people that he met with and talked to around the world were quite interested in having the United States work for them, or engaging the world in -- you know they were asking for us to come, because many of the people who asked for the United States to come, do benefit from the U.S. presence, right.

It takes some of the burden of providing for their own defense off of them and shifts it to the American taxpayers, shifts it to the American soldiers, which benefits them at some cost to us, and that is a something that we should take account of. There's a certain amount of altruism, there's certain amount of help for our friends around the world, but it's also true that we can have friends in the world.

And we can have a positive effect in the world, and we can trade with the world without being militarily allied to many countries around the world, countries are not our friends because the military shows up and promises to defend them, they are our friends because of what we represent, the products we offer to sell to them.

And I think that the -- to answer your question about, as the threats have changed in the world today, you have to ask yourself: is it best for the United States to lead with its military as its mechanism for responding to the world? How effective is our

military at dealing with these threats? And as I expect we will get to in the rest of the debate, the answer is, our track record is lousy and we could do better with a different posture?

MS. GLASSER: All right. Dr. Karlin, there are more than 100,000 U.S. troops still stationed around the world. Why are they there a full generation after the end of the Cold War?

MS. KARLIN: So, let's talk a little bit about the U.S. way of war. There are two key principles, we like unfair advantages, and we like fighting away games, and the way that we fight away games, is by being there. There being Europe, there being Asia, there being the Middle East,

Let's rewind for a moment because I think we heard a little bit about this track record, so let's go back about 70 years ago when the United States ended up entering World War II pretty late, had to be on the defensive for two years, and lost 400,000 casualties. That is two-thirds of the population of Las Vegas.

And when that war ended, right when fascism and totalitarianism were defeated, then the United States looked at itself and said, so what do we do? And in fact what you see is a maintenance of this posture, and you see all of these democracies erupting around the world. Over the last 70 years we have had the most peaceful and prosperous period in U.S. history. That doesn't just happen.

MS. GLASSER: All right. Peace, prosperity. Dr. Desch, what about the rise of China and Russia as pure competitors? In an America First scenario, like the one you are envisioning, who is going to be there to counter China and Russia?

MR. DESCH: Well, the question we have to ask ourselves is: does the United States need to do the heavy lifting to deal with what I think will be the inevitable rise of China as a major power? I guess I dissent a little bit from the General about

Russia being a major threat.

General, you and I are both old enough to remember the Cold War. The Soviet Union was a serious threat, that Russia --

GENERAL ALLEN: I didn't realize I had said anything about Russia, but go ahead.

MR. DESCH: You had talked about a renascent Russian threat. The Russia of today is a rump of the Soviet Union, a country with severe demographic crisis, certainly a troublemaker in its near abroad but hardly an existential threat. Now, let's talk a little bit about Mara's point about the forward deployment of U.S. Forces, and ask ourselves about how the expansion of NATO, in the years immediately after the Cold War, created the situation today in Russia that we are so unhappy about?

I heard from the Russian -- well, Boris Yeltsin's Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev, in 1996 he said, "The last thing that the United States should do, if it's interested in fostering the success of democracy in Russia, is expand NATO." We expanded NATO, we basically thumbed our nose at the Russians, we get Vladimir Putin and then we are shocked that we get a nationalist backlash there.

MS. GLASSER: All right. I'm going to give you a chance to respond to that; NATO aggression.

MS. KARLIN: Sure. So, that's actually not at all what we were talking about. Right? We were talking about the U.S. military being all around the world, and utility of it. Are the real debates to be had about whether or not NATO should have moved a few steps to the right or not? Absolutely, and that's really interesting.

And yet, nevertheless, the United States won the Cold War, and it is not at all surprising, that we might have taken those steps. But yet again that is not relevant to the question.

MR. DESCH: Not relevant to the question about whether the continuing forward presence of the U.S. military is a stabilizing force? Because the U.S. military has moved into some of the new NATO countries, and so it seems to me that this is directly relevant to your proposition that the forward presence of the United States is a stabilizing factor. I mean we could go around the world, we could ask in Iraq: was the forward presence of the United States there in March of 2003 stabilizing? I would argue, no.

MS. GLASSER: All right. I've got a lot of people who want to respond. Do you need to respond directly on this question of NATO?

MS. KARLIN: I'm good.

MS. GLASSER: Okay. Eugene, and then I want to bring the General in.

MR. GHOLZ: So, I might just chime in on sort of the key, the key alternative of this, which is I agree with Mike that you might think the U.S. military presence is not stabilizing if it precipitates crises and hostility in the way it's postured, but there is the alternative side of this which is the question of, if Russia is now obstreperous, whether caused by us or not, for whatever reason, Vladimir Putin, in a declining Russia, and a Russia that's not the same as the Soviet Union, is acting up, the question is, can the world handle them acting up without U.S. leadership, without U.S. forward presence? And the answer is, I think almost certainly yes, right.

So, if you look at the decline of Russia and the limits on Russian power, Russia is very powerful in its backyard. Going and playing the away game close to where they are maximizes the difficulty for us. On the other hand, Russia doesn't have much ability to play an away game, and if they do, even without the United States, they are dealing with very wealthy, very technologically sophisticated countries that have strong governments, capable governments of getting things done.

Europe, of all the places in the world, is an area that can take care of

itself very well in the face of the kind of threat that might be posed by the Russians, right. They don't need the United States to take the burden for them.

MS. GLASSER: All right. General Allen, can Europe take care of itself without the United States?

GENERAL ALLEN: We shouldn't even attempt to answer that question. The Euro-Atlantic relationship is one that has sustained global stability and economic progress since the end of World War II and the end of the Cold War. When the United States attempts to divorce itself from the whole concept of NATO, that's just an irrational argument; the United States is inherently and inextricably linked to Western Europe in the context of NATO. And Article V of the NATO Treaty indicates that in the event of hostilities, and an attack upon one of us, is an attack upon all of us.

So, the United States is in this thing with Europe for the long haul. And Russia is a threat. Now, I won't be unambiguous now, Russia is a threat. Russia severed Crimea from the Ukraine, not because of American or NATO membership, Russia initiated the separatist movement in the Donbass in the Ukraine, not because of NATO membership moving towards the Russian border, Russian cyber-attacks upon Western European states on a regular basis, virtually every single day, to include some critical infrastructure, and the massive strategic influence campaign that Russia has waged, not only upon our European partners, but also upon the United States as well.

This means that Russia is not a benign State, it is a threat to the United States. Now, to Mike's point, it may not be an existential threat, meaning it threatens our existence, but it has enunciated a campaign of the intent to use nuclear weapons to escalate to de-escalate. We need to remember that as well. So, Russia is a threat.

It's a threat to the West, it's a threat to the United States. It may not be existential, but it is a threat, and there are Russian cyber activities underway in the United

States, right as we speak, just as there are in Western Europe, and the influence campaign is enormous; attempting to break down the confidence of the people of the democracies of NATO and Western Europe, confidence in their own systems of government, and ultimately their democratic processes. We need to keep an eye on this.

MS. KARLIN: If I could just build on, I think, John's terrific comments. You know, it is hard to imagine Russia being a benign state, and even if we looked back at the 1990s, where you saw post-Cold War, the U.S. as a superpower, and the Russians feeling particularly discomfiting, it's hard to imagine them actually playing a benign role.

But we have seen substantial military modernization over the last decade; one has to assume there's a reason for that. Moreover, if I can build on this important point that John is making, of effectively their strategy is escalate to escalate, which means if I punch you, they are going to bring then 10 guys to then punch me back. Effectively they will use limited nuclear -- excuse me -- tactical nuclear weapons in the face of a conventional conflict.

You know, if we think about these counterfactuals of: what if NATO hadn't expanded? What if the U.S. had just pull back post-world War II? I mean let's remember that these are just counterfactuals, we don't know what might have happened here, and we can play the guessing game, right, we can think what might have happened, but do we really want to try to do that?

MR. GHOLZ: Mara, no one is arguing that NATO should have pulled back after World War II, or the U.S. should have pulled back after World War II, we are talking about after the anything after the end of the Cold War.

MS. GLASSER: After the end of the Cold War.

MR. GHOLZ: The Cold War, very important.

MS. GLASSER: All right, that's an important part. I want to go back

because this is an important point, the word Iraq has been raised here I want to ask a question. A lightning round here to everybody, which is: In the emphasis on counterterrorism after 9/11, did we fail to understand the threat posed by Russia and a rising China? I'll ask everybody that question. General Allen?

GENERAL ALLEN: Say that question again, please.

MS. GLASSER: Did we fail to account for and to have a strategy to deal with the rise of China and the return of Russia to the global stage, because we were so concerned with counterterrorism after 9/11?

GENERAL ALLEN: I think to an extent that's a valid point. We were deeply concerned, we were fighting in two theaters, we had several hundred thousand American Forces, a 50-nation coalition in Afghanistan, and some lesser number in Iraq. I wouldn't say we took our eye off the ball but we certainly were occupied elsewhere, and when I think back upon most of our Forces in East Asia that were deployed into the Middle East to cover down on the Forces that we needed, yeah, I don't think that we were oblivious to the rise of China, but I don't think we had a good sight picture on what was happening in Russia, frankly.

MS. GLASSER: Dr. Desch, did we overreact?

MR. DESCH: I think the United States had undertaken military operations in Afghanistan to try to destroy al-Qaeda, or at least oust them and topple the Taliban. After 9/11, we had no alternative in my view. Where we went to cropper was in two respects, one is that we took our eye off the ball in Afghanistan very soon, in early 2002, and started planning for an invasion of Iraq; an invasion that made absolutely no sense in terms of a response to 9/11.

The second problem is that we convinced ourselves in Afghanistan that we needed to engage in nation-building there in order to be successful. We have the

most capable military the world has seen, you know, in the last millennium, but rebuilding, or building a state in Afghanistan which has never had one, is a bridge too far. And defining success in terms of unrealistic goals, I think is going to be the legacy of the first decade of the 21st Century.

We didn't need to define our security interest as broadly as we did in those two cases, certainly took our eyes off the rise of China, but also I think took our eyes off the real problem of global terrorism.

MS. GLASSER: All right. Dr. Karlin, did we blow it?

MS. KARLIN: So, I think it's important for us to step back and remember how paradigm-shifting 9/11 was. How suddenly all of the ideas of the security and safety of America were blown up by this notion of not having two oceans and not having to close allies on our border -- excuse me -- ally and partner on our borders, and what that would mean.

Russia was much less of an issue at the time, China I think absolutely was on that trajectory, and that's where I see some real opportunity costs to what we've been doing over the last 15 years. And when you look at where the U.S. military is today, we have a whole lot of folks that have studied Dari and Pashto and Arabic, and not that many that know Russian or Mandarin. We have a very large army.

We have, frankly, a lot of neuralgia over what the last 15-plus years of conflict have inherited, and what they have meant for our forces. So, the opportunity costs are real and they are profound, but as I look through them, I do think it's important to remember: how did we get to where we are?

MS. GLASSER: All right. Dr, Gholz, we already know you are not in favor of a forever war.

MR. GHOLZ: Yes.

MS. GLASSER: So I'm going to rephrase the question a little bit for you. What would you have the United States do to counter the rise of China, and the new-found Russian aggression that we are seeing toward its neighbors?

MR. GHOLZ: Right. Well, so one thing I want to be clear about is that nobody gets a free pass or a free shot at the United States, right. So, if terrorists come to the United States and attack us, you know, we should chase them and get to the specific terrorists who attack us, it's not global terrorism, its terrorists who are anti United States. But in that realm, like I don't want to say that everything we've done, every kind of war we fought is always a mistake. Right? This is not pacifism this is not the United States just strictly backing down.

With respect to great powers, you're right. I think the Iraq war was a tragic blunder, the over focus on terrorism, as Mara has discussed took away some of the possible concerns with potential great power conflict that take years to follow and pay attention to, and think about investments for how to respond. But I think that Russia and China both have significant strategic problems of their own, are much smaller powers than the United States today, and will be for decades,

They can do things like attack and disrupt our elections, as General Allen discussed, and I think that's a very serious threat, I think we should pay attention to that. Our military is not what offers a response to that. Right? It's better cyber security at home, it's paying attention to the relationships that we might have that could help our allies, current allies become our friends and capable of paying their own defense against the potential threats that they would face from China and Russia, because they can handle the scale of threats that they face. But the United States has particularly with respect to the military, a much more limited role to play in defending against the threats that do exist.

MS. GLASSER: All right. Dr. Desch, this is going to be our last question before we turn to part two of our debate tonight, the audience questions, but I do want to ask you one last question here. What is the proper role for NATO in this new world that we face?

MR. DESCH: Well, I think NATO still has a role as a pillar of the European security architecture. I guess where I differ from General Allen is that I don't see the need to expand NATO particularly in the period in which the Cold War, which had been the primary rationale for NATO, was over. Secondly, I have no problem with the United States continuing commitment to our NATO allies, but I just don't think that we need to do that with forward-deployed U.S. Forces.

And I think we also need to be mindful of the fact that all along a big problem with NATO, and this goes way back to the Cold War, has been the problem of burden sharing, and a big element of that is the fact that the Europeans could always count on the United States no matter what level of contribution that they made. I don't think it's unfair in the current environment, and I don't think it's a threat to NATO security to say, hey, the world has changed. We no longer live in the world of the Fulda Gap and the Warsaw Pact, it's time to rethink what our relationship is.

Not breaking it but asking the hard questions about whether if the Europeans really feel the sense of threat, why aren't they meeting their NATO targets for defense spending?

MS. GLASSER: General Allen, you had a two-finger?

GENERAL ALLEN: Yeah. Look, NATO is in fact going to start to meet those defense levels, at 2 percent, and then 20 percent for modernization, and they are well on their way to doing that. And if we don't think that Russia has been acting as though it is a military threat to the Eastern flank of NATO, Zap-ad 2017; their major

exercise this year may have had as many as a quarter million troops involved in it along the NATO border.

Why would that be necessary if they weren't attempting to intimidate the NATO States on the Eastern flank? Their strategic influence operation has done a great deal to destabilize both the EU and NATO, and arguably while NATO was a defensive alliance, and isn't against anyone, it's about the defense of Western Europe, the EU as a Bloc of liberal democracies that stand for human rights and economic progress.

The EU is a real threat to Russia, in the sense that as long as they remain a constant Bloc they are the counter-influence to Russia. And it's much easier for Putin to deal with the European states in a series of bilateral relationships than ultimately as a bloc. But what NATO is attempting to do now of course, is to work as an entity to deter Russia to the East, but also very importantly NATO is working to project stability into the Middle East and in North Africa.

And this is long overdue. A couple more ways of several million migrants into Europe, and we are going to say Europe fundamentally changed forever, and NATO's intent to try to work with countries in the Middle East and in North Africa to try to stabilize those countries so that the populations will remain home, that's an important contribution of NATO in the future.

MS. GLASSER: All right. Now, we are going to go to audience Q&A, and to Mahsa Saeidi, of KTNV Action News, for questions submitted by the audience and on Twitter. Mahsa?

MS. SAEIDI: This is where it gets really tough for you guys. I hope you are ready for those. I've got some very tough questions. So, I want to start out with a question that has to do with Las Vegas. Obviously the importance of the Strip cannot be overstated to our local economy here. ISIS has released videos, propaganda videos,

specifically highlighting, and targeting the Strip with cars, with knives, these low-tech tactics that we have seen. So, my question to you is: does our counterterrorism policy is it effective at protecting what many believe to be a soft target? And, General Allen?

GENERAL ALLEN: Well, the policy seeks to defend against a number of different kinds of threats. What we know from ISIS, and we know from other of the terrorist organizations is, as we are able to detect their activity on the Internet, or their activity on social media, et cetera, and I will tell you that through the FBI, and our intelligence Forces overseas, and Homeland Security, et cetera, you know, we are deep inside these systems.

And as we are able to detect their activities, or planning, et cetera, then we are able to move against them. You know, the FBI has got active investigations against terrorist elements in all 50 states, and that will continue, and large numbers of FBI out of the Criminal Division have been moved into the CT elements as well. So, the FBI is postured to do something about this.

What's more difficult, much more difficult is for us to move against the individual colloquially called the "lone wolf." An individual who is on the Internet, who is going to the Jihadi websites, who is ultimately being romanced by a recruiter, or even, in fact, just seeing the YouTube videos of Anwar al-Awlaki, who admonishes people ultimately to perpetrate some kind of a terrorist attack.

It is much more difficult for our law enforcement, intelligence and security forces to get that individual, because they can be recruited online, they can be trained to build the bomb online, and they can ultimately be deployed and never leave their basement.

And today, of course, we had someone who had a pre-detonation of a weapon that they built in New York City. This is the perfect example of the kind of

individual who's a lone wolf, operates completely in the dark, as Director Comey called them, and that's the individual that's most challenging for us.

But I will simply tell you that in ways Americans will never know as they go to sleep at night, between the FBI and the CIA, our intelligence entities and our security forces, the work that has been done to try to protect the United, has been enormous. It is the lone wolf though, that is always going to be the challenge for us.

MS. SAEIDI: Does anyone else want to -- Dr. Desch?

MR. DESCH: Yeah, just very quickly. I mean, I agree with General Allen. The threat of terrorism in the United States is a real threat that justly deserves the attention that it's getting from the U.S. Government. The only thing I would point out is the irony of the fact that overseas ISIS and the Caliphate are basically getting rolled up, but that doesn't seem to reassure most of us that the threat of ISIS-inspired terrorism here at home is in any way mitigated.

And in fact, a lot of the Europeans are concerned now that ISIS is losing its territorial base in Iraq and Syria that it's going to be more of a traditional terrorist sort of organization. So, absolutely right, we have to attend to the security of our homeland. I just don't see how our forward-military presence necessarily ensures that.

MS. SAEIDI: This is a question from the audience, and Dr. Karlin, you can take this one if you would like. "How has the contentious political environment in Washington affected the DoD's ability to get resources and operate?"

MS. KARLIN: Well, unfortunately the story with DoD's resources and the operating budget is an older one than this contentious political environment over the last year or so. Effectively, the defense budget has been going in an unhelpful trajectory.

So, we've had a number of things like continuing resolutions, which means you are not allowed to kind of start new contracts. We've had the challenge of

sequestration which has mandated across-the-board cuts, and frankly, you know, for those of you business people in the audience, I suspect you are probably scratching your head and saying, that seems like such a silly way to run a place.

But of course as we know the U.S. system was designed to constrain action, and Congress holds the power of the purse, but there are some really profound costs to this challenge. You know, on national security, I think actually we have a whole lot more civil debate, and actually agreement. I think on the whole most folks understand that the last 70 years have looked pretty good for America, and we would like to continue them. I think most folks who would reject the arguments that have been made about pulling back, but we do need the resources and the funding to pay for it.

Now, one of the other challenges of course is putting money where we want the money. So, effectively right now the U.S. military actually really needs to focus on modernization, you've heard me and John, for example, talk about high-end threats from Russia, or China --

MS. SAEIDI: Dr. Gholz -- sorry to interrupt -- what do you think about? We need to focus on modernization.

MR. GHOLZ: Oh, on modernization. So, I think --

MS. SAEIDI: Just very briefly because I have another question for you.

MR. GHOLZ: Very brief, sure. Modernization is an important issue for the United States, but I think the most important kind of modernization is to change the trajectory of the kind of defense spending that we have. So, we are actually spending quite a lot on defense despite the kinds of challenges and the planning problems that Mara talks about, right. So, we are still spending more on defense today than in essentially all the -- in real dollars, essentially all the years of the Cold War.

So, we are spending a tremendous amount, we may not be spending it

as effectively as Mara would like, but I would say the reason we are spending so much is because we are buying very high-end technologies, and very difficult technologies to enable us to play the away game, to constantly project power.

Projecting power is super expensive, whereas being on defense, if we shifted the kinds of investment we were making to stress a defensive posture as opposed to an offensive posture, we would be able to achieve our strategic goals of defending our way of life, and even help many of our friends without spending as much as we do.

MS. KARLIN: So, if I could just add two points there. First of all, as a percent of GDP we are spending about 4 percent, at the height of the Cold War it was about 10 percent.

MR. GHOLZ: That's true.

MS. KARLIN: Moreover, actually much of what we are spending our money on isn't those super-cool high-end systems, its people. We spend about half of the U.S. military budget on people. Indeed, the price per soldier has gone up about 60 percent since 9/11, I think a lot of folks would like the idea of spending more on modernization, as some of us have talked about, the challenge being it's very hard to help Congress understand why that's so critical.

MS. SAEIDI: Okay. Thank you so much. I do want to move on. We have two kind of very tough questions, one on Twitter directed for you General Allen, and one from our audience, and they're both kind of along the same line, so I'll read both of them and then give you an opportunity to answer.

This is in response to your comments that the United States as a stabilizing influence around the world, and this person, Ed, on Twitter is saying, "They are killing thousands of foreigners since World War II, throwing entire countries into chaos benefits who?" And somebody in our audience had a similar question, "By what right,

according to international law, does the United States feel justified to invade a sovereign nation?" So, a very tough question, how would you respond to that?

GENERAL ALLEN: Well, it's not a tough question actually, because the United States, in fact, has been a stabilizing presence around the world. Look at the outcome of World War II, look at Japan's rise, look at South Korea's rise, look at Taiwan's rise, look at China's rise. Much of the reason that China has been successful has been a stable environment in which China could, in fact, achieve economic capacity.

Look at Southeast Asia, Southeast Asia is a very different place today than it was in the period of time and after then after the Cold War. And yes, I get the idea that I get the -- the Iraq question. Iraq was, I think, a mistake by almost any stretch of the imagination. It has caused us problems thereafter. But Europe has been at peace, East Asia has been at peace, Northeast Asia has been at peace, much of the world has been at peace.

And yes, there have been policy failures, but the overarching international community and the global system of rules that have dictated the intercourse of nations, and the economic prosperity of nations has, by and large, been a result of the United States-led alliance system in the aftermath of World War II.

MR. GHOLZ: There's a reason that General Allen and Mara keep going back 70 years, and keep going back to the post-World War II Era, and that's because the strategic situation then was different. And we did actually have 45 years thereafter of a need for the United States to play a different role in the world than we need today, or need in the post-Cold War Era. Right?

But we had 45 years of difficult slog, but general success. And then the 25 years since then, which they are lumping in with the 70 years because they want to claim the benefits of the first 45 years. The 25 years since the end of the Cold War have

looked terrible in terms of the effectiveness of U.S. military action overseas, and being able to achieve our ends, and the spending were doing and the chaos we are causing.

MS. SAEIDI: So, Dr. Gholz, I'm sorry to interrupt, but I do want to get through more of these questions, so if you could keep your answers a little shorter.

MR. GHOLZ: Sure.

MR. GHOLZ: This is one, specifically for you, on Twitter, "If the American military came home wouldn't that create a vacuum for other adversaries, including China and Russia?" And let's move -- did you already answer that question or not; because I was reading?

MR. GHOLZ: Well, I guess I would just say, it wouldn't create a vacuum for them because there are other powerful technologically-capable governments that are interested in defending themselves, if the United States wasn't defending for them. Like, Japan wouldn't give up, Germany wouldn't give up France wouldn't give up. It's not a vacuum there are other countries that have the ability and the will to take care of themselves, if we are not doing it for them.

MS. SAEIDI: Go ahead, Mara.

MS. KARLIN: So, we haven't had major nuclear war, we haven't had massive interstate conventional war, and actually we haven't seen a massive proliferation of nuclear weapons much of which we easily could have seen amongst Taiwan, amongst Japan, amongst South Korea, across Europe. Look at the Middle East, there are so many things that could have happened that did not happen.

And so we should Monday morning quarterback: what has occurred over these last 70 years absolutely? But we need to do so and be cognizant with that. Moreover, unfortunately, Vegas rules do not apply to the Middle East, you do not get to put the Middle East in a little box and say, I'm not going near that. We saw what

happened with Europe and the refugees over the last few years, we cannot just close our eyes and hide.

MS. SAEIDI: Okay. Now, I do want to take it back to another question. This is home to Nellis Air Force Base, I know there's a lot of you folks in the audience right now, if you have seen the movie *Good Kill* you know about the drones that hunt down the terrorists. And I wanted to ask General Allen, and anyone else who wants to step in, about the impact of this technology on the future role of the military.

GENERAL ALLEN: Well, I think we are going to see it more and more, what drone and high technology, artificially intelligent, potentially semi or completely autonomous systems give us capacity to do surgical strikes, and surgical operations the likes of which we've never seen before.

MS. SAEIDI: And how do you think that power has changed the way that we are viewed in the world?

GENERAL ALLEN: Well, first we haven't covered it very well, because I personally employed drones in Afghanistan, and where you saw a lot of coverage talk about collateral damage, the truth of course was that there was very, very little collateral damage. We did not shoot unless we had a target, we did not shoot unless we had positive identification of the target.

And there's an awful lot of mythology out there, about the collateral damage and the innocents that were killed by the use of drones. And yes, there have been, and we regret it, and we are very sorry when that happens, but the vast majority of the strikes that we have undertaken have had very low collateral damage, and have killed very few in the end, very few innocents.

MS. SAEIDI: Dr. Desch?

MR. DESCH: I agree completely with General Allen's assessments. My

one reservation about drones and about high technology, in general, in the American Military, is it could lead us to think that we can solve really complex international problems by shooting our way out of them.

There's a place for the use of kinetic military force, and I think there's a big place for the use of drones in the war on terror, but we also need to understand that there are limits to what this technology will do to solve the larger underlying problems that we are facing.

GENERAL ALLEN: And I would contend to agree with Mike on this. I would contend that we think about that constantly, and many of those drones go out on a mission and they come back fully loaded because we couldn't get the clear shot that we were looking for. Many of our aircrafts go out loaded with complete ordnance loads, and they come back completely loaded, because we couldn't get the clear shot. And sometimes there's a failure, and we regret that.

We live with that failure, it's a horrible thing and we regret it. But the vast majority, I will tell you, as an ethical country, the vast majority of the times we send those systems out we govern the employment of that system by the ethics of the States.

MS. SAEIDI: Thank you, General. So, another question from our audience, "Has the lack of congressional oversight led us into a history of disastrous wars without end?" Does anyone want to take that?

MR. DESCH: I think this is a chicken or the egg question. Has the Executive Branch and the Services conducted war without congressional approval? Or is it the case that our elected leaders on Capitol Hill have been derelict in their duty to oversee some of the big questions of war and peace that we've grappled with, you know, over the past years? And I think the short answer is, the problem is both.

SPEAKER: That's right.

MR. DESCH: But Congress has not covered itself in glory. It's not covered itself in glory in terms of reasserting its constitutional mandate to declare war, and it's also been derelict in its duty to take on some of the hard questions, like the proper balance between privacy and security. And their contempt to let the Trump administration, for example, continue to operate under section 702 with the FISA Act, even though it's expired. That seems to me to really be dropping the ball.

MS. SAEIDI: Okay. One more question here, I'm trying to pick the last one. I guess, "To what extent is our military too stretched given engagements all across the world?" General Allen?

GENERAL ALLEN: Well, you know, I look out in the audience and I think I can tell the young airmen and the military personnel coming out of Nellis. You know, it's worth it for all Americans to consider that over the last 16 years we've fought two major wars, and we have had a major overseas presence, and we've done all of that on a military that's less than 1 percent of the American population.

And I would say that while the morale of our troops is good, our equipment is tired, this goes to Mara's point about modernization being extraordinarily important right now, and in fact under General Mattis' -- Secretary Mattis' leadership with the New Defense -- National Defense Strategy, I think we are going to take a very hard look at both the size of the Force, and the modernization of the Force, to ensure that we are right-sized for the security environment in which we will be operating into the near future, in the distant future.

MS. SAEIDI: You have 30 seconds to answer.

MR. DESCH: I wish that once when we talk about supporting the troops in addition to giving them more money or more equipment, we would also say, is it really necessary to send them into harm's way? That also is supporting the troops in my view.

MS. SAEIDI: Okay. Thank you so much.

MS. GLASSER: All right. Great job! Mahsa, thank you very much for that. And now back to the debate portion of our debate. (Laughter) Okay. So, we've talked several times around Afghanistan, but we haven't really jumped into it. My friend Dexter Filkins wrote a great book a few years ago called *The Forever War*; that was already 10 years ago, and here we are going on. President Trump just recently decided overruling his own initial impulse that he was going to, not only keep fighting in Afghanistan, but send additional troops there.

General Allen, you know more about Afghanistan than anyone else in this room. Sir, how is it possible that the United States military, with all of its vast capabilities and powers, has not achieved a more positive outcome after 16 years of fighting there?

GENERAL ALLEN: Well, there are real challenges in Afghanistan. It shouldn't surprise anyone that being the fourth poorest country on the planet; no matter how long we stay they are still going to be a very poor country. We went to Afghanistan because of the attack on 9/11, we went to Afghanistan to deal with the Taliban Regime and ultimately to deal with al-Qaeda.

But the challenges that we face today we face because at the height of the war, when I was the Commander there, we had about 145- almost 150,000 troops, and to go from 145- to 150,000 troops down to 12,000, and do it less than 40 months. To go from 800 bases to 9 bases, and do it in less than 40 months, and then sub-optimize the follow-on Force, I think we were destined to have the challenges that we have today.

The Forces that we have there right now are Forces that are there to train and continue to advise the Afghan Forces as they get on their feet. The challenges of the President's decision, recently, to add some more troops to the mix isn't about the

tactical situation, the issue is: how are we going to continue to help the Afghans to build governmental capacity and to stimulate the economy?

Because those three things, together, are what is necessary ultimately for Afghanistan to get on its feet, and move forward as a member of the international community; there has to be a security dimension, a governmental dimension, and an economics dimension, and we haven't seen an American policy recently that embraces all three, only a security dimension. That's not enough.

MS. GLASSER: Dr. Desch had a two-finger here.

MR. DESCH: Dave Petraeus asked in a different context: tell me how this ends. General, tell me how Afghanistan ends in a way favorable to us that doesn't require a 10-year, a 15-year, a 20-year commitment by the United States?

GENERAL ALLEN: Well, first of all we shouldn't take that off the table. We've been in Korea since the end of the Korean War, we have 25,000 troops there still, and look what Korea has become. Korea became one of the model democracies and one of the great economies on the planet. So you can't go from 150,000 troops to 9,000 and expect that we are going to have an outcome other than this.

A long-term American presence, and an allied presence, not just an American, but an allied presence that continues to improve the capacity of the Afghans to support their government and to secure their population, over time gives them that that capability. To pull out abruptly creates the kind of waterfall that we have seen, where the Taliban can come back and threaten the Central Government, and can ultimately prevent the development of economic development.

A long-term presence isn't something that we should be afraid of. We've been in Kosovo now for almost 30 years, we've been in the Sinai for longer than that. Relatively small forces have great capacity when they are teamed for training and for

advising, and our long-term presence there to help the Afghans build the security platform necessary for them to improve their governance and to stimulate their economy, is exactly what we should be doing.

And we are not doing it alone, we are doing it with our European partners and with our East Asian partners, and so long as Afghanistan remains stable over time, and gains the capacity over time to both govern itself and to have a vibrant economy, then that is the outcome that we seek.

MS. GLASSER: All right. Dr. Gholz, you've written that the United States would benefit from a foreign policy that is less active in the Muslim world, and that it would diminish terrorism directed against Americans. How exactly would you have us: just pack up and go home?

MS. GLASSER: Well as a loose summary, pack up and go home isn't so terrible, but it's actually very complicated to do that, right. I mean, that this is not about doing something terribly abruptly, leaving people in the lurch who supported us, which I think is a terrible thing we've done in some cases, leaving equipment behind, to mean, it's not: like that (finger snap). But it is basically the case that we had a mission in Afghanistan which was to retaliate against people who attacked us, and we succeeded in that mission, not as rapidly as I would have liked, but we succeeded in that mission years ago now.

We've been engaged in a different mission. We've been through mission creep or escalation to say we have to stabilize or cause the growth of Afghanistan, or to change its politics, right. We don't have a recipe. Political scientists, politicians have not figured out a recipe for causing political development in the world, for causing countries that are not wealthy, don't have lots of experience with democracy, have a different political culture. There are preconditions that enable democracy to evolve over long

periods of time that cannot, as far as we understand, be forced quickly, or sped up through military engagement.

These are political questions not military questions. And so I think we, as the United States, could pack up and leave, we've achieved our key counterterrorism goals, and by staying there and breaking things regularly, and by making their problems seem to be caused by us, attracts more of a bull's-eye on us, that's what changes their struggles, their civil struggles, their internal wars into wars against the United States, is us meddling and telling them how to develop politically. Excuse me.

MS. GLASSER: Dr. Karlin, I'm going to let you respond to that, and then I know General Allen wants to jump in as well.

MS. KARLIN: So what I heard you asking, Susan, was really about this idea of pulling out of the Middle East. So let's push the terrorism issue aside, let's push aside the idea that al-Qaeda's top concern was the U.S. relationship with undemocratic governments, and let's actually just talk economics. You've got 30 to 40 percent of seaborne oil trading through the Gulf. That alone is a huge reason for the U.S. to have a robust posture there.

Or, maybe we just want Russia to take care of it, and China, and kind of hope that they'll have, you know, benign interests and plan on the free flow of commerce the way we've done that. We could take a chance on that. I don't want to, but we could.

MS. GLASSER: General Allen?

GENERAL ALLEN: Yeah, I would simply say Eugene has got it mostly right, but there are really two objectives in Afghanistan, one was to prevent the overthrow of the Afghan government by the Taliban, which we successfully did, and the other was to deny Afghanistan as a platform to al-Qaeda. Our special operators did that every night, all night long, for a long time, and we largely eliminated the al-Qaeda threat in that

particular area, along the Durand Line of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

But those two things we did together, and while we were helping the Afghans we had to fight initially because they had no capability, and eventually the intent was to shift us into the supporting role and them into the lead. And that's ultimately what we were able to do, and that's what we need to continue to do, but we also have to do we can, as I said before, to give the Afghans the capacity to govern themselves, and we can help them with that, and also to give them the capacity to have a vibrant economy.

And as Mara said, it's the economy, ultimately that will change this fundamentally, and this is where the Europeans and the community of nations are very important in joining us in this matter.

MS. GLASSER: All right. We need to get off this question. And, Eugene, I'm going to give you one chance to respond to that, and then we'll move on.

MR. GHOLZ: Well, so to very fast points. If we are concerned about the economy, the burden of spending quite a lot on forward-military presence and fighting lots of wars is a serious burden on the American economy that we can alleviate. If you are interested in prosperity, one of the key things should be to avoid overspending on these military adventures.

The second thing is, I spend a lot of time working on oil and thinking about oil, and global oil markets are actually quite global and quite resilient. People don't trade oil, there are no convoys of military ships delivering oil from one country to another. There's normal market behavior of buyers and sellers engaging in an oil market in a decentralized fashion, and there's not evidence that the U.S. military presence is what enables the United States or other countries of the world to purchase oil internationally.

MS. GLASSER: All right. Dr. Desch, we are meeting here tonight only two months after the tragic deadly mass shooting here in Las Vegas. And of course we

are all still thinking and praying with the victims and their families. But that attack was committed by a lone gunman, was not connected to any form of Islamic terrorism, but it did come in the wake of other mass shootings in San Bernardino, in Orlando, that seem to have been inspired, at least in part, by the so-called Islamic State.

We have this incident in New York City today. The premise of the wars that we've been fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq was to stop terrorism before it came here to the United States. Have we succeeded in that?

MR. DESCH: I think you answered your own question, Susan. The answer is absolutely not. Despite Afghanistan becoming America's new longest war, and an eight or nine-year U.S. commitment in Iraq, and a U.S. commitment again in Iraq, and now in Syria, the problem of terrorism remains front and center for most Americans.

And I think the problem by focusing on the old notion that we've got to kill them over there before they come over and kill us here, is that first of all it mischaracterizes the connection between terrorist groups in the Middle East and what happens here. And second, it diverts resources from actually dealing with the vulnerabilities that we have in the United States.

So, I would think that it's very clear that our wars, post-9/11, to protect ourselves from terrorism have ultimately not succeeded, and the key, the most important thing will be what we do to defend ourselves here at home.

MS. GLASSER: General Allen?

GENERAL ALLEN: There is a very strong linkage between our Forces overseas and our security Forces in the United States. And yes, there have been terrorist attacks in the United States, but I will simply tell you that the numbers of attacks that are prevented from occurring in the United States because of activity overseas by our intelligence services in our military, or intelligence that is collected from objectives

overseas, from operations that we run that is passed to law enforcement back here in the United States, that ends up in arrests and prevention of terrorist attacks, that linkage -- that inextricable linkage between our forward-deployed Forces and our domestic security and law enforcement entities is absolutely essential to American security and Homeland security.

MS. KARLIN: You know, this is a really hard and uncomfortable topic, I think, for us to discuss. And I'm really happy that you are asking about it, Susan. You know, let's put ourselves on September 12th 2001. If you had said then there would be a handful of terrorist attacks in the United States while tragic, it would only be a small handful and it would still be more dangerous to be in your bathtub than to face the prospects of a terrorist attack in America, I don't think anyone would have believed you. Right?

Obviously we have a zero-fail policy. John Allen, when he was in uniform was thinking about zero-fail policy. When I was sitting at the Pentagon for almost 10 years I also was thinking about zero-fail policy. And yet there's never going to be that zero failure.

And so thinking about what's the right level of risk that we are willing to accept? It is difficult, it's uncomfortable. I think actually a point where you'll see wide agreement amongst all of us is, it's an important conversation to have, it's one we should have with Congress, it's one we really need to have with the American people.

MS. GLASSER: All right. I want to turn to a big subject, but just quickly first, General Allen mentioned Korea. Talk about the elephant in the room. Right now the country is wondering, are we in the middle of some kind of a nuclear confrontation with the North Koreans? President Trump has threatened fire and fury will rain down upon them. What is the role, and what should the role be of nuclear weapons in this

post-Cold War Era, sir?

GENERAL ALLEN: Well, for us it's deterrence. And in Northeast Asia it's about extended deterrence. But look, much of this crisis is a direct result of the bombast, and the intemperate rhetoric that has painted two leaders into a corner which makes it very difficult for them to compromise. And one of the things you learn early along about negotiations, is never -- with your potential opponents -- never put them in a position where they can't come to the table and ultimately compromise.

And we, I think, from my perspective anyway, I've been more worried about Korea for the first time in my life than I've been for the entire 45 years that I've served my Government. Not because the Koreans have demonstrated an intense or an instantaneous need to attack us, but because we have created this crisis together with each other. This intemperate language has created an environment which is very difficult to back away from.

Now, President Trump is right, when he says that he's concerned about Kim Jong-un's promise to create an intercontinental ballistic missile that can deliver a nuclear weapon in the lower 48 United States, he's right to do that.

But the United States doesn't need ultimately to overstate, or to confront the leadership with threats of fire and fury, everyone knows the United States could make Korea bounce two or three times if we wanted to with our nuclear weapons. We don't need to say that, what we need to do is create an environment of temperate language where we can bring the parties to the table, with all of those who were involved.

I was involved in the Six-Party Talks, and I saw some very important progress that was being made. We ought to be looking for progress diplomatically and politically right now, because the Koreans know, if necessary, we have the complete capacity to devastate them. Jim Mattis has been very clear on that point. Let's get them

to the table, let's create the environment with our Chinese colleagues that can get us to where we want to be.

MS. GLASSER: Dr. Desch, a two-finger intervention.

MR. DESCH: Yes. Just very quickly. Another illustration of the schizophrenic policy of the Trump administration; on the one hand you have these intemperate tweets about fire and fury, on the other hand it's pretty clear that President Trump is investing a significant amount of effort and diplomacy in dealing with the North Korean problem, not diplomacy with Pyongyang, but with his golf buddy, President Xi in Beijing.

So, I'm not -- I guess I'm less worried about the situation than a lot of other people, because I think nuclear deterrence is ultimately a stabilizing factor. And as the General quite rightly points out, we have ample deterrent, vis-à-vis North Korea.

MS. GLASSER: Dr. Gholz, how do nuclear weapons fit into your view of an America that takes a much less expansive posture overseas?

MR. GHOLZ: So, I'm also a strong believer in the deterrent role of nuclear weapons. The United States has a robust nuclear capability that helps us deter potential threats to the United States. It gives us security. We are here in Nevada, not far from the nuclear test site in the United States, we have a long tradition of understanding the important role that our deterrent capability plays in U.S. foreign military policy. That shouldn't change.

We have changed the position in the world, as Mike was saying earlier, where we've escalated our aims in many ways. We seek not to deter conflicts against us, but to maintain the capability to -- the nice word is to say shape events overseas, a less-nice word would say meddle in events overseas. But it leads us to posture, and bully, and threaten other people that, you know, current strategy makes them more likely to see

that they need a nuclear deterrent against us, but we don't intend that, but it is kind of the style that our primacy is leading us towards.

We can rely on our nuclear deterrent, and if we want to see others not pursue, not be so interested in nuclear weapons, we should arrange the diplomatic circumstances, as General Allen was saying, such that they understand that we are not irrationally going to use nuclear weapons against them, and that they might not need to pursue this in their defense.

MS. GLASSER: All right. I want to turn to a big, broad subject that's a really important one. General Allen mentioned the point that there's such a small percentage of American society that is part of our military today. There's also been an enormous amount of commentary in this first year of the Trump administration on the role played by General Allen's former colleagues in leading our civilian policy.

We have a General in the White House as the National Security Advisor; we have a Retired General serving as the Pentagon's Chief for the first time, having gotten a waiver in order to do so. So, I want to turn first to you, Dr. Karlin. You spent the last decade, as you noted, inside the Pentagon. Do our Generals have too much power right now?

MS. KARLIN: I think it is --

GENERAL ALLEN: I've got a two-finger to (crosstalk) (Laughter) -- Just kidding.

MS. KARLIN: Look, there are study after study that shows, having people with diverse experience at the table is enviably a good thing, and I think that applies in every setting, and that includes the national security. If you are a General Officer today, you have spent a lot of time in Iraq and Afghanistan probably; you know first-hand the costs in blood and treasure of those conflicts.

While that is all very good, it also means that your perspective is inevitably limited, and so I think having different types of people, particularly in a place like the national security space, is really important. I will say we have seen, with the different types of either Generals in power or Retired Generals in power, something really important, which is, there's different types of general officers.

There are those who have beliefs about what really happened in the Civil War. There are those who have very respectful and understandable views on civilian control. There are different types, there's diversity amongst them also, and it's important that we acknowledge that, but this is not a healthy place for our system to be.

MS. GLASSER: Dr. Desch?

MR. DESCH: I think the problem of the relationship between American society and the U.S. military is really acute, but I don't think the problem is the man on horseback. Most people, and I guess I would put myself among them, sort of regard General Mattis as the voice of reason in this administration. I think there are two more, maybe mundane, but really more worrisome problems for me.

One is that I think a lot of Americans have a well-deserved affection for the U.S. military but they also devalue civilian expertise in national security decision-making. And I think that's a huge problem. I read Clausewitz. Clausewitz teaches us that war is the continuation of politics by other means, and that it's the political decision that shapes the use of military force. It's ultimately a civilian decision if we go to war.

The second problem, General Allen had mentioned the figure of 1 percent of the American public in uniform, it's actually worse than that, it's half of one percent.

GENERAL ALLEN: Yes. Yes.

MR. DESCH: Most of the American public has no skin in the game.

Very few of us have served, have children who serve, or even know people who serve, and the dynamics of that situation are quite worrisome to me. It's very easy to send people downrange if you don't know them personally, and if the consequences of them getting hurt, or killed, are things you don't feel directly.

MS. GLASSER: Dr. Gholz, what about the resources involved in building up our military? If all you have is a hammer, everything now looks for a nail, right?

MR. GHOLZ: So, that's a well-known aphorism, and there's some truth to it which leads us into trouble from time to time in the United States. So, look, I don't disagree with the people who say our military deserves the absolute best, and that our military is overstretched. Given the current strategy you can make a very good argument that says to keep doing what we've been doing given the technological trajectories in the world, given all the fires around the world that you would want to increase the defense budget to adequately fund our current strategy.

The problem is, that's not making a responsible strategic trade-off considering, say, the prosperity of the United States and what's good spending to spend our money on. And considering how ineffective we've been at achieving the goals of the strategy that we currently have.

If we can achieve our goals which are fundamentally defensive in the world, protecting our way of life, protecting international trade and continuing globalization, if we can achieve those goals with a different strategic posture that would require us to spend much less, that's a much better deal for the American people given our goals, and it's much better for the country as a whole. Right?

So, I think we could stay on the course that we are on and spend even more, we need more resources. Or, we could change course to a better course that would allow us to significantly cut the resources that we invest in the military.

MS. GLASSER: All right. Soon we are going to have to go to closing statements, but I know we all want to know General Allen's answer to the question of whether we have too many Generals in charge of our policy today?

GENERAL ALLEN: Well, I think Mike took a shot at it a minute ago, and you would not be surprised to learn that I don't agree necessarily. No. I thought he gave a great answer actually.

It goes back to the issue of survey and control of the military, and it is inherent and who we are as a people. It's enshrined by our Founders that we should have civilians who ultimately make the decisions, because there are political decisions which drive the employment of our military, drives the development of our strategy, that drives the implementation.

But this particular President felt he needed to be surrounded by people that he felt were successful. And he chose General Officers as manifestations of the people that he thought were successful. Now, it just so happens that several of these folks, in fact the three that I know in particular, John Kelly, and H.R. McMaster, and Jim Mattis, and there are a number of other generals who are actually in positions that have traditionally been held by civilians in this administration.

Not only were they successful general officers, but they are also hugely capable strategic thinkers. And we have seen in a number of the crises of this administration in the first year, some very adept strategic thinking coming out of these general officers. Now, I'm not proposing that this is where we want to be in this country. We need to have civilian dominance and civilian control of the military; we also have to have a major healthy civilian component to the policy-making process.

But in this case and at this moment I think we are all pretty happy that we got Jim Mattis in the Defense Department, and H.R. McMaster as National Security

Advisor, and John Kelly as the Chief of Staff of the White House. It's not where we ought to be as a nation, but it is where we are today, and if I had to choose three other people, I don't think I could have chosen three better strategic thinkers than them.

MS. GLASSER: Sir, a quick follow-up question before we go to the closing statements. The White House Press Secretary, Sarah Sanders, recently said in the context of this discussion about Generals, that reporters should not question the word of a four-star General. What do you think?

GENERAL ALLEN: I think you've been doing it all night long (laughter) and I'm really offended by it. (Laughter)

MS. GLASSER: All right. On that excellent note, we are going to turn to closing statements from our very capable debaters. We are going to go in reverse order here, so we started a way back, an hour and half go, with you Dr. Gholz, you get to start the closing statement.

MR. GHOLZ: Oh, so the same order. Okay. Well, thank you all for coming, and thank you to Susan, and to the audience for a set of excellent questions, and a really lively debate. So, I think the key message that I want to give everyone is that given the strategic situation today, and our experience of the last 25 years, the United States can achieve our goals, our national interests in the world, in a much more effective way that better balances American national interests, and achieves our goals more effectively at lower cost. Right?

By shifting to a more defensive posture, by a posture that avoids the great expense, and the ineffectiveness of our efforts to project power and reshape regions of the world that we may lack the political capacity to reshape, we can achieve our fundamentally defensive goals. The United States actually wants to be safe, secure, free and wealthy, right, these are our goals.

None of these require us to go abroad in search of monsters to destroy, to quote one of our earlier Presidents, John Quincy Adams. And I think we've learned a great deal over the past 25 years about the effectiveness and capability at the individual level, and the technological level of our military that's tried mightily to achieve goals that it's not suited to achieve.

And that we could adjust in a way that is in keeping with what we hope to actually achieve in the world, at much lower cost, and much lower risk, we could do much better for the American people if we shifted our strategy and changed our military approach.

MS. GLASSER: Dr. Karlin?

MS. KARLIN: Over the last 70 years, you have seen the most economically prosperous and peaceful time in world history. And that has happened because we have not only been the big players in the game, we have also been the referees. And I don't know a lot about sports, but that seems to be a mighty good situation.

The world is not self-regulating; we should not delude ourselves into thinking that it is, and that short of undergirding the system with U.S. military power, we will not have stability and security. So what you've heard tonight are alternatives like: let's let the Russians do it, let's let the Chinese do it, let's pull back and see what happens with some sort of an anarchic system.

That comes from a flawed understanding of the U.S. way of war, it comes from a flawed understanding of how we have fought won. And frankly, I don't think we want to see a situation where we are so focused on turning inward that we are unable to prevent the eruption and explosion of disarray in the system.

MS. GLASSER: All right. Dr. Desch?

MR. DESCH: Thank you. The world has changed a lot since 1991, but our policy hasn't. In fact, you know, if you listen to my two distinguished colleagues up here you would think that there's a no difference between the world of the Cold War, and the post-Cold War world.

But I'd ask you, today after 25 years of a bipartisan policy of deep engagement in primacy, do you feel more secure, more prosperous and more free in your domestic liberty? If not, you ought to try something different. Now, I have no question that Mara and General Allen want the best for the world, and they think that a continuation of an assertive U.S. military posture will not only do good for us, but also do good for other people.

But I was raised as a good Catholic boy, and I learned that, among other things, that the road to hell is often paved with good intentions, and exhibit A, if you need an exhibit A is Iraq. If you need an exhibit B, asked if you think things are better in Libya today than they were before NATO's intervention there. And I think well the list goes on and on.

Restraint, which is not isolationism, it's a different form of internationalism, is prudent and humble. And again, going back to my Catholic school education, prudence and humility were cardinal virtues, and I think I commend these cardinal virtues to the post-Cold War United States.

MS. GLASSER: General Allen, the last word is yours.

GENERAL ALLEN: Thank you. America has been a great nation, not because of America's military, because of the idea of America. And we have been able to project influence because of the idea of America, because the nature of our economy, because of our cultural influences, and the military has played a role in that. But the military is not the decisive dimension of that, and so I take issue with the idea that the

military has to be leading constantly, and that the military is the sole measure of American might.

America is a great nation because of the idea of America, and because of all of the combinations of great power within this nation, of which the military is a part of it, and as long as the United States maintains its influence overseas, and as long as the United States remains closely connected to the community of nations, there's going to be an essential need for American presence in the world, and American influence in the world.

It's not about America, American military presence, it's about the presence of America in the community of nations today. And we are a prosperous nation today, not because of the military but because of our system of government. The military has been an important part of that process, but it is not the sole determinant of the greatness of America. But if we do pull back the military, if we do under resource the military, if we do ultimately concede spheres of influence to other rising powers, the nature of the world will change very dramatically.

And not only will the world be a less-safe place to live in, but the United States will be a less-safe place to live in as well, and I think that that's really the measure of the American military power, it's a function of the greatness of America, not solely a military power.

MS. GLASSER: With that, I want to thank all of you, I want to thank our terrific audience today. We are bringing our debate to a close. We have team Notre Dame, we have Team Brookings, and we have this great audience here in Las Vegas, and joining us online. So, thank you, to all of you this evening.

I hope that you'll continue to follow this Brookings-Charles Koch series throughout 2018, and we welcome your feedback on Twitter on how tonight went. Please

use the hashtag AmericaInTheWorld.

So, from Las Vegas I want to thank all of you. Goodnight, congratulations to our debaters, thanks again to our hosts. (Applause)

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