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**Panel:**

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. SACHS: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for coming this morning. My name is Natan Sachs, and I'm the director for the Center for Middle East Policy, and also a big, and longtime fan of Shibley Telhami, whose work we will be discussing this morning.

Shibley needs truly no introduction here, he in many ways is the dean of Middle East Studies here at Brookings, he was here before there was even a Center for Middle East Policy. But he's also been a treasured member of the family of the Center for Middle East Policy, back when it was the Saban Center, and now as well.

Shibley is also, of course, a professor. He's the Anwar Sadat chair at the University of Maryland, nearby, and as well as nonresident senior fellow with us. And this poll is the latest in a long and illustrious series of polls that Shibley has presented here. It's part of the Critical Issues polls of the University of Maryland, and in conjunction with us -- these presentations, of course, are done at Brookings every year, or almost every year.

We've had some fascinating results in the past, and some of the issues raised today -- in the Q&A we can address this and ask Shibley about it -- relate to previous questions. So, it really gives a wonderful panel perspective, in a sense; or quasi-panel perspective over time, with great results.

Shibley has illuminated public opinion, both in the United States, as we'll see today, but also in the region as well. He knows the region extremely well, and that includes the Arab world, among Palestinians and among Israelis, in part, but polls in other parts of the region as well. We were just discussing a poll from 1993 in this regard.

So, I won't belabor my presentation. We will have a presentation of results of this very latest poll hot off the press by Professor Shibley Telhami, and then we will have a panel discussion with two wonderful colleagues, one Elaine Kamarck, who's joining us from the Governance Studies program here at Brookings, and we're very grateful that she joined.

As you may have heard, we're entering election year in the United States, and foreign affairs may or may not be an issue, or some issues might be part of the campaign, and this poll is, of course, of American public opinion, so we will have more of Elaine's take on issues of American politics.

She's an expert of American politics, she's also a veteran of the Clinton administration,

she worked very closely with Vice President Gore, and has had an illustrious career here at Brookings as well on a study of American governance and politics.

And, with us as well is Bruce Riedel, a senior fellow at the Center for Middle East Policy. He also needs very little introduction. He has been in American government, he was with the intelligence community for a few decades, and then spent eight years nonconsecutively in the White House, but he's advised four different presidents, which makes it conveniently, two of each party. He was the daily briefer, the Presidential Daily Briefer, and many other roles with a vast amount of experience in the Middle East, and elsewhere.

I'll plug already that we will have just later this fall the launch of his latest book about the origins of the modern American, involving military involvement in the Middle East that started in 1958, which Bruce saw as a child in Beirut.

So, with that, we will turn to the panel just after the presentation and then open up for Q&A, and so without further ado, let me invite Shibley Telhami.

MR. TELHAMI: Thanks, Natan, it's always a pleasure. I'm happy to be here. Let me just give you a brief introduction.

This is part of the University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll, which I direct, and I generally do this research with my colleague Stella Rouse, who's an Americanist, and we do a lot of public opinion polling on foreign policy, but not just on foreign policy. In fact, just earlier yesterday we released a poll on impeachment, actually, and a short piece that Professor Rouse and I wrote on impeachment.

But, certainly, this this is part of a long trend that I measure American attitudes toward the region on multiple issues, as Natan pointed out, really dating back to the early 1990s, when I first did my - I believe, in fact, my first poll was 1989 to be specific, and the first major article on this was in 1993. So, this has been a process of really kind of studying how American public attitudes shifted over time.

So, I'm going to talk about two polls that we did consecutive; one in September one in October, right one after the other. And, there were significant polls -- in fact, I'm, of course, not going to present all the findings. I'm just going to give you some hints, and some of it will come up in the discussion, because my colleagues have seen most of the polls.

Just let me mention a couple of things with regard to the findings. First, the methodology, the September poll was over 3 thousand. We had a significant poll; we were in the field for roughly three weeks, netting over 3 thousand people. These are all nationally presentative samples from Nielsen Scarborough's Probability-Based panel. And that's what we do in general, so we have a timeline on that.

The margin of error was 1.78% here, but I want to say one thing about this -- it's interesting, and you'll see it in the results -- is that on Iran, in September when we were doing the poll on Iran, we had the attack on the Saudi oil facility that happened on September 14th, split our sample almost in half.

So, we had almost 1,500 before and 1,500 after, so we're actually able to tell how that attack in real time changed public attitude. So, it's kind of interesting to look at and see. You know, it's usually you have to plan a poll and then you have to do another right after, or usually weeks after; but this was in real time.

The second poll was in October, October 4th-10th, and it happened also around the time that the President announced that he was pulling out troops from Syria, so we're able to last minute add a question on Syria to get a sense of how the public reacted.

The methodology, of course, is posted. You're welcome to look at it online. It's posted certainly at the University of Maryland website; the Critical Issues poll website. It's also posted on the Brookings Institution website for any follow-up, and you'll find also, additional questions that we're not presenting here.

So, let me start with the issue of the day: Syria. Now, when the President made the announcement, I immediately drafted a question the same day -- the same hour, almost -- and sent it to Nielsen; they were able to put it in there the same day. And so, we had an interesting kind of result, really from October 7th, late in the day October 7th -- we didn't have many in October 7th -- to the day we closed, which was October 10th, in the morning.

And we had time stamps, so we could also tell how that shifted, just even within the day. So, here's what we have.

If you look, first of all, at the overall, we had asked the question, "As you may know, the United States has recently announced (we didn't even say President Trump so that not to kind of be

political about it) the withdrawal of its forces from northern Syria, ahead of the Turkish military campaign there." President Trump explained, and then we write what he said in his tweet about it, and then we then say, "Then he faced criticism over not protecting the Kurds, and essentially going along with Turkey."

So, we specify that in minimal ways, and then we say, "Do you support, or do you oppose." So, I want you to look at -- first of all, this is broken down by parties. This is for the entire period, from October 7 to 10 in this particular case.

So, just to look at it by party, you have essentially only 24% say, "I support the decision." And, really even among republicans, where there was more support, fewer than half say, "I support." 42% say, "I support." The red is republican, the black is total, and the blue is democrat, and the purple is independent.

But here is an interesting thing; so, as you know, immediately, the President got pushback on this, including late October 8th, a tweet from Lindsey Graham -- but there are a lot of other republicans who came -- as you know this was bipartisan opposition.

And so, although we were in the field for those four days -- and really, mostly the 8th and 9th, because the 7th there were very few, and the 10th were even smaller, we closed the 10th in the morning -- you can see that the pushback had an impact.

The initial reaction was 27 support, it when down to 21 support within a day. And then it started with 42 opposing, the opposition went to 46 the same day.

So, this is fascinating, but it does tell you two stories here. One, of course, there isn't much support regardless, and it seems as though, when you have republican opposition, it does impact public opinion, even among republicans.

But it is also telling that as of October 10th the opposition was only by a minority, still 46%, and that's interesting. Of course, this happened before the vote in The House, the bipartisan vote against the President's decision -- this happened a few days before -- so, maybe it has shifted since, and I suspect it has because those things to have impact.

But, nonetheless, the instinct wasn't particularly to oppose it badly. And I think here, I want to just say something that perhaps my colleagues can help tease out, because you've got two stories here; one story is, yeah, the public doesn't really -- is divided on the President, and you're going to

get certain numbers in one direction and another, and republicans' views matter, but there is this aversion to being involved in the Middle East the President is capturing; just as he said in his tweet, "we gotta get out of there," that, I think, is still at play even in the Syria case here, and maybe in fact, in the democratic discourse about this, they may be overplaying their hands a little bit, in sounding as if they're supporting military action in Syria, continuing military presence. This is something that is worth discussing.

Okay, so, I'm going to move now to the questions on Iran. So, in this particular case, we have a lot of questions on Iran, but I'm only going to give you, really, three samples of these questions; again, measured before and after.

We had this, as I told you, before September 14th, after September 14th, to see how people reacted. And it's a meaningful sample because it's a large sample, even for one poll, before and after 1,500 each, roughly -- maybe 1,400-some, in one case.

So, one of the questions was about presidential, "Do you approve or disapprove of the way the U.S. Government is handling Iran, in general." This was before the attack, after the attack; it's the same poll, remember, we just happened to time it that way because we have a time stamp on when people responded; what date people responded.

So, these are not two polls, it's the same poll, and the way people responded is like this. Before the attack, 44% said they approved; after the attack only 39% said, "I approve." The same thing with the disapproval, it went up from 51% to 57%.

Of course, there's partisan divide on this issue, because it has to do with the President and approving his policies, and you can find that republicans were far more approving than democrats. Actually, exactly the opposite, as you could see, 78% of republicans approve, 79% of democrats disapprove, nothing surprising here.

Now, what about the odds of war with Iran, which we had asked prior because of the fear that was rising that maybe policy was on a slippery slope toward war. So, we asked whether they thought the chance of war as higher than three years ago. It says, "In comparison to three years ago, do you think the odds of the U.S. going to war with Iran are higher, lower, or the same."

And you can see here, again, before September 14th and after September 14th. So, 39% said "higher" already, before September 14th, which is pretty high in comparison to all the other

answers. But after that attack, 51% said the chances are higher. So, obviously people worry about war increase.

But here is the interesting thing that happened with regard to a key question that we have asked, which is, "Which of the following is closer to your view: To achieve its current goal vis-a-vi Iran, the U.S. should be prepared to go to war. The current goals of the U.S. policy do not warrant waging war. The U.S. must rely on other means short of war."

And the fascinating thing is not only is the opposition to the war option overwhelming -- three quarters of Americans -- it did not budge, really, after that attack. It remained highly adamant.

And just to make sure, just to make sure, this one ended late September, this particular poll; just to make sure, we added it in the October poll from October 4th - 9th, and we found exactly the same number; 76% said in October that they opposed the war option.

And to make even more sure, we added a new question in the October poll, which is, "If sufficient evidence emerges that Iran is responsible, should the U.S. consider a military action response?" So, we had, you know, this is just, what about if it turns out that Iran actually carried out this attack? What would you then do?

And again, 66%, two-thirds of Americans say, no to military option. And, even among republicans, you got 53% a majority against the military option.

So, the President is onto something, obviously, here, in staying out of the military option, even though, he's also caging himself in because people think he's handling it badly, because they see him, as you can see, more responsible for the escalation, and this brings me to this interesting question about, "Now, tell me, which one do you think is most important explaining the escalation in the Gulf."

We gave them several options to evaluate each, and then the bottom line said, "Well, now that you've evaluated each, which one is most important, do you think, in explaining the escalation in the Gulf?"

And, look at this, a majority of Americans really blame the actions of the Administration, including a majority of republicans. You know, you've got only 22% say, "it's because of the nature of the Iranian regime." Yeoman is not on their horizon so much as a cause of the escalation, only 5% say so. But you've got 35% say, "it's really the withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear Deal," and you got another 34%

say, "it's the imposition of new sanctions on Iran that it's responsible for."

So, in some ways the public, really, kind of, is blaming the crisis on the Administration, even among republicans, but they also don't war. That really is kind of the interesting story on Iran for the President; it's not a happy story for the President.

Now, American attitudes toward BDS, let me just say something about this before I go through it. I've been asking questions on Arab-Israeli issues for decades, and so we have a good timeline and we have asked questions about sanctions vis-a-vi settlements in Israel, and we found democrats particularly supportive of that. But we have never asked a question about BDS directly.

And one reason for it is, you know, not many people have ever heard of it, although in the last year, it became part of a debate for a variety of reasons, so more people have become aware of it. So, I decided to check it out directly for the first time and try to do it as carefully as one can to tease out where the public is.

I started with a baseline question, which is, "How much have you heard about BDS, or the Boycott Divestment and Sanction movement aimed at Israel?" We don't give them any information. Nothing in here other than just that straightforward question, how much have you heard?

And, you know, about half of Americans say they've heard at least a little about it, and about half say they never heard of it. Okay, so 51% say, "they have not heard of BDS." You've got 6% say, "great deal;" "good amount," 14%; and, "a little," 29%.

So, then we follow up with a question specifically among those who said they've heard at least "a little." So, remember that when you're looking at the next slides, they're not all Americans, they're only those Americans who say "they've heard at least a little about BDS."

And here we say, "Based on what you have heard, do you support or oppose BDS?" straightforward again, we don't tell them exactly; we don't spell it out more, or not; just, that's the information.

And so, here's what we get, 47% -- look at the black first, which is the bottom line -- 47% say, "they oppose it, either strongly or somewhat;" 26% say, "they support it, either strongly or somewhat;" 26% say, "neither support nor oppose."

But look at the, of course, the party divide. Republicans, 76% say "they oppose it."



Democrats a plurality, 48% say, "they support it."

So, that's interesting, the independents are far more divided, but it is striking here with minimal information.

We also added now a little more information, after we have this baseline. And this information is, we gave them the way BDS supporters define BDS, and the general argument against it is that it's in the debate, to see how much they agree with each one.

So, I'm not going to go through that, but I could tell you one option was, "BDS is a legitimate, peaceful way of opposing Israeli occupation in Palestinian territories, inspired by the South African anti-Apartheid movement, BDS urges action to pressure Israel to comply with international law. Opposing Israeli policy does not equal anti-Semitism."

And then we have, "Regardless of how BDS defines itself, it is an anti-Israel organization attempting to weaken Israel and undermine its legitimacy. Some of its supporters are opponents of Israel's very existence and may even be anti-Semitic." That's typically the kind of argument that we hear from opponents.

Now, of course, people can agree with both of these at the same time, and we do find that some people agree with both of these at the same time, we've seen it. But then, after we measure that, we ask, "Now that you have given us your point in each one, which one is closer to your view?" That's the question.

Here, again, you find that 54% find it closer to being an anti-Israeli organization. 42% say, "they find it's a legitimate, peaceful way of opposing Israeli occupation," But the bigger story here, really, is the partisan divide, because if you look at independents, they're divided and actually leaning more toward democrats a little bit, than with republicans.

But, it's just overwhelmingly republicans don't find it to be legitimate, 85%. And very significant, democratic majority, 77%, lean toward it being a legitimate movement. And this is interesting.

Then we follow with another question -- by the way, there are a lot more questions. You can go online, I'm just going to end with one question here on this issue, which is, "Which of the following is closer to your view?" This one is specifically two statements, "We should support laws that penalize people who boycott Israel because these laws help protect Israel. Or, we should oppose laws that

penalize people who boycott Israel because these laws infringe on the constitutional right to free speech and peaceful protest.”

And, what's interesting is, here, you find that, really, a very strong majority is on the second, opposing the laws. This is not supporting boycott, or opposing boycott; this is regardless, right? This is about whether or not laws are a good idea to do it.

And you could see, 72% say that they agree with the “oppose the idea that laws should be passed,” and that’s, interestingly, one of the few things in which democrats and republicans seem to agree.

You know, it's fascinating actually to look at that because not too much variation.

Let me end with just a couple of questions about Afghanistan. As you know, we have a really good panel who knows a lot about some of these issues. In the Arab-Israel issue, the Iran issue, the Afghanistan issue, American politics issue, and many of you know that my colleague, Bruce Riedel, has, among all the many things that he's done and written about, Afghanistan was one of the things he has worked on as well. And so, I'm actually very much looking to hear his opinion on some of these.

So, here we are only displaying just a few slides, but we asked a lot of questions, including questions about the Taliban and how the U.S. might handle them in the future, and so forth, but here, I'm going to just review a few.

“Do you think the U.S. should increase troops, maintain current levels, decrease troops, or remove all troops from Afghanistan the next year?”

And this was a little bit more nuanced than I expected, I have to say, that about one-third of Americans, 34% say, “maintain current troop levels.” Then you have 23% who want decrease, another 22% who all troops removed by the end of the year, and 18% who don't know.

A little variation, but you know, not much between democrats and republicans, frankly. I mean, you look at them, it's pretty close actually; it's not substantial, especially in our polarized environment, there were really very small deviations.

And then, “As you may know, the U.S. has started the reduction of military presence in Afghanistan, with about half of the approximately 14,000 U.S. troops there set to begin returning home in the near future. Based on what you know, do you support or oppose this action?”

And, here, again, strong support for the action. We have 61% supporting again, even more republicans, but certainly, also a majority of democrats and independents supporting it.

“Do you think America’s military involvement in Afghanistan has been successful, or unsuccessful, in obtaining America’s strategic objectives?”

And again, people are all over the place, but a plurality 38% say neither successful nor unsuccessful; but more people say that it has been unsuccessful than say it has been successful. One-third say, “it has been unsuccessful.” Only 20% say, “it’s been successful.” And that’s pretty telling.

“Regardless of whether our intervention in Afghanistan was justified or not, do you believe that the U.S. has an obligation toward the afghan government, and their many segments of society who are impacted by that intervention?” Bruce, that’s really for you to reflect on.

And, you know, interestingly here, yes, I think a plurality say there is an obligation, 44%, but a majority of democrats. But you do have 30% who say, “no”, and 25% who are unsure.

And, “What form should that responsibility take?” Again, it’s kind of like more divided than I expected; 30% say, “a limited military role,” they support it. And that, really, is again, includes 28% of democrats. But using mostly the plurality say, “using our leverage in the negotiations to protect the interests of affected parties in Afghanistan.”

And then finally, the question about the Taliban, “How strongly to you agree or disagree with the opinion that the U.S. should negotiate with the Taliban to end the war in Afghanistan?”

And, here I think, you find again, the public really more divided, so you have 42% agree or somewhat agree; 41% disagree, or somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree. And again, interestingly, not a huge difference between democrats and republicans.

There is a difference, and it is meaningful, more people strongly disagree and that’s interesting because this is what the President has been doing. And, by the way, they know; we have asked questions about how much they know on this issue.

So, let me end with that and invite my colleagues for the conversation.

MR. SACHS: Thank you very much. Thank you, Shibley, for another series of very illuminating data. I wonder if I will just start with our panelists, and then go back to you also, Shibley, on just what struck you most. There’s a wealth of information here, on a variety of different things, and I’ll

jump in with what struck me most, perhaps, but Elaine, can I start with you, what really struck you about this data? What was the most telling thing that you saw from it?

MS. KAMARCK: Well, I think there's two different things. One that was not surprising was the large number of people who either didn't know, or really didn't have an opinion. It's about 30% in some of those early ones, and I think that's typical of foreign policy questions in general in the American public.

I would also suspect that the actual number is bigger than 30% because of something that political scientists call, non-attitudes, and I'll tell you a little story about non-attitudes.

In 1975 there was a poll conducted, which asked Americans what their opinion was of the Public Affairs Act of 1975? And, 40% supported it, and like 42% were opposed to it, etc., and it turns out there was no such thing (laughter) as the Public Affairs Act of 1975. This exercise has been repeated in various polls for many years.

And people feel -- if you think about it, in responding to polls -- they feel that they **should** have an opinion, because they **should** be educated. So, I'd say that maybe we take that 30% and add another 10-15% to it, and we'd probably get down to people who really actually have an opinion on things. So, that didn't surprise me.

The second thing that was really not surprising was the partisan differences because what happens with low salience polling, is that people take their cues from the President.

So, if the President is withdrawing troops from Syria, then all the democrats say, "well, must be mad, because he's doing it," and vice-versa; so, you see that a lot in polling.

I think, to me, the most interesting thing, and something that's been around a bit, is the attitudes towards BDS as a symptom of a larger change in attitudes towards support for Israel, which I believe is happening in the democratic party, but it's a little misleading to see that as part of the democratic party.

What's really going on here is a generational shift. The two parties at this point in our history are very divided generationally. So, young people, mostly tend to be democrats.

In 2008, Barack Obama split every age group with John McCain, except for "30 and Under" where he got -- that was his margin of victory. And that partisan divide has continued.

So, the democratic party is a young party. The republican party is an old party. And I think that what we're seeing here in particularly the BDS attitudes, where I was surprised at how significant the differences were. What I think we're seeing here is a generational shift in viewpoint towards Israel.

Us baby-boomers who were non-Jewish, who grew up on Exodus, and all the great heroism of Israel, right, our children are not having that experience of Israel. And so, I think that's something that will affect American politics and is significant going forward.

MR. SACHS: Great, thank you. Bruce, what struck you most?

MR. RIEDEL: Two things, first regarding the Iran question. The Iran question shows a majority of Americans think it's our fault that we're in this mess today. They're right (laughter). They got that one right on the mark.

Also shows, what's very striking to me, no desire to go to war to defend Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is America's oldest ally in the Middle East. The relationship goes back to 1943.

Every American President, including Barack Obama, Richard Nixon; every American President has reaffirmed the importance of Saudi Arabia to the United States. And yet here, when Saudi Arabia is blatantly attacked by the Iranians, and there's not much doubt about that, there's no presumption of Americans, we should go to its defense.

I'll illustrate that in another way, as well. Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, came out right after the attack and said, "We have no obligation to Saudi Arabia." She's right, we don't have any mutual defense treaty with Saudi Arabia, and then she went on. She said, that the site of American leaders sitting down with Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman -- she didn't mention him by name, rather she referred to him as the murderer who had poisoned and then chopped up an American journalist -- very, very strong statement by her.

And I think in this case, she really does capture the popular mood in the United States. Americans have never been that crazy about Saudi Arabia -- September 11th, of course, plays a big part of that, so does the Oil Embargo of 1973 -- but what we're seeing in this poll, I think, is that support for Saudi Arabia has really diminished almost completely among democrats, and among a sizable number of republicans as well.

Contrast Mrs. Pelosi's statement about Saudi Arabia back in September, to her trip this weekend to Jordan and Afghanistan, where she went out of her way with her democratic colleagues, to reintegrate our support for Jordan as an American ally, and, more interestingly, our support for staying the course in Afghanistan; which gets to the second thing that struck me about Afghanistan.

There's no rush for the door. There are Americans who want to get out before the end of 2020, but they're far from a majority. If you put together the ones who want to stay, or the ones who want to marginally increase American forces, you have a pretty substantial group there. There's no rush here to say, let's put this endless war behind us.

And then the one thing that really, really struck me is that 70% of democrats say we have an obligation to the Afghan people. Now, the popular perception in the democratic party, believe me, is that the overwhelming Americans just want to wash our hands of this, get away from it, split and run. That's what the New York Times has been advocating for almost a decade now.

American people don't buy it. They do see that we have some kind of an obligation to Afghans. I think that that reflects, in very important measure, American feelings that we have an obligation to Afghan women. That we have done an awful lot for Afghan women, and that all of that is threatened if the Taliban came back.

I'm more puzzled by the question, should we negotiate with the Taliban or not. To me, this is kind of a no-brainer. Of course, we have to negotiate with the Taliban otherwise how are we ever going to get out. I don't understand why there's opposition to that.

I understand, yes, the Taliban is a loathsome organization, engages in terrorism, has been killing Americans for 18 years. But we negotiated with the Soviet Union, we negotiated with communist China, President Trump is negotiating with North Korea, and so were his predecessors. The Taliban is part and parcel of this, and we will have to negotiate with them.

Final thing I would say is the slide about whether we've accomplished our mission in Afghanistan. Again, to me, this is kind of a no-brainer. The reason we went to Afghanistan in 2001 is Al-Qaeda posed an imminent threat of another 9/11.

The good news is Al-Qaeda in South Asia is virtually gone. It's a hollow shell of itself. If you were to measure how well we've done against Al-Qaeda, the answer is thanks to the drones, and

thanks to the Seal raid, we've done very, very well against Al-Qaeda.

The more complicated problem is the secondary war; the war against the Taliban. And that's far from being resolved, and that's, I think, the reason why Americans are so confused frequently about why we're in Afghanistan and why we continue to need to be there.

MR. SACHS: Thank you so much. Shibley, if I may, I hope it's fair to do, but when you step away from your own product, what strikes you most? What is different here than in the past?

MR. TELHAMI: Well, let me give you a couple of things that I think. I'm reflecting on particularly attitudes toward wars in the Middle East in general. I mean, some of the stuff that Bruce touched on, which is, how much of this is really function simply of the polarization that Elaine talked about, which obviously we know is there.

On some issues, it's really the driving force, and you can see it like 90% and 90% against. Or, is it really that the republicans in Congress are just embracing the President when they go against him, then that it loosens up a little bit, as we've seen with some of that? Or is there something bigger than that going on in the attitudes of the public toward the Middle East.

And on the Iran question, and even the Syria question, I'm seeing something bigger than just republicans not responding. Here's why I say that: because we have seen evidence that the public does move a little bit when republicans respond. We've seen it on impeachment. We saw it in Syria, where there's pushback from Congress.

But, on the question of whether to use military option with Iran, they're adamantly opposed, even as, our republicans actually were pushing the President after the attack.

MR. SACHS: The leaders, you mean.

MR. TELHAMI: Republicans in Congress.

MR. SACHS: Mm-hmm.

MR. TELHAMI: Many congressional leaders, including Oz (phonetic), the President, were saying, you can't let him get away with this. You gotta do something. You gotta do something military. And that was really kind of a -- and I was seeing, up to a point, some democrats, because it wasn't just about Saudi Arabia, or even oil being imported, but credibility question, right? I'm mean that's sort of the issue. And yet it didn't move the public at all.

I mean, we've got consistent -- early, before the attack, after the attack, October, you got three quarters of the American public opposed, and a majority of republicans opposed. There's something here, I think, that is just more enduring, that's number 1.

Number 2, on the question of Afghanistan, I'm a little puzzled like Bruce. But I'm not as puzzled in the sense that, of course, it's been a long time, particularly for the new generation that Elaine's talked about, and we haven't yet controlled it for age; these are fresh results we're getting.

We're going to do that, and it might be true that, for example, people with a little longer memory will have a slightly different attitude; we'll see.

But on the Israel question, what we have seen -- we've always, sort of, particularly for someone with a historical view like I do, in the sense that as I said, several decades of asking questions and writing about this issue -- so, what drives the public.

And what I look at is not just salience of the issue, or who's interested, the attentive public. It's what I have called in the article that Natan and I were just mentioning with a former professor of Political Science at Stanford, Jon Krosnick, we wrote a piece back in the early 1990s called, "Issue Publics in American Policy," toward Israel, meaning, who ranks this issue highest in their priority.

It's not just enough to say, here's what the public thinks. Politicians are going to respond only to passionate publics and does the public care more deeply about this issue than before or is it simply a function of the polarization that we now show, you know, I'm for Trump, or I'm against Trump. Or, is there something else going on here.

I think there is no question that a big part of it is the polarization, and it preceded Trump, because I think the fact that Israel had had a right wing government headed by a prime minister who was seen to be almost an ally of the republicans, and opposing a democratic president of the United States, certainly impacted even further.

So, this is a deeper divide than just one driven by Trump. Trump accelerated it, or expanded it, but we have that kind of structural thing going on.

But we do have, nonetheless, a change. And the change is that, there was always some polarization in American politics; now it's much deeper. But there was always some polarization. This particular issue was more immune to polarization than other issues.



It was not perfectly immune, there are always some divide. But far more immune than other issues. Now, it's less immune. Whether it's just generational, or the demographic changes in democratic party, is debatable.

There is definitely the younger public, as Elaine has suggested, tend to be more critical of Israel. But really, all the other rising constituents in the democratic party: women, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, all of these minorities tend to be more critical of Israel.

And, finally on this, I think the question of sort of, is this all superficial? Part of it is superficial in political polarization. What happens if you have a democratic president get elected and you have a prime minister in Israel that's seen acceptable by the American mainstream, some of that will go away; some of it.

But there is something deeper, I think, that people have not noticed -- and these BDS numbers tell the story -- that a lot more people know about Israel/Palestine than they did 30 years ago, 20 years ago. And, for whatever reason, it has become a prototype of a value system; international law, international norms, human rights, democracy -- in fact, I did a piece for welfare on this a few years back with a colleague of mine showing how, in fact, it does, it has become sort of representative of a certain value system.

And therefore, probably more enduring, and up to the same extent, but more enduring than people think. So, there is definitely change here. And it is interesting, this is the first time that I test on this issue specifically, tried to do it as carefully as I could, and it is interesting that even this issue, there seems to be that fits into the pattern that we see on other issues as well.

MR. SACHS: Great, thank you. I'd like to come back to the others. So, first, I just want to mention previously polls that you've presented also at Brookings -- I think, perhaps, three years ago, about different lens through which many democrats and republicans frame the questions of Israeli and Palestinian affairs, of whether a lens of human rights and civil rights, or a lens of security and alliance.

MR. TELHAMI: Right.

MR. SACHS: And sort of the fundamental difference. There seems to be overall, a very strong tension here between on the one hand what you call the superficial, the polarized things, some that you could flip if the President was of a different party; but there also seems to be something much

more sustainable.

If you remember when President Obama did not strike after the Redline Crossing, the chemical weapons attack. He, of course, argued for an attack in The White House, and then he said, but, and he paused, and he said, "I will go to Congress for authorization."

The dirty (phonetic) secret is that Congress was not about to approve it. That is when he, in fact, decided not to do it and went to the Russians, is that Congress was not going to do it. This was a republican controlled Congress. In part, perhaps, Obama did this to test and maybe challenge the republicans. But I think it is quite telling.

So, I suppose my question, and then I'll turn it to the others to either answer the question, or ignore it and say whatever they want (laughter), which is, are we seeing actually a case in point of what Steve Bannon and Donald Trump were saying to a degree, which was that you're living in a bubble where many of the senators and congressmen from both parties live in a relatively interventionist environment, think of our obligations in the world, but the American public is simply not there. And in, maybe there in some instances when it follows leaders and follows cues from the President, but by and large is not interested.

Am I over reading this? You know, we've seen now with this attack in Saudi Arabia and previous attacks on tankers in the Gulf, maybe a sea change, a moment in American attitude towards the Middle East where the Carter Doctrine, where the very idea that the U.S. will guarantee the free flow of energy, be involved with, for example, Saudi Arabia. Maybe that's fundamentally changing?

MR. TELHAMI: Well, if I may on this because I think one way to look at it, it's not that members of Congress are living in a bubble. To go back to the question that I suggested, which is that it's really issue publics, people who care most deeply are the ones how are heard most, whether they're the ones who write the checks, they're the one who will vote based on that issue. I can have an opinion on many issues that are not going to determine how I'm going to vote, or how I'm going to write a check to a politician.

And so, members of Congress are going to hear those who care most deeply about the issue, and there is a gap between that and the public, particularly on fundraising.

And in that sense, it's not a bubble as much as it is the sensitivity to who cares more in

the political spectrum of the United States. The question is, whether that has changed. Really, that's the issue for me, is, has that changed.

And I think that there's some indication it has, in large part because the partial democratization of fundraising where there are many candidates to fundraise from a larger segment. And, because the space has opened up where it has become noticeable that sometimes a candidate who speaks the language of the public on Israel/Palestine is rewarded rather being punished; it used to be the opposite.

MR. SACHS: Mm-hmm.

MR. TELHAMI: And so that opens up possibilities for -- let's say Bernie Sanders, when he ran against Hilary Clinton, he didn't go -- really, when you actually looked at what he said, it wasn't so radical. It was really mainstream, but it resonated with a lot of public because he was seen to speak out. And I think he energized his base because it resonated with them.

This is on the radar screen of the public, but it isn't yet, it isn't yet, a burning issue. Remember, Israel/Palestine is not a strategically important issue right now.

MR. SACHS: Mm-hmm.

MR. TELHAMI: Israel/Palestine is not a politically important issue right now. It is for some, but not for all, and that really explains it.

MR. SACHS: And then can I ask you, I'll put it starkly, does foreign policy matter at all to the primaries we're looking now on the democratic side, or even to the general election. You've written a book on primaries; you've written **the** book on primaries. Does it even matter where, in effect, are there issue publics here that will really be moved by these positions?

MS. KAMARCK: Well, you know, your concept, Shilbey, of issue publics is very important because in politics intensity does matter. So, even if it is a small public, an intense mobilization of a certain group of people in a primary could matter.

So, yes, to the extent that the issue mobilizes some people, it does matter. Remember that primaries are smaller turn out than general elections, fewer people; which means that the possibility of an intense public having an impact is greater.

In general, foreign policy doesn't tend to make any difference in primaries, or even in

general elections, unless American boys, and now girls, are dying. Other than that, it really doesn't get home.

And so, obviously Vietnam made an enormous difference in the 1968 and 1972 primaries, but we really haven't seen that since. And the number of men and women in arms in the United States today is a very small portion of the population.

I happen to be a Navy mom. I can tell you that it's very unusual to have children that have been in the military. So, it's very small, it's very distant for most people.

On the other hand, what does happen -- and here's where foreign policy really matters -- is, it matters as a signal of presidential competence, okay. And that is more diffuse, but critically important.

So, when someone speaks authoritatively about the world, most Americans really don't have an opinion as to whether they're right or wrong, but they want to feel comfortable that the person has some view of the world, and some knowledge of the world.

And when a president makes what is widely regarded as a bad decision, as I think is we're seeing in the polling is what's happening to President Trump's decision on Syria, it does call into question his overall competence as opposed to whether or not that should have happened, or whether we should be in the world or not.

As for the endless war argument, I think this is primarily an argument that is affecting an intense, piece sub-group of the public, which is the America First group. And I think that those people are resentful, angry, angry at the establishment, and a lot of their children have actually been mobilized and have actually served in the military. So, that I think is a subsection of the public, but again, intensity matters.

MR. SACHS: Great. Bruce, for look at this data, especially the data on Iran, we've seen a public, even republicans in these polls blaming the United States to a certain degree, or blaming U.S. at least for the heightened, call it, possibility of war, whether or not they're critical of that heightened possibility. What does this mean in terms of policy?

If we have a new president in 2021, or even a second Trump Administration. If a democrat comes in, the imputes on the democratic side might be to do the opposite of Trump, so maybe

jump back into the JCPOA. But the JCPOA, of course, had time clauses attached to it. They're sensa (phonetic) clauses; times past. The U.S. has gained some leverage since then on Iran, whether good or bad. What might these numbers mean for policy on Iran?

MR. RIEDEL: I think what the numbers on Iran say very clearly to people is that Americans have developed a healthy weariness about starting new wars in the Middle East, for good reason.

This year, this coming year, the first American volunteers will go to Afghanistan and Iraq who were born after September 11th, that's pretty striking when you think about it. A whole generation has gone by and now we're starting to send our youngest off to fight the wars that we started almost 20 years ago.

The overwhelming number of Americans do not want to go to another war with Iran. They're right. As my colleague, Ken Pollock (phonetic) used to like to say, "If you like the war in Iraq, you're going to love the war in Iran," (laughter) because Iran is 3 or 4 times bigger than Iraq, both in terms of geography and in terms of people. And while they may like American jeans, they don't like American soldiers, and we would be bogged down in a mess. I think the American public has gotten that.

They've learned the wisdom of Douglas MacArthur's words, "Any American president who wants to start a land war in Asia should have his head examined." I know Bob Gates said it too, but Douglas MacArthur actually was the first one to say it, and he knew something about a land war in Asia, it was called Korea.

I think that there is a second message in all of this, which is, if you're a Saudi, or an Israeli, this is a wake-up message. You may have Donald Trump for another year and a half, maybe five years -- I doubt it, but maybe -- but, if you get a democrat in 2021, you're going to see a very different approach to the relationship with you. It's most acute in the Saudi case.

I'm personally of the view that any democrat who is elected, particularly if they get control of the Congress, we're going to see an existential crisis in the U.S./Saudi relationship, and a crisis which is, in many ways, irresolvable, because it's not about policy, it's about one person: Mohammad bin Salman.

MR. SACHS: Mm-hmm.

MR. RIEDEL: And, you can't change Mohammad bin Salman. That's going to be a big problem for the Saudis.

I think what the BDS stuff shows, and also the Iran stuff shows, is that support for Israel is not also splitting on party lines, and as Elaine said, splitting on demographic lines. This should be a wake-up call to the next prime minister of Israel. You do not want to become a partisan issue in the United States.

Israel's support, up until now, has been bipartisan. If it becomes partisan, Israel is not going to be in as favorable ground as it is today. Look at Bernie Sanders, the first Jewish candidate for President of the United States, who's openly said, "We should use military assistance as a lever to stop the building of settlements."

MR. SACHS: In fact, Elizabeth Warren just joined him in that.

MS. KAMARCK: Is that right.

MR. SACHS: that should be a big wake-up call to the Israelis Embassy and to Israeli politicians about their future.

MS. KAMARCK: Yeah, let me add to Bruce's excellent points, and deepen them a little bit. I'm Saudi, not only is the modern democratic party a young party, it is also overwhelmingly female.

So, for the last four years, whether the question is approval ratings of Donald Trump, partisan identification, votes in the midterms, whatever, there are many, many more women in the democratic party than there are men.

The antipathy to Saudi obviously has a great deal to do with the murderer, but it has an enormous amount to do with their attitudes towards women, which frankly just appall most American women. Women who don't pay any attention to foreign affairs, etc., just are completely turned off by that world, right, the world that exists there.

And so, I think that's another demographic move that will, in fact, make the Saudi relationship extremely difficult.

I used to be asked -- I worked for Al Gore in the 2000 Campaign, and I used to be asked back in 2001/2002, "Play history differently." Right? "What would have happened had Gore won?" Okay. And then we had 9/11.

And I can tell you with absolutely certainty one thing, which is, he would have used this to break the relationship with Saudi Arabia in order to accomplish two things; first of all, punish them for the relationship with the terrorists, but also to break our relationship with oil and fossil fuels.

He would have seen that as a way to do the transformative work on climate change -- which we still haven't done and we're like in big trouble for it -- okay, but he would have seen that nexus. And that would have happened then. I think that it may happen in the future, as Bruce has said.

MR. SACHS: Thank you. Shibley, why don't I end with you and then turn it over to questions from the public. On the BDS issue, many of the questions that had the split, the big splits, were, of course, among the population, or among the respondents who knew something about BDS.

I'll ask an unfair question, but can you extrapolate a bit, if we had been thinking more broadly about the whole public, at the end of the day, if they do hear and the (inaudible) BDS, if it becomes big enough; or if similar questions, analogous questions, on Israel and Palestinian affairs more broadly are asked, do you think that's representative, or is it exactly, are you capturing, perhaps, exactly this issue public that cares about it.

MR. TELHAMI: Well, of course, it's really hard to tell. And, you know, we could even tease it out a little bit more because we have information about "how much do you know," and we can do that a little bit to measure, to tease it a little bit out.

I don't go there in general because people who don't know, often it's not just that they haven't had a chance to know. (inaudible) people disengaged from foreign policy. How many people vote in America, right?

But I think it's telling because that's usually the people who say they know something about an issue --

MR. SACHS: Are the ones who care --

MR. TELHAMI: They're the ones who are going to be engaged. Well, one way or the other, so that is something you have to take seriously. You can't say "a majority of the American public"; but that's a majority of people who know, and that's a lot.

MR. SACHS: Okay, thank you very much. Why don't I open it up. The microphone is coming. I'll ask in our tradition to please identify yourself, ask a question, which has a question mark at

the end, and please keep it short, if you may. We'll start with Aviva Meyer, right there.

MS. MEYER: I guess I don't have to introduce myself (laughter).

MR. SACHS: Well, please do anyway.

MS. MEYER: I'm Aviva Meyer (phonetic), I'm with Americans for Peace Now. I was really -- this is a question about BDS -- I was intrigued that you did not say anything about distinguishing between BDS against Israel proper, and against the settlements, maybe it's in your -- so, the question is, if you have it in your other questions, why didn't you mention it. And, in any case, would you respond to it.

MR. TELHAMI: Yeah, first of all, there are a lot more questions on Israel/Palestine that I haven't mentioned. They're all there. We have questions on that, on the two state, one state; on Jewishness versus democracy of Israel. The typical questions that I ask, we repeat them often, and we have repeated them in this particular poll, and we have a lot more data. So, I just highlighted what is really new for this that we have never asked before.

But, on the question of settlement specifically, that in fact, we have had a running question. We ask it maybe 3, 4 times a year. I mean, that's how often we ask it, which is, their openness on the settlement issue, "What happens if settlements continue, would you then want to do nothing, limit your reaction to words, impost sanctions over the settlement issue, or even harsher measures than that." I mean, roughly along these lines.

And we find on this issue, certainly polarization, but a majority of democrats, a majority of democrats, support sanctions or harsher measures over the settlement issue, and that has been the case consistently over the past, I would say 3 or 4 years, in almost every single poll that we have done. You still get close to 58% I think, or something along these lines, of democrats who say they support sanctions over the settlement issue.

That's specific to settlements, it's not BDS, and that's why I thought because of the -- I mean, it's obviously important, and that's where Bernie Sanders is, that's where a lot of people are, including groups who want to see movement on this issue politically.

But we have never asked about BDS. BDS has become an issue because what's happening in Congress, the recent debate, and so I needed to separate that a little bit to see if whether



there's even opinion on that issue.

But the other trends continue. And we still continue to find that if people conclude the two states are no longer possible -- and now, you know, that's not an option, to have two states anymore -- would Americans prefer Israel's democracy over its Jewishness, or Israel's Jewishness over its democracy; roughly along these lines.

And we've had consistently, as we have found in the recent poll, overall, roughly two-thirds of Americans, sometimes more than that, who say, "If I have to choose, I would choose democracy over Jewishness of Israel. If two states are no longer possible." Right, obviously that's still an option for people, but that has not changed, it's still a strong sentiment across the Board.

MR. SACHS: Thank you. Please, the gentleman right there.

MR. THOLVICK: Thank you, Carl Tholvick (phonetic), a retired Special Agent U.S. Customs, 9/11 responder, the rate (phonetic) reference in ideal, lives on dotnet. My questions are primarily for Mr. Riedel.

In 1990, Victor Ostrovsky, former Mossad case officer published a book titled *By Way of Deception*, extracted from what he well knew as the Mossad Model, by way of deception, thou shall make war.

Deception operations and false flying operations, with your experience 30 years in the CIA, around the world, don't military intelligence entities perpetrate events that will actually be blamed on a third party in order to lure entities into conflict.

So, 1967, the U.S.S. Liberty attack, some suggest that even the attack on the Saudi oil fields could have been a false flag deception operation by Israel in order to draw us into conflict, defending Saudi Arabia against Iran. Your perspective, please.

MR. RIEDEL: False flag operations are probably as old as the bible (laughter). Espionage is the second oldest profession in the world (laughter). I don't need to say what the first is (laughter).

There are examples in the Middle East of false flag deception operations. One I've always found most fascinating is the trigger for the 1982 Israeli intervention in Lebanon, Operation Peace for Galilee. The attack on the Israeli ambassador in London was carried out essentially by the Iraqi

intelligence service.

They blamed it on the Palestinians, on the Abu Nidal faction, but the actual shooter was an Iraqi intelligence officer. We know that because the shooter immediately got into a car that had Iraqi diplomatic plates and drove to the Iraqi Embassy (laughter). Tradecraft was not the strong point of this operation (laughter).

But the point of it was that Saddam Hussein hoped that starting a war in Lebanon, an Arab-Israeli war in Lebanon, would convince the Ayatollah Khomeini to end the Iran-Iraq war, in order to defend Lebanon.

Well, it showed his understanding of Ayatollah Khomeini was not very good, the fact that he started a war with him underscored that point. Of course, the Iranians did intervene in Lebanon, but they continued the Iran-Iraq war.

In the specific case of the attack on the Saudi oil facilities, the thing that is striking to me is how little of the data the Administration has put forward to the general public. We have assertions, but we don't have a whole lot of data. We don't know where the missiles came from. I find that really, really hard to believe. I mean, we have more radar systems in the Persian Gulf than we have in North America.

And I think part of that is the Trump Administration, for a variety of reasons, including the American public, but I think also the President's own inclination not to start another war in the Middle East, don't really want to put out all the data that will incriminate Iran, and therefore force their hand to do more and more about it.

If you don't put that data out, there's more confusion about what happens, and that may allow the rush to war to dissipate away.

MR. SACHS: Thank you. Okay, Sir. Just behind, yes.

MR. RICHMOND: Thank you, Al Richmond (phonetic), former member of the State Department. I'm interested in the data which appears to show a contrast in the public reaction to Turkey's incursion against Syria, much larger reaction than as you just explained, Iran's attack against U.S.'s problematic ally, Saudi Arabia.

And I wonder, actually, the President may have felt that he had little to worry about Turkish incursion -- Turkey is actually a U.S. ally of sorts -- than what had happened against Saudi

Arabia, that maybe he was surprised by the reaction of the republicans in Congress by 2 to 1, booting against that lack of reaction against Turkey.

MR. TELHAMI: First of all, on Turkey, I have to say that, of course, we closed the poll on October 10th. The congressional action, The House passing overwhelmingly an opposition to the President's move happened after. So, it's possible that public opinion has shifted since. In fact, I would be surprised if it hasn't shifted a little bit.

I wouldn't say much because I think the fear of being dragged into war is still overwhelming, and I think the President has that on his side. And obviously, the President himself still has some base support that are going to stick with him even under these circumstances.

But what is interesting is that there is not as much opposition to the withdrawal; it's less than 50% by October 10th, despite the fact that there was focus on two things in our discourse immediately. One is, that we're letting down our Kurdish allies, and people were predicting horrible things already, from day one.

And number two, people raising questions about Turkey and its objectives, and in the question itself -- we're very careful, not only to mention what the President said, but also to say, to mention, the critics say the Kurds would be vulnerable. And also, to even point out that many critics say that Turkey, despite being a NATO ally, is a foe with suspect goals; it's actually in the question.

So, we put it out there to see what kind of reaction. So, despite that, we still see -- we don't see support, obviously, less than a quarter overall support the President's withdrawal, but it does surprise me that fewer than opposed it. And yes, I think it is surprising, and I think it is a combination of people sticking with the President with the fear of being dragged into conflict.

MR. SACHS: Thank you, Bruce.

MR. RIEDEL: That's the Brookings Dental Office next door (laughter, outside noise increase).

MR. SACHS: Yeah right (laughter).

MS. KAMARCK: Yeah (laughter).

MR. RIEDEL: I have to say, I am a bit surprised at the vehemence of the support for Syrian Kurds that we've seen. After all, this relationship with Syrian Kurds is relatively new, 3 or 4 years

old. I think the overwhelming majority of American people don't really know what a Syrian Kurd is (laughter), let alone why we should stand by them.

The reason we should stand by them, of course, is that they flock (phonetic) ISIS on our behalf, and in the process suffered very significant casualties. But that doesn't explain to me entirely the strength of this.

American foreign policy in the Middle East has a long history of betraying the Kurds (laughter). That's something we're very, very good at. Bipartisanship, probably the first one was Henry Kissinger who betrayed the Kurds in 1974. Those were Iraqi Kurds, but they're still Kurds.

I wonder if some of it has to do with the imagery, which is very, very powerful here, of American troops flying American flags --

MS. KAMARCK: Getting out of there --

MR. RIEDEL: Getting out and people throwing potatoes at them. They're lucky they're not throwing stones at them. That's what you usually do in the Middle East when you don't like someone.

I think that the imagery is very, very powerful, and it probably would have been easy to do this, or less contentious to do this, if we'd done it in a more slow pace. You know, draw down just the 50 people in the zone, instead of going for broke with everything.

But the imagery is powerful, and I think it seems to be having an effect on the American people.

MS. KAMARCK: Listen, I think it's quite consistent. We already know the American people don't want to go intervene in foreign wars, particularly in the Middle East. We see that in your polling, right?

MR. TELHAMI: Mm-hmm.

MS. KAMARCK: If you don't want to go, and you don't want your kids to go, okay, then you actually like people who help you out, right? So, the very fact -- which I suspect most Americans didn't know until the President made this announcement -- the very fact that the Kurds were our friends fighting with us, they were dying fighting ISIS, which means Americans were **not** dying fighting ISIS, means, yeah, we like them.

Yeah, we may not know who they are, where they came from, we may not know

anything, but we like them, because guess what, they helped us avoid something that we don't want to do, which is having lots and lots of American soldiers in harm's way.

So, I think it makes perfect sense, and I think that's where the President made a miscalculation in the precipitous way that he did this.

MR. SACHS: Thank you. Yes, why don't we take a couple of questions. We'll take this gentleman here on this side, and then the one across the aisle.

MR. BASS: I'm Jerry Bass (phonetic). Because, as we say, the American people are not that knowledgeable, let's say, about what goes on in the Middle East, and I've heard that before too, because I actually have kids that live in Israel.

And I went to a small place once and I said, "You know, what do you think about Obama when he was President." And he said, "Obama, all your presidents, they just don't understand the Middle East and what we're at." So, that happens.

But what do you think the press has to do since they're not that knowledgeable, they're not reading, but the press? And -- like we talk about imagery, as you've just mentioned is the main thing of what people see to get their opinions on -- so, how are they influencing your results? Would it be different otherwise, if the press was doing something different?

MR. SACHS: Thank you very much. The gentleman just across the aisle.

MR. TABBOT: Christian Tabbot (phonetic), thank you. I had a question about quadratic voting, and do you see any relevance for quadratic voting in the sentiment polling that you're working on.

MR. SACHS: Thank you.

MS. KAMARCK: Quadratic polling?

MR. TELHAMI: Define what you mean?

MS. KAMARCK: What's -- what do you mean?

MR. TABBOT: Quadratic voting is a system that allows -- you were talking about the strengths of sentiments towards certain policies or others, and so allowing people who are being polled to allocate certain points of how strong they feel towards certain statements to be made, thank you.

MR. TELHAMI: Actually, yes, we do that. We don't do it exactly -- in fact, as I mentioned earlier about this concept of the issue public that we put out back in the early 90s with my colleague Jon

Krosnick at Stanford, we have been asking questions specifically on the Arab/Israeli conflict, how people rank it.

We say, "How important is this issue to you? Is it the most important issue, it's in the top three, it's in the top five, it's not in the top five?" And then we correlate the answers to get at who really is --

MS. KAMARCK: Who really cares --

MR. TELHAMI: Most passionate about the issue. And we do find variations. And historically, those who said they care more about the issue tended to be more pro-Israel than the rest of the public, and that was part of the explanation for the congressional. So, we had issue publics were really far more on that side. What we have seen is loosening of even that in recent years.

Still, if I had to -- I haven't looked at this particular one -- but over the past year, I would say it's still probably true that the more you care about this issue, the relatively more you're likely to support Israel; on this particular question.

MR. SACHS: Thank you. And the role of the press, or anything else?

MS. KAMARCK: Well, I mean, one of the problems that the press has these days is that they are in a shrinking, not in expanding, mode. So, overseas coverage is really not what it used to be.

And so, given Americans' general ignorance of foreign affairs, the fact that we are blessed with two oceans on either side of us, so we've never had to care about international relations in the way that say a European country, or certainly, the way Israel has to care, we tend not to know much about the rest of the world.

And frankly now, the means that would bring the rest of the world to us has less capacity to do so. And I think that this is problematic.

I think the other thing that's problematic, and I hope that this will change with a new Congress, is this notion of against what we call CODELs here in Washington, congressional delegations. Members of Congress need to travel; they need to go places. And in recent years they've gotten all uptight about traveling because it's, quote, "a boondoggle."

Well, you know what guys, they don't have to go to France, they don't have to Paris (laughter). They need to go to places like Afghanistan, like Jordan. They need to go to Burma; they need

to go to places where they can learn about the world.

And I'm hoping that this will shift, and we'll get away from that and Congress will get back into the business of traveling abroad and learning things.

In this whole area of foreign relations, what you do see is that leaders can still lead here. Leaders can still influence opinion. A member of Congress, a United States senator who goes home and says, "Look, I was in Hanoi and I think that we should be doing this in Vietnam," people are going to listen to them. They still will. They'll trust them; they'll listen to them.

So, I'm hoping that -- you know, there's not much we can do about the press' problems, but I am hoping that Congress will get back into the business of traveling the world.

MR. SACHS: Thank you. We'll take two last questions. In the back, the very back, the gentleman standing there. And the lady here up front.

MR. PASTRITA: My question is about Afghanistan, so my --

MR. SACHS: Can you please identify yourself.

MR. PASTRITA: Oh, AJ Pastrita (phonetic), unaffiliated. So, my question is about Afghanistan. Since Al-Qaeda has been largely decimated, haven't our objectives changed? Isn't it more about keeping an eye on Pakistan? And, if so, isn't that a pretty good reason to be staying?

MR. SACHS: Yes.

MS. SMORD: Hi, good morning, I'm Anas Smord (phonetic) from The Netherlands Embassy (phonetic, mostly off mic 16:58:32) and I had a question --

MS. KAMARCK: We can't hear you.

MR. SACHS: Yeah, the other ones coming.

MS. SMORD: This one is not working. Hi -- oh that's better -- hi, Anas Smord with The Netherlands Embassy. I had a question looking forward to the 2020 elections, and the increased reports that are coming in from countries in the Middle East interfering and meddling with the U.S. elections, the (inaudible) report it was very clear that the Russians have a high (inaudible) Iranians and the Israelis now, one way or another seem to interfere with the U.S. elections. Do you think that has some sort of impact on how the American public perceives foreign policy in that region?

MR. SACHS: Thank you. Who would like to start?

MR. RIEDEL: I can start with the Afghanistan question. Yes, I hated the phrase Af-Pak (laughter). I told Richard Holbrook, this is really insulting to Pakistanis.

MR. SACHS: Says this the man who wrote the Af-Pak report for President Obama (laughter).

MR. RIEDEL: It should be Afghanistan, Pakistan; you know, let's use their full name. Just one small footnote, if you may recall, right when I was doing that report, Yemen suddenly came up in the news and there was a brief point when they wanted to include it as Yemen, Afghan, Pakistan, which would then have been YE-F-PAK (laughter), which I thought was the perfect name for it because it was ridiculous.

Pakistan has always been very much at the center of this. Where were the drone operations carried out? Where was Osama bin Laden, he wasn't in Afghanistan.

We did, in the invasion, successfully drive Al-Qaeda out of Afghanistan, largely; but they found very comfortable roots in Pakistan, which if you study the history of Al-Qaeda, was no surprise at all.

It is a question of what does our presence in Afghanistan -- our military presence in Afghanistan -- actually do to impact on Pakistani attitudes and thinking about the Taliban and Al-Qaeda? There are no clear cut answers to those questions. It's a mushy area.

The really important negotiations that have been going on about Afghanistan in the last six months are not the ones in Doha or the Taliban. That's pretty much the public show. The really important negotiations are the ones going on behind the scenes, principally between Secretary Pompeo and Imran Khan, the Pakistani Prime Minister, and the Chief of Army Staff of Pakistan -- which is, for those who study Pakistan, the Chief of Army Staff is the most important man in the country; far more important than the Prime Minister. He's actually the one who runs the nuclear codes -- Those negotiations made possible the Doha negotiations, it made possible the deal we almost had until President Trump introduced, what I have to say is, in my history of working foreign policy, the single stupidest idea I ever heard: inviting the Taliban to Camp David.

I've never heard an idea that is dumber than that (laughter), and I've heard a lot of dumb ideas in 46 years in government, and in think-tank business.



MR. TELHAMI: By the way, on that question, we do have a question about inviting the Taliban to Camp David, and the public agrees with you fully.

MS. KAMARCK: The public agrees, yeah (laughter).

MR. TELHAMI: We have that in there.

MS. KAMARCK: I was going to say, on that question, you didn't need an awful lot of foreign policy experience to, like, figure out it was a bad idea.

But to the Russia question, we know that the Russians are continuing to try and influence our elections. You spoke of red flag operations. We are now seeing red flag operations in election interference.

So, there is some concern that some of the democratic candidates are being supported by the Russians in order to, first of all, keep their number of contributors up enough so that they can get into the debates, and get on stage, and the debates.

There is also concern that that's a red flag operation to divert attention from the fact that there's a lot of Russian support in the Trump numbers. And the Trump numbers are astonishing for the number of small contributors that they have.

So, I advertise every place I can that somebody needs to start doing a review of contributors, and finding out where they are, and are these people real Americans or are they stolen credit cards and being used.

More disturbing than the interference in political contributions, is of course, the sophistication with which they are interfering substantively in the campaign messaging. And if you read today, Facebook has just taken down a series of sites that were Russian, sent by the same ones.

Finally, a little piece of good news, okay, is that for the first time ever the DEFCON conference in Las Vegas was invaded by a bunch of men with suits, and some women, I suppose, with suits.

But, in other words, DEFCON was the hackers conference -- very famous for hackers -- usually composed of young men with Grateful Dead T-Shirts and tattoos, and stuff like that.

This time, in the summer they were joined by election officials from the states, FBI agents, DHS agents. There were a lot of people making sure we try to secure the American election

machinery.

So, it's more difficult to deal on the persuasion side because that's a little bit of a cat and mouse game, right? A Russian site will go up, maybe Facebook will take it down, who knows how much damaged is done, etc.

But there is a lot of attention being played to securing the election machinery itself. And I think that's a positive note.

MR. SACHS: I'm stuck with the image of the election officials and the Grateful Dead in Vegas.

MS. KAMARCK: Yeah (laughter). I wish I could've gone. I had to have been a trip

MR. RIEDEL: There's nothing wrong with being a Grateful Dead.

MR. SACHS: Absolutely not, quite the contrary (laughter). Shibley, the last word goes to you. In particular, I wonder, what of this or of anything else, leads you to the next poll. What should be expect in future questions? What do you think is on the agenda?

MR. TELHAMI: Well, as usual, one of the most interesting stuff about the studies that we do is the long-term change. It isn't just the snapshot. And we try to get at questions analytically and connect them. So, we have constantly repetition of questions and adding more.

In addition to that, we do timely stuff that comes up every single time. And the nice thing about doing so many is that you'd be in the field and something happens, as the Syria attack, and we could add that question in and get some more results. So, we always have something timely and interesting.

But a lot of it goes into long-term academic analysis of these trends, the big issues that we all are grappling with because they go beyond public opinion. They're really going to what drives policy, and what motivates it, and societal changes about the shifts in America.

So, for me, things like the question of identity, which we have been studying. And one of the striking things that we have not talked about -- I studied identify both in the Middle East and hear in America -- but one of the fascinating things is that despite America First, Americans feel less American than they did before Trump came to power.

In fact, what we have seen since Trump has come to office, is that those people who say

they're American First, the number has declined in favor of -- among democrats in particular -- the rise among what we call global identity, people are, I'm a citizen of the world first. And among republicans, being an American gave way to people who rank themselves by their religion first, slightly.

And so, we have seen, oddly enough, in the arrow of America First, a less emphasis on American identity, and this is a trend that we have been studying to figure out what's going on.

But I'm grateful for you hosting it. I'm grateful to Elaine and Bruce for joining me for analyzing the polls, and I've enjoyed the conversation.

MR. SACHS: And I want to also make a plug, before we thank Shibley, I want to make a plug on the Brookings website, you can see both now and in the coming days a lot of the data that you just saw and more; data that we didn't have time to present, as well as some short analysis by Shibley.

But please also look back to previous years. As we already mentioned there's a lot of excellent data in the past, and I will be remiss if I don't mention that on the University of Maryland website, you'll see also a lot more as well, of course, and other works that Shibley and his colleagues are doing. And we're extremely grateful for the collaboration with them, and for the friendship and membership of Shibley. So, please join me in thanking out panelists, and especially Shibley Telhami (applause). Thank you so much.

MS. KAMARCK: Thank you. This was great.

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