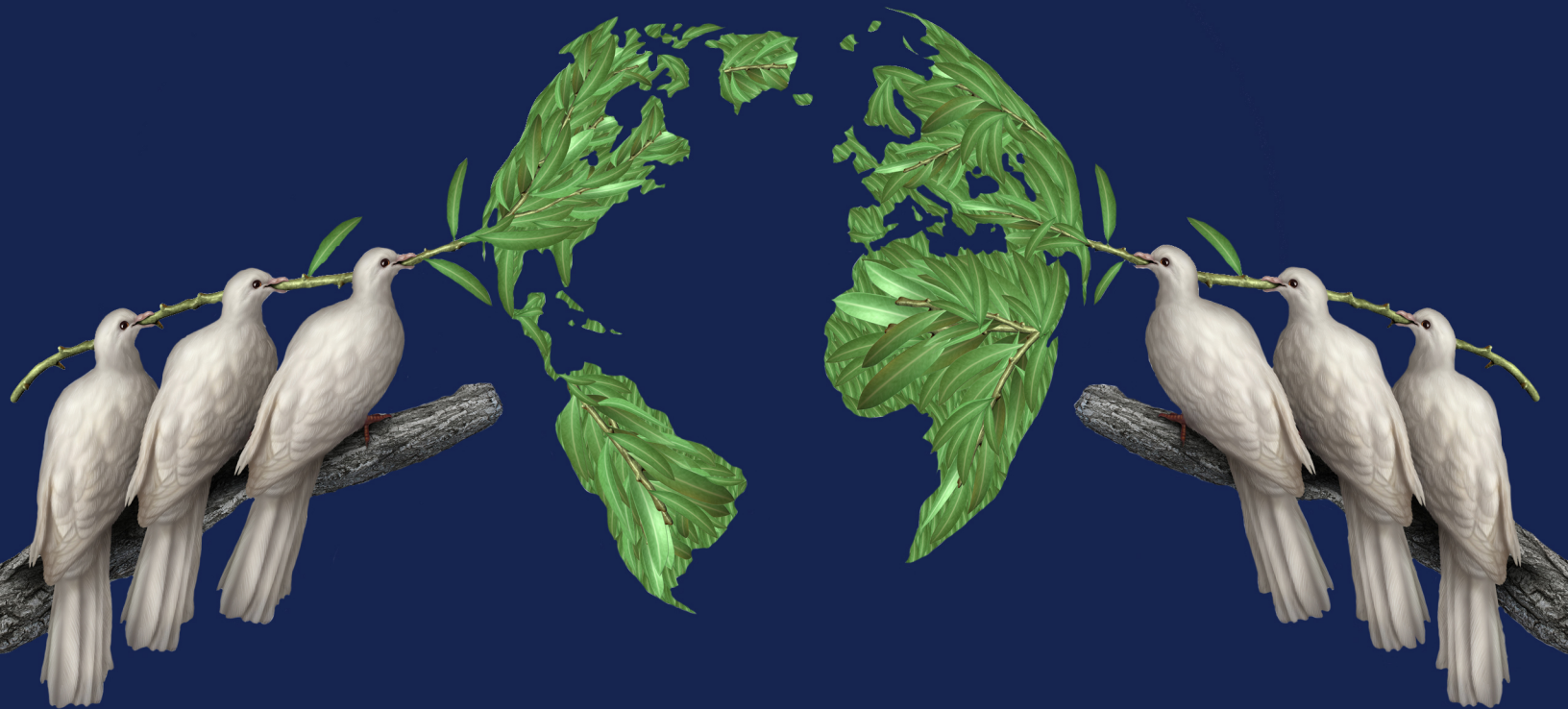


The Role of Diplomacy in Combating Terrorism

Selected U.S. Perspectives



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Introduction

Professor Yonah Alexander

Director, Inter-University Center for Terrorism Studies and Senior Fellow, Potomac Institute for Policy Studies

Terrorism is as old as history. In modern times there are four major challenges projected by state and non-state acts of violence that are contrary to the laws of armed conflict and warfare. These concerns relate to the safety, rights, and welfare of individuals and defined communities; the stability of geopolitical structures of nations; sustained health of economic development and prosperity; and the expansion and perhaps even the survival of democracies.

Thus, the dire impact of the globalization and brutalization of terrorism on all contemporary societies will ultimately determine not only perpetual security costs in human lives and property but also the future preservation of fundamental civilized values, such as freedom and justice as well as individual and group rights.

The key question then is whether the international community is capable of crafting adequate responses to terrorism, diffusing expanding conflicts regionally and inter-regionally, engaging in constructive peace processes, and striking a delicate balance between security measures and democratic value systems.

Indeed, the response to this question is most complicated, partly because each state defines “terrorism” unilaterally on the basis of its own domestic and foreign relations considerations. There is, however, some universal agreement as to the unlawful nature of attacks directed against non-combatants. Similarly, there appears to emerge a broad consensus among concerned nations regarding a wide range of counterterrorism structures, resources, and implementation of policies and actions. Among the utilized measures frequently mentioned are legislation, law enforcement, intelligence, scientific and technological capabilities, economic and military responses, and, finally, diplomacy and international cooperation strategies.

The purpose of this report is to focus specifically on the role of diplomacy in combating terrorism relevant to experiences of the United States and their implications internationally.

Diplomacy: Some Perspectives

The literature on the nature of diplomacy and its continuous role in world affairs is infinite. Consider the following selected examples cited by theologians, historians, philosophers, and practitioners from antiquity to modernity:

- “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than that taketh a city” (Proverbs, 16:32).
- “If they desire peace give them peace and trust in God” (The Koran, 8:61).
- “Diplomacy without arms is music without instruments” (Frederick the Great, 1712-1786).
- “When my profession fails, yours has to come to the rescue” (Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, 1754-1838).

- “Influence is founded on seven specific diplomatic virtues, namely truthfulness, precision, calm, good temper, patience, modesty, and loyalty” (Sir Harold Nicolson, 1886-1968).
- “In diplomacy, the more powerful the nation, the more amenable it should be to reason and negotiations. Such an attitude would make for peace and avoid war” (Carlos Peña Romulo, October 24, 1949).
- “All diplomacy is continuation of war by other means” (Zhou Enlai, 1954).
- “Diplomacy is strategy’s twin” (Anthony Eden, *The Reckoning: the memoirs of Anthony Eden, Earl of Avon*, 1965).

Among the American perspectives, mention should be made of the following:

- “Diplomacy is utterly useless where there is no force behind it” (Theodore Roosevelt, address to the Naval War College, New Port, Rhode Island, 2 June 1897).
- “Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind, but diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in public view” (Woodrow Wilson, address to Congress, 8 January 1918).
- “Diplomacy...embraces every phase of national power and every phased national dealing” (George F. Kennan, 1947).
- “Diplomacy has rarely been able to gain at the conference table what cannot be gained or held on the battlefield” (General Walter Bedell Smith, US Army, 1954).
- “Diplomacy and defense are not substitutes for one another. Either alone would fail” (John F. Kennedy, 1961).
- “He lied. I knew he lied and he knew I knew he lied. That was diplomacy” (Rear Admiral Williams Wirt Kimball, USN, 1848-1930, of U.S. Negotiations with the Mexican Minister to Nicaragua).
- “Successful diplomacy, like successful marriage, is not much publicized” (John Paton Davies, Jr., *The New York Times*, 23 May 1963).

Regardless of the divergent views on diplomacy’s characteristics, the indisputable fact is its critical role in statecraft. For example, during President Donald Trump’s visit to Saudi Arabia in May 2017, he utilized ecumenical diplomacy in advancing various interfaith approaches that can help practically in ending terrorism in the name of God.¹ Similarly, American diplomats have directly or indirectly been involved in peace processes around the world, such as in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Afghanistan, to mention a few.

Finally, it should be emphasized that any role of American diplomacy undertaken is under the barrel of the gun. For example, 38 years ago, on November 4, 1979, Iranian radicals seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran and took 66 American diplomats and embassy personnel hostage. Although 13 captives were shortly released and another in July 1980, it took until January 20, 1981, 444 days, for the remaining 52 to be freed.

Despite the Tehran experience, it was only following the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi in 1998 that a major turning point evolved in addressing the concern of protecting diplomatic missions abroad. Thus, Regional

¹ Alexander, Yonah and Sharon Layani. “President Trump’s ecumenical diplomacy.” *The Times of Israel*, 19 May 2017. <http://www.timesofisrael.com/president-trumps-ecumenical-diplomacy/>

Security Officers (RSO) placed overseas in hundreds of locations provided greater defense for U.S. personnel, their families, and facilities. Administered by the State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS), these special agents also serve as primary liaisons with foreign policy and security agencies in support of American law enforcement initiatives and investigations. These and related activities continue today.

As this report goes to press, the latest incidents include a "covert sonic device" targeting American diplomats in Havana and the suicide bombing in Kabul's diplomatic quarter in 2017.

Academic Context and Acknowledgements

In view of the multiple security challenges to international peace and order posed by the intensification of terrorist attacks for over the past half-century, governmental, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental bodies have developed tactical and strategic responses on national, regional, and global levels. The role of diplomacy is, indeed, a critical element in the evolving process.

As previously discussed, embassies and their diplomatic missions around the world have continuously been targeted by a wide-range of actors, including adversarial states and sub-state movements. From the take-over of the U.S. embassy in Tehran in 1979 to the Benghazi assault over 30 years later, American diplomats have been on the front-line of the battle against terrorism. Despite the growing dangers, these diplomats have served with courage and professionalism to pursue their mandates in combating terrorism and contributing to conflict resolutions regionally and globally.

It is against this context that the Inter-University Center for Terrorism Studies (IUCTS) and its affiliated academic institutions, such as State University of New York, Georgetown's Center for Strategic and International Studies, the George Washington University, the International Law Institute, University of Virginia's Center for National Security Law, and the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, have conducted numerous activities focusing on issues related to terrorism and diplomacy.

For example, since 9/11, the IUCTS has organized dozens of seminars dealing with diplomacy and international cooperation efforts to combat terrorism. Among the topics discussed, mention should be made of the following: European, Middle Eastern, South Asia, Latin American, African, and U.S. counterterrorism strategies and strategic partnerships; NATO, EU, OSCE, and other regional organizations; terrorism captives; diplomacy and force; diplomatic security; WMD; insurgencies; and peace processes.

Additionally, research and publications relevant to diplomacy include topics such as *International Technical Assistance Experts: A case study of the UN experience* (1966); *Terrorism in Europe* (1982 and republished in 2015); *Governmental Responses to Terrorism* (1986); *International Terrorism: Political and Legal Documents* (1992); *Combating Terrorism: Strategies of Ten Countries* (2002); *Counterterrorism Strategies: Successes and Failures of Six Nations* (2006); *Partnership for Peace Review* journal; and *Terrorism: An Electronic Journal and Knowledge Base*.

To be sure, the forgoing selected academic activities could not have been initiated or implemented without the outstanding contributions of numerous ambassadors, both American and foreign.

Selected American participants have included Ambassador L. Paul Bremer, III (Ambassador at Large for Counter Terrorism, 1986-89); Ambassador Henry A. Crumpton (Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State); Ambassador Dell Dailey (Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State); Ambassador Gerald M. Feierstein (Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs and Ambassador to Yemen); Ambassador James Jeffrey (Ambassador of the United States to Turkey and Iraq); Ambassador Teresita C. Schaffer (Ambassador of the United States to Sri Lanka); and Ambassador Kurt Volker (Ambassador of the United States to NATO).

Among the foreign diplomats, contributors included Ambassador Said Tayeb Jawad (Afghanistan); Ambassador Amine Kherbi (Algeria); Ambassador Dennis Richardson (Australia); Ambassador Michael Wilson (Canada); Ambassador Zhou Wenzhong (China); Ambassador Mohamed M. Tawfik (Egypt); Ambassador Pierre Vimont (France); Ambassador Klaus Scharioth (Germany); Ambassador Lukman Faily (Iraq); Ambassador Sallai Meridor (Israel); Ambassador Mohammed Alhussaini Alsharif (League of Arab States); Ambassador Al Maamoun Baba Lamine Keita (Mali); Ambassador Zango A. Abdu (Nigeria); Ambassador Husain Haqqani (Pakistan); Ambassador Javier Ruperez (Spain); and Ambassador Namik Tan (Turkey).

Finally, the current report on “The Role of Diplomacy in Combating Terrorism: Selected U.S. Perspectives” includes presentations by the following diplomats: Ambassador Charles Ray (former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/Missing Personnel Affairs and ambassador to Cambodia and Zimbabwe, and served in the United States Army for twenty years); Ambassador Jo Ellen Powell (former career member of the United States Foreign Service who served as Consul General in Frankfurt, Germany and ambassador to Mauritania); Ambassador Edward Marks (former U.S. Department of State Deputy Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism and ambassador to the Republics of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde); Ambassador Robert Hunter (former National Security Council Director of West European and Middle East Affairs and United States Ambassador to NATO; and currently, Senior Fellow at the Center for Transatlantic Relations at SAIS); Ambassador Marcelle M. Wahba (former U.S. Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates; President of the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington D.C.); Ambassador Theodore Kattouf (former U.S. Ambassador to Syria and the United Arab Emirates; President and CEO of AMIDEAST); Ambassador Bonnie D. Jenkins (U.S. Department of State’s Coordinator for Threat Reduction Programs in the Bureau of International Security and Non-proliferation); and Ambassador Ronald Neumann (former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State and U.S. Ambassador to Algeria, Bahrain, and Afghanistan; currently President, the American Academy of Diplomacy). We owe them special gratitude for their cooperation and support of our academic work.

Another publication on “International Cooperation in Combating Terrorism” is forthcoming.

Finally, some acknowledgements are in order. Deep appreciation is due to Michael S. Swetnam (CEO and Chairman, Potomac Institute for Policy Studies); General (ret.) Alfred Gray (twenty-ninth Commandant of the United States Marine Corps; Senior Fellow and Chairman of the Board of Regents, Potomac Institute for Policy Studies); Professor Don Wallace, Jr. (Chairman, International Law Institute); Professor John Norton Moore (Director of the Center for National Security Law and the Center for Oceans Law and Policy, University of Virginia School of Law); and Professor Robert F. Turner (Distinguished Fellow and Associate Director, Center for National Security Law, University of Virginia School of Law) for their inspiration and continuing support of our academic work in the field of global security concerns.

As always, Sharon Layani, Research Associate and Coordinator at the Inter-University Center for Terrorism Studies, deserves special gratitude for her professional research, publication support, and management of our team of interns during the Fall 2017 semester, including Angel Chaverri (University of California Santa Barbara), Trev Hadachek (American University), Emily Kennedy (University of Maryland), Renae Lee (University of Maryland), Charles Murphy (American University), and Isaac Shorser (American University).

Finally, the views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the institutions associated with our academic work.

Selected U.S. Perspectives

Ambassador (Ret.) Charles Ray

*Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/Missing Personnel Affairs and ambassador to Cambodia and Zimbabwe. Previously, he served in the United States Army for twenty years**

We have lived with terrorism and extremist violence for many decades now. As I was thinking about what I wanted to say, I went to Google and a few other search engines and I looked at terrorist incidents over the years. I actually went all the way back to, for example, some of the first bombings of our embassy in Saigon in the 1960s and 1970s when the VC used truck bombs to attack the American embassy there. What I concluded is that, while the incidents themselves, regardless of the number of physical casualties they generated, were local, it was, and still is, the intent of the organizations who carry out such actions that they have a much broader impact. And in fact, most of these incidents, even some of the smaller ones – let us for a minute forget about 9/11 and the horrific number of casualties – but even incidents generating a small number of casualties, such as the disabled American who was killed when an Italian cruise liner was hijacked in the Mediterranean, have an international effect and impact. And this is what I think extremist groups seek. Not so much the specific casualties, but the fallout from them; the fear and uncertainty that is generated when these events take place and they are not responded to in a way that makes people comfortable. It erodes the confidence people have in their governments.

So, given that terrorism and extremism aim to affect us internationally, it goes without saying that in order to be successful in combating terrorism, we have to have international cooperative structures in place to identify these organizations, to identify their leadership and their aims; to be able to cut off funding and supplies and support to them; and to be able to stem the flow of new recruits. We also have to recognize that most terrorist activity, most extremist activity, starts with an idea, it starts in someone's head. While a military response is sometimes necessary – and as someone who wore a military uniform for 20 years I am a firm believer in appropriate military responses to these acts – you cannot defeat an idea with tanks and guns. I know there are a few people, a few of my former colleagues in uniform, who do not like hearing this, but there is no military on earth powerful enough to defeat an idea. You can kill the people who hold that idea but unless you can stop them from getting new recruits, you have to keep killing until you run out of bullets and you will still have a war on your hands, because killing the believers does not kill the idea. So, what is needed is some way to understand the idea or ideas behind these extremist movements, and then develop an appropriate mix of ways to deal with it, and that is where diplomacy comes in.

During my time in the army I remember a saying “know your enemy,” which fits with something that my grandmother and my uncle taught me; “keep your friends close and hug your enemies like a python.” Diplomacy is how we keep our friends close so that we can build the structures we need to provide mutual benefit and protection, but it is also a way that we can keep track of our adversaries. There are very few countries on the planet that we do not have some form of diplomatic relations with. Contrary to the image

* Presentation at an event on “The Role of Diplomacy in Combating Terrorism” held on June 29, 2017 at the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies.

the popular media gives you of diplomats, we do not spend all of our time going to cocktail receptions and playing tennis with the prime minister. I can tell you that the diplomats at our embassy in Moscow are not having a good time. Despite what you might hear in some quarters, the Russians are not our friends. And because of that, it is very important that we have someone close enough to be able to keep a finger in the wind to know which way it is blowing. If you have an adversary who you do not talk to, who you only encounter during times of conflict, you have an adversary who is going to kidney punch you in the dark. So that is also where diplomacy is important.

Even when employing the military, it is also critical to have diplomatic support. I do not know how many of you have seen this new TV show, it is a couple of years old now, "Criminal Minds: Beyond Borders," which I had to stop watching because it is so unreal. It is about an FBI unit that jets all over the world whenever an American gets into trouble, and they basically zip in and shoot the place up and get the bad guys and they get our people home safely. The FBI does have international response units – I have worked with them – but they do not have the *carte blanche* authority that these guys exercise on TV. And by the way, our embassies are not in some of the places they show them to be in their movies. I think it threw me off when they had the embassy in Belize in some resort town and had the ambassador meeting them on the tarmac when they landed. I was an ambassador twice and I did not go out to the airport to meet FBI teams, that is what you have an RSO [Regional Security Officer] or a Legat for. But the point I want to make is this: even when you are employing military or law enforcement assets as a response to a terrorist act, there is a diplomatic component. It seldom gets advertised. It certainly does not make it into the movies. In the movies, the guys put their parachutes on, they lock and load, they get on a plane and they jump out the other end, they shoot up the bad guys and go home. What is left out is the fact that someone has to get flight and landing clearances for them. Someone has to get overflight permission for every sovereign country whose airspace that aircraft intrudes upon. Unless we are declaring war on a country, we do not land military forces in that country to do anything without permission from the political leadership and relevant authorities. The military is not authorized, equipped, or trained to get such permission; by law and custom that is a diplomatic function.

So, even when you use the military, you need to have some diplomacy to enable the military to do its job successfully. And who do you think by the way, when a military team goes in on a counterterrorism response and does its job and gets on a plane and flies back to wherever they are based, who do you think cleans up the mess? And they inevitably leave a mess. Because that is the nature of military operations; to shoot people and blow things up. An example, and I am not quite talking terrorism here, but, non-combatant evacuations. When a country is going to hell in a hand basket and the military comes in at State Department request and under State Department jurisdiction and evacuates American citizens, they will usually use neighboring countries, provided that the circumstances in those countries are stable enough, as staging bases to get Americans out, to get them on commercial aircraft and back to the U.S. and when they do that successfully, they go home. And I can tell you that, having been involved in a few of these in my 30 years in the Department of State, there is usually about a six to eight month cleanup required after they leave. They break things, they ruffle feathers, they do what the military is trained to do. It is not intentional, it is just the nature of a mission-oriented organization. I had a helicopter unit commander on an evacuation in west Africa once who wanted to let his pilots have a little strafing training along the

coast of the country where I served as deputy chief of mission – during that particular mission, the ambassador was absent, and I was charge d'affaires, and was consequently, the senior American official present. The air unit commander reckoned that since they were just waiting for the cargo helicopters to bring in the evacuees, they did not need the gunships, so rather than have his guys sit around idle, he thought it might be a good idea to let them fly around and shoot up the coast line to get some practice. What he failed to take into account, or perhaps he just was not aware, is that the country in question was involved in a civil war with rebel forces in the interior, and had just had its first democratic election. The image of American gunships conducting live fire along the coast was something neither the U.S. nor the country needed at that point in time. But, that is what the military is trained to do and without a seasoned diplomat on the scene to tell that commander not just no, but hell no, I hate to think what might have happened.

I could go on and on but the point I am making is that in order to effectively deal with and combat terrorist activity, much as we do in regular military operations abroad in situations short of outright warfare, for the military aspect of it you need diplomacy before the operation to create the conditions and get the permissions; you need diplomacy during to make sure that not only rules of engagement are adhered to, but that no actions are taken that could exacerbate the political situation. You do not have a diplomat on the team when they are breaking into a building to rescue hostages, but you had better have one at the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to see that all of the necessary prior coordination is done; and you definitely need one after to clean up the aftermath of any military action.

You need diplomacy to create the cooperative agreements internationally to identify and track terrorist organizations, to understand their motivations, to try and if not stop at least stem their recruiting, and to shortcut their funding and other logistic support. That, I would hope, gives you food for thought, and is why I think, contrary to what might seem logical I think diplomacy is probably, not necessarily the only one but one of the most potent tools in our toolbox for combating violent extremism and terrorism if only we are wise enough to use it appropriately in a timely manner.

Ambassador (Ret.) Jo Ellen Powell

*Former career member of the United States Foreign Service who served as Consul General in Frankfurt, Germany and ambassador to Mauritania**

I would like to build a little bit on what Ambassador Charlie Ray has been talking about and take this discussion to some personal observations about diplomacy and the functions of diplomacy and the practice of diplomacy in managing conflict, including terrorism, transnational terrorism, and violent extremism.

The first experience I would like to draw on was from serving in Beirut, Lebanon. I was there from June of 1983 until September of 1984 – bookmarked by the first bombing that blew up our embassy and the second bombing that blew up our embassy again. That was a very different situation and a very different environment with very different drivers and motivators of those who were attacking us than was the case a few years later when I was an ambassador in Mauritania.

In the first instance you have to consider the context: Lebanon had been in for many years a state of civil war. The United States was invited to send military presence to Beirut after the summer of 1982 to help secure first of all, the departure of the PLO forces from Beirut to their new home in Tunis, and second, to help secure, stabilize the situation on the ground. The invasion of Lebanon by Israel had further destabilized that civil war and I think one of the real game changers in that conflict was the massacre of Palestinians at the Sabra and Shatila Refugee Camp, primarily carried out by the Christian militias who were combatants in the civil war. And it was a diplomat, it was the head of the Embassy political section, a gentleman named Ryan Crocker, who was the first one to go in after those massacres and to report on what he saw there.

As the civil war continued, the United States became increasingly perceived by some factions in Lebanon as having taken sides. I do not think we did, but that was the perception. And the result was first, our embassy blown up on April 18, 1983 with, I do not know, 60 or 70 casualties, including 17 or 18 Americans, followed by the attack on the Marine Corps headquarters out at Beirut airport, which I think is still one of the largest non-nuclear explosions that we ever recorded, with more than 240 casualties. It blew me out of bed at 6:00 o'clock in the morning and I was several miles away. And then our embassy was blown up again in September of 1984. In those cases, those who would do us ill, the terrorists, were still fairly conventional, if I may say, in terms of sponsorship, ideology, organization, affiliation. We know that Iran was and remains an active supporter, funder, and recruiter for Hizballah, which broke away from the more “mainstream” Amal movement, in Lebanon’s civil war. And that was an environment that was fairly straightforward – I hate to say it – but fairly straightforward to navigate. We understood pretty well who the bad guys were; we understood why they were motivated to do what they were doing; we understood where the funding was coming from; we knew a lot about them.

In Mauritania in 2010 to 2013, the situation on the ground was very different. No, there was no active civil war, but AQIM moved freely across very porous borders. They controlled a lot of the landscape because nobody else did. So, AQIM, which had no real

* Presentation at an event on “The Role of Diplomacy in Combating Terrorism” held on June 29, 2017 at the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies.

state backing, this is not state-sponsored terrorism in quite the same way that Hizballah is state sponsored. But AQIM had and has its own agenda, not necessarily a single ideology, not necessarily a single party line, multiple sources of funding and support, and really taking advantage of the fact that there is very little in that North African Sahel landscape to inhibit their movement, their activities, their recruiting. In fact, most of the AQIM recruits are, I think, less motivated by ideology than they are by lack of other opportunity.

As Ambassador Ray has said, diplomacy and we, the diplomatic mission in a foreign country, have a responsibility to analyze, to understand, to support, to work with our military contacts, to work with our host government to try to address the drivers of terrorism. What makes a recruit recruitable? How can we change that course? How can we make it difficult for AQIM to move across national boundaries that are weakly guarded or not guarded at all? How do we instill in the population of the country some notion that AQIM is not their friend either – maybe not ours, but not theirs either? How do we build local police and military capacity? How do we build local civil capacity? How do we support efforts that will give disenfranchised youth opportunities to do something other than engage in petty criminality or the occasional kidnap for large ransoms?

There are as many kinds of terrorism as you can imagine, as many ideologies, as many drivers. We cannot treat it monolithically. We have to understand what it is about this specific group or what it is about this specific organization. And I think being a diplomat, being on the ground in the environment, understanding the environment is a key to understanding and developing an appropriate response. I think that as diplomats we have some immensely powerful tools at our disposal to do that. The ambassador is the president's personal representative to whatever country the ambassador is accredited to. The ambassador leads a country team that may include many government agencies, including the FBI, the Department of Justice, Homeland Security, the intelligence community, the Defense Department. The ambassador controls this rich pool of resources to draw on, and incredible talent and knowledge and experiences and expertise, to analyze the why, the drivers, and to develop the appropriate, if not solutions, responses. Whether that is inhibiting recruitment, cutting supply lines, creating an inhospitable environment for terrorists to operate in. Just making the ground harder to operate in can be incredibly effective.

Another tool that we have at our disposal, and the most important I think, probably the single most effective, is our own men and women. The people who go out there, who establish contacts, who meet with people across a spectrum of backgrounds and activities, and who get to know, who engage, who participate in programs, who reach out to people.

In Mauritania we worked with a local filmmaker to sponsor a series of film classes, and we invited young Mauritians to make films about things that were important to them. Nobody told them what to make films about, but some of their short films were very revealing in telling us what motivated young Mauritians to go to an extreme, to be attracted to an extremist organization. Education is one of the areas we can do more, should do more, and I hope we will do more. Exchange programs – the experience of being somewhere, of being in a different culture, of learning and experiencing something first hand, are one of our best diplomatic tools to try to address the ideologies that drive terrorism, the despair and economic disenfranchisement that particularly affect young

people; the mythologies that people like ISIS leader al-Baghdadi use to attract recruits; and to make the ground, the environment inhospitable. There are all some of the things that we, as diplomats, do.

And we have to adapt because, as I started out, the situation in Lebanon was nothing like the situation in Mauritania a few years later, and yet, we were confronting, combating terrorism and violent extremism in both countries. Very different ways, very different scenarios, very different circumstance. So, these are some of the things we can do as diplomats. We need that presence, we need that understanding. We need to know what drives and why. We need to know how the supply lines work, where the money is for military intervention. Believe me, in Mauritania, the Africa Command was a frequent and welcome visitor because they had resources to train, to equip, to help us build civil capacity in a country that had very little in the way of civil society or national identity.

Ambassador (Ret.) Edward Marks

*Former U.S. Department of State Deputy Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism and ambassador to the Republics of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde**

Counter-terrorism is an element of national security policy, which in turn is an element of national foreign policy. Diplomacy is the leading implementing tool of national foreign policy. Without diplomacy, foreign policy is little more than a position paper. Without diplomacy, counter-terrorism is all tactics and no strategy. Diplomacy is how the business is actually done.

There are two especially important aspects of a nation's foreign policy relevant to the counter-terrorism of the American government, which I would like to emphasize.

The first is the democratic character of the United States. Authoritarian governments and personalities believe, or pretend to believe, that comprehensive solutions to problems exist. Democratic governments are less sure of that and tend to wrestle with conflicting objectives and ideas. The diplomacy of democratic governments reflects this ambiguity about life and politics. The attitude was summed up in Reinhold Niebuhr's pithy observation that both democracy and diplomacy are methods "of finding proximate solutions for insoluble problems."

The second is the role of the various elements of foreign policy, especially the relationship between the military and diplomacy. When people refer to General von Clausewitz, they tend to quote his comment about war being the extension of politics, but they also tend to oversimplify his thought. Another way of putting it is to distinguish between strategy – picking the right battles – and tactics or successfully executing those battles. And the battles are not always, or even usually, military and kinetic. Strategy is concerned with defining an overall purpose and priorities. It is holistic. It clarifies how the individual events in the contest or the program fit together and why they are being pursued. Strategy's key role is to define a winning proposition, a rallying call from which all decisions and activities will cascade.

So what is the "rallying call" for the foreign policy/national security challenge of terrorism?

The first question obviously is that of definition. I am not referring to the perpetual question of a legal definition which so bedevils lawyers, academics, and journalists, but the strategic policy question: is terrorism an existential challenge to the nation or rather a "problem" within the context of national security? Is the appropriate strategic view espoused by President Bush after 9/11 when he launched the War on Terror, or the more modest view that terrorism is a serious challenge that needs to be managed that he and then President Obama later adopted?

If we adopt the existential threat interpretation, some believe there is little role for diplomacy or indeed anything else but kinetic action. "Cry Havoc, and let slip the hounds of war." Laying down the rule that everyone is either with us or against us leaves little room for meaningful diplomacy. However, the last sixteen years have convinced many of us that this approach is inadequate.

* Paper edited on "Diplomacy and Terrorism," November 6, 2017.

If Niebuhr is right about the desirability of “proximate solutions for insoluble problems,” then someone needs to put the dogs of war on leashes.

That view is also founded on the assumptions that terrorism is not only a threat to the U.S. but also to the general international community, and that such a community actually exists. It is contemporary terrorism versus the “nation state community.” That community is essentially anarchic, despite fond wishes of “world government” devotees and its operating principle remains that of the Peace of Westphalia sovereign state concept with its mechanism of diplomacy.

So if we accept this thesis of a contemporary threat to the members of the existing global political structure, we must turn to diplomacy as the relevant instrument of policy. If contemporary terrorists are a danger to nation-states, to all existing governments, then other governments are our natural allies.

This approach is especially applicable to the primary source of contemporary terrorism – the Middle East. Again, as Niebuhr said – over 60 years ago - “the whole Middle East is, moreover, in serious plight. For there a decadent Mohammedan feudal order is visibly disintegrating.” If nation-states are the defining feature of the modern political era, the Middle East has by and large failed to create enduring nation-states. Such entities give people a collective identity and a pride of place that replace older and more limited allegiances.

Again, as Niebuhr pointed out, it is “Not possible to transmute an agrarian culture into a technical civilization without vast cultural and social dislocations.” And so the Arab nation-states failure to create viable political economies has opened the door to the historic transnational competition between the Sunni and Shiite sects of Islam as well as the struggle within the Sunni Arab realm. These issues can no longer be contained by a country’s borders, such as they are, and transnational as well as domestic terrorism is the result. One community's terrorist becomes another's hero.

If so, then a major element in the fight against terrorism must be that of mobilizing the nation-state community, shoring it up where it is threatened, and rebuilding it where it has collapsed. The last objective is very problematic, involving the almost impossible task of nation-building. Recent experience has pretty much proven that nation-building is a domestic task. External influence in general and diplomacy in particular are of limited effectiveness when not actually counter-productive.

But much of the international community does exist and does function, both for self-protection and in limiting the spread of transnational terrorism. This community remains technically anarchic, with cooperation and coordination essentially consensual rather than binding. It operates by various forms of diplomacy, in settings ranging from elegant chanceries, the halls of the United Nations, in various regional arrangements like NATO and by a rich and constantly evolving web of informal and transient relations between governments and politicians. And this has been the case since the signing of the Treaties of Westphalia, supplemented by wars when Clausewitz's advice is followed, displaced when he is ignored.

One special attribute of the most recent era in international relations was the role of the U.S. – the global superpower. As Leader of the Free World, the U.S. attempted to corral like-minded governments rather than frog-march them in disciplined ranks. It was both a policy and diplomatic choice. (Compare NATO with Imperial Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.)

However, the global superpower is not feeling all that super at the moment. George Freedman recently described the situation as, in fact, the superpower is tired:

It was roused in 2001 by a devastating attack on its soil, it overextended itself in wars in the Islamic world, and it now wants to get back to repairing things at home. Indeed, the main theme of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's campaign was retrenchment, the idea that the United States will pull back from overseas obligations, get others to carry more of the weight of their own defense, and let the United States focus on boosting economic competitiveness.

Barack Obama already set this trend in motion, of course. Under his presidency, the United States exercised extreme restraint in the Middle East while trying to focus on longer-term challenges.

The main difference between the Obama doctrine and what looks like an evolving Trump doctrine is that Obama still believed in collective security and trade and diplomacy as mechanisms to maintain global order while Trump believes those institutions are at best flawed and at worst constrictive of U.S. interests. Regardless of these differing perspectives, President Trump will have to operate through diplomacy, although his version would appear to be more 19th century than the increasingly cooperative style long favored, at least in theory, by the United States and other Western democracies.

So the policy question in the contest with contemporary transnational terrorism gets back to the need to decide on two fundamental questions. First is the question of the analytical character of the transnational Islamic threat: is it existential or not?

Second is the role the U.S. wishes to take in dealing with the threat: concentrating on unilateral action directed against the terrorists or folding such action into a broader policy involving mobilization of the nation-state community.

But whichever of these analytical choices we choose, the world remains one of nation-states and nation-states must practice diplomacy. Diplomacy is not an optional task for governments. Therefore the old definition of diplomacy's central role remains pertinent: “the management of the relations between independent states by the process of negotiation.” [Harold Nicolson].

The rest is commentary.

Ambassador (Ret.) Robert Hunter

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Regarding terrorism, I think we must make some distinctions. The last two presidents have been very clear, even though this president is prepared to say it and the last one did not use the words exactly, against radical Islamic terrorism. I would say *Islamist* terrorism in order to make clear that 98 or 99 percent of Muslims do not support what is being done. In fact, most of the victims of Islamist terrorism happen to have been Muslims. We have been lucky in this country that, since 9/11, the terrible day of 9/11, we have had very little Islamist terrorism in this country. We have had some lone wolves, we have had some terrorism inspired by Islamists, but very little, in part because of what a lot of people in the American government, military and nonmilitary, have done, in particular the intelligence community, and what has been possible under three presidents now to counter the terrorists, primarily now the so called Islamic State but also al-Qa'ida and its affiliates. I think every day that we do not have a major terrorist incident in this town or in this country, we have to recall the efforts of an awful lot of people to keep it that way.

Another way of putting that is what Yonah Alexander put very well when he said the realistic goals should be getting terrorism down to a manageable level. It has been around a long time, it is going to be around a long time. This is not whether the battle against terrorism can be "won," in the sense that it can indeed be, totally extirpated, because there are going to be people out there, over time, ad infinitum, who are going to have in mind the perversion, the ideology, and also criminal mentality, to try to achieve their ends through terrorism. They are and will be motivated by a variety of factors that we must get to as well as the methodology of the responses. Some terrorists also act for self-aggrandizement, facilitated by international media, not just the main stream media, but also the technological means that there are today which can inflate the significance of individual terrorist connections and hence give aid and comfort to people who might be thinking of going in that direction. I am a strong supporter of the first amendment. We put up with the media's exaggeration of some events, but we also must understand that it is an element, the effort by some terrorists to gain publicity and then to see if they can gain recruits among people who, when they join up, then see their own lives perverted or are prepared to see other people's lives perverted. We live in that world.

I recall, for example, when there was an attack in Oklahoma City, which we all remember. In the first couple of hours afterwards people were choosing countries. Was this Usama bin Laden, while he was still alive, before 9/11? Was it Egypt, was it Saudi Arabia, was it Iran? It turns out it was homegrown terrorism. But the publicity that came with that event or some of the others which have been relatively minor in terms of the impact on us means that they get inflated and help terrorists in their recruiting. It makes our job much more difficult.

* Presentation at an event on "International Cooperation in Combating Terrorism: Review of 2016 and Outlook for 2017" held on February 23, 2017 at the National Press Club.

I think it is also correct when we talked about the concept of “whole of government” or even “whole of society” in combatting terrorism. This is not just a military issue. It is not just the military activity which may lead us in the short term to be able to defeat and degrade on the battlefield efforts by organizations like al-Qa’ida and ISIS, but it is also what happens afterwards, what happens in individual societies if the terrorists just pull back, regroup, and come back again. We have discovered that acting from outside trying to rebuild societies is an extraordinarily difficult job. We have been involved in Afghanistan for 15 years and I am not so sure how close we could be to say that that would be a society that is self-sustaining, that would not have problems of terrorism and other threats in the future. Clearly, that is not true today with Iraq, even though we are now 14 years since the invasion of Iraq. And that continues on. We are now in the 6th year in Syria, and that has become a proving ground, a recruiting ground as well, for the Islamist terrorist that we must deal with.

Now, in terms of getting others involved. For example, what is happening in Europe in terms of refugees’ migration. A lot of which came about, I think we must recognize, because of the invasion of Iraq in 2003. A lot of people foresaw what could happen, some people did not, and it happened. As anybody who has been involved in government can tell you, you cannot go back and revisit the past, you deal with what you have to deal with. But you now have the influx of migrants into Europe, a large fraction of whom are Muslims. A lot of them are also coming from North Africa and elsewhere. This is having a corrosive impact on the European Union and on particular countries.

I believe that the British departure from the European Union through Brexit is strategically folly for several reasons, but that is not our topic now. But the migrant flow into Europe is not so much about terrorism because most of the people who come there have not been involved in terrorism; rather, it has to do with a cultural challenge. But with that cultural challenge and the response to it, a lot of which has been negative, has also proved to be a very good recruiting ground for people who then go off to join ISIS. We have seen this only in the last couple of days with that person released from Guantanamo, a British citizen, who was judged by our people not to be a threat. He went back to Britain, lived a perfectly normal life for a while, and then got recruited and went off and blew himself up a few days ago – in part, possibly, I do not know and I have not studied it, because of the push-back against Muslim immigration.

So, this must be a whole of government and whole of society effort and also kept in perspective so we do not find ourselves stigmatizing all Muslims. You will not be surprised that I think that the president’s Executive Order regarding banning people from seven countries was probably not the best conceived and certainly was not the best implemented. The point has been made that not a single person from one of those seven countries has perpetrated a terrorist attack in our country.

OK, I understand because, as we all know, terrorism has been an amazing shock to the American system. What happened on 9/11 was the first time that we have been attacked from abroad in the Lower 48 since August 1814. We had a little bit by Pancho Villa, but we do not really count that nor “the Recent Unpleasantness,” which is known up here in the North by a different name, the Civil War, although across the Potomac you may call it the War between the States, I can accept that, that is all right. To show you how difficult it is for peoples to go beyond their historical experiences, we are still talking about the Civil War in our country today.

A lot of countries, members of NATO, do not see terrorism the same way we do in terms of what needs to be done in combatting terrorism, including from the Middle East. When the president of the United States, the current president, said he thought that NATO was obsolete, I do not happen to think it is, and I do not think he does. You have to read the rest of the sentence. It looks as though he said “obsolete” because NATO as an institution is not involved in the war against terrorism. And a couple of Marines over in Europe last week in Munich, General Kelly and General Mattis – General Mattis is someone I worked with and have a very high regard for – were talking very specifically to the NATO allies about the need for them to become more engaged in the fight against terrorism. Now, again, that is not just the military dimension, it is also other dimensions, so that we will not see the military success simply be a time-buyer rather than helping to create a lasting solution.

I am going to say a couple of other things.

Number one, we cannot see what is going on in the Middle East today with Islamist terrorism separate from the lack of stability in the region; the lack of capacity by governments to govern themselves, societies to cohere, a lack of coherent policies on the part of several outside countries. I do not think we had a coherent policy in the last two administrations. I hope we are going to have a coherent policy under President Trump, I wish him the best. We have one president at a time, we have got to help him be successful. As Americans, we have to make him successful. So, Middle East stability is terribly important.

Number two on my list, we must look at the sources of terrorism. Not just the ones that have already been talked about. Many people say that the leading exporter of terrorism in the world is Iran; I have to tell you something, that is nonsense. The leading exporters of terrorism in the world are the promoters of Wahhabism, and that includes Saudi Arabia and some of the other Persian Gulf Arab states. If it were not for the export of Wahhabism by citizens of Saudi Arabia, not by the government, there would not be an ISIS. That is where it comes from. ISIS is a Sunni phenomenon. It is not a Shia phenomenon. In fact, the Iranians have been on the hit-list along with a lot of others. Until we are prepared to go to the Saudis and say “You have to cut this out,” their people will continue to pour gasoline on the flames. I think we need to do that and I hope President Trump will do something that I regret to say the last two presidents were not prepared to do.

Finally, we must worry that we do not allow what these characters are doing to win the battle of ideas, and to lead us to damage our economy or in particular to damage our own civil liberties. We have an amazingly strong country, an amazingly strong set of ideas, amazingly strong people of all races, creeds, faiths, and the like. We must guard against allowing these criminals to do things that will weaken our resolve. Indeed, as Abraham Lincoln, who died a few blocks from here, said, we are “the last best hope of Earth.”

Ambassador (Ret.) Marcelle M. Wahba

*Former U.S. Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates; President of the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington D.C.**

For someone who has spent almost all of my professional career in the Middle East, the number of times we have all talked about the difficulty of a specific period in time are too many to enumerate, so I will not repeat that and just say that the Middle East today continues to be going through a difficult period of transition.

What I thought I would do, instead of focusing on a specific issue, conflict or country, and there are many to discuss today, I thought I would look at the Middle East through maybe five regional trends that I believe define and explain some of the things we see happening in the region today.

I think the first trend we are seeing is that we are at the end of the status quo as we know it. The invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Arab Spring or the uprisings of 2010-11 unleashed very powerful forces across the Middle East. Nearly six years now since the food vendor in Tunisia lit the spark that rocked the Arab world, the region continues to go through major upheavals. Probably, in my view, we are witnessing the most significant consequences for the region and for the world since the aftermath of World War II. Everywhere we look in the Middle East today we see that the status quo is challenged in almost every respect: the legitimacy of established governments, borders threatened by conflict and by the Islamic State and other terrorist groups, and the absence of strong credible leadership that can unite and formulate an accepted roadmap for the future. We have failed or failing states in Libya, Yemen, a raging civil war in Syria and ongoing instability in Iraq. Tunisia is probably the only country that is making a relatively peaceful transition but continues to be fragile. Egypt has returned to the route of stability of an authoritarian regime but faces serious domestic challenges in its economy and a potent terrorist group in the Sinai.

The second trend that I think we need to understand in a larger context is the Shia-Sunni rivalry. It is a new and dangerous trend and we see this competition of power throughout much of the Middle East: in Lebanon, in Syria, in Iraq certainly, Yemen, Bahrain, and also in the tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran. While many of these conflicts are essentially political, the religious sectarian divide now enflames the region and defines the conflicts in religious terms. This is clearly manifested with the rise of Islamic State and of course the continued presence and in many cases increasing strength of al-Qa'ida in places like Syria and Yemen.

The third trend that I will point to is that the U.S. influence in the region has clearly diminished. We face a deficit of trust and therefore our ability to influence events in the region has clearly lessened in the last five to eight years. I think the fact that the Obama Administration decided not to intervene in a robust manner in Syria has harmed our credibility. The fact that the Obama Administration did not respond in a better manner to support Mubarak when he was under threat is seen by many in the region as betrayal of a leader we supported for many years. Also when we engaged with the Islamic government that took over, led by Mohamed Morsi and the Muslim Brothers, many in Egypt

* Presentation at an event on "Middle East Strategic Outlook: Regional and Global Implications" held on November 21, 2016 at the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies.

and others in the region saw that as U.S. support for the Muslim Brotherhood and not just the normal government to government engagement. In my view, many of the conflicts that we see in the region today do not lend themselves to solutions by external powers. Whether the revolution in Egypt or the struggle for power in Libya or now in the current state of affairs in Syria, regional solutions are required. That said, I think the U.S. can and should play a leadership role by coordinating and supporting our allies in the region. Due to the diminishing stature of the traditional centers of power in the Arab world, such as Egypt, Iraq, and Syria, the disengagement by the United States is a cause for serious concern by many of our allies.

The fourth trend I would point to is that the Gulf Cooperation Council countries have risen to a leadership role in the region that we have not seen in the past. We see a rising assertiveness particularly by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in defense of their national interests and in defense of stability in the region. The fact that they decided to undertake a joint effort against the Houthis in Yemen is just one example. The fact that they worked with the Egyptians and went into Libya against one of the factions in that struggle for power is another example. They are no longer waiting to have active participation by the U.S. in some of these decisions, they are taking decisions on their own and defining their own national interests in a very assertive manner.

The fifth regional trend that I would like to point at which I think is the most critical one is the huge number of refugees and displaced persons in the region. This is, I think, a trend that we will not recognize its immense impact until many years from now. Both the wars in Iraq and Syria have displaced over half of the Syrian population and 4 million Iraqis. In Syria alone there are 5 million refugees and 8.7 million internally displaced Syrians according to UN figures. That is more than half of the Syrian population. What are the repercussions of that 5 years from now? 10 years from now? Will this country ever be the same again? In Yemen, we have 3 million Yemenis internally displaced and this is without the numbers of the many hundreds of thousands dead in both Syria, Iraq and now also in Yemen. It is very important to remember that the refugee crisis has a huge impact on the neighboring countries. Countries like Jordan and Lebanon who have taken in huge numbers of refugees. What will the impact be on their governments, the infrastructure, the educational system, their overall stability? The refugee influx into their cities is clearly taking its toll. And how long can they continue with that kind of pressure of outside refugees? Obviously, the repercussions for Europe are also very significant and all of us have seen the nonstop stream of refugees crossing the Mediterranean.

With these five regional trends in mind, I would like to turn for just a few moments to comment on the impact of our presidential election and look at it primarily through the prism of the GCC countries but really more broadly, the Middle East.

I think the watchword for all parties whether U.S. allies, U.S. adversaries, terrorist groups, armed militias, is "uncertainty." It has created uncertainty here as well but from the view of our overseas allies it remains very unclear the shape and form of a Trump Administration foreign policy. In the region there is a great deal of uncertainty and maybe some anxiety. I think many are hopeful that Donald Trump's nationalism will not be simply nativism, let alone isolationism, and that the administration will develop a robust internationalist element. Obviously that remains to be seen.

On the other hand I think many countries in the Middle East will welcome the lower emphasis on democracy, human rights issues, especially women's rights issues. These are themes that they never appreciated very much from the Obama Administration and certainly many feel they will not be a main issue with a Trump Administration.

However, the main areas of concern for the Middle East as they look at a new U.S. administration will focus primarily on Syria, Iran, and of course terrorism and Islamic extremism. What policies will the U.S. put into place? What actions will we take? What level of engagement will they see from the US in the region?

In Syria, especially for Saudi Arabia and Qatar, they believe that the future of the Middle East will be determined by the outcome of the conflict in Syria. Specifically, they see that the outcome in Syria will determine whether or not Iran becomes a regional superpower whose power they cannot resist without massive international support. I think their main concern with the Obama Administration has been the lack of engagement and limited focus on ISIS without trying to contain or remove Assad. They will be looking to the Trump Administration to see if the new team will be more active in resolving the Syria conflict.

There is also tremendous confusion as they look at some of the statements and read and hear some of the interviews over the past few weeks. They've heard President-Elect Trump strongly praising Russian policy and Vladimir Putin while emphasizing the need to eliminate Islamic State terrorists. However, anyone who understands Syria and the region well, knows that the campaign to support the regime of Bashar al-Assad is a joint Russia-Iran-Hizballah project. So many in the region are waiting to see how the new administration will balance these conflicting ideas. Are they going to be supporting the Russian involvement in Syria, which supports Hizballah and maintaining the Assad administration, or will they consider the Russian-Iran intervention as a negative intervention and see it as a threat?

Another issue regarding Iran of great importance for our allies in the region is the question of the nuclear deal. Even though President-Elect Trump is very unlikely to abrogate the agreement, many believe he will take a much harder line on the implementation of the agreement. It is very difficult to imagine a continued smooth implementation process under the new administration. From the Arab Gulf states perspective, although they were originally extremely critical of the Iran agreement, I think now that it is in place, very few would argue that it should be abrogated. Many believe it should continue to be implemented but of course they are very much interested in seeing the U.S. administration play a bigger role in enforcing some restrictions on Iran's de-stabilizing behavior in the region and not limit the U.S.-Iran relationship just to the implementation of the nuclear agreement.

On Jihadist terrorism I think it becomes a little more complicated. There has been a new degree of anti-Islamic rhetoric I think in the American discourse, obviously during the political campaign and in the last few weeks. Many of our Arab allies will be dismissing this as campaign talk and I think that they will try to build mutually respectful relationships with the U.S. administration. However the terrorist groups and others seeking to exploit chaos and division will clearly be very encouraged by the prospect of a U.S. administration that explicitly buys into the clash of civilizations, interpretation of contemporary international relations. I think the recent comments that we have heard

about the interpretation of Islam and terrorism as being almost one and the same by some of the recent appointments by the new administration will be very difficult for the region to understand and to accept.

Meanwhile, al-Qa'ida in Syria has been quietly and deliberately gaining strength while the world's attention has been focused on Islamic State. I believe the jihadist movement is continuing to gain strength in the region, al-Qa'ida in particular remains a very potent threat especially in Syria and Yemen. The Iranian inspired Shia terrorist sectarian militia groups are also thriving. Therefore, there is really no reason to believe that in the immediate or even possibly midterm there will be any great let-up in the international and regional terrorism from these sources or in the brutal sectarian rivalries that we see so much in the Middle East today. The policy of the new administration on this set of complexities remains unclear as thus far the focus has been solely on the Islamic State.

Ambassador (Ret.) Theodore Kattouf

*Former U.S. Ambassador to Syria and other diplomatic appointments elsewhere in the Middle East; President and CEO of AMIDEAST**

Terrorism is not an abstraction to me or to most of my colleagues who spent the bulk of their Foreign Service careers working in the Middle East and North Africa. Some of us have experienced terrorist attacks firsthand; all of us have lost friends and co-workers to this scourge.

Though many of us share similar tragic experiences, we sometimes come to different conclusions about what is to be done. Most area specialists and counter-terrorism experts agree that the approach of the U.S. government must be multi-faceted, involving the U.S. military, the State Department, USAID, Homeland Security, intelligence agencies, law enforcement, soft power, and public awareness; and I could go on. The principle debate seems to always focus on how large a threat terrorist groups pose to the homeland and our citizens and interests abroad and the form and degree of our military intervention.

I want to focus on what the balance should be between our military response and the many other tools and policies available to us. Let me state clearly that my 42 years of involvement with U.S. policies in the region have made me a firm believer in the law of unintended consequences. Even President George W. Bush once famously said in a presidential debate with Al Gore that U.S. foreign policy needed to show greater humility. Yet, after two inconclusive wars that lasted for a decade or more, Iran is arguably left as the dominant power in Iraq and the Taliban is poised to make a comeback in Afghanistan. Many of the principal architects and proponents of these wars mock the Obama administration for missed opportunities to intervene more forcefully in Syria, and for not having left a residual force indefinitely in Iraq. Indeed, some former senior members of the current administration state much the same thing. Some weeks ago, I heard former Secretary of Defense Panetta assert that matters might have turned out differently in Syria if only the president had extended more and earlier military aid to opposition fighters there and had carried through with his threat to hit Assad's forces after he crossed the President's self-declared red line concerning the use of chemical weapons. Now, let me hastily add that Secretary Panetta has given great service to our country for decades and I have admired him from afar. Moreover, some colleagues whom I deeply respect share his opinions.

But the question is this: which Syrian opposition forces should we have more forcefully backed? The opposition was splintered into literally hundreds of small groups that lacked a central command. The Muslim Brotherhood initially dominated the Syrian National Council. Even prior to the Nusra Front's and ISIS's domination of the opposition's military forces, Islamic groups, including the Taliban-like Ahrar Al-Sham, were prominent players.

Was our goal ever to replace a corrupt, bloody Baathist military regime with a barbaric, intolerant, and bloody radical Islamic regime? How would that serve U.S. inter-

* Presentation at an event on "International Cooperation in Combating Terrorism: Review of 2014 and Outlook for 2015" held on March 30, 2015 at the National Press Club.

ests? And, by the way, we had many years to train the Iraqi Armed Forces under relatively ideal conditions. How well has that turned out? Why have Iranian-influenced Shia militias been spearheading offensive actions against ISIS? Why did the Iraqi Armed Forces come apart so rapidly when ISIS attacked Mosul, leaving their U.S.-supplied heavy weapons behind? Those who want to argue the counter-factuals need to explain why this time it would have been different!

My take away from years of focusing on the MENA region is that these countries are not ours to “win” or “lose.” The peoples of the Middle East have developed cultures and value systems that are not largely consistent with our own. They have yet to decide clearly what role Islam will play in their constitutional governance. Who is sovereign: God or the people? The U.S. and the West can encourage those, whose values, such as pluralism, tolerance, and inclusion, are closer to our own, but it is not for us to impose those values on them at the point of a gun.

It is hubris to expect that every society will achieve our level of social and political development overnight, when we, ourselves, will always be struggling to create a more perfect union. The neo-cons and their supporters who never believed in social engineering at home, thought nothing of going halfway around the world to spread Wilsonian democracy and values. If we want to put our money where our mouth is, why are we not doing more to economically and otherwise assist Tunisia, the one country that has emerged from the Arab revolutions with a real chance for pluralism, tolerance, and co-existence? What better rebuke to the radical Islamists and cruel dictators could there be than a free and prosperous Tunisia?

So what is to be done? First, we need to quit exaggerating the threat that terrorism poses. The 24/7 news channels must fight for ratings. Every lone wolf operation in Europe or the U.S. becomes an existential threat to western civilization. Our police forces have become so militarized that it was thought necessary to virtually shut down the entire city of Boston and its suburbs to catch or kill the Tsarnaev brothers. Copenhagen and Paris have experienced similar phenomenon. Yet, right after 9/11 the Washington suburbs were terrorized by non-ideological assassins who chose their victims at random. Many other senseless mass killings have subsequently occurred with alarming regularity, such as at the elementary school in Newtown, CT, and at a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado. Each year tens of thousands die from influenza and auto accidents. Yet, it is deaths at the hands of terrorists that haunt our thoughts and dreams. The terrorists could hardly hope for more. Aside from being inherently barbaric, ISIS is striving to terrorize the west and provoke a disproportionate military response from us.

Another U.S. president famous for a failed, prolonged war was Lyndon Johnson. When running against Barry Goldwater in 1964 he stated that we should not be asking American boys to do what Asian boys should be doing for themselves. Unfortunately, just like President George W. Bush, he overreached rather than following his own sound advice. This war is an existential war, but not for us and for our western allies. It is the governments and peoples of the entire region who are most threatened. Groups pledging allegiance to ISIS are in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, and West Africa. So after two major wars, the cancer has metastasized.

The U.S. should calibrate the help it offers to indigenous forces that are willing to confront ISIS militarily and otherwise. The Kurds, Jordan, the Iraqi and Yemeni governments deserve our help. So do those elements of the Syrian opposition that are genuinely willing to espouse democracy and pluralism and protection of minorities for their country. What sort of help: military equipment, intel sharing, logistical support, training, including for special operations, in some cases air support, and search and rescue. Those countries and movements that wish to use the crisis for their own narrow interests should only be supported to the extent necessary to achieve our objectives. Our fighting men and women and national honor should not be for sale.

Foremost, we should not lend ourselves to advancing hateful sectarian agendas. Yes, there are some parties that are making this a Sunni-Shia struggle. There are others who are fighting for the very soul of Sunni Islam. In the latter struggle, we have an obvious interest in seeing more orthodox, mainstream interpretations of Islam prevail. But, paradoxically, we must be very careful not to inject ourselves into what are legitimate debates for Islamic scholars and their followers. Yes, it is easier said than done, because ISIS must be confronted and combatted, as must al-Qa'ida and its offshoots. But let us ask ourselves how would it have been received in the 17th century if the Turkish sultan had sent the janissaries to sort out the 30-years war in central Europe between Catholics and Protestants? This conflict was so bloody, that it may have wiped out a quarter or more of the population, most of them civilians, in the areas where it was fought before the treaty of Westphalia in 1648. Just saying...

Ambassador Bonnie D. Jenkins

*U.S. Department of State's Coordinator for Threat Reduction Programs in the Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation**

My work in the government really focuses on ways in which we can keep weapons of mass destruction materials and weapons (WMD) out of the hands of non-state actors with an intent to do harm. So my perspective in terms of international cooperation in combating terrorism is that it is very important indeed to have international cooperation. The only way we can really reduce the threat of terrorism is to work together on a global scale, to work bilaterally, multilaterally with partners, and the work that I do really does foster that effort in ways in which we can develop programs to actually make sure that we do not have opportunities for non-state actors to use chemical, biological, nuclear, or radiological weapons.

The U.S. has developed a number of tools and initiatives to address this issue whether they are through working with international organizations, whether it is working through specific initiatives, or working on the ground bilaterally with countries. There are a number of ways which we have been focusing on addressing a very complex threat that follow individuals as they move around the world. Individuals with a threat to do harm may seek access to pathogens, precursors, or to nuclear materials.

There are a number of areas that I work on at the State Department focused on reducing WMD terrorism. I have worked since 2009 on the Nuclear Security Summit. I am the Department of State lead on the preparations for the Summit. It is an effort that was started in 2009 by President Obama in his first Prague speech where he announced that nuclear terrorism is one of the greatest threats the world faces. And he announced we would have a security summit to bring together leaders around the world to focus on this important issue, recognizing that in order to prevent nuclear terrorism you want to prevent the access to nuclear material. So as you probably know, there have been a number of nuclear security summits since that speech. There was one in 2010 here in Washington, followed by the 2012 summit in Seoul, and 2014 in The Hague, and there will be a final summit under the current format in 2016 in the United States, the place and time to yet be determined.

Through these nuclear security summits we have worked with 54 leaders, to include four international organizations, providing commitments, communiqués, and other efforts to ensure that states who are working with us are doing what they can to secure nuclear materials. We have done this through a number of national commitments. There have been a number of what we call “gift baskets,” which are actually commitments by a group of countries on particular areas of nuclear security. So through this process of nuclear security summits, we have been providing ways in which we can consolidate nuclear material, get rid of excess nuclear material, and really focus on ways in which we can coordinate and work together internationally and with international organiza-

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tions and initiatives like the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction (Global Partnership) and others to prevent nuclear terrorism in the future.

One of the other aspects about international cooperation is the recognition that we need to work with not only governments but with entities outside the government as well. Through the nuclear security summit there has been a process of working very closely with non-governmental organizations and industry, which are very important parts of ensuring that we do secure nuclear material. So when we talk about international cooperation, we are talking not just about governments; we are talking about all of the entities that exist around the globe that can help ensure that we prevent nuclear terrorism.

Another entity that exists to which I am the U.S. representative is something called the Global Partnership. This is an initiative that was started in 2002 in Kananaskis under the then G8 chairmanship of Canada, and the main focus of this initiative is to help ensure, through programs and activities, that we do not let WMD get in the hands of non-state actors. It was originally to be a ten-year commitment amongst the G8 members with the United States putting in \$10 billion matched by \$10 billion of the other members. We now have twenty-eight members of the Global Partnership, so it has grown a lot since 2002. It was extended in 2011 to go beyond ten years. For the first ten years the Global Partnership's main focus was destroying Russian nuclear submarines and Russian chemical weapons. We spent over \$22 billion in the first ten years in the Global Partnership. Now the Global Partnership is looking at all areas of chemical, biological, nuclear, radiological weapons to prevent them from getting into the hands of non-state actors with intent to do harm.

Some of the activities that the global partnership has been engaged in include: the physical protection of nuclear materials, securing the transport of nuclear materials, radioactive security, prevention of illicit nuclear trafficking, material management, verification and compliance, and work on export controls. In the area of biosecurity, there is work on securing and accounting for biological pathogens, preventing deliberate biological attacks, strengthening disease surveillance and detection, reinforcing biological non-proliferation instruments like the biological weapons convention, and ensuring the safe, secure and responsible conduct in the biological sciences. In chemical destruction, the global partnership members have completed the projects remaining for Kishinev projects, assisted in destruction and activities in Syria and Libya, and are prepared to assist in the destruction of newly-declared stockpiles.

In addition, I should mention that last year the Global Partnership has been having meetings focusing on CBRN security assistance in Ukraine. Ukraine is one of the members of the Global Partnership. It has been a member since 2003. And as a result of recent activities in Ukraine, we have been meeting and working with Ukraine in trying to address some of their CBRN threats that they may be facing right now.

I should also mention one other area that is getting a lot of attention called the Global Health Security Agenda. For those of you who do not know what this is, it is an effort that was started last year in the United States, with a launch in Washington, D.C., February 2014, to focus on reducing infectious disease threats, like Ebola, whether accidental or intentional. The focus of the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA), which

is led by the White House, now has forty-four countries that are working on this effort. It is a security effort. It is also a human and animal health effort, and it is a law enforcement effort. In the United States you have quite a number of departments who have traditionally not been working on threat-reduction programs who are now involved because we are looking at infectious disease and how to fight infectious disease from a prevent, detect, and respond lens. There is a strong bio-security aspect to the GHSA.

Those are just some of the programs that fall within my portfolio and that promote international cooperation to combat terrorism.

Ambassador (Ret.) Ronald Neumann

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The subject “South Asia Security Challenges: National, Regional, and Global Perspectives” is really gigantic; security in the whole region. And if you are not awfully careful, this becomes an invitation to sort of roam across the whole place saying something about everything but I am afraid at the end of that one may have said nothing about much of anything. I would like to be able to set out for you some glowing and brilliant conceptual approach to the area from the Northern Indian Border to the Eastern Border of Russia. Unfortunately, I do not have one. In fact, I do not believe there is one. Because this is a period of really intensive instability and of new multiple challenges coming from multiple directions and tearing people’s attention from one corner to another. This is not just true of Washington, where there is a certain resemblance in the higher levels of policymaking in Washington to small children playing soccer: that everybody rushes for the ball at the moment and nobody plays any other field. And we are experiencing that right now. So first it was Syria, then it was Ukraine, now today it is Iraq. We have a policy statement on Afghanistan that apparently has a new focus. And so we snap back and forth and we are in such a period now.

But what I will try to do is sketch out a few what I would call base points or reference points, around which one might try to organize thinking about the security prospects in the region and to talk just a little about the idea of regional stabilization, regional agreements, both economic and political, about which I think one has to be extremely cautious not to exaggerate what they can do or how quickly they can do it. Or whether they can do it at all.

The future of Afghanistan is one of great question marks, it is one on which people do not agree, including Afghans. It is highly confused because of the lack of clarity in American policy. And that infects everybody else.

I want to come back to talk about American policy in a minute because we are in so many respects the large elephant in the room. The result of America being as powerful as it is that to some extent we influence everybody else’s actions. Friends, enemies, neutrals, all, to some extent, take positions based on what they think the United States is going to do. When they do not know what that is, then they make assumptions. Those are usually worst case assumptions from their own point of view. And so the results of uncertainty and insecurity are often unfortunate.

Let me come back to that in a minute. But as you look across the region, you have either a new or a reinvigorated Russian approach to Central Asia. And it is very evident from people now looking at Georgia in 2008, the Ukraine, the Crimea, being swallowed up now, pressures on the Eastern Ukraine, the pressure on the Central Asian states to join an economic unit, and there is a question about how far does Russia intend to go in pressing other states into, not back into a territorial embrace – I do not think that they are not trying to recreate the Soviet Union – but they clearly intend to dominate

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politically in areas close to, that which they so charmingly call the “near abroad.” And that is making the Central Asian states and a lot of others, and Eastern Europeans (fortunately that is not my subject for today), it is making people nervous. And it is drawing their attention away from other areas to focus on how bad this pressure is going to be. And that is particularly true for instance in Kyrgyzstan, where you have the only other democracy functioning, I say the “only other” because now you are beginning to have one in Afghanistan. That is a huge sweep of territory but one is critical of whatever the blemishes are in these democracies. To think that from the Northern Border of India to the Western Border of Russia, these are the only two more-or-less democratic states. And I exclude Pakistan because of the role of the military which excludes the civilian power from dominance in so many of the most critical issues.

So you have Central Asia looking over its shoulder at Russia. You have Russia slightly schizophrenic about the United States in Afghanistan: they do not really like us being there in the sense of the challenge it poses in Central Asia, but they also really, really do not want an unstable Afghanistan and a rebuilding of an Islamic fundamental (fundamental is a lousy word, but an extremist), Islamic extremist movement coming up against the borders of Central Asia. And so, because of what they do not want, they have been very helpful in a variety of things: rescheduling the huge Afghan debt; the growing amount of transport of military supplies across Central Asia, relieving pressure (which at one point they were putting) on airbases in Manas and Uzbekistan and allowing freight to go across. At the same time, they have never allowed munitions to go across, so it is all combat equipment but not anything that shoots. Nothing that goes bang comes in by the Northern Transportation line, it all comes by air over Pakistan, and that is also an important point.

So, you have got Russia, slightly schizophrenic, pushing into Central Asia but not wanting us to lose, not wanting us to be too big in Afghanistan. You have got a Pakistan which is itself somewhat unstable, I do not believe it is anywhere close to collapsing, but which is engaged increasingly in a major war with its own Islamic movement and yet trying to maintain support for others in Afghanistan. It is very unclear what Pakistan’s long-term policies will evolve to. There is a lot of discussion about changes in Pakistani attitudes and I have seen some of that discussion in terms of “oh my god we do not want real breakdown in Afghanistan, we do not want to deal with the refugee flow again, we have got enough economic crisis.” But I have to say that none of that discussion over the past year or more seems to have been evidenced in an actual change of policy or action. I think there was a period of considerable enthusiasm where we began to hear these sorts of discussions. And that has kind of cooled because it did not allow much.

Now, you have had the election of a civilian government, you have had a peaceful transition of power which is pretty important, but it is not at all clear that that government has the ability to change major Pakistani policy vis-a-vis either India or Afghanistan.

It is also, I think, important to understand that Pakistan’s policy is heavily influenced by what it expects the United States to do. I think this is true of all the countries but it is particularly clear here.

Americans often say about any number of situations “well, what is *their* vision;” in Afghanistan “what is their vision of what the future should be?” It is important to stop and understand that that comment is intensely, inherently American. It comes out of being part of a very strong state with enormous power. Because underneath that statement of “what is *their* vision” is the idea that you can have a vision because you have enough power and enough strength to bring about a vision if you want to put that energy into it. That is not the starting point from which the vast majority of states in the world address foreign policy. They address it from “what is the situation with which I have to deal?” And within that situation, particularly the dangers, “what can I do about those dangers?” And then there may be an element of vision but it is within the context of “what is it that I cannot do anything about that I have to deal with?”

So for the Pakistanis, one key starting point for that view of the world is the belief that we are going to move out of Afghanistan too early and let it collapse. As General Kayani, the former chief of staff, said to General Allen at one point, I think he said it to others, “I expect you will leave too early, you will underfund the Afghan security forces, they will collapse, and we will deal with chaos.” So to say to them in that condition, “Don’t you see how important a stable Afghanistan is?” is sort of like saying “wouldn’t it be nice if you could fly?” Well, yeah, so what? It is an irrelevant statement from the power position of just dealing with the situation. Now, you might argue their policies are wrong, they do not give them the stability they want and various other things. But the starting point is that you have to change the world that they think they see if you want them to change their view of how they deal with it.

I won’t go into India but you have a new government in India and obviously how it approaches things will also be difficult. Two base points, one about China, one about India, because I do not want to spend all the time just sort of making the circumference.

China has considerable interests in Afghanistan. I think it is clear that China is worrying more about Afghanistan. It is worrying about what will happen if you have an Islamist connection there that connects to Chinese insurgents. That worry does not yet translate into any particular policy of action. And I do not think it will, maybe it will eventually, but I see no evidence of it now. I was recently at a conference in Beijing and one Chinese professor somewhat ruefully summed up Chinese policy, he said “I believe China’s policy in Afghanistan will remain cautious passivity.” And I think that is what you have got. So I think one should not build any theoretical or policy frameworks on the assumption that you could get China to play a much larger role in Afghanistan. In many ways I wish it were true, because I do not think they are a particularly hostile force for any of our interests, but I do not think it is true.

So, the last thing I want to mention there before talking a little bit about Afghanistan itself and about the region there is the role of Iran. And again, very complex subject, we have got all kinds of other issues with Iran, but I think there are a couple of base points. Iran is potentially a minor political problem in Afghanistan but not a strategic threat. Afghanistan in Iranian eyes is extremely different from Iraq. And since we have so much experience with Iran in Iraq, which is negative, particularly as they built shape charges and blew up our vehicles and killed our people, one needs to understand the difference. Iraq historically for Iran is a strategic threat. It has been the source of strategic threats since the eighth century battle of Karbala, it has never changed. When I served in Iran in the 1970s before the Revolution and I served up in Tabriz in the West, every year

Iranian forces in Western Iran Kermensha, and the western provinces drilled an exercise premised on the Iraqi invasion of Iran, falling back, regrouping, blunting the invasion, and counter-attacking. This was their regular paradigm in the 1970s under the Shah. They fought an eight-year war with Iraq. They do not have an interest in a stable Iraq. They have an interest in Iraq which is not in total chaos, they do not want it dominated by hostile Sunni Islamists, but a stable Iraq will ultimately be in all probability an Iranian threat. And that includes a Shia Iraq, because a Shia dominated Iraq which is really stable and which does not need Iranian support desperately will also be an Arab Iraq. And that will be the same Iraq in which the Shia fought as members of the Iraqi Army for eight very bloody years without any major defection.

Afghanistan, in contrast, is not a strategic threat to Iran. The last time it was a strategic threat was probably when Ahmad Shah Durrani took the treasure that Nader Shah had after his assassination in 1747 and went off and made himself king. Afghanistan is a source of minor threat. Iranians worry about us in Afghanistan, they are very sensitive about what we do on the border. They tend to impute various motives to us which make them very nervous. I think it was a mistake that we cut off communication with them in Afghanistan. I had perhaps the last conversation with them in Afghanistan that was officially sanctioned and then I was told to shut that down because of nuclear pressures. I think that was a mistake because it just made them more suspicious about what we were doing. We have overlapping interests in Afghanistan. They have a huge narcotics problem in Iran, both trans-shipment and a problem of addiction. Most of the narcotics that cause that come from Afghanistan. There is an area of common cooperation there, they cooperated extensively with us in 2001 both in the overthrow of the Taliban and in the negotiations that followed. To say we have overlapping interests is not to say the interests are all the same. Those two statements should not be confused. But the point is we do have things we can cooperate on. The Iranians will always try for influence because they do not like threats and because that is the kind of natural primordial relation of most politicians except those who think the twenty-first century is different. But otherwise, it does not mean they are striking and striving for hegemony. Those are issues much more of the Gulf and of Iraq than they are of Afghanistan. So there is potential for cooperation.

So, to just close out, you have bifurcated Russian policies. You have Central Asian states which are concerned about what happens in Afghanistan but do not see themselves as having, by and large, the power to actually influence it and whose attention is increasingly taken by pressures from Russia. So they are not likely to be the source of large actions or daring actions. You have China which is largely inactive. You have Pakistan which is more negative than positive. And Iran, which can be worked with, but is not pushing hard for anything in particular.

The overarching element in this, perhaps I should say it is more like the hole in the donut because it is conspicuous by its absence, is U.S. policy. What is our policy toward Central Asia? How much does our desire for democracy, support for democracy, which irritates the hell out of the Russians, how does that balance against our need for Central Asian support in Afghanistan which requires a certain measure of Russian acquiescence at least? If we cannot sort out, that does not mean one has to always have priority, but if we cannot find a way of expressing the balance between those policies, everybody worries that whatever it is they don't like is what we're doing.

In Afghanistan you have this constant tension between the commitment of forces and the establishment of dates which undercut things because Afghans are thinking things will fall apart and therefore look to their own survival instead of to larger issues of building the state or building the army. There is a lot of success right now. I think what one can say in the aftermath of the second round of the elections, but we still (cross your fingers) have to get through a vote count without major battles over fraud, but basically the army has performed well in security. There is much too much that has been done to say nothing has been done as some critics do. That is nonsense. But what has been done is not sufficient to ensure success and it is not sustainable without continued American, particularly financial support, but some degree of military involvement which, for the Afghans is also key psychologically. So that it is also nonsense to say that you are on some glide path to success. You are neither. And you are neither, in a war which is so complex it reminds me of Vietnam in a sense, if you have a really strong view about Afghanistan, as was true in Vietnam, you can go to the country, you can find the pieces that will support the argument you brought with you, you can then go back and write the article and say "I was there and this is the way it is" and then somebody whose view is completely and totally opposite can go there and do the same thing. And that of course makes it a little difficult to have informed policy discussions. But the bilateral security agreement will be signed. I have absolutely no doubt about that, and I think it will be signed probably within the next three months. We will have troops there at least until the end of 2016, it would be nice if we had more clarity of policy beyond that because the expectations of what we will or will not do affect what Pakistan does. They affect what Iran does. They affect how Afghans relate to their own state. They affect the degree of risk people will take to build that state, guys line their pockets and expect to run away.

Unfortunately, we are not answering those questions. We are particularly not answering them with the latest decision that all troops will leave after 2016 and our security advisory presence will fold back inside the embassy. You should, by the way, understand this is a very plastic statement; you could have quite a large security training presence inside the US Embassy. In Saudi Arabia we have a two-star command with a large training mission and then one almost as large made up of former U.S. military training the Saudi National Guard under contract. So, in fact, saying you will have an embassy presence does not really tell you what you are going to do, it is kind of a way of hiding it. But it scares the hell out of the Afghans.

The timeline also suggest to people who we send in uniform that we need you to go and accept a certain degree of risk but by the way we do not really give a damn whether you succeed or fail because we are going to end the mission anyway. That is a very bizarre way in which to inspire your forces to take risks.

So, two final comments on regional strategies. I would say that there has been a lot of discussion about the need for regional strategies in two respects. One is the neutralization of Afghanistan and the other is to build regional economic ties. Neutralization in the sense that Afghanistan has had its longest period of stability from 1929 to 1979 basically when it was essentially neutral, and so many people dream of recreating this. And it may be a good idea and someday it might happen. But it will not happen soon. It cannot happen soon because in my judgment, obviously these are judgmental questions, but it cannot in my judgment happen until you have a government in Afghanistan that is strong enough to keep basic order. As long as you have other forces contending

violently for power, they will inevitably draw in other foreigners to support them. And if Afghanistan begins to break down from what it is now, if American support really goes away, then you will have a much larger foreign presence. And it will not be because people expect to win; it will be because they think it is critical that their allies not lose. So the Pakistanis will be even more heavily invested in the Islamist insurgents because they want, at a minimum, to control the areas around their own border and they fear Indian building a threat to Pakistan. The Indians will be involved because they fear that those areas will become again the training ground for terrorists as they were in the past with Lashkar-e-Taiba and other groups. The Iranians will become involved because they do not want a group of fanatics on their border and they remember that their diplomats were massacred in Mazar-i-Sharif when the Taliban took it. The Russians will become involved because of the same reason – they do not want a fundamentalist Islamic state on the borders of Central Asia. None of that drawing in will lead to victory. It could give you something that looks like the Lebanese Civil War, which lasted for 15 years and Lebanon is much smaller and there were fewer outside parties and they were not as nasty (that is a pretty comparative statement). So this is really something to worry about because it has the potential for enormous instability. Until you have reduced that potential by the strength of the central government in Afghanistan, I do not think you can get a regional cooperation agreement. Now you could get an agreement but it would be an agreement on paper, it would not hold, and it would not, in the old saying, be worth the paper it is written on.

There is enormous potential for regional economic cooperation but, as the old Kurdish leader Mullah Mustafa Barzani said to me once about another subject “I have often heard of this bird but I have never seen it fly.” There are a number of reasons for that and I won’t go through them all. The benefits of regional economic cooperation are huge. The impediments are also large, some of it comes out of people’s mentality. It was enormously interesting to watch the Central Asian states gradually accept the idea of sealed cargo passage across Central Asia with our military supplies going to Afghanistan. This is something we have talked about for years, it is essential. And you see these trucks on the road that say TIR, Transports Internationaux Routiers. It is an international system of sealed cargos moving around so that you can ship goods easily across countries. This system is not accepted in the East, it is a whole new way of thinking. And there is a certain amount of “oh, that is what they meant.” But it is still very, very new. So there are all kinds of impediments. I hope it will develop. Certainly the economic case for it is very strong. The economic case for it is also irrelevant, in large part, to overcoming the political obstacles. Irrelevant may be too strong a word but I wanted to give you a sense of the difficulty of this. I think there is an enormous amount of room for academic, what people often call track two discussions, of regional economic cooperation because it is something that should happen. But it needs to move beyond praise for how good it would be to a much more detailed examination of what the problems are. Because people’s minds and government are not open to that yet. So there is a very fertile field to be explored there about how do you do customs regulation? How you would make it in a way that you have faith and you are not just opening the doors to smuggling. How you would handle your border controls. What you would do about letting drivers from other countries pass across your country. And that is just three issues out of a myriad of technical issues. But those all need discussion because on the day when some of this becomes more possible and more realistic, those questions will need to be answered. And the only place they are going to be discussed now is outside of government because

the government is not ready to discuss them seriously. So I think there is a fertile field there for that, but it is also not yet.

So, I leave you with this thought that there are all sorts of contending forces, it is very difficult. If we really screw it up it could be much worse, which ought to be an incentive to remaining involved even though it has been a long war and we are tired. There are hopes for the future but they are not immediate and they need work, and they need diplomacy, and they need attention.

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