

Speaker 1: [00:23](#) [inaudible].

Nick Schiffrin: [00:23](#) Okay. Thank you very much to everyone. Uh, my name is Nick Schiffrin. I'm the foreign affairs and defense correspondent for PBS news hour. Uh, and I am excited to talk about Afghanistan, a place very close to my heart cause I lived there for many years and, and hopefully, uh, close to a lot of people here who care about policy and the future of the u s and the region. Uh, and I am joined, uh, by investor Royal Ross money. First female ambassador of Afghanistan in the u s former, uh, first female ambassador of Afghanistan to Indonesia. And before she entered government was the human rights and women's empowerment advocate in Kabul. Uh, and ambassador Doug Lute, a former U s permanent representative to NATO. Uh, 2007, President Bush, uh, name Tim. The wars are as, as we call do. Back then, he didn't actually say that, but we, we did, um, uh, in charge of coordinating the, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan continued under President Obama when, when you and I first met focusing on Afghanistan and South Asia.

Nick Schiffrin: [01:26](#) Uh, and as general lute, uh, director of operations for Centcom, uh, as well as the Joint Staff. Uh, and so quickly, if I could just do a, a scene setter for Afghanistan. We're on our seventh round of talks between the United States, led by ambassador Julio Zed, uh, and the Taliban in Doha. Last week we had our first intro Afghan dialogue between the Taliban and members of the African government, including, uh, or in addition to other, uh, Ashcans, not in the government. Uh, the U S is negotiating on four subjects, counter-terrorism troop, withdraw intra Afghan dialogue and a ceasefire. And we'll get to all of that. Uh, in the meantime, u s military has taken a very active role targeting Taliban leaders, uh, in Afghanistan, uh, and civilians as always are paying the price. 3,800 died last year, more than any other time or higher than any other UN number. Um, and, uh, we have about 13, 14,000 US troops, uh, in Afghanistan spending 50 billion a year or so, still, uh, and looming over all of this.

Nick Schiffrin: [02:32](#) Our two dates of the next couple of months. Elections. Uh, President Ashraf Ghani, um, is running for reelection in September and the United States has set a deadline for at least a preliminary piece deal in September. So a lot going on. Uh, and not, not a lot of time to do it. Uh, so ambassador Ramani, if I, if I could start with you and, and let's, before we go into the specifics of the peace negotiations, I want to talk about us off gun relations. That four months ago I was in your embassy in Kabul and your predecessor, ambassador Mohid current national security advisor, uh, basically did a diplomatic destruction of Zalmay Kahleel Zed basically saying that he

wanted to create a caretaker government and then become the viceroy of Afghanistan. We've heard some nicer much words in the last four months, but today does, the Afghan government does. President Asha, Afghani trust is almost a [inaudible] in the process. He is leading.

Roya Rahmani:

[03:29](#)

Thank you. Neck America and Afghanistan are foundational partners. This is how we have been terming it and using it and meaning it. United State has contributed immensely to reconstruction of Afghanistan. And, uh, terms of blood and treasure and we are extremely grateful of that. I cannot start a talk without expressing our gratitude for everything that they American has done in the past 18 years. What in terms of our relationship of course when you are working so closely there could be ups and downs. Um, our government of course has our national interest in heart and you are government the same. There has been ups and downs but the reality is that this relationship matters the most. It's more important than many other things that are based on relations and the how we come across on sometimes we we may have curls and whatnot. Um, I can assure you that uh, the relationship is good. We have a friendly relationship, we rely on one another and we are looking forward to much more to come. Does the Afghan government trust the process is [inaudible] is leading. We are continuously discussing and talking to one another. We Ha we express our concern when we have concerns and the we are hoping that they are taken into concentration because a peace deal is only going to be durable and sustainable. If it's owned by the Afghans. Hmm.

Nick Schifrin:

[05:10](#)

So, uh, there is one larger, one other big large question I want to ask you before we turn to some of the specifics in the peace agreement. Uh, and I've talked to a handful of people in the last, uh, few days, both in cobble and, and in Washington in the u s uh, and they are many expressed a concern about the elections and a concern that president, uh, Osher Afghani, uh, we'll make sure that it's legitimate. So to this room that wants this election to proceed, uh, and succeed. What can you reassure us at Asha Afghani is doing to make sure, uh, that, that this election is legitimate and, and I will have you respond to some of the criticisms of him, which is that he's politicizing his office, um, stacking local police chiefs in his favor, which is what you do in order to make sure election day goes well. Uh, and so, um, bottom line, do you believe that this government is committed to making sure that this election is legitimate and does Osher Afghani want to win the election more than he wants? The u s to find peace with the Taliban.

- Roya Rahmani: [06:22](#) There was a lot of questions you ask us to question just to, um, elections are imperative. We are going to do everything we can to hold a fair and free election. Why is that? Because elections means continuity and continuity means stability. In my lifetime, I have seen enough of that regime changes in the ways that has been pretty destructive. Well, of course there was one time that continuity was not a good thing to continue and that is when two times after nine 11 and the 2001, which really Eh, was the statement of war. But for us segment piece, uh, so we will do everything to hold a fair and free election. Uh, and the run up to that we have made all the necessary preparations. The ballot has been, uh, printed, the top up, registration has been completed, the budget has been finalized, the operational plan is in place.
- Roya Rahmani: [07:29](#) And of course we did support the front of national, our international allies. We are hoping to hold the election on time. This is imperative also for peace to happen. It's not an alternative. It's a complementary part of the peace process. Should we, eh, have a, an and I hope that we will have a peace deal soon. Who is going to implement it? A peace deal is the first step, but the reality of implementation of a peace process would only occur or happen once, uh, when, when you have a reliable partner, an eight and implementing can m possibility. And that is only a strong and central government that will make sure that the people's confidence is secure, that will proper people towards hope and the, uh, progress as, as the, as the peace process unfolds, uh, to ensure that they receive and have access to the all, uh, relevant services that they need. That's the work of a government. And they go and they, uh, uh, legitimate strong government needs to be in place for the peace to succeed.
- Nick Schifrin: [08:46](#) The last two presidential elections, with all due respect have not produced that obviously legitimate, strong government. Why should we think that this election would,
- Roya Rahmani: [08:56](#) I e democracies are not easy. I think we all, or at least some of us might agree with that we have a very nascent democracy. 2014 was a landmark event when for the very first time Afghanistan had transfer of power from one legitimate government, from one elected government to another. It never happened in our history and we have 5,000 years of history behind us so that, eh, of course it's not at the same level and Eh, may not respond to all of our expectations, but this part, all the fact that the African God, the people of Afghanistan have demonstrated their resolve to a republic system to democracy. I don't think anybody can challenge that. We have shown and

demonstrated with a lot of resilience how much we want democracy to continue. You are a, you know, very well that a last October we held our parliamentary elections.

- Roya Rahmani: [10:11](#) It took months to wrap it up. In fact, after it was wrapped up and announced they had corals for a month over the speaker of the house. But once they finalized the election, the speaker of the house was elected. It's his contestant held his hand, lead him to the, to the chair of the speaker and congratulated him. It might not be the same way that we expect, but it happens. It was, despite all the odds, a lot of people said it's impossible to hold a parliamentary election, but we succeeded. Let's not forget all of these practices. Everything we are doing is only 18 years. So we have full confidence. That is what happened.
- Nick Schifrin: [10:59](#) Ambassador Lute, you know, better than most people here that some of the problems are not about inside Afghanistan at all over the last 18 years, but inside the u s government and the policy making process. So, so let's talk about two things. One is, um, the relationship between the military, uh, and the diplomats. Uh, and then let's talk about some of the specifics, uh, in this peace deal. Uh, so in terms of the first one, the military and the diplomats, uh, let me read you what a general mark Milley. The next chairman of the Joint Chief of staff said a few weeks ago. I think pulling out prematurely would be a strategic mistake. It's slow, it's painful, it's hard. I spent a lot of my life in Afghanistan, but I also think it's necessary. Secretary, Palm, Peo, however it said that we need a peace deal or some kind of framework by September the first you have seen some real conflicts over Afghanistan between the State Department, the military today. Is there still a between the military
- Douglas Lute: [11:54](#) and the State Department over Afghanistan or just to mark Millie's point doesn't seem to me that 18 years was premature. So I think there's a point to discuss there. Um, one thing is very different today, uh, in the Dura cratic set that Zell collars, artists dealing with inside the u s government is that unlike 10 years ago where we began to talk to the Taliban today, you really have a quite unified position across the bureaucracies in Washington. So our military now states that the, there is no hope for a military outcome, a favorable military outcome, Afghanistan and in effect the security situation on the ground as a stalemate that's new. Uh, we didn't have that when we started 10 years ago. And frankly we spent a lot of time and sort of policy bandwidth talking to ourselves about should we prioritize the military effort? Uh, or is there an opening is a reasonable opening for diplomacy.

Douglas Lute: [12:52](#) I think we're past that. And I think one reason that Zelle is making some progress is the fact that we're now speaking much more with one voice. And you're saying we weren't past that and we weren't as nine to, you know, we weren't. We still, we imagined 2009 when President Obama has sent an additional 40,000 US troops, which topped us off at a hundred thousand US troops. Um, we still imagined that at least some of us imagined that there was a military solution and that and that of course impeded diplomacy, right? So because so why would we negotiate? Why would we compromise if we think we can win? So you, you brought it up and former member of military, former person inside the White House and the Security Council staff trying to figure this out. What you just said, I think actually might surprise some people in this room.

Douglas Lute: [13:36](#) Do you believe that the military leadership is wrong or doesn't quite understand, uh, the dynamics of Afghanistan when it says that it has to stay and that a precipitous withdrawal, uh, would be a bad mistake? Well, again, you know, precipitous in, you know, premature don't tonight to my eyes, uh, match 18 years. But I do think that this, this, they have to understand right, that we've tried one approach in fact with several variants for 18 years. Uh, my counter argument to mark Milley who has spent considerable time in the combat zone as a soldier, right? My argument back to him was at what point is for, you know, to, to commit as much as it takes for as long as it takes. At what point is that not a productive approach? And, and I think the reality today is we have another approach. We have an approach.

Douglas Lute: [14:36](#) If we prioritize the diplomacy of this, we have a possibility and we'll talk, I'm sure here in the panel it's not going to be easy. This is a, here we are surrounded by mountains. This is a pretty steep mountain is our callers are just trying to climb. Right? But it's an approach that is worth trying because what we've been doing for 18 years has not been successful, but it's to put a point on it. Do you believe that the argument that Afghanistan would become a safe haven for terrorist, again, if the u s leave is, is wrong? And do you believe the u s can have the strike capacity inside Afghanistan even if it left? So the counter terrorism argument or the safe haven argument, this is if we leave al Qaeda, we'll return and this'll be like 2001. I'm actually skeptical of that argument. Uh, for a number of reasons.

Douglas Lute: [15:24](#) First of all, there's any number of other places around the world that offer perhaps a more attractive, safe haven opportunity for transnational terrorists than Afghanistan. Um, second of all, al-Qaida today is not al-Qaida of 2001 it's decimated. Um, it's not eliminated, but it's much diminished. And frankly, Afghanistan

in 2019 is not Afghanistan, uh, 2001. So there's a lot of reasons that I think the safe haven argument isn't a, isn't fully justified doing look as Americans, we ought to look in the mirror here. You know, we, the shorthand, the folklore here, the shorthand story is that bin Laden was in fact in Afghanistan on September 11, 2001, but the plot for four of the attack on America was hatched by college aid Mohamed in Karachi, right? Uh, Mohammad [inaudible] created this cell of attackers in Hamburg, Germany and the guys who hijacked the airplanes got flight training and Florida and Arizona. We did an occupy any of those places. Okay. So the notion that we somehow have to occupy Afghanistan or sustain it indefinitely with as much as it takes for as long as it takes, I don't think that passes muster on the safe haven argument and ambassador wrath. My does that concern you if, if someone like ambassador alluded, you clearly cares so much about Afghanistan, argues that maybe United States does not have to be there in the longterm.

Roya Rahmani: [16:52](#)

Well, um, all conflicts must end with a political solution. We know that. Uh, however, how we are going to reach that political solution matters the most, whether it will be sustainable or not. The reality is that, Eh, it is the environment of fear and oppression. We are extremism and terrorism, triumph. That was the environment that was provided for and eh, as ambassador lute, Eh, refer to that basically made a safe haven for those activities to be conducted or, um, organized or housed in Afghanistan. So,

Douglas Lute: [17:37](#)

but could that safe haven be created again if the u s were to withdraw either to zero or close?

Roya Rahmani: [17:44](#)

Well, again, it totally depends on the approach of how we are going to do that. Um, what I mean by that is let's not forget that the withdrawal of the foreign forces really happened in 2014 where the number of foreign troops went to, uh, from, uh, over 150,000 to 14,000. Finally that, that, uh, something around 16,000 that that is currently today, right now the fight against terrorism is conducted by our forces, Eh, the United States on our ne the need to allies or providing the UN assisting and training mission. Where they support us the most is with the air lift and intelligence unmute to stay in the forefront of a fight against terrorism. Let's not forget that it's not only the Taliban that we are fighting, there is over 20 different transnational terrorist organizations that our troops are fighting on everyday basis. Uh, as early as January this year, the government of Afghanistan in fact put up a plan and called Eh, for a reassessment of the engagement, the military engagement of the foreign forces. So if we need to make adjustments, uh, of

the number of troops or you want to reduce them, it is possible and doable and we can work with you again as we have done over the past 18 years, uh, to be your ally in the fight against terrorism, to bring those numbers down it. But of course, if, if this, this whole thing would turn to a, um, set up way or Taliban would come on takeover. I am not so sure. I'm not very hopeful.

Douglas Lute: [19:38](#)

Let's talk about the specifics of the peace negotiations. As I mentioned at the top four aspects. So counter terrorism, this is basically getting the Taliban through, announce all Qaeda and some version of the Taliban committing to go after not only al-Qaida uh, but uh, isis and other transnational terrorism groups, troop withdraw. That's, that's pretty obvious. Inter Afghan dialogue, which I want to ask about. And then permanent and comprehensive ceasefire. So, uh, Doug Douglas, let's, let's start with the last one. Permanent and comprehensive ceasefire. Does the u s right now really have leverage over the Taliban to get the Taliban to stop any of its violence and to convince the Taliban to commit to a ceasefire that the Taliban itself says, uh, would actually damage their abilities, uh, and their support across the country. Do we have that leverage? Um, I don't see it frankly. Um, I think that there are things that Taliban want out of this conversation.

Douglas Lute: [20:36](#)

Um, most important there. I mean their war aim is one of the other provisions you mentioned that the withdrawal of foreign forces, right? Uh, and their, they're against foreign occupation is the cohesive, it's the glue that keeps the Taliban glued together, right? So for them to sacrifice on that front and permit some residual foreign presence, right, would actually be a bit of an existential threat to the movement itself. So given that, I don't think there's much room for us to argue for a residual force. Now that doesn't mean that we have to abandon Afghanistan. I mean there, there are ways today that we didn't have in 2001, there are ways today to sustain a CT capacity in Afghanistan that even if al-Qaida or this Islamic state were to spring up, we can respond in meaningful timeframes. Um, so, um, I don't [inaudible] doesn't have a lot of leverage.

Douglas Lute: [21:39](#)

I mean he does it. It's a tough, tough. Um, it's a tough top role. The one thing I think that is different though today is that all the parties to the conflict seem to be reaching common ground on the understanding that there is no military solution. Uh, I mean we mentioned earlier that's new to us here in the u s um, but increasingly I think the Afghan government, uh, and the Taliban and frankly, regional players, uh, have come to the conclusion now after 18 long years that this is not going to be one on the ground militarily. So there is some common ground. Uh, the

Taliban also have suggested in some of their public statements and so forth that they at least somewhat understand that Afghanistan today is not the Afghanistan that they ruled, uh, 18 years ago. Uh, and the fact that we have the ambassador here, uh, is symbolic of the increased role of civil society in Afghanistan. Uh, the increased role of women, the increased role of, uh, ethnic minorities and so forth. Uh, but mass communications, uh, emerging democratic institutions still nascent as, as the ambassador said, this is a different Afghanistan. And, and my sense is the, the Taliban understand that at least to some extent, ambassador, this is a different Afghanistan. Do we have a different Taliban?

Roya Rahmani: [23:07](#) That's a, that's a, that's a very important question. I haven't met with them, but so I have to base my question on the following a, on what I hear they say B on what I see they do so and eh, Eh, battlefield, it doesn't seem that they have changed last night. 9:00 PM Eh, Aspen time. There was a big explosion at the Kabul University. 10 killed, 30 wounded Taliban said they didn't do it. So if the Taliban didn't do it, then there is a lot more to negotiate with a lot more groups. I mean,

Speaker 1: [23:52](#) Huh.

Roya Rahmani: [23:53](#) But of course, back in Afghanistan it's beliefs and also based on [inaudible] and then formation, our security forces have, it was a tolerant, yesterday there was a big attack on the headquarters of police in Kandahar where they killed 1190 injured. Most of all of these people. And both of these attacks or civilians.

Speaker 1: [24:17](#) Okay.

Roya Rahmani: [24:19](#) The killing of women for the accusation of adultery and the closure of 42 centers. And we're that province, um, of, of health care facilities in Murdoch province that was run by the Swedish committee and many more. I was going through the list of what has happened last July. There were dozens of these attacks, so that doesn't convince me very much, at least that the battlefield that they have changed. So otherwise politically have they changed? Okay. The air was this, uh, and travel gun dialogue and the, in this dialogue women also participate. Um, I don't know. Um, um, it was of course a positive step. It was, it was, uh, a step forward, um, given that it was in Doha, I don't know if the, if it was in Afghanistan, it's with a fin the same. Um, so, uh, and the people who went to Doha, um, they give me, their feedback was not a very positive, let me, let me summarize it in the following way. If they have changed, this is what I heard

from people who have met them. They might have changed for the Afghanistan of 96, not enough for Afghanistan of 2019.

Roya Rahmani: [25:48](#) Today I don't, um, I mentioned 65% of our population or under the age of 25, our youth are aspiring to completely different lifestyle. They want democracy, they want sports, they want music. They are in all sorts of professions. Again, thanks to you, our eyes that helps us on provided this opportunities for us. But a young, uh, population is also a restless population. So there is also, um, difficulties attached to it.

Nick Schifrin: [26:28](#) So the obvious question to me therefore is if the Taliban have not changed in terms of what they do in Afghanistan and who they target and how they target them. And if the Taliban have not changed politically when they speak to women in Doha, can you make

Douglas Lute: [26:43](#) a piece with a Taliban that hasn't changed?

Roya Rahmani: [26:47](#) Well, um, again, as we discussed here, we, the Afghan nation wants peace more than anyone else. Eh, a peace negotiation, eh, or any negotiation as a matter of fact is a matter of give and take. This is why it's important in the four elements that you discussed, that ambassador Hellos are this pursuing in his talks. That there shouldn't be any precedents between these four elements, uh, except for the ceasefire because ceasefire is of course something that we want, we want the 40 years ago. But, uh, if, if you were to negotiate a withdraw wall and assurances of counterterrorism before they have a full dialogue with the Afghan government on the details of how they are going to be part of a power sharing system, how they are going to conduct what they need to do, how they are going to reintegrate as part of the society. I don't know. They will enter the, the, that negotiation with a bargain thing or a, a spirit of negotiation, um, and make it successful.

Douglas Lute: [27:59](#) So Nick, if I could just come back, I don't think the question here is have the Taliban changed? Right. The question is, has Afghanistan changed the Afghanistan of 1996 to 2001, when the Taliban rule was in Afghanistan coming out of a decade of Soviet occupation followed by the meltdown of the government when the Soviets left, followed by civil war, right? Those circumstances or the circumstances that led to the Taliban ruling for five years. Um, and that's not the Afghanistan we have today. Now the, you know, there may be, there may well be tell upon leaders who still aspire to the good old days, uh, when they were in power. My argument is that that's not, that's not the, those conditions are not in place today in Afghanistan,

largely because of all the advances over the last 18 years. So in a way, we have bought some insurance against a return to the Taliban because of the advances that the ambassador has cited.

- Douglas Lute: [29:00](#) Now the other thing I want to just highlight here is this is not, this is, none of this suggests this is going to be easy. A, in fact, it may not be possible. But I think the argument that I, you know, I'd like to communicate to the asthma community today is that, is that this is the best chance we've had in 10 years. It may still be impossible, but the combination of changed circumstances, uh, the fact that we've got an ace diplomat and Zalmay call is odd and Afghan Americans speaks the language, knows all the players. So he goes to speak to the Taliban. He's speaking in posh Pashtu. Um, so this is an opportunity that we have and we should prioritize it because
- Nick Schiffrin: [29:42](#) just doing more of the same indefinitely isn't very promising. Vassar, do you agree with them? Ambassador lutes first point that the Afghan, uh, society, the government, the military have really come far enough so that there's no existential threat posed by the Taliban to those, uh, bits of progress that you've said.
- Roya Rahmani: [30:03](#) Well, as long as we have continuity, we have a democracy is our democracy, eh, preserve and sustain. We have a system of republic. Of course we will continue on. Even if need be, we will fight for it. This is what we have done all the years along. So, of course, Eh, and we are open for the Taliban to be reintegrated. Our, uh, people have, uh, demonstrated their greatness and have, uh, basically expressed that, that they are, uh, willing to reintegrate the Taliban as long as they will become part of the system. But if they want to go back and change, uh, Eh, our system to s to Emirates, that's not, that's not gonna hold. [inaudible].
- Nick Schiffrin: [30:49](#) Um, I only have time for one more question, then we'll open it up. Um, ambassador lute, uh, it seems that for, uh, Zalman [inaudible] to succeed, he needs to know his internal red lines, how far he can go and, and how far he might not be able to go. Is it, are his bosses, is this administration capable of giving him those red lines and providing him some flexibility that he's going to need on drawdown.
- Douglas Lute: [31:16](#) So I think, um, one of the old rules of diplomacy is a little ambiguity is a good thing, right? Uh, you don't want, you don't want your red lines define too precisely, uh, and you need them internally, don't you? Well you need them internally. But you know, we just heard, uh, I think a pretty convincing a session

with Susan Rice that describe the sort of the internal decision making process today. And it's not very, it seems to be disciplined, predictable, um, or [inaudible] in my judgment effective. So I don't think Xiao has precise marching orders. Um, he's a very talented diplomat. He will in my estimate, take advantage of the fact that he's got some room. Um, but look, the realities that you set out early in your comments, the fact that, you know, the peace process is overlaid in time on top of the, an Afghan political transition, hugely complicates [inaudible] position. The fact that what 16 months from now will be in, um, uh, the height to 12 months from now, it will be in the height of our political campaign. So this is vastly complicated by those two political transitions that are in front of us. So, uh, I, my guess is if Xcel had made it this week, he would, he would not describe any red lines. He's probably quite happy with a little ambiguity. Uh, okay. Let's start with Kim. Desert who I saw first there, there and there.

Audience Member: [32:49](#)

Hi Kim. Dose your daily beast. Say that the withdrawal and CTE agreement are negotiated first and there's a slight but not complete drawdown of western forces. And during the Afghan dialog, Taliban violence continues including some of the revenge killings that we've already seen directed at Afghan forces and Afghan leadership. What does the u s government do then? What does the Afghan government

Douglas Lute: [33:13](#)

do then? I'll take that first.

Roya Rahmani: [33:17](#)

I'm sure this is why I mentioned before that and I have been mentioning this to the administration many times too, that it's very important that there is no precedence between these four elements except for the ceasefire. Again. Uh, and the reason is the one that I just explained that you need the Taliban to come to the table with the spirit of negotiation if you already give them a statement of victory that they can announce. Yeah. And as ambassador lute before said that they have been very consistent asking, we just want draw down. We want, Eh, the foreign forces, uh, not draw down the withdrawal, the full withdrawal of the foreign forces. If, if they have that it's not only for them and in my humble view really it sends a statement to all the other, uh, terrorist networks that persistence pays off, uh, that uh, that there is that, that there is, if they continue, uh, the, they might, they might find victory. While I personally believe

Douglas Lute: [34:31](#)

that, uh,

- Roya Rahmani: [34:35](#) president Trump wants a deal but a good deal and I have been assured of that many, many times by the administration. So what's a good deal? A good deal is the one that Afghanistan will no longer be your threat, but your ally, we will not be economically dependent on you, but be your partner. It will not be a lost cause. But Tobacco victory on the shoulder of every man and women who served in Afghanistan. And that's all possible. I know you don't have much time, but I'm happy to do the full length, discuss how that could be possible. And what's about deal about, it would be the one that I p u u we will have a piece of Thurman but it's not durable. So what would it result to? We have seen it. I've got to start in the past 40 years have had many deals, many agreements from Geneva to Maca, you name it. The problem was it did not hold eh about deal is the one that we preserve the gains of the past 18 years, that we, our democracy cannot be pre preserved and protected and, and the one that will not be eh, honoring to our sheriff fight against terrorism.
- Douglas Lute: [35:53](#) So fine. In fact you just come back, I think more likely Kim is not a, uh, an arrangement of final arrangement where parts one and two are agreed and locked. And then we turn to parts three and four. So the intro Afghan dialogue, uh, and the ceasefire but more likely is a, is sort of a step by step approach, which by way of execution of the withdrawal and by way of execution of the counterterrorism guarantees a bit of trust and confidence is built up over time. And if that trust is violated. So if the Taliban violate the, um, the, uh, counter terrorism provision for example, then I think you would, we'd be back to, we take a step back. We wouldn't just proceed, you know, dutifully down a path. Yep. Over here.
- Roya Rahmani: [36:45](#) Um, Leah Khan from the State Department, ambassador off money. I was wondering if you could speak to the future of women's rights in Afghanistan following the peace talks.
- Speaker 1: [36:54](#) [inaudible]
- Roya Rahmani: [36:55](#) it's a very good question. And, uh, I was many times asks, how bout what I made out of then trap gun dialogue where women were included? And I said it was an immense progress and very important, but not enough, Eh, women's inclusion and the peace process is a means not the end. Uh, women's rights will be only protected and preserved if we protect and preserve our constitution, our democracy, because it's the institutions that protect rights of women, not rederick. Uh, I'm sitting today here in front of you on all of this has been made possible with our shared and joint efforts. Eh, I, this is a very small example of the

changes of the immense changes that has taken place in Afghanistan. Uh, we can give many, many examples of how far we have come. It doesn't, uh, probably you cannot see it from afar.

- Roya Rahmani: [38:01](#) Uh, and you see usually the bad news there that incidents is the bombings, the violations. But there is a lot of good news for five years of distraction. You need 30 years of reconstruction in Afghanistan. We are having 18 years of reconstruction and it's paying off. We have Trevor's a very steep curve and we have come a long way. So we are hoping that by securing our system, uh, that we all, uh, have commitment and resolve to, uh, we will be able to preserve Eh, eh, eh, right. The civil rights and liberties that we are committed to including women's rights. Yes.
- Douglas Lute: [38:44](#) All right. So, uh, we only have time for one question here, sir. And then if you could just wait on the answers and then Chris [inaudible].
- Speaker 1: [38:50](#) Yep.
- Audience Member: [39:01](#) Thank you. Thank you for a great dialog. Uh, your neighbor, Pakistan hasn't come yet. And Pakistan most would say have pl Pakistanis have played less than a helpful role over these last almost 20 years. Will Pakistan remain part of the problem? And what should Pakistan do? It could become part of the solution. Okay. And let's get Chris's question and then we'll,
- Speaker 7: [39:29](#) well, he actually stole my car.
- Douglas Lute: [39:30](#) Oh, okay.
- Audience Member: [39:32](#) But I w I would just add to that we have a new prime minister in Pakistan Imran Khan who's visiting the White House, uh, on Sunday and Monday, uh, in the morning. If you could specifically address whether you've seen any changes in policies since, uh, uh, since uh, Imran Khan has become prime minister. Any aid he did, they did arrest huffys I e do a very prominent, uh, militant leader the other day. Uh, we'll see if he stays arrested, but that was a good sign. Um, but, but anyway, I'd be interested in that comment.
- Douglas Lute: [40:00](#) Alright, so quickly, ambassador lute, why don't you take the, is Pakistan one of the, if not still the main problem. So I don't think the war in Afghanistan is fundamentally caused by Pakistan. However, Pakistan undeniably has a role. It is among the regional neighbors, right? It is the most important regional

player and that's because Afghanistan is Pakistan share the posture and population. They're actually more posh tunes in Pakistan than there are in Afghanistan. And the Taliban leadership since they were evicted from, uh, Afghanistan by our forces in 2001 went to Pakistan to live among their fellow Pashtuns. The leadership today is in the Pakistani city of Cueta. I mean, it's called the Cueta Shura for a reason. Right. And Cueta is a city in Pakistan. It's counterpart in the East is the push our shore, the showers, a city in Pakistan. So there's no question here that Pakistan plays a big role and I think is probably the most significant potential spoiler in on the regional set. So on top of everything we've talked about here, laying out the complexity of Zales job, there's a regional dimension to this, which your question highlights, which we really haven't touched on, but this is a multilayered, a chess board, uh, that Zell Kalizar is trying to try and play quickly. Ambassador [inaudible], have you seen any difference in Pakistan playing that spoiler role since Enron con, a very different of populists and yet still backed by the military and the ISI? Have you seen any difference in Pakistani behavior?

Roya Rahmani:

[41:39](#)

Um, I, I, it's a very important question. First of all, let, let me just, uh, respond to what ambassador eluted. Um, what I knew, Eh, in Pakistan, uh, the Taliban leadership, the not flea after the, after 2001 to Pakistan, they were, they were formed there. Um, number one. Number two is that in the peace negotiations, the elements that you pointed out, these, the, the very important element that is missing is Taliban's relationship with the regional actors, specifically with Pakistan. That's not something that is, that's, uh, included in this, these four elements. And in addition to that, their relationship with the drug cartels and their narco industry, which is fueling the terrorism and the region and, and the, the fingers of the, of the narco traffickers really stretched to the, to, to the bedrooms, whether in Europe or in the United States. So these are other elements for, uh, for our peace in Afghanistan to find its way that need to be considered and discussed whether they have changed, eh, of course there is, uh, some positive movement, but actions are still remaining to be seen. Let me just also add this, that the, the, the, uh, the attack in Kandahar, that the, that took place, there is evidence that it was planned and managed in Pakistan, in Showman, that happened in the last 24 hours. What's that positive movement? Just very quickly what the, there has been promises for the, for the, uh, cooperation. We've seen those before though, right? I have.

Douglas Lute:

[43:25](#)

So if you searched hard for an element of optimism here, right? I mean the only one I can think of off the top of my head with

regard to Pakistan is, is the release of a Moodle burrata who was Omar's deputy and one of the founding figures of the Taliban movement itself from Pakistani custody and he's now leading the Taliban political commission in Doha. And I don't think he's a great diplomat. I'm not offering that. But what that did was remove the question mark about the credibility of the Doha political commission and its connection to the senior leadership. And that would not have happened without Pakistan seeing it in Pakistan's interest. So there's something there with regard to the broader play, which causes me to think this may be slightly different in terms of internal Pakistani PoE. Of course, there's a debate about why Pakistan did that. Yeah. There has been, as your Buddha said, Pakistan, there were no straight lines only circles within circles. Right. So I bet we in there. Anyway, thank you so much for all your partners.

Speaker 1:

[44:25](#)

Any question in a bathroom? Bathroom, honey. Thank you guys. Joe [inaudible] we are taking a break.