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PAKISTAN'S INTERNAL DYNAMICS AND CHANGING ROLE IN THE WORLD

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. AFZAL: Good morning, everyone. It is a distinct pleasure to welcome you all to our Brookings Institution event today on Pakistan, it's internal dynamics and changing role in the world.

I'm Madiha Afzal and I am a fellow in the Foreign Policy Program at Brookings. I am part of its Center for Middle East Policy, as well as its Center for Security, Strategy, and Technology. I am thrilled to be joined today by two fantastic speakers. First, my Brookings colleague, Bruce Riedel, who is a senior fellow in the Foreign Policy Program, also part of its Center for Middle East Policy and Center for Security, Strategy, and Technology. Bruce in the author of many books, including on Pakistan, most recently his book "Beirut 1958" on how America's wars in the Middle East began. Bruce joined Brookings in 2006 after a long distinguished career in the U.S. government. He was a senior advisor on South Asia and the Middle East to four presidents in the staff of the Natural Security Council at the White House. Bruce was also the deputy assistant secretary of defense on Near East and South Asia at the Pentagon.

Declan Walsh joins us from The New York Times, where his currently the chief Africa correspondent based in Kenya, but for a very crucial decade, from 2004 to 2003, he was stationed in Pakistan. He covered Pakistan until 2015, most recently as The New York Times Pakistan bureau chief, but he was also with The Guardian in the initial years that he was in Pakistan. Declan has written a new book titled "The Nine Lives of Pakistan." I have it here. It's a great new book which really adds color to a picture of Pakistan that we don't often see. He both, you know, illustrates the time that he was in Pakistan and covering it, but also its history through covering nine key figures and their lives. And in so doing he paints a really three dimensional picture of the country, introducing Pakistan's many sort of contradictions and various facets to an audience.

So we're again thrilled to be having this discussion today. So, you know, just very briefly, by way of introduction, you know, Pakistan's importance is hard to overstate. You know, it's a country of 220 million people, the 5th largest country in the world, of course known for the fact that it has nuclear weapons, known for its geostrategic position, nestled as it is between India and Afghanistan. It is also a country of brilliant talent, art, architecture, a rich cultural history, though it is not often in the news for those reasons, and not know necessarily in the world for those reasons today. It's also a country of many, many contradictions.

For a long time Pakistan has been defined by its struggle with terrorism and extremism. Of course, tens of thousands of Pakistanis died in that crucial decade, in fact, that Declan covered Pakistan. Tens of thousands of Pakistanis died until the Pakistani army operation took out and routed the Tehrik-i-Taliban in Pakistan, which was responsible for many of these attacks. But the question of extremism and terrorism, though Pakistan is eager to move past it, is not something that goes away easily in Pakistan. In recent months, the TTP, the Tehrik-i-Taliban in Pakistan, has been resurfacing. Just in the last few days ISIS has claimed an attack on Hazara, which is an ethnic minority in Balochistan. Hazara coal miners, 11 of whom were killed in Balochistan. So the question of extremism and terrorism never quite goes far away in Pakistan.

Pakistan is also a country that has a very young population. 64% of Pakistanis are under 30 years old. In recent years, Pakistan's sort of — the discussion in Pakistan has been sort of taken over in some sense by internal politics in the country. And that is something we'll be discussing today. With the election of Imran Khan in July 2018, internal politics and political dynamics, civil military relations have really taken center stage in the country.

But in the U.S., we are still looking at Pakistan through the lens of the Afghan peace process, which is of course sort of central here as America seeks to wind down its war in Afghanistan.

Today in our discussion we want to sort of re-examine the country at the cusp of the Biden presidency, both looking at its internal domestic policy, where we'll start the discussion as I said, before moving onto the U.S.-Pakistan relationship, and then discussion Pakistan's relationships with countries in its immediate neighborhood, and then looking at the Middle East.

We'll turn at the end to your questions, some of which we've already received. But please feel free to send in your questions. Feel free to join the conversation with #USPakistan on Twitter and we'll leave 10-15 minutes at the end for those questions.

We will begin the discussion now, as I said, with a discussion on sort of politics and civil military relations in Pakistan. It's easy to be cynical about Pakistani politics. You know, it's defined I would say in many ways by a recurring cast of characters. That does not necessarily inspire much confidence, what with their varying degrees of incompetence, corruption, subservience to the military, some degrees of intolerance in some of them. And there's been an inability of Pakistan's various civilian

governments, as well as military governments in the end, to deliver to their citizens both on terms of development and growth. So thinking just about Pakistan's GDP growth rate last year in 2019, it was just 1% to 2%. Sort of very stagnant growth rates.

The discussion on civil military relations in Pakistan always sort of comes out regardless of whether the military is overtly in power or not. The fact remains that it remains the most dominant institution in the country and Pakistani politics remains dysfunctional essentially, with sort of an unstable democracy and weak civilian parties, though civilian governments have been able to complete their full terms in office. No prime minister has still completed a full term in office of five years. We'll wait to see if Imran Khan becomes the first prime minister to do so.

Yet there are some interesting trends to note. The military is not an overt power, as I said. One could argue it has perfected the art of control without power and that it is in a stronger position now than it was post Musharraf's time in 2008. There are a few new actors on the horizon, including ethnic movements like the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement, Islamist movements, like the TLP, the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan, and most recently the Pakistan Democratic Movement and lines of 11 parties which wants to oust Imran Khan's government and argues against the military's dominance of Pakistan's politics.

So I will turn now to both Declan and Bruce. First to Declan with sort of a very broad question about what you think is different or the same about civil military relations currently in Pakistan relative to the past? What you would say about the state of Pakistan's politics and the government of Imran Khan in comparison to the previous couple of decades that you covered?

Over to you. Declan, you're muted.

MR. WALSH: Apologies. Thanks very much for that great introduction.

One of the things that really strikes me now, as you said, is that this is a period of sensible —- of civilian rule, it's a period when the country has gone through an unprecedented run of elections, passing these milestones that you noted of governments completing their terms and handing over power and so on. And at the same time, I see that the military in some respects has greater control now over certain things than they did, I would argue, even under Musharraf.

I mean when I was based in Pakistan for that period between the mid 2000s and 2013-

2014, you know, at that point, for instance, in terms of the press, there was a very vigorous debate. There was a lot of criticism. There was, you know, very strong criticism of course after the Osama bin Laden incident. But even Musharraf himself was in power, you know, the press, particularly the TV stations, were vociferous in their criticism on many subjects. Of course there were certain red lines, as ever, but, you know, on the whole one of the really striking things about the county at that time was that even though you had a military ruler, you know, there was a great deal of debate about what was going on. And of course at that time a lot was going on.

And now I see, talking to colleagues, you know, seeing what's going on in the country, seeing television chat shows being cut off mid-stream, journalists being abducted in the middle of Islamabad, you know, in broad daylight by the security forces. Not to mention, of course, countless reporters in less visible parts of the country, some of whom have been killed in mysterious circumstances. And so I see that the military, that's just one aspect. But in terms of the press, the military is certainly very dominant right now and really since 2011 I would say or 2013 has made this very concerted effort to control the narrative about the country. The military had gone through this period of great embarrassments and humiliations with the Taliban insurgency, the American operation against bin Laden, which raised more questions that the military could answer. And so there was a real sense that they needed to control the narrative, destroy the Pakistanis to themselves.

And similarly, under the — you asked about the Imran Khan government. You know, this is a government that on the paper should be quite a strong civilian government, and yet my sense is that it has maintained its strength by ceding control of key policy decisions to the military, about policy in Afghanistan, about the posture towards India, obviously control of the nuclear weapons. I think nobody would really ever claim that the civilians enjoy control over that, over Pakistan.

So you see, you know, that leaves Imran Khan in control of a very anemic, even ailing economy. You know, of course, dealing with matters the government should be concerned with, like the response to COVID and so on. But I don't see a civilian government that despite the authority it should project, is either able to r willing to wield that authority. And so that seems to be a case where we've seen of course advances. And there's a danger in the West that we get a little bit sometimes too caught up in the importance of elections as a marker of democratic development and strength. But we still see many

of those same institutional flaws, we see the imbalance. And of course we see, you know, these structural problems inside Pakistani democracy that have made the civilian political class so weak, partly of course through people's own doing. And there's a whole host of complicated reasons for that. You know, parliamentarians who come from futile backgrounds, endemic corruption. There's no understating all of those things.

But by the same token you also see a political class that, you know, has struggled to assert itself. And I remember when I was even in the country I noticed that, you know, if you wanted to get elected from most parts of the country, you had to spend money. And so many politicians I think, you know, they felt that you had to spend money to get elected and when you get elected you've got to make that money back. That's not to excuse things like corruption, but it's to point out that there are, I think, under the surface some real structural issues that challenge the development –– the emergence of a strong democracy, some of which has to do with the balance of power, others are to do with these other factors.

MS. AFZAL: Excellent. Thanks for that great introduction.

Bruce, I'll turn over to you for sort of the same question. You know, what would you say is different or the same about civil military relations, Pakistan's politics, the government of Imran Khan, and so on?

MR. RIEDEL: Madiha, thank you for that great introduction.

I want to underscore a point that you made at the beginning about Pakistan. This is an incredibly important country, the fifth largest in the world, the second largest Muslim country in the world, the only Muslim country with nuclear weapons. We often in the United States look at Pakistan through the eyes of its neighbors, India, Iran, and Afghanistan, which tends to diminish its importance. We should look at it and stand-alone power. Very important country in that regard.

And that's why I want to pivot to the issue of democracy and civil military relations. As both you and Declan have rightly pointed out, Pakistan's democracy has enormous flaws. The military plays an extraordinary role. It has ever since independence. The press has been muzzled in the last (inaudible). I remember the morning after the field raid in Abbottabad. The Pakistani press was already running articles saying the military had to know he was hiding, but the American press wasn't writing

those articles yet. They came much, much later. The Pakistanis were right off the block on that. You don't see that kind of thing anymore. It is a much more muzzled press.

And in many ways Imran Khan has become a protege of the military. It's quite ironic because Nawaz Sharif was once the protege of the military. The lesson that Imran Khan should remember from that is it's hard to stay the protege of the Pakistani military forever.

But let me just step back for one minute and say this. With all these flaws, let's do a little comparison shopping. Today in our country we have had two out of the past five elections the winner of the popular vote was not elected president. The current incumbent lost this election by more than 3 million votes in 2016 and yet he's President of the United States and today he is challenging the results of an election that he lost again by 7 million votes. Now, you can say, okay, well, Donald Trump is a one off, but he's not. The majority of the Republican Party is supporting him trying to overthrow the results of an election.

Comparison. Pakistan since 2008 power has transitioned from (inaudible) to the Sharifs to Imran Khan. It was never seamless, it was never beautiful, it was never perfect, but it happened. It is an important comparison to make.

Civil military relations. Yesterday the Washington Post published a letter signed by the 10 alive secretaries of defense saying that the military has no role in American politics. Why did they publish a letter? Why did the 10 secretaries of defense, led by of all people Dick Cheney, feel that they had to stand up and say something about civil military relationships?

Let's comparison shop just a little bit more broadly. What other major Muslim country in the Middle East and South Asia has democratic elections? None. Turkey is about as close as you can get. Some people would argue Iran, but of course in Iran you can only run if you're approved by the clerical authority. But Pakistan's contribution, it's exceptionalism in this regard is really quite noteworthy.

And I'm just going to finish on this point. All the flaws that Pakistani democracy has, Pakistan is probably the only major American ally in the Middle East that is a Muslim country, aside from Turkey, that genuinely should be invited to President-elect Joe Biden's upcoming Summit of Democracies. It would be invited not with an A+ grade, but by comparison with its neighbors, at least it's in the running. I certainly wouldn't put Egypt, Saudi Arabia, or most of the Turkistans (inaudible). So a

little bit of comparison shopping. It's interesting to see how Pakistan compares when you look at (inaudible).

Let me finish there.

MS. AFZAL: Excellent. And Pakistan's prime minister, Imran Khan, in his tweet congratulating Joe Biden and Kamala Harris for winning the election talked about that global summit on democracy in the very first — the very first tweet to them. So that's a really important thing to bring up.

There's one more question I want to ask about sort of internal dynamics — and perhaps it's a two-part question — before moving to U.S.-Pakistan relations. Are there elements in Pakistan, if you think about civil society, the youth, Pakistan's women, a political movement or an alliance of parties, that gives you hope for change in its democracy and politics in a positive direction? And not just that, you know, it's democracy and politic systems as it is, but that it becomes more functional and delivers results to its citizens. So better governance if you will.

So, you know, the first part is there a part of a Pakistani society that gives you hope. The second is, you know, what part is a cause for concern?

And, again, Declan, why don't we start with you and then, Bruce, we'll come to you.

MR. WALSH: Sure. Well, look, I mean the parts of Pakistani society that give rise to hope, you know, there's nothing new about that. I mean those sections in society, those people who are there, they — you know, I met plenty when I was there. They've been there for a very long time. The trouble is that the barriers to entry into, you know, vehicles or the political system where they can start to effect those changes. I mean I remember when I lived in Pakistan I knew people who were incredibly patriotic and capable and who wanted to participate in government, but felt that they would have to make a lot of very personal, sometimes moral, compromises to participate in that system. And I'm not sure that I see the necessary changes in the system to allow those people access just yet.

I mean when Imran Khan was rising to power in the — or when his popularity was rising really in the run up to the 2013 election initially, of course he appealed to young people for a host of reasons, you know, including his — some of his stances against drones, he evoked a certain new kind of patriotism in young people, a reason to be proud. And of course he was glamorous, spoke against dynamism, the dynastic families, and all of that. But, you know, I think also he just — he capitalized on

this wave of, you know, frustrated disaffected young people, particularly in the towns, who wanted something to catch onto. And I'm not in Pakistan right now, so really my sense of this I would say is highly qualified, but I think even for the most ardent supporters of Imran Khan's government would probably concede, at least privately, that he has not yet delivered on the hopes of those young people.

But it's not just of course about the mainstream parties. I saw the emergence in recent years of the PTM movement. Again, young Pashtuns rising from some of the most marginalized and war torn parts of the country in the tribal belt and asserting their civil rights and also asserting their identity. There's this group that, you know, after 2001 was broadly seen not just in the international community, but also in parts of Pakistani society as being either terrorists of victims of terrorism. And, you know, here's this group, this movement that's come forward where people are reaching for a Pashtun identity that speaks to a very different set of values, a very different political and cultural history. But, you know, again, this movement, because it is seen as a challenge to the power at the center, has been suppressed, at least in the media. And, of course, some of their people have ended up in jail as well.

So I'm not sure that I see emerging winners, but I see that — and this is really the thing about Pakistan that I think is most heartening — and it goes a little bit to Bruce's point about the difference between Pakistan and particularly Muslim majority countries in the Middle East is that you see that the game is on, that these ideas are contested, that young people and older people are willing to rise and to assert themselves, to try and fight for higher ideals. So for me that is the most hopeful thing I would say.

MS. AFZAL: Great. Bruce, over to you.

MR. RIEDEL: I think I completely agree with Declan on this about (inaudible), but I would also make a gender statement. What gives me great hope about (inaudible) with Pakistani women. Benazir Bhutto is of course the most famous. I mean they'll argue that she got her position because of being part of a political dynasty. That's not that unusual — Hillary, after all. That's often the way people get put forward. But she did provide a level of leadership, both in government but I would say even more importantly when she was in opposition and in exile. That was quite important for Pakistan. And the tragedy of her assassination was a real epic moment in the country. We will all wonder endlessly what Pakistan would have been like if Benazir had been able to (inaudible). She's not alone. You know, there

are lots of other women in Pakistan — Sherry Rehman, for example, who have demonstrated leadership in the face of not just adversity, but in the face of being threatened with being murdered. That's not something that — thankfully American politicians don't operate in that kind of environment. So the women of Pakistan, not just the leaders but the rank and file, get out and vote. And here the comparison again. Saudi Arabia — does anyone know who the Queen of Saudi Arabia is? We have no idea. Egypt, and of course ourselves. In a few weeks, hopefully, we will for the first time have a woman vice president after 200+ years of our democracy. We have a long way to go to catch up in that regard.

What do I worry about? Three initials — the ISI — the Pakistani intelligence service — I happen to know quite well. Declan knows them quite well as well in a different way. They are ruthless, they are powerful, and they are a state sponsor of terrorism. By any definition of what a state sponsor of terrorism is, Pakistani intelligence service is one. Its involvement in attacks like the Mumbai Paris attacks back in 2008, but also much more recent events. And it's the relationship with the Afghan Taliban, which is intimate, complete, providing sanctuary and safe haven, to having a voice on the Shura Council of the Afghan Taliban, actually directly its highest levels.

The good news is we have seen in the last couple of weeks a few steps to reign in some of its previous supporters, particularly Lashkar-e-Taiba. We can all be very cynical about this, and good reason. We've been around this before. But Hafiz Saeed has been in jail now for months and months and months. It's a little bit of a change. You have a long, long way to go, but it's worth noting that we have had this change in the positive direction.

So that's what I have to say. Thank you.

MS. AFZAL: Excellent. You know, I agree with both of you on the potential for positive change and the hope. I would just add in sort of the cause for concern, I've studied Pakistan's relationship with extremism and sort of the root causes of extremism and there was some clarity that came after the army public school attack of 2014, of December 2014, in terms of Pakistan's national action plan and sort of figuring out the root causes of extremism. Not a complete clarity, but some. And I fear that in recent years, especially in the last couple of years, that has been lost. And so the root cause of extremism that I've outlined, Pakistan's education system, problems in Pakistan's law, the way politics is structured, the power given to Islamist parties even though they don't have electoral power, all of that

remains the same. In some sense all of those things have only been solidified in the last couple of years. There is finger pointing, you know, to account for terrorist attacks rather than looking within at what accounts for people turning to extremism and terrorism. So that worries me.

But we will now move to talking about U.S.-Pakistan relations. And of course, again, with inauguration day coming up in just 15 days, it's crucially important to look at what we might expect of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship under a Biden presidency. Is it going to be a reversion to the Obama years, or will there be something different?

Just a couple of points before I turn over to you, Bruce. You know, in some sense the relationship with the U.S. — Pakistan's relationship with the United States has been defined in many ways through Afghanistan and then as well as through India. In the Trump years the relationship saw a low point, but then since then has moved up in the last couple of years. It's become very transactional though, but some things have worked. In particular related to the Afghan peace process that you started talking about, Bruce, as well as the Financial Action Task Force grey listing that Pakistan has had, has led to it taking action on the Lashkar-e-Taiba, in particular Hafiz Saeed, as well as other Lashkar-e-Taiba leaders.

So I wonder, Bruce, if you could talk a little bit about, you know, if you want to look at a retrospective in some sense of the Trump years, but looking ahead where you see the relationship going in the Biden administration.

MR. RIEDEL: The U.S.-Pakistan relationship, going right back to the beginning, has been a roller coaster. We have moments of incredible highs and moments of incredible lows. No country I think in the world, with the possible exception of Iran, has been sanctioned by the United States more than Pakistan, and certainly with no effective results.

I remember at one point at the end of the Clinton administration there were so many sanctions on Pakistan that our lawyers basically couldn't figure out how you could strip them all off. There was just such a complex web of sanctions.

The other thing that's striking about it is that by and large the highs had always come when Pakistan had a military dictator, not when it had a democratically elected president. My favorite example of this is Jimmy Carter and Zia-ul-Haq. You would have thought that the president who

introduced the idea of human rights into American foreign policy would not be able to work with General Zia, but in the end they worked together quite effectively and set up the program that led to the demise of the Soviet Union and the victory of the Mujahideen.

The Trump years have been a kind of shortened version of the roller coaster. The Trump administration started off with very, very biting criticism of Pakistan, perhaps the most succinct we've ever seen an American administration give about Pakistan, and particularly its role in terrorism. And then Imran Khan was elected and the Trump administration pivoted from being the most critical country of Pakistan to being one of its biggest supporters. The iconic image of Donald Trump sitting in the White House saying that he's prepared to mediate between India and Pakistan on Kashmir, and Imran Khan virtually falls out of his chair when he hears him say it, is one of the most striking images I've ever seen of a presidential interview with a foreign head of state. Now, of course he never did. A lot of this was all talk. It didn't really turn into anything. But the Trump administration did turn to Pakistan, particularly for help with the Afghan negotiations. I won't call them peace talks because Afghanistan is certainly not anywhere near peace. You could argue it's more violent today than it has been at any time in the last 20 years. But the Trump administration did recognize the importance of Pakistan in Afghanistan.

Turning to Joe Biden, Joe Biden knows Pakistan very, very well. Sobering to realize that Joe Biden now has been in the federal government elected role for 45 of the last 49 years and he has visited Pakistan very often. Pakistan was in fact the last country he visited before he gave up his role in the Senate in 2009. And he went for a very, very important point. This was right after the Mumbai attacks, this was right as the United States was beginning to examine its Afghanistan policy. There was a vivid demonstration that Joe Biden understands that if you want to deal with Afghanistan, the proper address to start is Pakistan. And he is very much understanding of the fact that (inaudible) — a term I hate to use — should actually be (inaudible) — would be an equally horrible term to use. The right address is Pakistan.

One last thing I would say about the relationship is we've tried everything over the years. As I said we sanctioned Pakistan for everything. We've also tried to buy Pakistan with tremendous offers of assistance, never as much as Pakistanis thought they needed, but quite a large amount of money by comparison terms to American foreign assistance or military assistance for other countries. I know the

issue of how good the equipment we've given Pakistan is in Pakistani eyes, but it's nonetheless quite substantial military equipment. None of it has worked. Whether it's sanctioning or trying to buy Pakistan, it hasn't worked. And I think Joe Biden faced quite the challenge as we look forward. How is he going to be able to persuade Pakistani government to help us reach a stage where we can leave Afghanistan confident that we are leaving something better than that we went into change in 2002.

MS. AFZAL: Thanks, Bruce, that was great.

Declan, I'll turn to you now on sort of the same question, including, if you would like, to talk a little bit about how you see Pakistanis viewing the U.S.-Pakistan relationship, especially when you were there and sort of in some ways what does Pakistan want from the U.S. and from its relationship with the U.S.

MR. WALSH: Well, I think that at this moment the incoming Biden administration really offers a really potentially important moment for both countries to re-calibrate their own expectations of this very — as Bruce says — very troubled relationship over the decades. You know, the Americans have tried to punish Pakistan, they've tried to bribe or to buy their way to Pakistani affections. And I think if you were to say to reach one takeaway from that, it would be that, you know, I think the Americans always sought to change — they thought that they could influence Pakistan's strategic calculus about Afghanistan, about India. And even at the height of the Musharraf years when America was pouring money into Pakistan, America gad great influence over the country, the Pakistanis were still effectively running their own policy in regard to Afghanistan and so on. And so it was this really stark illustration that American power, short of declaring war, has severe limits.

And I think Pakistan has proven the extent of those limits. And I think that there's an opportunity at this moment for the United States to look at Pakistan, as you said, not just through, as has always, through the lens of Afghanistan in particular, but on its own terms as this — you know, it's a country that's a medium power, it has all of the potential that we've talked about here earlier on in this discussion. It's geo strategically located and that if there were an opportunity — and I think this is what one would pray for — if there was an opportunity to engage with Pakistan on those terms for Washington, it could actually be a process that would have more realistic expectations and more measurable results.

But to get to your question, there's also a re-calibration that has to take part on the part of

the Pakistanis. If the process in Afghanistan, difficult as it is, does result in at the very least an American withdrawal, a full American withdrawal, whatever place the Taliban have in that future, you know, you see that one of the great points of leverage for the Pakistanis over the last couple of decades has of course been their ability actually paradoxically to influence the Taliban. You know, without that, part of their power would be a lot less. And we've even seen recently Pakistan has not actually been able to always deliver with the Taliban. They bring the Taliban to the table and then the Taliban often, very obstinately, do their own thing.

And so, you know, for me, that's an indication that for — if you like Pakistan's strategic planners, it shows that Pakistan's importance as the fulcrum, as a key element of solving this huge problem of Afghanistan, is probably going to diminish in the future. And so their ability to command attention in Washington is going to be, I suspect, diminished. And I think Pakistanis need to ask themselves the question, why will the Biden administration particularly care about Pakistan? There are so many other things going on in the world. There's a limited amount of time. And, you know, if you ask me about my — the period when I was there, Pakistan really was — and Bruce will speak to this — an intense center of American attention. Pakistani diplomats and ambassadors and so on, army chiefs, would go to Washington. When I was based in Islamabad I can't count how many visits there were by the head of the CIA, joint chiefs of staff, all of that. I mean I can't remember the last time there was, for instance, a CIA head level visit to Pakistan. I'm not sure how often the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff is in Pakistan anymore.

And so you see the Pakistanis also have to re-calibrate to this world in which they will have to perhaps rather than expect that this relationship — I often got the impression that the Pakistanis in return for the cooperation they offered the Americans, you know, they wanted blind support if the Americans misunderstood the Pakistani's strategic calculation or if they wanted to change it naively. The Pakistanis also felt often wounded that the Americans were not giving them what they wanted if it came to India, for instance, or think Kashmir, issues like that. And, you know, Donald Trump pandered to that idea, but didn't deliver.

But I think Pakistanis also have had unrealistic expectations from the relationship down the years and they've often said one thing and done another, to the immense frustration of foreign allies

and partners. And so, you know, I think at this juncture they will also have to think hard about how they can — frankly, how they can command the attention of the Biden administration, and particularly to position themselves in a world in which the American relationship with India has gone from strength to strength and Pakistan's alliance with China is both a strength, but it's also of course seen as a threat to the Americans.

MS. AFZAL: Excellent. And as everyone can see, we can talk about the Pakistan-U.S. relationship without talking about Afghanistan, without talking about India, and without talking of course about China.

So I'll turn actually to India and Afghanistan next. Perhaps India first. Where do you — you know, the relationship I would argue is at a low. Where do you both see the relationship going? In some ways I think the Pulwama attack of February 2019, so a couple of years ago now, and then after the revocation of — India's revocation of Kashmir's autonomy, the relationship has been at a low.

Pakistanis — you know, India often pointed the finger at Pakistan for intolerance within Pakistan, but in some sense rising amounts of intolerance in India has many Pakistanis giving sort of a retroactive justification for the reason that Pakistan had to come into existence. And so, you know, the specter of partition comes back. You know, the shadow of partition is never far away from the discussion of India and Pakistan.

So where do you see that relationship going? Briefly if both of you could talk about that.

And then to Afghanistan. You know, intra-Afghan peace talks resumed today after a break. Zalmay Khalilzad was in Pakistan again yesterday making his umpteenth visit to the country. Pakistan and Afghanistan's relationship has been characterized by mistrust over the years. Pakistan has just announced that the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan is almost completely fenced, yet there has been some rapprochement between the Kabul government and Imran Khan's government in recent months.

So, you know, we'll turn to that Afghanistan relationship, but first the relationship with India.

And, Declan, I'll start with you and then, Bruce, perhaps we could go to you for India and Afghanistan and then, Declan, back to you. And then we'll turn to audience questions in about five

minutes.

MR. WALSH: Thanks. So I mean the India relationship obviously is in a pretty (inaudible) state. And there have been these instances in Kashmir and of course there's always the danger you've got these two nuclear armed nations facing off against each other. But, you know, to be perfectly honest, for all of that I'm not sure that I see any imminent signs that there's going to be a conflict between these two countries. You know, the nuclear deterrent I think is that actually in the case of Pakistan and India. Both sides know that were they to use these weapons, despite the ever present dangers that it could happen, I think both sides know that they would face mutual destruction. So I see a situation of stasis and degradation in that relationship with India.

But also, you know, so interesting you mentioned this position about Pakistanis seeing sort of a retrospective justification for the creation of their country. And I wrote about this a little bit in the book actually because I totally agree with that. I really started to sense in recent years that, particularly under Modi, that people are looking across the border at what's been happening with Muslims in India. And when I was in Pakistan, you know, my friend, progressive Pakistanis, talking about Jinnah and the history. You know, generally very appreciative and praising of Jinnah as a person and of course as the creation of the country, but quietly dismissive of the two nation theory. You know, the idea that Muslim and Hindus couldn't live together and, you know, people would sort of quietly dismiss that.

Now I see many of those same people looking at what's happening and thinking well, you know, maybe Jinnah had a point. When you look at the politics, the majoritarian politics of India, the discrimination, state sponsored discrimination against Muslims, you certainly can't fault people I think for coming to the conclusion that to some degree those things were right.

On the other hand of course, inside Pakistan never unfortunately a country to disappoint on the same questions, you know, you look at what happened in Karak in the northwest with a mob destroying a Hindu temple. And you see that of course moderation and tolerance is a two way street. And in both of these countries, unfortunately, you know, these tenancies are coming to the fore. In Pakistan they've had these — wrestled with these problems for many years. And now, of course, the most damnable thing you can say about India is that, at least in this respect, it's becoming more like Pakistan. And I think that's really sad.

MS. AFZAL: I'm glad you brought up the temple. I mean one thing I will say is exactly —— you know, that it's just obviously so disappointing and so disheartening that this continues to happen.

But the Pakistani state, because it is so concerned with its image perhaps and Imran Khan tries to argue that he's moving Pakistan towards tolerance, has taken quite swift action —— or is promising to take swift action against the mob that led the charge against the Hindu temple, as well as the cops who just stood by and watched it happen. And so perhaps, you know, just the caring about the image actually makes a difference in terms of the actions of the state. There is perhaps a little bit of a silver lining to that obsession with the image, and in particular trying to in some sense compare it favorably to India.

Bruce, I'll turn to you for India and Afghanistan as well if you could please.

MR. RIEDEL: Well, both of you, I'm very troubled by the way the Modi government is moving India. It's quite striking because the first BJP government that we dealt with was very, very careful on these issues. Surprisingly careful on these issues. Modi seems to have thrown care to the wind.

From a U.S. perspective, Pakistan is always second best I have to say. Everybody wants to go out with the Indian girl who has so much money and has the constant allure that if we could only sell one pair of sneakers to every Indian, we'd be the richest country in the world. Of course, in reality, they don't buy sneakers, but this constant perception that India is the country of the future hurts Pakistan.

And you see it in visits. Declan made a reference to this. American presidents used to always visit both India and Pakistan. Dwight Eisenhower, who was the first president to travel to South Asia went to both. He actually also went to Kabul. That was the norm for many, many years. It's not the norm anymore. Bill Clinton did go to India and Pakistan, but he spent five days in India, he spent less than five hours in Pakistan. George W. Bush at least spent the night. To the best of my memory, Barack Obama never went to Pakistan —— unless I missed something, but he did go to India. But Donald Trump never went to Pakistan. It's unfortunate, because as we've all said several times today, a Pakistan merits attention on its own merits, not in comparison to India and Pakistan.

The situation between the two is dangerous. Pakistan has been able to rally virtually no support over the issue of Kashmir, to the intense frustration of Pakistani leadership. It's certainly rallied

no support from the United States government and I can't believe that a Biden-Harris administration are going to rally much support here. It is deeply troubling that nuclear deterrence seems to have worked. It has created a stalemate in the relationship. I remain concerned through about the possibility of miscalculation at some point down the road. This is a fragile basis upon which to build a relationship.

I'll just say a couple of words about Afghanistan, particularly knowing Joe Biden. Joe Biden wants to get out of Afghanistan going back to 2008. In the debates over policy on Afghanistan on the Obama administration Joe Biden was a consistent minority of one, saying we should just leave. But he always a caveat that we should leave behind a small counter-terrorism force, about 2,500, which is about what he's going to inherit now. The problem is that the Taliban are not going to accept that. This is an area where the Taliban's position is very, very clear. All of the Americans need to go, all of the NATO foreign forces need to go. And I think we're going to be heading towards a crisis quite early in the Biden administration.

Zal may know, but the deadline that Zal set for the United States leaving is coming in May. And the Taliban are going to argue that part of the deal the United States needs to live up to. Regardless of the fact that the Taliban have lived up to none of the parts of the deal that were required of them, they're going to hold us to that. And it's going to take a lot of effort and Pakistan is going to be crucial in all of this. And the Pakistanis play a role in persuading the Taliban that that deadline is not fixed.

We'll see. This is going to be a very early test for the Biden administration on an issue which I'm sure they would rather not have to deal with.

MS. AFZAL: Great. Yes, absolutely. I mean Pakistan's importance I think at the beginning of the Biden Administration remains as it was at the end of the Trump administration. And so but looking ahead perhaps in the next couple of years, all of that could change quite a bit if the withdrawal occurs and then Pakistan has to be dealt with as Pakistan, not Pakistan as it relates to Afghanistan.

We have received many great questions. We have actually covered a number of those questions in our discussion. We attempted to have a wide ranging one. I am going to quickly pose — I'm going to pose two questions. I'll come to you, Bruce, first, then Declan.

The first question — and this something that we have talked about as well, Bruce, is

about Pakistan's relationships with the Gulf, in particular thinking about with Saudi Arabia and UAE. Someone in the audience asks about the changing relationship given India's closeness with both. Of course, the relationship with Saudi Arabia saw a rift given that Pakistan sort of — and Pakistan's foreign minister in particular expressed concern that if Saudi Arabia has not said more on Kashmir and Saudi Arabia asks Pakistan to return loans that it had given it, where do you see that relationship going. So that's the first question.

There is a second question about the Pakistani military and our leverage — the U.S. and the West's leverage on the Pakistani military, in particular, you know, its control over politics as well as its relationship with extremist groups. What leverage, if any, does the U.S. and the West have over the Pakistani military?

I'll pose both those questions to both of you and we'll have to be sort of quick and then we'll end around 11.

MR. RIEDEL: I'll take the question about the Pakistanis and the Gulf States.

Pakistan very wisely in 2015 decided not to join the Saudi war against Yemen. I wish I could say the same about the Obama-Biden administration. The Pakistanis refused to send troops. That really was a major disruption in planning. They had counted on the Pakistanis providing the ground forces. Instead they stood by the side and they passed unanimously in the Pakistani parliament saying they would not send troops. The relationship has soured since then.

You mentioned some of the things that have soured it in more recent years, Kashmir and others. The Saudis still need Pakistan and Pakistan still needs Saudi Arabia, but this relationship has transformed quite remarkably in a negative way from what it was. In contrast, India is the market for Saudi oil and that has become more and more important to them.

I'll add just one more country here in the mix, and that's Israel. Now, it's quite interesting how much the question of whether Pakistan will follow the Emirates and the Bahrainis, etc. in recognizing the State of Israel has come up in the last month. I don't think Pakistan is about to do that, but when you talk about leverage, Pakistan has an interesting new card in its back pocket, whether would recognize Pakistan. And if Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim country, recognizes Israel, Pakistan will be in a — will have some leverage in dealing with the Biden administration on what can it get in return for taking

(inaudible). What leverage do we have on the Pakistani military? The answer to that question is easy — zero, nada — nada.

MS. AFZAL: Excellent. Thanks, Bruce. Declan, over to you. And for any final words as well and then I'll wrap up at the very end.

MR. WALSH: I'll just say two quick things. One is, you know, in several of our chats here, this issue of India as a competitor to Pakistan, whether it be with the Saudis or with the U.S., is really — it's something that's come up. And yesterday when I was talking to someone I came across a figure that I thought was very striking that, you know, last year in 2019 U.S.-Pakistan bilateral trade was about $6 billion. American trade with India in the same period was $129 billion. And this year it's forecast to be closer to $150. And I think for any Pakistani, those are pretty sobering figures.

You know, the other thing on the issue of leverage, I think as Bruce says, I think the Americans don't have much leverage, but I think actually the key question is the other way around. It's, you know, what leverage do the Pakistanis have. And I think, you know, certainly the Israel card is a potential card to play, even though if it does turn out that a bunch of countries do recognize Israel, there is going to be first mover advantage, but if you start doing it towards the end of the run, there's going to be a lot less to gain from it. But the other thing I think, just to go back to an earlier point, is I think that Pakistan's leverage is diminishing fast. I think with the end game, or some sort of end game in Afghanistan, we're seeing a historical period that started in 1979 with the Russian invasion, you know, not necessarily coming to an end, but coming to an end of a chapter. And this has been a period in which Pakistan for most of that time has maintained a lot of leverage, either by helping the Americans or by helping the Taliban, or by doing a bit of both, over the last period. And so I think this is a real strategic challenge for Pakistan. I think they're losing a card in this came and I think they're going to have to figure out what's going to replace it.

MS. AFZAL: Excellent. Well, thank you to Bruce Riedel, Declan Walsh, for a fantastic very wide ranging discussion. Thank you to all in the audience for joining us, for your excellent questions. We were able to get to many things. You know, we could talk about Pakistan of course for hours and hope to reconvene to talk about Pakistan again soon. Thanks very much again.

MR. RIEDEL: Thank you.

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