THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

ROAD WARRIORS: FOREIGN FIGHTERS IN THE ARMIES OF JIHAD

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Introduction:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

GENERAL ALLEN: Well, good morning ladies and gentlemen. It's wonderful to have you with us this morning at the Brookings Institution.

I'm John Allen, and I'm the President of this organization. And it is a great pleasure for us today to welcome you here for the launch of Dan Byman's latest book, “Road Warriors: Foreign Fighters in the Armies of Jihad.”

In Road Warriors Dan takes readers through the evolution of the foreign fighter movement starting with the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan in the 1980s until the present day rise and the subsequent travails and the fall of the so-called Islamic State.

I have some personal experience in this topic so I have great interest in the book. I first encountered foreign fighters in Bosnia in '95 and '96, then in the al Anbar province in Iraq in '07 and '08, and in Afghanistan from '11 to '13, and then finally as the special presidential envoy to the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL.

In particular, one of my principal priorities within the Counter-ISIL Coalition was stemming the flow of foreign fighters to the region and to limit the capabilities of external organizations operating in support of ISIL, as we called it.

While no one really knows the actual number we believe that about 40,000 foreign fighters traveled to Iraq and Syria to join the Islamic State from scores of countries around the world. The numbers vary, but it's in the high tens, somewhere nearing 100.

So that number, that number of fighters, that number of countries and the geographic breadth of participation one was and continues to be unprecedented. We've never seen anything like these numbers flowing to Iraq and Afghanistan, for they came from so many places, in such large numbers, in such a short period of time.

So ladies and gentlemen, we need to gird ourselves, we need to get ready. This is a very strong indicator that the foreign fighter phenomenon is only growing, and that Dan's book is thus a very timely assist to all of us in our thinking on this subject.

As Dan makes evident in his book, however, it's important to recognize that

despite the surge in foreign fighters, this problem is not new. For instance even in the U.S. revolutionary war that conflict attracted foreign fighters from many countries around the world, happily they all fought for us.

More recently the foreign fighter movement reached new heights in Afghanistan pre-9/11 where thousands of fighters trained and created networks and enjoyed the relative safety of being able to plan and then ultimately execute their counterterrorism efforts.

Foreign fighters have always exploited the technologies of their time and of the day. And today they now use very sophisticated technologies that allow jihadists and other similar groups to expand their online reach, employ ever more effective propaganda tools, and ever more subtle and nuanced online recruiting.

Returning to foreign fighters -- returning foreign fighters add another layer of complexity in dealing with this phenomenon.

Europe of course is in particular had to deal with and contend with the returning foreign fighters, not just from this conflict, but from al Qaeda's conflicts around the world as well. And we should expect that future conflicts of this nature will generate another wave both of foreign fighters going to the conflict and returning.

But at the same time rehabilitated foreign fighters have been a vital component in the counter ISIL messaging campaign, disillusioned fighters who returned home were able to speak the truth about what actually occurred inside that so-called caliphate.

Many of these fighters believed that they were headed to a Salafi utopia which turned out to be a jihadi hell. And today these former fighters can still serve as important deterrence for those headed towards radicalization.

In a few short moments Dan will take the podium and he'll address some policy recommendations in dealing with this important topic and the foreign fighter movement more comprehensively. And then of course he'll speak in-depth about his book.

Joining Dan today and for the discussion on “Road Warriors” is Peter Bergen. Peter is an acclaimed journalist and current vice president of global studies & fellows at New America. He's written five books with his most recent one focusing on homegrown terrorism in the United States. Peter notably produced Osama bin Laden's first television interview in 1997, which marked the first time that bin Laden declared war against the United States to a Western audience.

I want to thank you for that, Peter.

I've known Peter Bergen for many years and I have to tell you for those of us who've dealt with these many issues, Peter Bergen was and remains our pole star in terms of both understanding the complexities of these matters, and they are hugely complex, but also because of his willingness to help in finding credible policy solutions.

So we are really honored for you to be with us today, Peter. And welcome back to Brookings.

The final housekeeping note is that we are on the record today. So, with that, Dan, if I could ask you please to address our audience this morning. And good luck in the conversation.

MR. BYMAN: Thank you. Good morning, and welcome everyone. Thank you, John, for that kind introduction, and let me echo my thanks to Peter Bergen.

If you've read a serious book on the jihadist movement in the last 15 years you've either read Peter's book or a book that's been influenced by it. So, it's really an honor to be up here on stage with him.

I want to begin by reading you two quotes. They're quite similar as you'll see. The first is, "I'm sure my daughter will grow up being told how selfish her father is, but it was exactly my selflessness that caused me to make the decision to go fight. If everyone stayed behind with their loved ones who would be left to help those who have their loved ones murdered?" That's one.

The second: "Being a foreign fighter was the best year of my life. When you

think of hundreds of years of being put down and suddenly you are people rising, it was a wonderful feeling."

That person was asked about his own role in the fighting, whether he had killed people. And he said, "I wouldn't have had any self-respect if I didn't. Someone had to be one of those somebodies."

Now the first quote is from a man named Omar Hammami, who was in some ways the English language voice of the Shabaab for several years.

The second is from a man named Vidal Sassoon who was a fashion icon and a foreign fighter in Israel's war of independence.

And as John noted in his opening remarks, this phenomenon is not new. We've had thousands of people at different periods of history go and fight for other countries, and this seemed to peak with international communism, but what has made the jihadist way different, the tens of thousands of people who have gone over the last 30 or 40 years, is that it's been linked to international terrorism both in their homes and around the world.

My own work on this project began really, depending on how you want to say it, in the years before 9/11, but certainly after 9/11 with the tremendous role foreign fighters played in that attack.

And when the United States went to war in Iraq in 2003, I was tremendously concerned that there would be a wave of terrorism in the United States, in Europe and elsewhere from the returnees from Iraq. And there wasn't.

And so an important question came to me, which was simply: as we think about future foreign fighter waves, so when Syria happens, is this going to be more like Iraq? Or is this going to be more like Afghanistan?

And my book, by trying to trace the history of the foreign fighter movement and its impact, tries to answer these questions. And what I'd argue is that the threat of foreign fighters is quite real, they're often a force multiplier, but at times the danger is

overstated. It's overstated in part because foreign fighters often make the conflict in question worse for the fighting groups themselves, and are self-defeating,

In addition, the terrorism risks that foreign fighters pose is highly dependent on policy; so this is something where good policy can and often has made a tremendous difference.

So let's start with the danger. When foreign fighters leave a war zone and return home they have several impacts. One is that they are often the seeds of the next dangerous group, they are somehow shaping new organizations and making them more radical.

So something we've seen around the Muslim world over the last few decades are groups that have either emerged or become more dangerous because of linkages to foreign fighters. And this is a very nasty development. It's led in different ways to thousands, depending on how you want to count, hundreds of thousands of deaths in the Muslim world, right. This is a dramatic consequence.

Also if you look at some of the most important terrorist attacks that people in the United States and the West pay attention to, again we see foreign fighters, 9/11, the London attacks, the 7/7 attacks in 2005, the Madrid attack in 2004, the Paris attack in 2015, and the verdict is still out in Sri Lanka, but we are seeing large-scale terrorist attacks, the largest scale terrorist attacks linked to foreign fighters. And one of the best studies of this phenomena by Thomas Hegghammer, talks about the presence of foreign fighters increasing both the chance of a plot's success, and also its lethality.

Let's take 9/11 as an example of what can happen. Many of the key figures involved in the planning at the leadership levels had fought in different foreign wars over the years, and the foreigners had a haven in which to plot and organize, and really build a mini army in Afghanistan, right.

So, that foreign war zone was tremendously beneficial for the leadership. It also enabled them to recruit large numbers of people, and in particular to identify people

who are comfortable operating in the West.

So you might have hundreds or thousands of people come from another country but that doesn't mean they can function effectively in Los Angeles, or Washington, or New York. You have to have people with some degree of cultural comfort, and having a haven, having the ability to sort people in war zone is tremendously valuable.

The training camps that al-Qaeda ran in the 1990s, and other groups ran, often involve not just skills on how to fight, but how to do passport forgery, how to design explosives, how to do counterintelligence, very important skills that relatively few groups have.

And then finally there was indoctrination. So, Mohammad Atta, who was the cell leader of the 9/1 plot, he initially wanted to go to Chechnya, right, that's why he goes to Afghanistan to train up to fight for Chechnya. But while he's there he's brought into the embrace of al-Qaeda, and they're teaching him that this particular conflict in Chechnya is simply one of many. That fighting the United States, killing Americans is another way of serving its faith.

The Afghanistan model is what many of us bring to the study of terrorism when we're thinking about the dangers of havens, when we're thinking about the dangers of foreign fighters, but it's worth pointing out that some conflicts, Iraq I mentioned, Somalia, Maui for France, and have not produced significant international terrorism, and that in recent years the news has been quite good, right.

So, in Europe most of the major attacks have been linked to foreign fighters if we go back 20 years, or even 10 years ago. In recent years especially since Madrid and the Brussels attack, it's been much more homegrown. The foreign fighter problem I won't say has been solved, but it's been greatly reduced.

In the United States tremendous change, right; there are countering questions but arguably zero attacks linked to foreign fighters since 9/1, right.

Now that's a remarkable success record, and that's something that is worth

not only celebrating but also examining.

So let's start by thinking of the foreign fighter problem, if you will, as a process that begins with people being recruited, they're going to a war zone, they come back home and commit attacks.

I want kind of take you through each stage of that. So there's been a lot of work done a recruitment, right, and I would mention that Peter's book here on the domestic terrorists in the United States, and he has a line I love which is, "Who joins jihad, is somewhat like asking who drives a (inaudible), right?"

That you have a number of people who seem quite ordinary from the outside and nevertheless are joining these groups. If you look at the Islamic State, especially the volunteers in Europe you do see a few commonalities, so prison, or some brush with law enforcement is far more common than average.

A number have somehow gone into the orbit of radical but ostensibly peaceful Salafi groups in Europe. And in the United States many of those involved have been converts to Islam. So you do have some commonalities but these are very broad brushes right these are not specific factors.

When you think about recruitment, some of the factors have changed, one of the biggest is that you have greater technological reach. If you go back to the 1980s when there were some early recruitment to go fight Afghanistan. These groups are struggling to put out magazines, they're struggling to get the word out.

Now, as we all know, individuals are empowered for communication that's much easier, travel is also much easier. Again some of the memoirs of those involved in the first conflicts are actually quite funny, where they're trying to find out where things are in a map, right.

So we have some of the fighters in Bosnia who have no idea where Bosnia is, right, but they want to go fight there, they just don't know where it is. That's not an issue for anyone today.

You also have network effects, where, because of the thousands people who have fought it's easier for those who want to fight to identify an individual to help them, to go to the war zone, find the right person, and then perhaps come back and do an attack.

But a couple things are often neglected when we talk about recruitment, and this is to me tremendously important for the Islamic State today. One is that the war itself matters, to look at who goes to fight in isolation of the war itself is, I think, a mistaken endeavor.

I don't think, for example, that the condition of many European Muslims was dramatically different 10 years ago than it is today, but the presence of a war in Syria that electrified much of the Muslim world and much of the world, had a huge impact and deserves tremendous attention. So the absence or presence of compelling wars is an important factor.

Another one is that the success or failure of the group itself matters. Somebody in the Islamic State could say in 2014 and 2015 was that it was a winner, it had established the caliphate, its accomplishments dwarfed those of even a group like al-Qaeda. It was fighting Islam's enemies around the world, and it seemed to be doing quite well at that.

Today, it's not winning. There's a kind of endless effort to pretend it is, right, to say that even though the Islamic State have lost the caliphate it's more dangerous than ever, the caliphate is a virtual concept, the caliphate is within our hearts, right. There all these kinds of variations on this theme, but the loss of a caliphate is a blow to the group's prestige, is a blow to the group's capacity, and it's important to recognize that that has profound consequences for recruitment.

Shifting over to the war zone, the foreign fighters often bring an array of problems to the war zone itself. First of all, many of them are militarily unskilled, so some gained tremendous experience but often they're there, and they're not put to great use militarily. But many of the people who go, especially the Westerners, have a tremendous

amount of difficulty adjusting to difficult life in a developing country, right.

Very basic factors of, you know, the difficulty with food, the fact that bugs are going to swarm over you at different times, the problems you have logistics and transportation from one place to another, right, anyone who has spent time in a developing world country, and actually had to live the way locals have, will have some understanding of this, and now add a war zone to all this, right.

It's not the sort of thing that necessarily a relatively pampered young person from the United States or Europe can often do. They're often though, a limited asset for the groups that recruit them. They mistreat citizens, they're too zealous, they threaten local power bases, and in many of these conflicts, the locals are fighting for some form of nationalism, right.

They're fighting because they're angry at foreigners, they're defending their community, and to have a different group of foreigners come in and tell them what to do, is usually not something that appeals to them particularly well.

The foreigners are also vulnerable to spies, right, that it's easier, not easy, but easier for intelligence services to put pressure on their families, or otherwise try to develop connections to the recruit, and the groups know this. So the foreigners are often treated with tremendous suspicion when they come in, at the same time the foreigners themselves, by definition, reject borders, right.

They're saying that, I'm a Muslim and we are not fighting for Syria we are fighting for Islam, we are not fighting for Afghanistan we are fighting for Islam.

But when you do that of course there's a tendency to expand the war, and we saw this particular in Chechnya, where, this was a tremendous disaster for the movement there, where they expanded the war to Dagestan and neighboring areas, and that was an excuse for Russia, in particular, to crush them.

And that expansion is something that is one of the many reasons that governments at times welcomed a foreign fighter presence in a war -- right -- and that may

sound odd but it's a way of describing the broader movement, right.

So, go back to the Syrian Civil War in 2012, right, where it was a mix of demonstrations and these words are always difficult but let's say moderate opposition against the regime. And the regime kept saying, no, there are a bunch of crazy jihadists who are fighting us, right, we are the force of civilization against these radicals. And they were able to point at the time to relatively small numbers, but over time that number became bigger and bigger to the point where much of the world accepted that narrative, that the Syrian regime may be a lesser of two evils, right, and that's quite a remarkable accomplishment.

Also the foreigners are magnets for outside intervention. If you go back to some of the debates within al-Qaeda about whether the Shabaab in Somalia should take on the al-Qaeda label, part of the concern of bin Laden was that as soon as you do the United States is going to start bombing you, right.

And that's a fairly correct statement, right, that the United States and some of its allies are, appropriately, concerned about this. And you have skilled professionals like General Allen who are going to make it part of their mission to make your life unhappy, and you really don't want that, right.

That's utterly devastating to a number of these groups. So, not surprisingly we've seen in Syria, we've seen in Yemen, that groups are actually being very careful about foreigners, right. Not all groups, and not all times, but they're starting to put far more restrictions on foreigners than they ever have in the past.

So that's the war zone. Let's shift over a bit to terrorism on returning. Now, there are a couple things to think about when we think about the threat they pose. First of all, especially because many of these individuals have criminal backgrounds, it's worth pointing out that some of these people would have been violent in the first place, right.

So a number of the attacks we've seen are people who have picked up a gun or a knife and shouted out Allahu Akbar, but they might have shouted out something

else and done the same attack. We often appropriately use a terrorism label, but the violence might still be the same.

It's also worth pointing out that a lot of these people die, right, so again Afghanistan has, I think, somewhat misinformed us, because the vast majority of the foreigners who went there lived, right.

In Chechnya probably 95 percent of the foreigners who went there died. So, the idea that this would be a dangerous breeding ground and people would come back from there was much less true there.

The figures from Syria are still a bit all over the map, but 20, 25 percent mortality seems to be a reasonable guess, maybe a little higher, we'll sort this out probably in a year or two, but a relatively high mortality rate.

Some of the most radical don't return home, and maybe when they come home they're done, right, they fought their conflict, and they're exhausted by it. And there was a recent study by David Mallett and Rachel Hayes that said that we don't see sleeper cell phenomena, we don't see individuals who are coming home to plan attacks who burrow underground for years, and then pop up, right.

They come back and do attacks, but they're not doing this kind of global clandestine operation on behalf of the group. What has changed dramatically as well is the intelligence picture. So, if you go back to 9/11 again, it depends on what you want to count, but the number of people who were working on al-Qaeda and similar groups in the U.S. Government it's roughly similar to the number of people in this room. Okay?

I have no idea what the number is today, but I'm going to say tens of thousands of people, right. Again, a lot depends on what you want to count, but it's a staggering number. And then add to that the huge number of people around the world that are cooperating with the United States is a problem as well.

And so you have a huge and overwhelming resource shift, and you get a lot for that. First of all, you have a much greater ability simply to monitor people in your own

country. You have much greater ability to share information across borders. And I would also stress, the war zone has shifted.

It used to be if you went to Afghanistan in the 1980s or 1990s, you kind of disappeared and people tried to spot you when you pop back up if they knew you had gone in the first place. But now, due to greater intelligence collection and greater intelligence sharing, there's much more knowledge of people in the war zone to the point that when people are in the war zone they are often betraying intelligence on people back in their home countries -- right -- that the war zone itself can be a negative rather than a positive from the jihadist's point of view.

And the United States is putting the intelligence pieces together. The day-to-day of what we used to call the war on terrorism is often individuals in a room sharing information from around the world about jihadist networks. And it's not particularly glamorous but it's vital, and having more people do it with more information has proven devastating.

There's also been a shift on social media. So social media, appropriately, got a very bad reputation because groups like the Islamic State were using it incredibly effectively for several years to recruit, to issue propaganda around the world, to kind of send out images to threaten their enemies, and even to do operations.

And initially the social media company response was, not our problem, right. And even to go kind of extreme the algorithms they had were actually helping the jihadist groups. So if you were following a foreign fighter on Twitter, for example, it would suggest other foreign fighters for you to follow, the way it might if you were following a rock star on Twitter, where it would suggest other rock stars, right.

And so it was doing their job for them. But once the government, and once the companies began to pay attention to this changes tremendously, right. And all of a sudden individuals are betraying huge amounts of information publicly, and they're not the only ones who are paying attention to it anymore.

So, you have large numbers of people in the United States who are simply arrested at the airport because they tweeted out or put on social media -- on Facebook to their friends: *off to go fight*. And they got arrested, right.

And they're doing it because in their eyes they weren't joining a clandestine terrorist group, they were joining the Marines -- right -- they were joining an army to fight, not something that they should be hiding. And we see again and again in these court cases individuals revealing a lot of information about themselves, on social media incriminating themselves.

And also, if I have your phone, right, and I have your social media account, and I know your friends, and I know your followers, you've just put yourself into a network analysis software, right. I mean, this is something when I used to work in government we spend a lot of time trying to figure out was, you know, does this person know each other -- another person, right.

And now of course we have that information readily available, and it's been devastating for these groups, and in particular it reveals hidden threats, it reveals individuals who might not otherwise be known.

One problem that Europe in particular is facing; is the question of what to do with captured foreign fighters. We had Ambassador Sales here at Brookings last week, and he talked about roughly 1,000 foreign fighters being in camps in Iraq and Syria, and he believes the number is likely to double in the coming month.

Right now the Europeans basically treat this as their own more brutal version of Guantanamo, where only a few of them are willing to take back their own people, and they're basically encouraging a form of detention where many of the people are killed. And some are guilty, to be clear, but often there's minimal evidence and a lot of times it's, I'm angry at you so I'm going to denounce you as a jihadist, and therefore my grudge goes away, right.

Whether I owe you money, or there's some old score, and that happens

again and again in civil wars. This is not a new phenomenon. But many of the people are not truly facing justice, and part of the problem for the Europeans is their laws still haven't caught up with this problem, that they're worried that they can't actually put people in jail, and if they do put them in jail they won't be in jail long enough for it actually to work. In fact, the opposite will happen, where they'll radicalize others in jail and make the problem worse.

Let me conclude by talking about some policy measures that I think can make a tremendous difference. One of the biggest of course is simply to work with communities before people go off to fight, right, you don't want to have a foreign fighter problem, what you want to have are communities that trust the government, are willing to work with it, and if there are troubled individuals that the community is eager to find help for them, right.

And part of it, is you need robust programs to work with communities to stop this. And this is very difficult and science isn't 100 percent there, but in many places if you are a -- I'll say a father, as in my case, and you are worried about your son going off to Syria, you don't want the alternative to be jail, right.

You want to be able to call someone in government and say, I'm nervous, I'm afraid, can you help? Rather than, can you put my child in jail so he doesn't end up in Syria, right. And so that stark choice is a very dangerous choice and you don't get communities on your side when you do that.

Transit is a key issue. There's something that's incredibly, I'll say, anodyne about the Syrian jihad that to me didn't get enough attention, which was, it was very easy to get there, right, and if you look at, for example, Chechnya the Russians had cordoned off much of Chechnya, it was very hard to get in and out.

Afghanistan, difficult for people to find, you had to make your way through Pakistan which is not obvious or evident to many people, easier though, obviously, than Chechnya.

But Syria, you hop on a plane to Istanbul, for a while there are recruiters

there at the airport waiting for you, there are networks waiting to take you to the border, the Islamic State controls the other side of the border, and pushing the Islamic State away from the border militarily, and also getting the Turks to crack down on their own jihadist presence and their toleration of this, was a tremendous shift.

And that's not particularly glamorous, right, but access into and out of a war zone is tremendously important for stopping this flow.

I mentioned intelligence sharing, I'll just say it again, it's vital, it's the important part of this, but also you need to resource security services, right.

So, the Australian figure they gave is that it costs the Australian Government about $7 billion a year to follow a returnee. And if you are a country like Belgium that has a relatively small security service and hundreds of returnees, that's a very serious challenge.

Now, you don't have to follow them forever, right, as I mentioned, I don't think these people are all going to be problems for decades and decades to come, but you do want some immediate short-term presence, and then some long-term presence as well.

You're also sifting a lot of data, right, I just said social media gives you information, and allied intelligence services give you information, your own collection gives you information, but processing all that is very difficult.

And one of the people I talked to for this book described it as the data are buried in a mountain of data, right, that the information is there, it's just very, very hard to process and define.

in the war zone there's going to be a mix of trying to again stop the war or reduce the war in the first place, training military forces, and in my view, in general this is not the time to abandon the U.S. global role, that this is self-defeating.

And the last thing I would say, and I'll stop my remarks here, is that one thing that has not gone well in the earth since 9/11 is domestic resilience, right.

I would argue that in the United States in particular the almost 18 years after

9/11 have actually been a tremendous counterterrorism success, especially when you focus on the jihadist groups. Slightly over 100 people have died, that's a hundred people too many, these are innocent people, right, but this is far lower than I certainly would have predicted after 9/11, and I think most people would have predicted.

It's also almost half the deaths come from one attack, which was the Pulse Night Club in Orlando. That was to me more an individual who was disturbed and violent in variety of ways, rather than someone who was deeply motivated by the teachings of jihad.

And this issue of resilience is, to me, tremendously important because it makes the job of the terrorists easier. It also has shaped American foreign policy in ways probably beyond it deserves, right.

So, there's a question of how important counterterrorism should be in U.S. foreign policy, and I certainly think it should be important, but I'm not always sure it should be dominant, and should be pushing aside other things, but often in the Middle East, which is my area of focus, you see the U.S. Government having a counterterrorism policy without broader regional policies.

And to me this is a tremendous mistake even though I think overall the foreign fighter effort, from a U.S. perspective, has gone very well. Thank you very much. (Applause)

MR. BERGEN: Thank you, General Allen, and to Brookings for hosting this event. And thank you, Dan, for writing this book which is a tremendous act of synthesis.

You cover, you know, the Afghan Jihad, the Bosnian Jihad, the Chechen Jihad, the Iraqi, the 2003 Iraq Invasion, and then of course ISIS. So, give us a sense of the process of researching the book, and how did -- you know, how did you do that?

MR. BYMAN: So, this book I'll say begins with a question about Syria, right, which is how Syria is -- how dangerous is the Syrian jihad? And then tries to inform that by looking backward as well as forward. So, trying to see what are the constants, and what has changed.

And part of what was interesting was to go back to some periods in this history that have been quite well covered, right. So, Afghanistan being an example where Peter, among others, has done really sterling work, but also to look at some of the conflicts that to me were tremendously important that have not gotten the attention they deserve.

So, I would mention Chechnya in particular, but also Bosnia, also Somalia, and trying to see how this movement, as a whole, considered these conflicts, and the research part of it was drawing on the work of other scholars, but a lot of it was kind of digging through court records, digging through government documents, but in particular since a lot of my interest is counterterrorism, our interviews with counterterrorism officials in the United States, in the Middle East or in Europe, and trying to get a sense of their perspective.

Well, what made that, to me, particularly interesting was the job of the counterterrorism official is to worry, right. I mean when you're talking to a domestic intelligence service chief he or she is not going to say, you know, everything is great, right, I just want to let you know that we don't have to worry about this. Their job is to anticipate problems and try to solve them.

But what was striking in some ways was how successful many of them had been without realizing it, right, without kind of looking back at their own track record and saying, we were all much more scared than the actual record has entailed. Now, that's going to vary, right.

You know, in Belgium a very different story, right, the problem is much worse than they anticipated. But in several countries they were -- they made some fairly dramatic changes after a terrorist attack, and there was some degree of success.

MR. BERGEN: One of the big changes is sectarianism. I mean, you know, bin Laden didn't talk about the Shi‘a, so how did that affect -- and reflect in the future, since this sort of sectarianism in the Middle East doesn't seem to be evaporating, what that means for a conflict or foreign fighter recruitment?

MR. BYMAN: So, when the Syria conflict begins, one question I've been asking myself is, how many foreigners are going to go, and my initial thinking was, probably not huge numbers because we're not going to see this foreign occupation that drove so many people to go to Afghanistan, and then later drove so many people to go to Iraq.

And of course that was wrong, right there, you know, more went to Syria than all the other conflicts combined. And so much of it to me was sectarianism, was this belief that, whether it was the Shi'a or the Alawi, this kind of lumping them together were part of a foreign community that were oppressing the Sunni Muslims, and could be seen the way we see foreign occupation in many ways.

But in some ways from the point of view of the jihad is much worse, right, that this is the enemy within as well as a distinct community. It was kind of accommodation of those two. And then if you go back you see the strands of sectarianism show up, but just not in Al Qaeda, or Al Qaeda pushing back against this.

So to go back to Afghanistan, you do have groups there that are quite sectarian. Now, tremendously concerned about this issue they're just not the dominant groups, they're not the ones that because they're not focused on the West they're not the ones getting our attention nearly as much, either or analytically or at times from an operational point of view.

But this sense of, who is the enemy, is to me one of the great divides within the Jihadist Movement. You have it right now when you start to look at groups like the al-Qaeda Affiliates, when you look at the Islamic State Provinces, where there was, to me, a million-dollar question which is: are they focused entirely on their locality and on the region? Or do they actually put the U.S. high on their enemy list, high enough to actually want to do operations in the United States?

So, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula a decade ago decided to attack the United States, and came extremely close to succeeding, but most of the other groups have focused locally and regionally at times that U.S. or international targets, but not trying to

target the U.S. homeland.

And so the question of who is the enemy to me is a big one, but the sectarianism, in my mind at least, starts to become a very important factor in the 2003 -- after 2003 in the Iraq conflict.

And initially there's kind of a nationalist, anti-American wave, but relatively quickly it becomes more focused on the Shi‘a Government, on Iran and that internal conflict, and that laid the groundwork, so when Syria happens that everything is ready to come alight.

That you have the preachers who are already preaching sectarian hatred, you have individuals who are a motivated by sectarian anger, and so to me this is very much one of the, I'll say, strong future possibilities of this movement as a whole, is to continue to focus on sectarian targets.

MR. BERGEN: And now we have Shi‘a foreign fighters showing up in, you know, with Houthis in Yemen, and also obviously Lebanese, Hezbollah and in Syria. So reflect a little bit on that phenomenon.

MR. BYMAN: So what we've seen in Syria in particular, are almost as many Shi‘a foreign fighters showing up as Sunnis, probably fewer, but significant numbers. But there are some big differences. First of all the Lebanese Hezbollah, which is a nearby group, and very close to the Syrian regime, but especially close to the Iranian regime, is one of the most formidable fighting groups in the world probably, but certainly in the Middle East, and especially when you're talking about guerrilla tactics.

I'd say highly disciplined, highly skilled, and so unlike many of the unskilled Sunni foreign fighters who show up, who are a divisive, having the Lebanese Hezbollah in the battlefield is a game changer, and are key moments in the Syrian Civil War, the Syrian regime used Hezbollah Forces, now it's Forces because they were more trustworthy and better.

In addition though, the Iranians began to bring in people from Pakistan, people from Afghanistan and people from Iraq, some affiliated with existing groups, some

affiliated with refugee communities, really as, if you will, kind of friendly mercenaries. They were being paid a certain wage, they were often given certain rights in Iran after completion, and it was a job, right.

So for -- they would play up things like the threat to the Alawi and Shi'a communities, or the threat to the Sayyidah Zaynab Shrine in Syria. But for the most part, it was something that they were just saying, you know, our country needs you and we'll pay you, and your current situation isn't that good.

But a big difference is, they were entering a discipline command structure. So when they're coming in they're being run through the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, they're being run through Hezbollah, to a lesser degree to run through the Syrian Army. And that makes them much more effective.

They're not units going off on their own fighting other Shi'a units, or fighting other government units, they're part of a broader force and as a result have much more impact on the battlefield. A big question to me though is: what happens when these people return, right?

MR. BERGEN: Mm-hmm.

MR. BYMAN: And some will go on to other fights, so we've seen a few showing up in Yemen but, for example, when the Afghan Shi'a comes back to Afghanistan this is a community that certainly had its own warlords and a presence in government, but historically was the subject of tremendous discrimination and abuse.

And now they can fight, right, now they have thousands of people who have fighting experience, and again many are actually in Iran rather than Afghanistan, but nevertheless the community is stronger. The same with Pakistan where the Shi'a community had suffered tremendously at the hands of Sunni Jihad.

So, it's good to have minority groups be stronger and empowered, I just don't like to have more violent groups be the ones empowered, within that I'm tremendously worried that this sort of combat experience abroad is going to show up in small ways and big

ways in the Middle East.

MR. BERGEN: Another innovation of ISIS was the recruitment of women, because in previous foreign fighter waves women were excluded I think almost entirely. Is that correct?

MR. BYMAN: Absolutely, it was -- the appeal was entirely to young men, but now the pitch was different, when the Islamic State had a caliphate. It was saying, to be a good Muslim you have to live in a caliphate, and so that would mean you would bring your wife if you were married, if you were unmarried that's where you wanted to go to find a wife, to say the very important but horrific reality, they would also take people they had captured, Yazidis and others, and give them to visiting fighters.

They would also coerce Iraqi and Syrian women who, for various reasons, were vulnerable, into being -- in my sense -- largely and willing partners of these people, so the family element was very important. But they were deliberately also trying to recruit women as a way of showing the validity of the caliphate.

And so right now you have thousands of women who are foreigners, and the question is: what to do with them, as well as children, right?

And that's an incredibly difficult topic. The women are often, in my view, wrongly treated as innocent victims, right. There is a kind of, you know, old image we have, you know, when we say women and children the implication is non-combatant.

But many of these women went there deliberately, they were engaged in Islamic State activity, they were part of the Islamic State police Force, they were encouraging others to attend, they were very much part of this that doesn't mean that they were, you know, out running gas squads or things like that but they were nevertheless a significant part of this.

Some were probably innocent victims, right, and I'm sympathetic to, you know, any teenager who does something stupid, maybe that's just because I have teenagers but, you know, that does happen but nevertheless to recognize the culpability of women is

very important here.

The children are a different matter, right, and I'm very, very nervous there was a headline *New York Times* yesterday about, you know, are these -- are the children victims or time bombs, right. And the answer is victims. It's not an or actually, it's a very definite answer.

If we have children who are victims of abuse in the United States we know statistically they're more likely to commit abuse in the future when they are parents, right, but we don't say: therefore they can't have kids. We don't punish them, right, we give them extra love, we try to care for them even more because of what they've endured. And that's what we should be thinking of for the children of the people involved in this.

MR. BERGEN: But, you know, there's a huge policy problem which no one seems to want to untangle, which is what to do with these kids, with these wives, with these -- the foreign fighters that, you know, like the Beatles who are alleged to have beheaded Jim Foley, and are sort of in this legal netherworld. And so, I mean, we were sitting in Brookings Institution today, so what is the policy answer?

MR. BYMAN: So, whenever possible government should take care of their own people, and that's why I was actually very critical of the Trump administration's decision to take a woman with -- I'm not a legal scholar -- but my sense is, there were some legal ambiguity about her citizenship status that they were deliberately trying to exaggerate as a reason not to take her back.

When it should be the opposite, we should be sending the message that we have robust laws, we have effective court systems, and we can put people in jail if they're guilty which, as far as I can tell this woman was. And that's the message we want to send. That we want to encourage European States whenever possible to do it.

As I mentioned some of their laws aren't up to stuff, right, Europe needs to have a fairly comprehensive look at their laws, and in particular jail time for some of the people involved, and a level proof, but Europe has gotten much better. There been several

UN resolutions that had a big impact on European States.

And then many states in the Muslim world actually have a strong ability to certainly to put people in jail, I worry more about the justice system in general, but they certainly have the ability to put people in jail.

So, to me, this is a problem that has an 80 percent solution, right, there'll be some countries that don't have that ability, right. That could easily be overwhelmed, and there you need some form of international attention. What you don't want, to me, is to leave -- you know, to have Syrian Kurds be the jailers of the world, right, that's incredibly unfair burden on them. And to go further, I don't trust their justice system, right.

So, it's not good in any way, and that's what we're doing by default, and that has tended to be, I'll say, an American response on the detention issue. If you look at -- you know, one of the amazing things is almost 18 years after 9/11 we still have a detention system that isn't really formalized into world law, right.

And whether you agree or disagree with Guantanamo, the fact that this is still something that is largely run out of the Executive Branch is, to me, quite striking, and that all Congress has done is to try to hamper it on both sides, to prevent it from being more, and to prevent it from being less. And you need robust legal systems to handle people in this really ambiguous state.

MR. BERGEN: International detention is an interesting idea. How would that work?

MR. BYMAN: Good question. Right, and there are -- again I'll stress I'm not a lawyer -- but what you could imagine is designating several facilities in different places around the world where you're gathering that are -- you're gathering information on people, you're trying to determine if they're a threat. You're treating them humanely because that's what you do, because they're human beings.

But at the same time you're recognizing that many of these people could be extremely dangerous, right. You don't want to presume either way, but at the same time

you're always trying to encourage countries to take care of their own citizens. You're always trying to encourage countries to have responsibilities for their nationals.

So the hope is that's relatively short-lived, and after a certain amount of time you want to end it, right. I'm not someone who believes that the danger endures forever. In a few cases you will be taking on risk, right, there may be some very nasty actors there, but many of the people involved time will be very helpful in reducing the threat.

MR. BERGEN: You begin the book with Abdullah Azzam who's sort of the Godfather of this phenomenon. What was his role?

MR. BYMAN: So, you have this man who is, Abdullah Azzam, who is effectively creating what we call the modern Foreign Fighter Movement, right, so the idea more broadly within the Muslim world was: we have the Soviets invading Afghanistan, what should we do about it?

And the initial response from a lot of preachers in Saudi Arabia was, you know, the Afghans aren't even good Muslims, right, they're not Salafis, they don't practice properly, so they're not Muslims, right, we have no obligation to help these people, right, but you have a rival movement start to emerge that sees them as kind of lost sheep.

They're not great Muslims but, you know, they are under communism, they have this -- they've been far away from, you know, a good preacher. So, actually our obligations double, right, we have a responsibility to help them because they could be good Muslims.

And so that's one question he's trying to address is simply: are they part of the family? And the other then is who's responsible for them? And the traditional response, historically, was you are responsible for your community but as you go farther away from that that's unrealistic.

So there's, you know, I live in Maryland, right, if there's a conflict in Maryland that's where I should be involved; Pennsylvania, maybe a little, but when it starts to get to Wyoming, not my problem, right.

And Azzam was saying, no, that's actually not right, we're not -- it's not that Dan Byman is from Maryland, it's that -- or Dan Byman is from Pennsylvania, it's that Dan Byman is an American, and whether it's Maryland, or Alaska, or Hawaii, those are Americans, you have responsibility.

So it's a form of nationalism that is religiously based. And initially this is really not accepted, right, but over time you have a number of factors that make it more accepted. One is that you have greater globalization, and connections, so it's easier to go to Afghanistan, it's easier to see television reporting on Afghanistan, and of course this goes on steroids in the decades that follow, right. So the identities are crossing borders and becoming much stronger as a result.

A second factor is the Cold War. So you have Saudi Arabia that's a very active participant in the anti-Communist struggle, and is trying to play up anti-Soviet sentiment.

And the third related factor is the Soviets. The Soviet campaign in Afghanistan was utterly brutal, right, there's no way to whitewash the horrific crimes the Soviets did there.

And so you have people appropriately and genuinely upset over the mass slaughter of innocent people, and so those together make this cause popular, but as I know from reading Peter's books, the initial number of Arabs who go to Afghanistan, who heed to Azzam's calls, are in the dozens, right.

The way they retell the story, it's, you know, the Soviets invade and the Muslim world reacts, and everyone is off to Afghanistan. In reality it was a few dozen people, there were a lot of oddballs as you'd expect if you're just talking a few dozen people, and ironically it actually really starts to take off as the Soviets are leaving. And you start to have more and more people, you start to have bigger and bigger numbers, and you have a big successful battle that makes bin Laden's reputation.

And this is an important point because although there are theological

justifications, the fighting really matters, right. So, bin Laden and his broader cause become much more popular because he is important in a high-profile battle. It's of course glorified, but he's genuinely brave, and genuinely important, I think that's fair to say.

And that leads lots of people to want to be like him. They then fight another battle where they are incredibly brave, and they march into enemy fire, and as you'd expect, when you march unprotected into enemy fire you die, right.

And it's this huge waste of jihadist life and incredible blow to the cause, because they're seen as foolish, so, military success, military failure are mattering in Afghanistan.

Fast-forward to Iraq. You have this guy, one the most important jihadists who, his name, if you know a guy named Abu Musab al-Zarqawi who is the founder of al-Qaeda in Iraq, he is a brutal thug. Okay? But he has credibility because he's a fighter, right. He is standing up, he is fighting, if you are an 18-year-old Muslim you might say at the time, you know, a lot of respect for bin Laden, but I want to be Zarqawi, I want to be the guy with the gun, the guy with the knife fighting.

And he promulgates this doctrine, that it's the fighter who matters the most, right. And this is something the Islamic State picks up which is, if you want to be a fighter, you know, the theologians they're all well and good, but it's the guys on the ground who matter. And that's what proves to be most inspiring to the next generation.

MR. BERGEN: So what do you -- it seems that just as a school shooter is done from other school shootings, a terrorist will learn from the previous terrorist groups. So, what do you think the innovations that ISIS, or to this, will we see in the next iteration of whatever this thing is, because surely there will be another iteration?

MR. BYMAN: So, I want to go back to 2009 in Iraq when it looked like the predecessor of ISIS was on the ropes. So, al-Qaeda and Iraq is being devastated, and we have what makes them, I'll say, interesting to study is they do what we do, they do lessons in foreign states.

All right, so maybe a lesson (inaudible), and they came up with the same lessons I think the U.S. Special Operations community would come up with, right. So, they said, you know, first I'll treat the population well, you know, don't mistreat them, you want them to be your friend, the tribes are very important, be their friend. Don't declare a caliphate, right.

They declared an Islamic State in Iraq it was kind of failure, people, kind of, didn't take it seriously, and the foreigners, be very cautious about them, they're way too zealous, they mistreat people, and whatever you do, cooperate with other groups, right. You're all common enemies, and you don't want to spend your time shooting at each other.

And those were the al-Qaeda lessons, and we see -- in Syria we see what becomes the al-Qaeda group, Jabhat al-Nusra, largely assimilate those lessons; and they were perfectly sensible to me.

When the Islamic State emerges it's the same people but they had learned the opposite lessons, right. Their lessons were, you wanted to declare a caliphate because then you get respected, and everyone has to obey, it's a recruiting source, and it's the source of legitimacy.

The foreigners are great because they'll do whatever you want. Do you want them to go kill people in a village, they'll do it, right. They don't have any relatives or friends there, they're not afraid of retaliation, they'll go mow everyone down. That's awesome, you could trust them, you can trust them to be suicide bombers.

Their lessons are very different. So it's quite possible to me that different groups could draw completely different lessons from the same experience.

What ones am I guessing they'll draw? So, one is the benefits of a caliphate. Right now I would argue that the caliphate is very dangerous for these groups because it simply enables the United States to conduct military operations more effectively.

Right, they have to concentrate forces, they have to defend the territory, they have to create bureaucratic structures, they are very vulnerable. So, from our point of

view it's -- I don't want to say an easier task -- but it's a more straightforward task than rooting out insurgents who are embedded in population. But I think they see tremendous benefits from the caliphate.

You mentioned sectarianism. I think whenever possible they're going to play up sectarianism, that was a big win, and with much less downside than really anything else they've taken on. And I also think it's ideological --ideologically genuine. I think there is -- they have a sense that these people really are betraying God, they've turned against us, they are the enemy within.

Tactically, of course, there's a lot they did that was very effective. So, so one thing that they did which I would stress is they mixed military operations and terrorism, right, so things we think of as terrorism like suicide vehicle bombing, they might use a couple of those to go through a fortified position. So, what we'd see in combat. And then go immediately and try to kill a commander, and behead him on video and disseminate him, right.

So it's a military operation, but a lot of the purpose was to have psychological effects, but a lot of the purpose of terrorism was to benefit the military operation. And to me that was a very impressive, I hate to say, but it was a very effective use of tactics and enabled them to gain a lot of ground by demoralizing enemy forces. And that's something I think others will learn as well.

MR. BERGEN: And one of your policy recommendations is -- I mean right now if, let's say, your son is planning to join ISIS, as a parent in the United States you have a tough decision which is, if I go to the FBI he could be in prison for 15 years, or if I just do nothing he could go to Syria and get killed there.

And of course, you know, law enforcement is not-- it's pretty risk-averse for good reasons. So how do you -- and, you know, think about Shannon Connelly, who was a 19-year-old American female in Denver Colorado, the FBI talked to her four times and said, you know, if you want to do something for Syria just help an NGO that's working in Syria.

And she ignored that. So, some people will just -- it doesn't matter if -- most people, if the FBI comes four times they're going to stop doing whatever they're doing. So, the question is really how do you -- how do you how help a parent or a family whose kid is radicalizing without putting them in prison for 15 years?

MR. BYMAN: So, to be clear I think the FBI actually handled Shannon Connelly very well. You know, I think that was --

MR. BERGEN: Yes.

MR. BYMAN: -- a very impressive attempt to not jump to incarceration as first resort. So, what you want, to me, is a polite knock on the door, which is also kind of threat if it's the FBI, right, so you want that kind of coercive element to be there, and you want community involved. And it's going to depend on who the individual is, but I can imagine for a typical young man it would be some mix of a religious leader, a soccer coach and their uncle, right.

That it would be different authority figures from different parts of their life intervening, but again with the family and community recognizing that the law enforcement is trying to work with them, right, and that they should go to law enforcement. But at a certain amount of time, just as in crime, just as in other things, there is an irreducible element that you do have to put in jail, right.

And I think that, what's amazing in some ways is how differently the FBI has handled this in different parts of the country, right, where in some cases there have been individuals, including some who are mentally challenged, who have some real problems that the FBI has gone after extremely aggressively. And in my view, in a way, that does not reflect what we should have been doing.

But in other cases has been very careful and trying very much to rehabilitate -- not even rehabilitate -- but to prevent a person from radicalizing further, and turn them off the path, and that's been very commendable.

MR. BERGEN: And what you're describing is exactly what the community

tried to do with Samir Khan, who then went to Yemen to found *Inspire Magazine* for al Qaeda in Yemen. So it is -- it's not a an easy -- but the fact is the United States is really being pretty -- kind of, there were very few American recruits relatively speaking. Why was that?

MR. BYMAN: So, let me say a couple things here. First of all, when we do this sort of approach we'll make mistakes, right, and we have to accept that, right, that you will at times believe someone is not violent, or not about to be radicalized. So, you'll think it's working, and then something changes, and off they go, and so zero risk tolerance is not going to work if you're going down that road. You have to accept some degree of mistakes.

Why relatively few American recruits? This is a million-dollar question to me. So, I would say a couple things? One is, first of all the American Muslim community is extremely well integrated, right. So, on average if you are an American Muslim especially outside the African American community you're likely to be better educated and wealthier than the average non-Muslim, right. You know, compare that to parts of Europe and that's staggering. I mean so it's an incredibly successful community.

It's also a community where the ethnic enclaves are not huge, and concentrated, right. So, it's the kind of standard immigrant success story, where of course immigrants tend to live often near other immigrants, but go a couple generations out, and it's communities that are very scattered in a very positive, in my view at least, American way.

Part of it is an aggressive FBI campaign, where the FBI has been identifying potential people, and going after them out in the post-9/11 era, and that's important to recognize, right, that there would have been more without that campaign.

And then also transit difficulty, right, it's much harder to leave the United States than it is to leave a European country for Syria. And not impossible of course, and we tend to think of transit as relatively -- relatively easy, but compared to Europe, compared to the Muslim world, much harder. So, those are some of the factors I would say.

MR. BERGEN: Great. We'll open it to questions. I think there's a mic. So,

if you have a question, raise your hand and identify yourself. And this gentleman right over here?

MR. MULLER: Yes. John Muller from Cato, and Ohio State. One of the things that puzzles me is why there hasn't been more violence by returnees? We've been told for two or three years ago that there are a thousand hundreds of returnees in Europe, for example, and there's probably more now, and there's been a lot around the world.

And as far as I know there's been no case of a returnee committing violence, terrorism violence in Europe during that time. Though a part of that maybe with the police, but the police -- but there's been plenty of terrorism, but just hasn't been by returnees. So, could you deal with that issue? Have they just been turned off or is there some other?

MR. BYMAN: So, I think there is a mix of things that explained this. So, the last major returnee involvement was the Brussels attack in 2016, and then there were -- it depends what you want to count, but there were some smaller things that are a little -- a little more ambiguous in the years after that.

So, a lot of it is a much more aggressive police intelligence effort. When people identified earlier, followed earlier, some are put in jail, so that's part of it. And part of it is there aren't huge numbers who want to do attacks, right. What makes Syria difficult is there are the roughly -- there are over 5,000 Europeans who went to fight in Syria and Iraq.

And if Europe were -- if the Muslim population of Europe where its own country, that would be the highest percentage of any country in the world, right. So, it's a huge issue more broadly for Europe.

MR. BERGEN: Can you repeat that again, sorry?

MR. BYMAN: Sure. So, if we -- I have to make sure I phrase this properly.

MR. BERGEN: Yes.

MR. BYMAN: I believe if we treated Muslim Europe as a country, that the percentage of foreign fighters who came from that country are greater than a percentage of

any other country.

MR. BERGEN: Mm-hmm. Right.

MR. BYMAN: Any other major country I should say. So it's a staggering number, right. The question in some ways is, what is the denominator of those who go abroad to fight, and those who come back and want to do attacks? And for Afghanistan it was extremely high, right.

So one estimate was about one in nine, right, in Syria may me closer to 1 in 300. Now, now with thousands of people going 1 in 300 is actually not a tiny number, but it makes the job of the police much better. A lot of the job of the police is triaging, right, it's trying to figure out which individuals involved are truly dangerous, and which went overseas, picked up a gun, but they're done, right. They had their moment, and they're done.

And this is always a question for the security services dealing with foreign volunteers; it's how to think about their activities upon return.

So, a part of it, to go to Dr. Mueller's question, is police intelligence services, but part of it is I think that many of them hadn't planned to do attacks and weren't operationalized when they returned.

MR. BERGEN: And in the case of the Afghan returnees, people just didn't know that was going to be an issue. I think it's that simple, right?

MR. BYMAN: That's right. And people were not paying attention, right.

MR. BERGEN: Yeah. This gentleman, here in the glasses; just wait for the mic, and identify yourself?

QUESTIONER: Thank you. I wanted to know about the findings regarding the states which are facilitating the foreign fighters to transit from one place to another, or are supporting, they're training them, and your policy recommendation how to stop them doing so?

MR. BYMAN: So, the focus of my book is on the kind of Sunni Jihadist side of this. So, where states have been involved it's been, I'll say, deliberate passivity, so it's not

-- it's not the case, for example, where -- you know, right now, for example, Pakistan has training camps for Lashkar-e-Taiba that it's supporting and encouraging, right, a very direct state support.

It's much more not putting resources to going after this problem, right. So, it could be allowing transit as Turkey did, as Pakistan did, as Iran did for that matter, it could be a big thing in the 1990s Europe, was fundraising and proselytizing, where, there was a sense in Europe that, you know, if they're raising money for jihad in Algeria, not really our problem, right.

And then of course terrorism happens in France in particular, and they start to focus much more on that, but there's a sense that either this indirectly benefits the policy goal of ours, as was true with Pakistan and Turkey, or it's simply not our problem.

And that the "not our problem" is a pretty common state response, right. So, go back to the United States in 1970s with Irish terrorism, where, you know, a lot of Irish terrorists going from Northern Ireland to hang out the United States raise money here on the signature, IRA weapon, the ArmaLite is a U.S. weapon.

So, this is not something that's kind of unique to the Muslim world in any way, and certainly was present in Europe, and in a different way present in the United States.

MR. BERGEN: But the Turks seem to have been a little bit more -- and I mean they really weren't being told repeatedly that this is a problem you should be dealing with and they kind of just stone-walled for a while. Is that correct?

MR. BYMAN: Yes. The Turks early on in the conflict are hosting an array of Syrian opposition groups and are believing, as many people believe, that Assad is going to fall, and they can be the ones tipping the balance. And so a lot of the people going back and forth are Syrian, and a lot of these groups are working with foreigners, and the Turks are very reluctant to kind of interfere with this, because they think that foreigners might help that effort.

They focus and try to aid particular groups more than others, but for the most part they were, as you said, stonewalling, and this starts to become a circular process where, with heavy U.S. pressure when the U.S. Military campaign begins, they reluctantly agree to U.S. Military basing for this.

Because of that, they are concerned about stability on their own soil, they begin to eliminate crackdown, because they do eliminate crackdown they anger some of the jihadist's networks which do attacks in Turkey, because they do attacks in Turkey there's a further crackdown.

And this sort of cycle is a relatively common thing where the jihadists are very uncomfortable with ambiguity, so the idea that, for example, in 2003/2004 in Saudi Arabia, where the Saudis still have not done a major crackdown on these groups despite 9/11, and they are getting funding from these groups, they are getting recruits -- I'm sorry -- they're getting funding from Saudi Arabia, they're getting recruits, not from the kingdom -- or not from the government but from individuals in the kingdom.

And the Saudis are reluctant to do anything, but then because of limited efforts in response to pressure there are attacks on the kingdom itself. And then the kingdom does a very serious crackdown that's devastating for these groups.

So, I think these groups would be better off if they themselves could recognize the way Hamas does, for example, that sometimes they have to work with enemies more, and that's something that, that pragmatism is simply lacking.

MR. BERGEN: This gentleman here?

MR. HURWITZ: Thank you for a very good presentation. My name Elliot Hurwitz; I just wanted to ask you about one thing you mentioned. You said that in some cases that various nations are trying to rehabilitate terrorists and other jihadists, could you please address the issue of the success or lack thereof in that effort?

MR. BYMAN: Sure. So, there are programs around the world in Indonesia, in Saudi Arabia, there was one in Yemen, the Brits for over a decade have had a series of

programs, I went to Denmark to look at their program, and it seemed in part to be surrounding potential terrorists with very tall blond intelligence agents, until they recognized that there was another way.

So there are a whole host of problems that are being addressed by these programs. It's very hard to measure success, right, and part of this gets to the earlier question where we don't actually know how many of these people intended to do bad things in the first place. Right, so if you're treating someone for a problem that they didn't have in the first place, you know, it's relatively easy.

In addition, a lot of the problems are relative -- a lot of the programs are relatively coercive. So France has a program that was basically kind of encouraging people to assimilate as part of its program, rather than trying to simply move them away from violence. And that's always, you know, relatively few people like to be told what their identity is, right, that's something we want to embrace rather and have a thrust upon us.

It's very hard to judge something like the Saudi figures because in my view the data with any authoritarian regime are messy, right. It's rare that that government is going to be transparent about that.

The British programs I think it's fair to say, they started disastrously. Is that a reasonable statement?

And a part of the problem was they almost openly said to the Muslim community, we think you are all a bunch of terrorists. We want to work with you to stop being terrorists, right. As opposed to, there are a relatively small number of radicals in your midst and you as a community have a whole bunch of other problems that you care about more, how can we work with you, gain your trust?

And in gaining your trust, get you to work on the small number of violent people? But also work with you on things like drug abuse, work with you on things like crime in general, work with you on the tremendous anti-Muslim violence that Muslims in the U.K. suffer?

And so a lot of the programs were, I would say, very poorly conceived at first. You want relatively targeted programs, in my view, focused on known communities at risk, right. So, that can be communities in jail which to me is a tremendous concern. I would add; people who have expressed support for violent jihad on social media, right.

Often people are self-identified, rather than simply trying to say: we think you have certain demographic characteristics and therefore we want you to enter this program. That, to me, is a recipe for disaster, because we need to remember that even in -- and I just talked about how many Europeans went -- even in European countries it's still a tiny number as a fraction of the overall Muslim population.

MR. BERGEN: This gentleman here?

QUESTIONER: So, Peter Shay, and I'm a student, Foreign Policy Director at Portland State University in Oregon, so pretty far away. My question was with this being a larger problem in EU do you think the 28 member states need to have a more united policy, i.e. the Irish Government saying that they wanted to bring back ISIL bride Lisa Smith, who was a former Defense Force's soldier; but then the British conversely saying that they weren't going to take back any of the ISIL brides. Thank you.

MR. BYMAN: So, on that particular question, and the narrow question to me of, Islamic State brides or returnees in general, what I would like is, I would certainly like a European response but at a very -- at programs accepting responsibility.

So, if it's the unified response that they're not going to take any of them, I don't want a unified response, right. I want them to be taking their citizens.

But to your broader question, the terrorist groups can cross borders, right. It's relative, if you look at the Paris attack one of the things that contribute to it was you had individuals able to operate nearby, in Belgium in particular, where the security services were not mobilized, the way the French security services were mobilized.

And this is a constant concern of European states is that there'll be at least common denominator effect, that whichever state is the most lax, whether it's on border

security, whether it's on their own policing, that this will have implications for other parts of the Continent.

So, to me you do want a strong European response. Intelligence-sharing often tends to be one of the last things that becomes unified, it's a very sensitive issue. There's very good article in *The New York Times* a couple days ago about how a Lobby Intelligence Sharing in Europe now says, except for Austria, because there's a sense that Austria is completely penetrated by the Russian Government, and anything you give to Austria is going straight to Moscow.

And so you have real problems in Europe that have nothing to do with Jihadism, but have a lot to do with kind of broader problems of European unity, or outside penetration that have a big impact indirectly on Jihadism.

MR. BERGEN: This gentleman here.

QUESTIONER: Thanks. Ozgur Ozdamar, Bilkent University in Ankara, SAIS here. I keep reading in the opposition Turkish media that there is a significant amount of foreign fighters in Turkey as sleeper cells, I think that's the term they use. That's the first thing I wanted to ask you, is this true? Second, I've read it -- I heard about this in a podcast this week that Baghdadi in the video last week declared Turkey as a province of his caliphate, and these journalists, Turkish journalists, were interpreting this as, he may want to expand his war to Turkey, the jihad to Turkey. What would you say to this? Thank you.

MR. BYMAN: So as you know, Turkey has already been a victim of this group in a very serious way, right, significant attacks. The term sleeper cell is used in different ways by different people. So, it used to be used historically in a sense of, you know, the Soviet Union was sending over -- you know, the acquittal of the Americans for those who watch that show, where the Soviet Union sends in some people who burrow in very deep and then do operations, right.

What it has often been used as, more commonly, is simply people come back and they do attacks, right. That there they sleep for a day and then they wake up and

start to do attacks, right. So, I haven't seen much evidence of kind of the deep sleeper cell phenomena in the Jihadist Movement.

Now you do see evidence that 10 years later after some returns they hook up with another group or cell, but that's different from they were under instructions to lay low, burrow in, and then act.

So, longer-term, it could happen, but I don't see it as a deliberate plan. Short term it's quite plausible to me that Turkey is very high on the list. The Turkish closing of the border was a huge blow to the Islamic State, and their propaganda was quite open about that. You know, the Turks are betrayers, deserve to be attacked. Also because there were significant networks in Turkey that to facilitate the flow of jihadists those can easily be turned into attack networks.

What I would add for Turkey in particular is you had a lot of -- I use the word Chechen networks -- but really the caucuses, Chechen is often used as a label, a shorthand for a lot of people from Ingushetia, or Dagestan, or that area.

And a lot of that was based, they were -- the Russians kind of did -- gave people a one-way ticket and they encouraged a lot of people to go to Turkey in order to get out of the area for the Sochi Olympics. And so a lot of people went to Turkey and that went to Syria as well.

So to me there's a lot of potential in Turkey. As you know the Turkish Intelligence Services are very aggressive, right. So there was a question to me of, kind of, capacity of the jihadist side versus capacity of the intelligence services. And in general I think the intelligence services have been pretty successful in the last year-and-a-half on this. People were very concerned about this and the problem has not manifested in the way people have been concerned, but I think the potential is still real.

MR. BERGEN: The lady right in the back, and then the lady up here in the middle?

QUESTIONER: My concern is actually that the IS now, could be getting

hijacked by others. I mean I think we've seen this earlier in other terrorist groups as well. My example is that in Afghanistan you have three IS troops sometimes fighting with each other, and with a very tenuous link to IS engine, the link is there but it's tenuous.

Having said that, I then distrust some of the stuff I see on Amaq, so I don't know if it is being -- in some cases is being hijacked by a state who's using the IS name, and IS central for their own ends. To me, this is the most dangerous thing that's happening. And would you have something to say on this?

MR. BYMAN: So, one thing that I think is a big difference between the Islamic State and al-Qaeda, is al-Qaeda care tremendously about trying to control its affiliates, and had a lot of back-and-forth with individuals about their behavior, has codes of conduct, there were these long extensive negotiations about joining the group, and it still failed to a degree, right; but tried really hard.

The Islamic State was much less about controlling its provinces, right. It was simply one the oath of loyalty, and therefore it's much more about being a brand, right. So, it's often a certain style of violence, it's a certain presence in propaganda, and that makes you more Islamic State than other groups.

But many, if you, think about whether it's in Nigeria, for example, or Afghanistan, that many local jihadist groups saw this brand as an opportunity just to gain power against another jihadist group, right.

So, if you head up kind of preeminent group in Nigeria, and you had rival commanders one could say, there's this cool new thing going on called the Islamic State, I'm going to align myself to that cool new thing and use it to challenge my boss, right. And now challenge his legitimacy by saying, I'm part of the Islamic State, I'm more legitimate than you, because people now like this phenomena.

I'm certainly not an expert on the Islamic State Province in Afghanistan, but my sense is in Afghanistan a lot of it was kind of fighting within this movement, and power struggles within this movement that some of it was the excitement of the Islamic State, but a

lot of it was simple opportunism by local commanders who wanted to do this.

And when you have a central group in Iraq and Syria that both unable, and also uncaring about exercising command and control, I think that's sort of splitting, and that sort of rivalry is quite likely.

MR. BERGEN: This lady in the middle here?

QUESTIONER: Hi. Thank you very much very for the fascinating talk. I'm Minera Mustafa, from American University. So, I'm quite struck by your comment earlier by the radicalization programs; and the fact that you've seen some of them yourself. And I'm interested in your thoughts. What I'm wondering about is that considering the countries that have their own radicalization programs, do you think there's any way to adopt or would -- from one country to another?

Or would it be limited in terms of the context pertaining to the culture or the population of a country? I'm asking because I worked at the government level CVE and CT, in the efforts before, so I'm really curious about what your thoughts are. Thank you.

MR. BYMAN: You probably know the answer to your own question better than I do, but so -- I mean of course every context in every culture is going to be different, right. And whether it's the Islamic State versus al-Qaeda, versus a much more local group that's going to matter, whether it's the Islamic State in 2019 versus the Islamic State in 2015, it's going to matter because those are very different challenges.

Whether you're doing this in Denmark, or whether you're doing this in Indonesia it's going to matter. But all that said I do think you want to think about what has worked in one country and try to identify how relevant that is to another country. So, a big question to me is simply, as I'm sure, you know, there's a debate in the circles about whether you want to focus on genuinely changing someone's mind, right. Turning them away from dangerous ideas, or simply change their behavior, right.

So is it, you know, I don't care if you think crazy stuff as long as you're not shooting anyone. Or, you're always at risk of shooting someone if you're thinking crazy stuff,

right. And there's a big debate within the field on that question.

And so where do you want to orient the programs, right? Is it you want to pull them away from friends and family members who might be dangerous, and give them a job, give them some stability, and maybe they'll still be, you know, staying up late at night on the internet reading the Islamic State propaganda. But, who cares, right?

Or is it, now to go after this you have to change the propaganda, you have to change the mindset. Changing the mindset is a lot harder, it's harder to do in the sense of it's a much bigger task, and it's also hard to do because I'm not sure we know how to do it, right.

This tends to be something governments are very bad at, right, where it's hard to -- it's hard to convince young people to listen to a government over cool members of their community, right. And U.S. Government programs have had huge problems in this regard where they've often backfired as a result. So I would like to focus more on behavior and see how much leverage we can get on that before taking on the harder task.

MR. BERGEN: One final question here, the lady in black?

QUESTIONER: I would like to ask. How do you see the foreign fighter situation evolving in Bosnia and the Balkans? You spoke a little bit about that before. The region does have a very unique cocktail of emigrated Mujahideen from Afghanistan, the fighters who fought there in the '90s, then you have ISIS cells and fighters returning from Syria, not to mention influencers from state actors who are promoting very conservative religious ideas in the region.

The perceptible threat has really kind of ebbed and flowed over the last five years. What factors do you think would be needed to spark this powder keg of foreign fighters from so many different generations all concentrated in one region?

MR. BYMAN: I am concerned about the Balkans in part because of this multi-generational aspect, and we did see some of the earlier people inspiring the next wave, right. We saw those kinds of first movers influencing the next generation.

One thing about the Balkans is the security services are uneven, so you're going to have large numbers with not particularly well-resourced security services that are not particularly -- not particularly competent in what they're doing.

So, that to me has tremendous potential, and to that you have kind of ongoing religious tension, and so to me this is a potential thing, but to go back to the question of kind of: why haven't we seen more attacks? The Balkans is a great test case for this, right, because if my answer is: it's the security services; that actually doesn't work particularly well in the Balkans, right.

So, it has to be a case where a fair number of the significant number of people returning actually -- right now at least -- don't want to blow something up, right. Some do, they have been some disrupted plots there as, you know, but there hasn't been the huge numbers one might expect.

MR. BERGEN: Well, on that optimistic note, we want to thank Dan for a brilliant presentation. (Applause)

And I believe Dan is willing to sign books, for those who like to.

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