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MILITARY INTERVENTIONS IN THE BROADER MIDDLE EAST:

EFFECTS ON NATION BUILDING AND EDUCATION

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ANDERSON COURT REPORTING

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GENERAL SIR DAVID RICHARDS
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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. SHAIKH: Good evening. My name is Salman Shaikh. I'm the Director of the Brookings Doha Center. It's wonderful to have you all here and also, of course, our esteemed guest. It's wonderful to have you all here in particular because you've managed to break through the traffic of Doha. So it's a double testimony to your desire not to hear me, but the gentleman on my left, General Sir David Richards. It's wonderful to have you here to discuss and to have a conversation on the title "Military Interventions in the Broader Middle East: Effects on National Building and Education."

Of course, many of you would already know the very distinguished career of General Sir David Richards, but let me give you a few of the quick highlights. Of course, he joined -- I believe was commissioned -- in 1971 in the British Army. During the next nine years he saw service in the Far East, the Arctic, Germany, and the U.K., including four tours in Northern Ireland. In 1994 he became a

colonel, taking responsibility for overseeing the shape and size of the British Army. In 2006, by now a lieutenant general, he was appointed to command NATO's successful expansion throughout Afghanistan. This was the first time a British general had commanded American troops at this level since 1945. His tour of duty earned him an operational KCB, a knighthood, the first since World War II. And then on 29 October 2010 he was appointed as the Chief of Defense Staff of the British Army, the professional head of the Army, and the Strategic Commander as well as the Prime Minister's principal military advisor.

He, of course, has a great grasp of grand strategy; that is something that he is renowned for in and out of uniform and on either side of the Atlantic. And he's ensured the successful implementation of the 2010 Strategic Defense and Security Review. He guaranteed the defense of the Falklands, played a leading role in the Libyan operation as well as other operations, and he is a strong believer in maintaining Britain's nuclear deterrent.

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I wanted to welcome you again, and how we're going to do this today -- for those of you who are coming here for the first time, welcome. We usually try to engage in a conversation in these discussions. I'll ask today Sir Richards to first make some opening remarks and then I'll ask him some questions and then I'll leave you to do the hard work towards the latter stages. Please, General Sir David Richards.

SIR RICHARDS: Well, thank you very much, Salman, and it's great to be back in Doha. The last time I was here I was in uniform. Now I know the mighty have fallen. My wife, who's here for the wonderful WISE Conference, was greeted by VIP cars and all sorts of things. I was on the sort of Shanks's pony, anyone give me a lift to the hotel. So it's been a very humbling experience, and I'm delighted that I experienced it first here in Doha.

But thank you very much, Salman, for inviting me to this event. I didn't know I'd done all that, so it was quite interesting to hear in itself. Thank you all very much for coming here this evening.

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I know with all the fantastic building work going on in this country, one of the downsides is the traffic and roadwork and all that sort of thing, so thank you very much.

I think and I hope I might learn more from the discussion than you'll learn from me, but we shall see. And I'm very happy, but it should be as spirited as you wish. I'm the first to agree that I and others with whom I've worked have made mistakes. The key is does one learn from one's mistakes and I hope you'll help me and in due course others do so.

I thought I'd talk, as Salman said, 5 minutes, 10 minutes maximum, just to provoke debate. I'll give you a few themes that came to me as I was preparing for this. I should say, by the way, that I'm sort of a bit limp-wristed as a soldier. I'm a bit liberal and that might help me, but some of you will think I probably wear my sandals too often, if that's not the wrong term to use in an Arab country.

Firstly, no country should intervene in another unless that country has really thought it

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through to an acceptable end-state. And most importantly that they're confident, objectively and dispassionately so that they can achieve that aim, and this is a very stiff test to pass. It doesn't mean that everything has to be in place at the outset of an intervention operation, but the intervening state must have a clear strategy, an implementing plan in other words, to deliver the successful outcome they seek in a reasonable timeframe. That plan, I emphasize, has to be practicable, practical, and achievable. Too many such so-called plans are based on sand, to be frank, on wishful thinking. Today the plan has to be geostrategic in nature and not just military strategic. The information operation, that which explains what you're trying to do, which in this electronic era has to be much more than a media operation, will need to be central to the strategy and is going to determine in large part the success of the intervention.

Now, armed forces can usually only buy time, opportunity, and a bit of space for politics to bear

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fruit. As Clausewitz -- and I apologize for quoting him -- rightly observed, "War is an extension of politics by other means." In modern wars amongst the people, a good friend of mine, General Sir Rupert Smith, christened them in his book, "The Utility of War," and I'm talking about counterinsurgency or counterterrorist operations. One must add socioeconomic initiatives to the political imperative in order to take the oxygen out of one's opponent's cause.

This longer term strategic precondition to the initiation of war was not present, has not been present, in a number of recent conflicts. For example, in Libya in 2011, it started with the best of intentions, but had not been thought through to the end and today Libya is in a very troubled state. Nor is it present in Syria as we sit here, and most infamously it was absent from the Iraq War in 2003. It was present in Afghanistan actually in 2001-2, but good core plans were not applied with the vigor and on the scale required. You might remember Lakhdar

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Brahimi talked about a light touch. Well, with the benefit of our experience over the last 12 years, probably -- and he's a good friend and I'm watching him struggle manfully with Syria at the moment -- probably it should have been a very heavy intervention, not militarily, not required, but in terms of civil plans and money rather than taking their foot off the pedal at that time. And then, of course, as we all know, America, critical to the outcome, was already beginning to focus on Iraq at that time. And if you really press me in questions or discussion, I can tell you a story about Donald Rumsfeld and how I got a certain conversation wrong when I queried whether this was right. But I won't talk about it now.

These political, socioeconomic, solutions must be ready from the moment the war in question is launched, ready to apply immediately, indeed even during the fighting phase. Because if you're looking at a linear operation, as you progress physically on the ground, at the same time as you're fighting there,

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there will be activity here that you should be doing to set the conditions, to reassure the population that you are there for them and not for yourself.

They -- these solutions -- must chime with the traditions and culture of the country in question and not be imposed by those who know best as I grew to love them when I was in Kabul from thousands of miles away. Representative government -- and I'm not a politician thank goodness -- but representative government might well be better than Western versions of democracy in some of these parts of the world. And given many of us are here for the WISE Conference, education, which is so central to people's desires for a peaceful and prosperous future in all these countries that I mentioned, must be a key consideration from the start of the design of the strategy.

And on the impact of conflict on education, specifically an issue I have to say always larded by the political leaders of those states, but are often very keen to embark on war, I'm constantly in awe of

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the levels of hypocrisy that they can achieve. They must know that the humanitarian impact of their actions or inactions on often fragile sectors like the education system in these developing countries is going to be severe. Yet still sometimes to be fair without realizing it, they will proceed with ill-resourced and often badly conceived interventions in order to get on with it as opposed to waiting till things are properly ready. Sometimes that's not possible. Interventions that may as a result have short-term tactical success, but be poorly rooted in strategic logic, are short of the commitment and treasure that's going to be required for success in an acceptable timeframe.

Most intervention operations, at least for some time, aggravate the plight of the people. And because of this, I have to say they maybe even legally questionable even under the often flimsy right to protect doctrine, which is not actually a law as such. And it was Sun Tzu who famously said that strategy -- it's a good one so hang on to it if you haven't got

it, you probably have -- but "Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to success or victory. Tactics without strategy is merely the noise before defeat." And we see a lot of tactics and tactical activity and tactical plans all over the globe today; not much good strategy is underpinning it. And I think Sun Tzu would probably be turning in his grave if he was able to. And this saying, by the way, is as true today as it was 2,000 years ago when that very famous soldier/philosopher first crafted those words. And it's a state of affairs aggravated by a persistent failure to synthesize and synchronize activity between the various sectors of activity, the military call it lines of operation. A businessman will often refer to them as silos of activity, and silos are the curse of most governments in peace, let alone in war, and they're the curse of most businesses as well. And unless you've got a strategy that synthesizes them, you'll often find that one perfectly good bit of activity here is undermined by another that isn't as well thought through or is dependent on this one and

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it's behind the power curve. And this is a real skill, which I have to say most civilians, diplomats, politicians, have never been taught and is very frustrating for the military who actually, because they're all a bit sort of sinful, we have to have process to deliver the outcome of a strategy. I reckon I'd make a fortune if I could teach this quite simple process to the people who actually commit us to war.

In sum, like many senior soldiers, it might surprise you -- and I hinted at this -- in my judgment in having seen quite a lot of war, I would say that war is to be avoided and I'm sure most of you agree with me unless it is very, very carefully thought through, properly resourced, and dynamically prosecuted. Whether one fights it directly or, as is increasingly the case through proxies whose commitment and motivation are often questionable from the outset, this will only happen, this full-blooded commitment to get on and do it properly and quickly, if a country believes its vital national interests are at stake.

Indeed, the latter means it almost certainly cannot be left to proxies because how can you deliver on something that's vital to you through trusting people who are doing it maybe for different reasons. And the law of unintended consequences will as a result often apply or perhaps in the spirit of Sun Tzu, it is the law of what happens when tactics rule at the expense of strategy. And if these conditions don't apply, and in my judgment few recent wars meet such criteria for any of the belligerents, then better not go to war in the first place.

Thank you.

MR. SHAIKH: Thank you. Thank you very much. I can tell you it's rare that people get a round of applause right at the start.

SIR RICHARDS: Well, I'll wait till the end.

MR. SHAIKH: It's also safe to say that you described -- we can certainly see you're a liberal general, but I think you're also the thinking man or woman's general as well based on the remarks that you just made.

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Let's start with Afghanistan. A lot has been said about the war in Afghanistan. A simple question to you: Has some of its aims been achieved and what are those?

SIR RICHARDS: Certainly some of its aims have been achieved. I think I last was there about five months ago, and there is a growing consensus -- I was at a conference in Moscow before I came here, which was attended by Pakistanis, largely Pakistanis, Afghans, Indians, and some Bangladeshis and some Western experts. And I think all of them, among all of them, there was a consensus. And I read something in a newspaper here actually yesterday there is a consensus that things are better than they were in 2001. I met a charming woman, an Afghan woman, who's the gender advisor to the High Peace Council. And one of the more traditional Afghans at the conference said she's the gender troublemaker. But I had to say, you know, ten years ago even you wouldn't have seen her. She wouldn't have been at these things. So that I thought was a sign of progress.

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Education -- my wife runs a charity building schools in Afghanistan and some of them in inhospitable parts of Helmand. The Taliban, the local Taliban, have agreed that it's okay to build the schools there. So there is some sort of process of reconciliation certainly at the local level. I'm not certain that we've yet hit the point where it's going to really happen at the strategic level, but there's an office here waiting to be opened and, hopefully, the next time that will work.

So I think many of the aims have been achieved, but I'll be the first to admit that the aims that we all had, the hopes we all had -- and I came to it quite late in 2005 -- but the hopes we all had for Afghanistan have not been fully realized. But what I would say to those that say it's been a failure is one, let history judge that; but two, if you're now in the 55 to 60 percent of the Afghan population who are living in cities and who are quite different from their forbearers, they do not want to risk reverting to the pre-2001 era. My own sense is we owe it to the

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people of Afghanistan, the vast majority of whom actually -- and there are polls that are credible and I don't know anything about how you do this, but they've been objectively benchmarked that make it very clear the vast majority of the people want to stick with the gains: The 7 million children in education, economic growth beginning to happen, and all the other things.

The elections next year are vital. If the elections come off successfully and President Karzai, who I know very well has said he's going to step down and I absolutely believe him, there's some very credible candidates now coming up -- Abdullah Abdullah, Dr. Ashraf Ghani, and others -- I think we should hope it will work and don't give up on them. That would be a tragedy I'm afraid. And the confidence of the Afghan people in all our countries' commitment to them and their country is absolutely vital.

So hang on in there is my view, and it's certainly better than it was and it could yet come

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right.

MR. SHAIKH: Very good. And, of course, congratulations to the Afghanis for getting to the cricket --

SIR RICHARDS: Yes, that was fantastic. I must just tell you, in 2006 like all good Brits I said right, let's play cricket against this fledgling Afghan side. I went into play as I'm a bit more ancient than most of them, I have to say I lost two balls against the fastest player I've ever faced and he was vicious.

MR. SHAIKH: You already touched on it, but what should one do with the Taliban?

SIR RICHARDS: I have been very clear as a bit of a minor student of history, and I remember being interviewed in 2009 by the BBC by a fellow from Edinburgh in Scotland where I upset a few sort of more hard-lined guys not just in Britain, but in other parts of the world, where I made it very clear that as far as I was concerned there has to be a political process. Now, it's difficult and many Afghans who

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have suffered a lot under them find this a problem. But we had to explain that you cannot win these wars as I said through Clausewitzian doctrine by fighting only. There has to be a political process and in all of Britain's experience that has been the case. If you think about it in Kenya, the Mau Mau; Kenyatta was in that group and came into the process -- all around the world they have to be brought into the political process. And the fact that they're here in this great country says a huge amount. There clearly is a quorum there that says yes, there has to be a political process. So we must energetically enter into that process. I have a huge regard for Professor Stanekzai who is running a lot of this. Sadly, you know Professor Rabbani was killed.

Now, there are hard-lined Taliban who do not want a political process, and they will continue to try to subvert it. But all the countries that are involved now -- America, Qatar, Britain, Germany, and most of all the Afghans -- and you're going to ask me a question about Pakistan no doubt --

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MR. SHAIKH: You might as well answer it then.

SIR RICHARDS: Well, Pakistan -- look, I try to see good in everyone. There is no doubt that the Pakistanis in the 1990s did for reasons that, if you look at it through Pakistani eyes, were entirely logical. They worried about India, and they still worry about India; however much Indians tell them not to, they do. It's a part of the world and the Indians worry about the Pakistanis, by the way, quite mischievously and based probably -- I know and love them both, but during that period, there's no doubt they courted the Taliban and helped the Taliban. And one reason is that they wanted at least a stable Afghanistan because if you think about it, in '93 to '95 it was chaos and there were 6 million Afghans in Pakistan as refugees and Pakistan couldn't go on like that. So one motive was just let's have some stability in Afghanistan. It also did and in the views of the military give them a little comfort blanket about what India might do, those that talk

about strategic debt and things like that. I don't think it was a major motive, but it was a factor.

Then increasingly after 9/11 -- and I'm absolutely committed; this is so, I know there are skeptics -- starting with the more enlightened politicians, but they weren't in a position of influence. But then under President General Musharraf -- who I saw a lot of when I was in Kabul and I would do sort of minor shuffle diplomacy between him and President Karzai -- there was no doubt they were beginning to see that their interests lay in a stable, secure Afghanistan that was not dominated by the Taliban. And then in the last three to four years their own version of the Taliban has grown, causing them huge problems. They have seen that what they want now and they must have is an Afghanistan that is at peace in which the Taliban, the Afghan Taliban, are reconciled to the political process and then they might be able to deal with their own Taliban, the TTP.

So I think while it's a hesitating, cautious process, I'm absolutely clear that that is what they

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want, but it's difficult to get there and we need to help Pakistan as we do Afghanistan on that journey.

MR. SHAIKH: Just one more question related to Afghanistan on education. You already touched on it. I think the figures are something like there are now 10 million schoolchildren enrolled in education, whereas at the start of the war it was 1 million and hardly any of them were women, in fact, next to none. And yet now we have 40 percent of them being females, being girls, who are going to school.

You mentioned WISE. You mentioned the role of Hina Shaikh Amosin regarding education in conflict in the Afghani context, but you could apply it more broadly. What is the role here of Gulf States and regional states working with Afghanistan in promoting that education?

SIR RICHARDS: Well, it's been huge. And it was being applied by Gulf States in a way much earlier than I'm afraid the West began to realize the importance of it because culturally here the people and your rulers understand the importance of

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education. It's relatively new even here, relatively. In places like Britain and America, it's just taken for granted, too much for granted, and so it wasn't central to the strategy. Indeed, I'm afraid arguably it's not yet central to every country's approach to Afghanistan. It's been a bit of a sort of afterthought and leave it to others. Now, some have been very good and belatedly I think everyone understands the importance of it because they were not thinking long term. They were thinking tactically, short-term success. If this campaign, which has cost so much treasure and so many lives, is to succeed, then you have to think long term and what better signal of that understanding than investing in education, which is about the long-term prosperity and future of the country.

I have one concern, and this is a bit of silos. Remember, I said it was the curse of a lot of the strategies. A huge investment in education that cannot then meet the aspirations of the children or the young men and women that are coming out of it in

terms of employment risks trouble. And so economic growth and investment in the economy and most of all jobs -- I used to say to everyone in Kabul it's jobs, jobs, jobs, which was a shorthand for saying it's about the economy, stupid, because you can then meet their aspirations.

If you can't meet their aspirations, there is a risk that they come out of school full of ideals of what they want to do and they're disappointed and then they can cause trouble and that would be entirely in that direction. They sort of -- just a few -- you only need a few. In Northern Ireland not more than 0.02 percent of the population was actively engaged in the IRA and that took Britain 30 years to resolve. So you only need a very, very small proportion. The same applies in all these troubled countries give or take.

So that would be my ending qualification. It's not just education. It's about development of the whole of the socioeconomic and then it's great.

MR. SHAIKH: Okay, well that takes me nicely onto the question I wanted to ask, which is sort of

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the core of the premise of how we build this discussion as well. Should military interventions be about nation building? Surely it's about just getting rid of the bad guys, and we haven't shown that we can do nation building that well in any case.

SIR RICHARDS: I wouldn't say that nation building should be written off as a concert because if you just go into a war, defeat whoever it is you're trying to defeat and leave, then chaos will ensue. Some of you will say, yeah, but look at the chaos that ensued by us staying around. But actually we've learned lessons, but we haven't applied those lessons properly since we sort of understood them.

Now, in Afghanistan, it was President Obama's surge that at last allowed the correct levels of investment in nonmilitary activity to be applied, and people began to see that they had to open up, for example, their minerals sector, which is huge. I mean Afghanistan is a very rich country, but it's sitting there idle. There were some people in certain countries who were trying to stop China from investing

in it for ideological reasons almost.

So I think to cut a long story short that if -- and I went back to the light touch sort of concert in Afghanistan -- if we had known then what we do now and applied it full bloodedly, the nation building concert, then I think it could have worked. It's not being applied for obvious reasons in Syria. It's not being applied in Libya. If the situation in Syria is resolved satisfactorily -- and I know that's a huge if -- but if it is, then we need to do nation building. It's going to be a huge requirement, and it's not helped by the fact that our economies are looking dodgy even though they're beginning to pull out of it.

So it's a perfectly legitimate question, but I think the chaos of war and the irresponsibility of launching a proper war with all that would entail in terms of pain to the civilian population and then just go, to me that is almost -- well, it is immoral. And I would just say it can work, by the way. You think what our forbearers did in Germany in 1945 -- after the war the huge destruction in Germany. Some very

enlightened people went in and rebuilt Germany and they were ready to do it. There was a government in a box ready. They'd got to a certain federal or state capitol straight in there got people in and they did, by the way, allow middle-ranking Nazis, as difficult as it was for many, to stay in power or in positions of influence because that meant they were capable administrators.

But that's not what we did in Iraq in 2003 as everyone famously knows. So you are going to have to sup with the devil a little bit, but if you really are putting the people of the country first, then I'm afraid sometimes ideals have to be subordinated to practicality, and I think we've learned a bit of that.

The other thing I would say in the context of Afghanistan, I remember the very famous British journalist, John Simpson, coming to see me in Kabul in 2006. And I said, because we were talking about it, I said one of my heroes is the American general, General Marshall, who was a great soldier/statesman and, of course, famously he came up with the Marshall Plan, a

hugely generous scheme to the war-torn countries of Europe after the Second World War. And I said to Simpson -- and in 2006 the economies were flourishing and it was possible -- I said what this region needs is a Marshall Plan scale of generosity and generosity of spirit. I was really annoyed. Two days later he was doing his stuff in front of the cameras and he said indeed, what this country needs is a -- and I thought hey, I gave you that idea. I've talked to him about it, too, since.

MR. SHAIKH: You said that Libya was not thought through. Was it a necessary intervention nevertheless?

SIR RICHARDS: This is a very political question and it depends what you put to the forefront of your thinking. I remember sitting with Prime Minister Cameron -- to show how much he was involved and how seriously he took it -- something like 55 meetings of the National Security Council we had in that six month period, all of which give or take he chaired personally and I was his military advisor. We

saw the pictures of what Colonel Gaddafi was attempting to do. We heard his rhetoric. It may have been largely rhetoric, but do you take that risk? So I think from my personal point of view that it was an entirely justified action.

What we didn't do and where Libyans did not help us at all is get ready for the day after. Now, to be fair, I know Britain and France and Qatar who is instrumental in the tactical success in Libya, what we didn't do is have our government in a box ready and the money ready and the schemes ready and eyes were taken off the ball, but the Libyans stiff-armed us, too. I was already and I remember talking to General Hammond who's the head of the Armed Forces here at the time and others who were involved. I said let's have a meeting of military leaders and we'll go straight to Libya and we'll talk to them about what they need to do to get their security side sorted out, and we had people ready to do the same thing for the economy. And the Libyans -- because I think they lacked confidence and were worried about it and there wasn't

a dynamic leader to go and persuade them this was what was necessary -- and they were all mutually suspicious, the groups. It didn't happen. And it hasn't really happened since. And I feel that has been the problem rather than the intervention itself, but that intervention actually, going back to my prepared remarks, was not thought through to the end and you could argue in that respect it wasn't wise, but on the other hand, it probably saved countless lives. And again, history will be the judge, but I'm sure others will have their view.

MR. SHAIKH: It's very interesting what you're saying also in terms of lessons learned. An awful lot of lessons have been learned regarding Afghanistan and yet when we talk about military intervention in Libya, for example, and now Syria, those may not be being applied at this point in time.

I can't resist but talk to you about Iraq, of course, and I want to hear the Rumsfeld story, of course, in terms of what seems like a poster child for a war that was not thought through, maybe thought

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through on illusionary principles. I'd like to elaborate a little bit more on what you said in your remarks in that respect.

SIR RICHARDS: Well, the Donald Rumsfeld story is actually about Afghanistan, so I can tell you that in a moment. But as far as Iraq, actually he's a very humorous man. It might surprise you, but he is, a great sense of humor. And it's a joke --

MR. SHAIKH: Anyone who talks about known unknowns, and then --

SIR RICHARDS: Yeah, and all that. He's a very quick man, very fit, too. Shall I tell you the joke, the story?

MR. SHAIKH: Please.

SIR RICHARDS: So very typically the Americans had let me, in principle they were going to let me command thousands, tens of thousands of American troops. But Mr. Rumsfeld came out to Kabul in about June of 2006 pointedly to give me the once over. Was I good enough to command all these American troops? And typically generous heartedly, the

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American commander of those American troops, General Eikenberry, some of you will know, he invited me to join the Rumsfeld sort of discussions. And I was asked by the Secretary, why were things deteriorating in the south? And I said well, without really engaging my brain too much, I said there's a vacuum. The Taliban have realized there's a vacuum. We've put insufficient resources -- and all the stuff I've just been saying -- insufficient resources, the economy's not growing, et cetera, et cetera, not enough troops to just keep the peace. And he said, what do you mean, General? And I said well -- and then I remembered that he'd been very unhappy with a chap called General Shinseki who had had the temerity going back to Iraq to say there weren't enough troops for what they were being asked to do in Iraq. And I thought to myself, ah, this is probably not very wise of me and I sort of dug my hole a bit deeper and I said, yeah, not enough troops. He said, General, I don't agree. Move on. But anyway, he then took me typically to see President Karzai with the delegation

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and towards the end of the meeting -- and I was sitting there not really -- wondering why I had been invited really. I wasn't part of the conversation, but I was listening. And out of the blue Mr. Rumsfeld said to the President, he said Mr. President, what do you think of General Richards? And I thought I'm here, anyone want my view?

And President Karzai was slightly discomfited and he looked at me and he said, oh, I think General Richards is a very nice man. And then he said, what do you think of General Richards? And I thought I'd better leave at this point, and then again, I was a three-star officer. I was a lieutenant general and Rumsfeld was a five-star; he's at the top. And he said -- and I've got a photograph at the moment he said it because I just couldn't help laughing and he's laughing at me -- there's only one thing I'd say about General Richards. I think he's great, but one thing I'd say is he's sometimes confused about who's a three-star and who's a five-star. And I thought that was a lot of humor.

But Iraq, yeah, a magnificent tactical operation that was rooted in a strategic misconception. And we know the story and the poor people of Iraq suffer to this day. But, again, only history will tell. I have a great Iraqi friend who's a very famous doctor in London. He practices there, a Harley Street guy, a top guy. And I was coming out with the sort of inference where we're getting at now yesterday -- no, two days ago when I had supper with him in Moscow. And he said yeah, I get that, but you know for us, Saddam Hussein was awful. The situation is bad, but we're now sort of free. We can go back and our families feel better.

So I think in our frustration about the situation, we just want to remember that he was a dictator and he was a totalitarian dictator with total power. And quite literally he and his family did some awful things. So I think we've got to continue to help, and we've got to think long term. And as I'm known to say often, things will improve.

MR. SHAIKH: Let me put Iraq in another

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context. You talked about geostrategic. In this part of the world many believe that Iraq and its aftermath was such a big mistake because it shifted the deck chairs. It allowed the Iranians -- Iraq is now much more Iran-leaning, and it's had a profound effect, therefore, on Gulf security as well.

Let me link that with the effect that Iraq seems to have had on the American civil and political and military psyche and combine that with an American drawdown in terms of its defense cuts and probably the likely capability of the U.S. in defense terms in terms of being able to protect its friends and allies in this part of the world as well as elsewhere. In that context, wasn't Iraq a very big geostrategic blunder for the United States?

SIR RICHARDS: I can see the headlines now.
General Richards --

MR. SHAIKH: We want a headline.

SIR RICHARDS: Yeah, I'm sure you do, yeah.
It's good for Brookings, bad for Richards. It's a very credible argument that in geostrategic terms it

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got rid of the secular bulwark against Iranian expansionism and everything that goes with Iran at the moment. And I think if I was forced to vote on the issue, I'd be in that camp.

Fast forward to today because I often say look, I know what went wrong in lots of places we've learned our lessons and hopefully we understand things much better. That's useless in one way unless you've learned the lessons and are applying them. We are where we are today. And so what political leaders, our statesmen, are there? How many statesmen are there because they tend to be political, and we need more statesmen arguably? It's a difference. A statesman puts his country to the fore. He'll think long term. He might be more strategic, all those sorts of things. It's very difficult to be a statesman in the West today. If you're lucky to live beyond the next headline and certainly the next election, you're doing well.

So when people look at China, it's not a democracy. The great value is they can think long

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term. They institutionalize their foreign policy knowing it's there for years and it's very difficult to do that. Although there are trends in the big Western nations that broadly pass from one type of government to another. But I think today is the issue and I've no doubt in Washington, knowing many of them well as highly intelligent people, they are thinking through the risks in a growing sense of insecurity in the Gulf because of the overtures to Iran. And we need to - and America I'm sure understands this -- they need to mitigate that risk and reassure our friends here that they aren't going to be sacrificed in any way on the altar of Iranian reproachable. I know that's very well understood in Britain, and we are much more involved in the Gulf. And sadly we were for a number of years and in the '80s and '90s we sort of dropped out almost. I know that that is absolutely seen to have been an error. The Prime Minister has got a new Gulf strategy. Let's say there is a strategy; I haven't seen it yet. But the intent is clear, and I think other countries to a degree must be

prepared to pick up any slack that America in its pivot to Southeast Asia and so on may create.

So it's not over yet. There's a lot of time still I think to make sure that our Gulf friends feel the sense of security, which is absolutely critical to us, too, but keep their toes to the fire on it because it can be neglected.

MR. SHAIKH: It is interesting that you point that Britain is to a certain degree taking up the slack in the Gulf. It's also interesting when you mentioned the pivot to Asia. I had an academic, a well-known academic, in the Gulf say it's actually not a pivot to Asia. It's a pivot back to America and one of retrenchment.

But I can't in this context, of course, not ask you about Syria. Was it a mistake of President Obama not to go forward with military strikes after what seems like it's become quite clear Assad and his regime have used chemical weapons against his own people, the last incident in Houla being probably the worst one -- in Guta, sorry, being the worst.

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SIR RICHARDS: Well, do you remember I said earlier if you're going to go to war, and some may argue against this line, but if America launched strikes on Syria, it is an act of war whether one thinks the regime is legitimate now or not. But legally they're still sitting at the U.N. and so on and so forth. That is an act of war. If you're going to do that, my line -- and this was my advice to Prime Minister Cameron in Britain at the time -- if you're going to do it, do it properly. Make sure you are going to win this war. And I think one of the problems was talk about shots across the bow and all that sort of thing. That might just aggravate the situation without resolving it.

So my quibble was not -- in a way I'm not the policy major. In Britain I was the advisor and I'm sure there are others giving the American leadership similar advice -- is that if that's what you want to achieve and that's your end, then these are the ways and means to achieve it. If you're not prepared to apply these ways and means, then readdress

your end. And if you want regime change ultimately or to force at the very minimum a sad -- to negotiate and then as part of that to step down, which seems to be the sort of broad rift of where we're going although the opposition groups who are not helpful, by the way, because they can't get here, makes it very difficult. Where's the day after? Where's the government that has to be ready to take over. But if you're not prepared to do it, then better not do it at all. And so that's my worry about the situation in Syria.

MR. SHAIKH: But let me ask you again. You mentioned responsibility to protect. Isn't military intervention actually -- should it not be about responsibility to protect --

SIR RICHARDS: Yeah.

MR. SHAIKH: Especially when you have had 120,000 people killed?

SIR RICHARDS: I agree with you. The responsibility to protect was the basis for the Libyan operations, and I played a pretty major role in it. And tactically it was a success, I mean beyond what we

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expected. And I would just like, again, to pay tribute to the Qatar Armed Forces and General Hamad in particular. He played a blinder as we say in making sure that tactical activity on the ground was innovative and would lead to success. And we had a little luck just towards the end, but you know fortune favors lucky generals or you create your own luck.

LADY RICHARDS: Can I say something?

SIR RICHARDS: That's my wife. You're not meant to be in this.

MR. SHAIKH: Please.

LADY RICHARDS: You were concerned that the approach was actually going to make the humanitarian situation worse.

SIR RICHARDS: Yes. You see I have a devil living with my wife. Well, it was, and that's the same in Syria. I'm not opposed at all to, indeed, I have been quoted in London newspapers as saying if that's what you want, then this is what you've got to do. The what you've got to do is beyond the appetite of all the countries it would appear that are

prosecuting this war. So if you aren't prepared to do it properly, then I am a moral soldier. You have to accept the plight of the people will deteriorate. And if the plight of the people deteriorates, and that is a risk we all run at the moment, then the right to protect or the responsibility to protect, which is not a law it's a doctrine -- and I've talked to our own legal officers in London about this -- begins to be questionable because under that doctrine, the plight of the people has to be materially improved in an acceptable timeframe. And there's another great cry of the military "clout, don't dribble." And there's a risk that what we're doing in Syria is dribbling. A bit more of this, a few more arms there, a bit of that, and a bit of this. It's going to actually aggravate the people's lot, and that is the point my wife's making and there was a risk that in Libya we did the same. In fact, in the end Libya was fine, although I would argue that the humanitarian solution wasn't applied quite as energetically as I'd like, but it's okay.

MR. SHAIKH: And that brings very nicely to a question on the humanitarian situation inside Syria, but you could apply the lessons from elsewhere, too. And that is, of course, we are now seeing a really catastrophic situation taking shape both first and foremost inside Syria. And I'm talking about 5 to 6 million people who are displaced, even cases of siege and starvation and malnutrition taking place and WHO is confirming even polio appearing in Syria and then, of course, across its borders. Is there a role here, and I'm talking also maybe the lessons learned or the experience of Bosnia and elsewhere of militaries being involved in terms of humanitarian access and delivery. And I say this also that we had a U.N. presidential statement three or four weeks ago, and as Valerie Amos, the U.N. Humanitarian Coordinator, has just said, nothing's really changed on the ground.

SIR RICHARDS: And I know Valerie well. She's a terrific person. The answer's very much yes. Eighteen months ago I got into a certain amount of trouble in London when I said in the Andrew Marsh

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Show, that thing on Sunday mornings, the sort of flagship BBC program, that I would not be surprised if the humanitarian situation didn't provoke a military role for us. I didn't at that time because I knew there wasn't internationally because Britain couldn't do it by herself an appetite for it in any other respect, but the humanitarian situation is hugely difficult and getting worse.

I did advocate a containment strategy as a very minimum because the spillover from the fighting in Syria into Jordan and Lebanon in particular, a little bit into Turkey, has been hugely damaging to both those countries. I went up to the big refugee camp up near the Jordanian-Syrian border. Honestly, if any of you have been, you'll know what I mean. It's sort of mindboggling. But that containment strategy has never really been properly put into effect.

So I suppose I'm not ahead of you. I'm with you entirely. There is a role for the military. We're very good on what you might call expeditionary

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logistics, not that many of these NGOs aren't very good. The relevant U.N. agencies are very good. But they usually, given the scale of the problem, can't quite meet the demand. And then what the military can do is insulate the area from further fighting.

And I think you've seen there was talk about some sort of area within Syria that you might protect, a humanitarian zone or corridor, that sort of thing. The trouble with that is that that is an act of war and if the people in their plight is really your motive -- and I sometimes think as I said in my remarks, I'm not certain it really is -- but if it really is, then you've got to think this through terribly carefully because an ill-thought through military operation will almost certainly aggravate the plight of the people. It won't improve it. Well-thought through interventions in Ukraine and Bosnia, which to begin with is awful by the way, but then we got it right and the Americans went in there and on a scale it allowed us to sort out.

Kosovo was another successful intervention

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because I think as we look at interventions, you don't want to think they're all failures because they're not. Bosnia was a success. Kosovo was a success. East Timor, which I was involved in, an Australian-led operation, was very successful. I led a little one in Sierra Leone that was successful. So properly thought through, properly resourced, applying the lessons, they can work, but don't be naïve about it when it isn't properly thought through or properly resourced. And that is my worry still about any intervention in Syria.

MR. SHAIKH: My final question before I throw the floor open on Syria as well is, of course, in the north and the east of the country, there is now another actor, al-Qaeda. And for all intents and purposes, they are establishing safe havens. They're establishing not just the ability to do operations, but also social control and trying to win hearts and minds. Many would say that they have been learning from other theaters. Is military intervention justified in going after these guys?

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SIR RICHARDS: Hmm, I mean I would like to see the real nature of these groupings. I know I've seen on the media what looks to be deplorable activity, but it's not all bad clearly because they are helping the people and they have learned the lessons. What worries me is not what they're doing today so much, but what that might become. If they really are AQ with all the imperatives they feel to upset us all, including countries in this region, over the long term, then I think at that point if it became clear then we are all running a big risk. The reason so many groups in Syria have sort of been brought into their ambit was because of our failure collectively to deal with the problem dynamically early on. And this sense of isolation, of hopelessness, has undoubtedly fanned the flames of militancy and if you want to join a group that does anything well, then that's what you've got to join.

So can we bring back a lot of those people who probably aren't natural followers of AQ? I think that's got to be part of the strategy. But I think

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you've got to be very careful of branding them all in the same way and try to be intelligent about how you split off really hardcore people from those that might be temporary bedfellows because they have no other solution. I'm sort of out of my real area of expertise, but that's the sort of thinking you've got to be careful about.

What I am very clear on is we are sowing long-term seeds here that we mustn't be naive about. And if we don't do something about it, either by engaging with them -- unlikely, but you never know -- or by ultimately, if necessary, dealing with them militarily, then we all need to be rather careful.

MR. SHAIKH: Thank you; proves again why you're the thinking man's general. I fear that we may see American drones in that area sooner than we would want.

Now, let me open it up. I'm sure I've been doing a terrible job and I'm sure you can all do much better. So I'll take a few questions. If you could just please give us your name and any affiliation that

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would be really helpful. We'll start with the lady with the glasses in the middle.

QUESTIONER: Thank you so much to Brookings and Sir Richards, thank you so much. My name is Lori Heninger. I'm the Director of the Interagency Network for Education and Emergencies. And after hearing you, I think there are probably a number of us who would like to chip in for an additional pair of sandals for you.

I want to just talk for a minute and then ask you a couple of questions about the securitization of education. When the U.S. and the U.K. linked their funding for education to security, we can sort of understand that. But when the Dutch start to do it, then it has moved into a different league. I think that we hear the words "peace building," "security," "conflict sensitivity," used interchangeably. They mean very different things and that worries me a little bit around the use of those words in relation to education.

We also hear a lot about hearts and minds,

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this idea of winning hearts and minds. And I think in what we've seen from research is that in Afghanistan a lot of times community schools in people's homes are much more effective than school buildings being built and children having to leave their homes and travel to those buildings. And my first question is when we're talking about hearts and minds, whose hearts and minds are we talking about? Are we talking about sort of selling military intervention to the people back home, or are we talking about state building?

And then my second question is do you think that the military should be involved in education, in humanitarian situations? And if so, could you talk about the pros and cons? Thank you.

MR. SHAIKH: Thank you. The lady with the glasses next to you. I have a bias for now.

QUESTIONER: Thank you for speaking with us. Given your focus on long-term strategy and intervention, I hope that we might discuss security sector reform, specifically how does an intervening actor balance the host nation's need for capable

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individuals with experience in security with a desire to obtain justice for the grievances that initially prompted intervention?

MR. SHAIKH: Thank you. The gentleman with the beard. I'm sorry for the characterizations.

QUESTIONER: That's fine, that's fine.

MR. SHAIKH: I'm sorry. The tall gentleman with the blue jacket.

QUESTIONER: Hello, Sir David. We met before in Afghanistan.

SIR RICHARDS: We have, I recognize you.

QUESTIONER: In an interview, yeah. My question --

SIR RICHARDS: Your name, please, sir.

QUESTIONER: Hashmad Mussler. Now I work for Aljazeera Television, but not in any official capacity here now. You talked about the coming of al-Qaeda in Syria. Now, I have traveled in the south. I'm sure you know that through my phone conversations. I'm sure they were tapped. I came across many Taliban. I spoke to them. I discussed the situation

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in Afghanistan, but prior to that I was fighting against the Taliban. Did you know that? I was very close friends with Achma Sharma Sude in the north. And once I asked Achma Sharma Sude before 9/11 why the situation in Afghanistan is a stalemate, and he said this is the American will. And I asked him why is that? He said well, they see the Taliban as a stabilizing factor in Afghanistan. It was interesting to hear yourself saying that Pakistan played a positive role in stabilizing Afghanistan during the time of Taliban, but not for all the people who went in their graves during that time.

Other than that, the most important thing that is on everyone's mind in the region is this nation building. In whose image are these nations going to be built? Because right now we have conflicting images. Is it an image of Taliban? The image of Pakistan? The image of Iranian government? It's a war on whose image are we going to build this nation. And to a lot of people it is still seen as an extension of colonial period when we have Western

governments coming in and talking about nation building. And so often it is translated within the image of a liberal democracy, not democracy, liberal democracy, and I think that causes a lot of tension.

And people who are potential allies also move away from the work that you have done in Afghanistan, and I agree, Afghanistan is better. But if I bring the example it's like you get a flood. Yes, you get the ground wet, but is it better? So my main question is in whose image are we talking about when you talk about nation building.

MR. SHAIKH: Thank you very much.

SIR RICHARDS: Shall I do three because my brain can't manage more than three.

MR. SHAIKH: Please, please.

SIR RICHARDS: Well, on the last one, you obviously weren't listening to what I was saying earlier. And I remember you well; you did listen when you asked me questions. It's very good to see you again, by the way. Because I emphasized in that that it might be representative government, not even

democratic government, let alone liberal democracy.

You have to evolve into that if that's what you want.

So I'm absolutely with you in that respect.

In whose image? Again, I did say in my remarks it's got to be built by the people of that country. Only they can know what they want, and it has got to be sympathetic to their culture, traditions, their religion. And there's no doubt that what the West well intentionally sought to impose and the constitution imposes on Afghanistan was not sympathetic to Afghan traditions and cultures. The tribal culture is vital and that wasn't reflected at all through the centralized system of government.

Mind you there were lots of Afghans who were quite content with this as you're probably -- well, you're better aware than me. So it isn't as straightforward, but I think if we were going to do it again now that's what would be the imperative, at least it should be.

That said -- again, you'll know this better than me -- many young Afghans do not want to revert to

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the tribal basis for doing things. Living in the cities now and 50 to 60 percent as I said, that's a majority who actually want to do it in a different way. So I have to say in all humility as I and you criticize rightly people, one has to think it's jolly complex stuff, very difficult, but absolutely should be in line with what that country suits and not anyone else, but it's difficult.

Security sector reform, balance security versus grievance: I sort of said earlier, you live in the real world. Can you find it in yourself, oneself, to talk to people who were killing you or killing your family or killing your friends in the greater good? And I think obviously it's a slightly different situation, but what South Africa did under Nelson Mandela absolutely showed what generosity of spirit and of heart can do. And if only more people could act like that. And I think that's essentially what in a process that President Karzai I think understandably wants to control, essentially that's what the reconciliation process that everyone hopes will be

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reignited soon in Afghanistan will have to do.

There'll be many spoilers, but if you have one or two very impressive leaders like Mandela, then it is possible. So I think you have to have some sort of process like they had there.

Back home are we fixing home or state building? Well, it's a very interesting question. I'm convinced that when I got involved in it, I didn't think about home at all. I was definitely trying to help the country in question. It's intriguing to think that may not always have been the motive, but I can buy it might not be. But for those of us who were deployed -- and finding it's a bit of a reunion here for me; there's a couple of people now working here who worked for me and with me in Afghanistan -- if you spoke to them, we were absolutely dedicated, making many mistakes I'm sure, but we were absolutely dedicated to what we were trying to do. And it wasn't anything to do with home. In fact, we argued a lot with home because we felt we knew what the people were wanting. We talked to Afghans of all kinds by the

way, which President Karzai wasn't always very happy about, but we did. And I had a team of local people who were advising me, challenging me. So I think we were focused on it, but it was an intriguing question whether that is everyone's motive.

And should we be involved in education projects? No, we shouldn't be, but we should help facilitate education projects. I don't always think -- and the same with medical projects. We shouldn't do it, but sometimes no one else will. There's a case then perhaps very subtlety through others doing it. But we absolutely need to build that assumption into our strategic planning, but it shouldn't be our job. We're not good at that. People like you are much better at that, but we might make a good team with me very much in the background.

MR. SHAIKH: Thank you. I'll take the gentleman here in front.

QUESTIONER: Hello. Thank you very much, General Richards, for these very interesting insights. I'm from Kings College London. I just transferred

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from the U.K. Defense Academy Joint Service Command Staff College to the local Qatari Joint Command Staff College with some of your former colleagues. My question: I had lunch with Peter Penfold a couple of months ago. As you might remember a former U.K. High Commissioner in Sierra Leone and he always had a lot good things to say about you.

I'm wondering. I've been looking at Sierra Leone in 2000 -- obviously taking a bit out of the context here -- but that was probably one of the most successful recent U.K. interventions, also as an intervention in terms of nation building and state building and so forth. If you look at Sierra Leone before 2000 and look at Sierra Leone today and see the progress that's been made since the intervention of Operation Palliser, do you think there are any lessons that we can take away from Sierra Leone and apply them to contemporary operations in Afghanistan or maybe a Syrian intervention?

SIR RICHARDS: Well, it's a very interesting question. There was a book written by Professor Gwyn

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Prins, I think, in which he says that Sierra Leone is pregnant with lessons, the operation we ran there. And I think immodestly I learned a lot. It probably is, though it was an entirely different scale. It was at the maximum we had 5,000 people employed, although the UN had a force on its site of nearly 20,000.

I haven't got time to go into it all, but I think one of the things we did correctly was be full blooded about it. If we had to fight, we did fight. And we fought, I'm afraid in some people's books you might say we fought very ruthlessly. But don't forget the Revolutionary United Front, their trademark, their signature atrocity was going around chopping people's arms off. These people only understood violence. And I have to say we didn't kill many of them. I really mean that because I take no pleasure in this at all.

But they knew they couldn't beat us, which was actually a bit of -- they could have. We never really had the orders even to do a lot of what I was doing. I got in a bit of trouble actually as Peter Penfold will tell you. Yes, who is running British

Foreign Policy Robin Cook was asked in the House of Commons? Is it you or is it this chap, Brigadier Richards? He insisted it was him. I was quite clear it was me actually. But we did the "clout, don't dribble." We convinced the IUF -- and I remember the phrase I came up with -- of the inevitability of their defeat. We had the UN. There was a mandated UN operation. We weren't with the UN, but they absolutely needed us and wanted us. We gave the UN time and then they robustly at last because they hadn't got it right realized it was a Chapter 7 operation. Some of them, you know, senior people in their force thought they were on a Chapter 6 operation. And I went in and said no, no, you're on a Chapter 7. Start fighting the bastards.

So I think there are all sorts of lessons if the logistics are right. We didn't hang around. As soon as we had achieved our military aims, we handed over to others. So there are some lessons, but in modesty I have to tell you -- well, in all modesty I have to say, it wasn't as complex as what we're

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confronting in so many -- and, of course, there wasn't a jihadist element to it. And I often wonder actually and interestingly if al-Qaeda had been in Sierra Leone, would we have succeeded and it's an interesting question.

MR. SHAIKH: Which, of course, applies to other ungoverned or contested spaces like Mali and many others. I recall in 1999 being in Sierra Leone and you mentioned -- with the UN -- and you mentioned the chopping of limbs. And one of my worst experiences still is seeing a whole camp of amputees.

So we'll take three more questions, please, and I want to get away from the bias of the center. I will come back to one of you, but let's start here.

QUESTIONER: Thank you very much. Well, this is maybe --

MR. SHAIKH: Name?

QUESTIONER: (inaudible), Northwestern University here in Doha. This is a combination between a comment and a question, maybe a "commention" or something. But to go back to your comment on the

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Iraqi intervention and from the perspective from this region, if you go back people would say that intervention has been mostly unjustified in the lives of many people in the region. And it gave any operation of intervention, especially after the end of the Cold War, a very bad name because maybe we needed this.

And if we think of the whole notion of humanitarian intervention as in cycles like the economy, boom and bust cycles, we had that kind of boom in humanitarian intervention, which ended in 2003 and then we started this decline, which is maybe very unfortunate because it has been encouraging people in so many cases of brutalities as we are witnessing nowadays in Syria.

So my "commention" is -- if you can even comment on this -- from the regional perspective the unjustified intervention in Iraq at the end of the day handed Iraq over to the Iranians, so we are losing. And nowadays the refraining from a justified intervention in Syria is doing exactly the same,

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handing Syria over to the Iranians. So in both cases, Iran is on the winning side.

And not only this, this is regionally, but globally this huge reluctance in action in an intervention whether it was justified or unjustified, of course, encouraging so many maybe dictators and others nowadays and in the near future to do the same. And if we include, if you like, the nowadays huge media coverage that is not any single maybe brutal, however small, activity is but covered. If we have this in mind, I think the scale of atrocities that we are seeing in Syria as compared to Cambodia in the '70s because back then we never had the same media coverage. And now we are witnessing these days on a daily basis and yet have been accepted. Thank you.

SIR RICHARDS: Thank you. I would supplement that by saying that many would say that it was the Iranians in Basha Lhasa that were also killing British and American soldiers, particularly in Iraq, and we have a strange turn of events now, particularly in relation to that.

MR. SHAIKH: I'll take the gentleman in the glasses. Stand up, please. You've been patient. Thank you.

QUESTIONER: My name is (inaudible) and I'm a student at the Qatar University and I graduated from the London School of Economics. My question to Sir Richards is that you said that the intervention in Libya was justified and you also said that you advised Prime Minister Cameron that if you have to go to war, make sure you win it. Is that an implication that there hasn't been any intervention yet because they know it's a war they're not going to win? That's my question. Thank you very much.

SIR RICHARDS: Are we talking about Syria?

QUESTIONER: Yes, we talk about Syria.

MR. SHAIKH: Right here, please.

QUESTIONER: I was a professor in Afghanistan --

MR. SHAIKH: Name, please?

QUESTIONER: (inaudible). I was a professor and now an economic consultant here in Qatar. I was a

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professor in Afghanistan during the time 1989 to 1994.

So when there is military intervention, the output must be warlords. Rabbani was a warlord, Abdullah Abdullah warlords, drugs. Also we didn't mention about drugs, cultivation of opium, 90 percent commercial from Afghanistan.

So I want to know the relation between warlords, drugs, and education. Thank you.

MR. SHAIKH: Well, in a minute or two. I'll take one more question. I'll take two more. I won't forget you, sir.

QUESTIONER: Sir David, my name is Brendan O'Malley and I've written a number of studies on attacks on education. And one of the questions that comes up is to what extent continuous attacks on education make it more difficult to establish stability later, peace and stability, particularly because education is often a focal point of stability for an individual community, particularly in rural areas in countries like Afghanistan where once you no longer have education, there may not be hope for the

future or a motive for staying in that place and that causes displacement.

So what I'm interested to know from a military man as yourself is to what extent in your training of soldiers and your thinking of how you fight a battle, do you think not just about the nation building afterwards and the relationship of education to that, but of the means to prevent the destruction of education, which prevents or slows down the nation building later? How would you go about doing that? Do you train the troops in being cautious about using schools for military purposes because that makes them a target? And do you try to influence -- or another question actually would be how would it be best to try and influence the proxies who fight on behalf of the interests of our states or the military forces generally around the world to try and change their behavior in the way they fight wars in order to protect education better?

MR. SHAIKH: Thank you. And I know we're giving you more than three, but just a very final one.

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Please, the lady in the middle.

QUESTIONER: Thanks so much for taking my question.

MR. SHAIKH: Your name, please?

QUESTIONER: My name's Diya Nijhowne. I'm Director of the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack. So I'm following on from Brendan's comment. We've actually been working very closely with states and UN agencies and NGOs to prepare the new guidelines on protecting schools and universities from military use during armed conflict. And as you know in conflicts around the world, schools are being used as bases, barracks, detention centers, by nonsafe armed groups and by militaries. So I'm wondering if you've come across that in your long and illustrious career and if you could talk a little bit about the impact of that.

And also a little bit of advice; how do you feel militaries are going to react to being asked to sign onto voluntary guidelines asking them to refrain from using schools for military purposes?

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MR. SHAIKH: Thank you very much. And I'm grateful for the colleagues who are here to talk about education in conflict. And let me just say great work, of course, also and the support that Shaikh Amosin has been giving through her protection of education and security in conflict initiative, which you've already mentioned; something which I was very much a part of when I first worked for her two or three years ago, but, please.

SIR RICHARDS: Right. Iraq handed to the Iranians, your point, sir. Well, we talked about it when Salman and I were talking. I absolutely understand the logic of what you are saying. Was Iraq intentional in that respect? Did President Bush understand the strategic risk he was running? So it is, I'm afraid, the law of unintended consequences kicking in. Don't forget, they felt that the new Iraq -- although sadly as everyone knows now, those people in charge were not preparing to ensure this happened. They felt that when the war was being planned that the successive regime would be nonsectarian, largely

secular, be supportive of the West, of the Gulf, of the Arabs, but it didn't work out because it was not a proper strategy.

If they had known what would be the result in terms of liberating of Iranian ambitions, I suspect they would never have launched the war in the first place. But they didn't, and it wasn't thought through. If you go back to my introductory remarks, it wasn't thought through to the finish and this is the result.

Is it stopping the West and others full bloodedly intervening in Syria? There is no doubt there is, particularly within America which is central to it, a war weariness, a determination not to make the same mistakes again, not to put American boots on the ground. You could easily design a strategy that doesn't require that, by the way. I have done so. But it does require, I'm afraid, more effort from other countries, too, if that's to happen.

So there is a military strategy in the case of Syria that in my judgment would lead to a

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successful outcome, but it's on a scale that, I'm afraid, still deters every country intervening -- and I mean every country because this -- and I'll get to a similar question, this is difficult, but it can be done militarily. But if the politicians aren't prepared to invest the resources and the effort both in the fighting stage and in that second stage, then my advice remains the same, I'm afraid. You'd better not do it and find another solution and maybe Geneva will yet work. But it's that law of unintended consequences that's really about tactics and not strategy.

Syria, a war that cannot be won: I can see the LSE badly educated you. I think it's a very similar question, and I've sort of answered it. It is a war that can be won, but Iraq, even Libya now people say, you know, tactical success, strategic outcome, questionable Afghanistan. To win a war, and that means winning the peace -- forget the fighting, it's the aftermath, it's the day after, it's the years after -- to win that requires a scale of effort that

is deterring every country in question. You want the same outcome as we all do.

I said in London before I finished my job, I said it will happen. There will be a war in Syria, and you'll go in reluctantly and too late because the scale of the humanitarian tragedy will become too much and the risks, I'm afraid, of extremists as we were talking about gaining toeholds that will come back to bite us all are too huge. But I'm afraid I'm skeptical that they will do it in the way a purist, a military man, in any view would design it and that's the risk.

So I think it's a good point. It can be done, but it's going to take a lot of effort.

Professor, the relationship between warlords, drugs, and interventions: You're the professor. You could write a very good book on that because I suspect you know the answers.

Now, going back to the question about a peace and reconciliation process that one of you asked me a minute ago, I just think that we know what went

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wrong then and we know what they were doing then and we know even today probably some of those people you mentioned are still doing what they were doing in terms of illicit incomes and all that sort of thing. But, you know, if you don't track conditions in which all these people might have a second chance, then they will be spoilers of whatever solution one's trying to impose. So just like Nelson Mandela did in South Africa, it's more intractable, but it ought to be tried. And maybe the election next year is an opportunity for the Afghans in question to have another go. Quite interestingly, and you'll know this better than I -- are you an Afghan? You are an Afghan yourself, are you?

QUESTIONER: No.

SIR RICHARDS: You're not, okay. Well, you know Afghanistan well clearly. There is no ethnic move to break up Afghanistan. I remember one of the things that hit me between the eyes when I first went there in 2005 is the number of people who said look, we are Afghans and we want to put that first. Now

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they then get into the ethnic groups after they fight their conflicts, but they don't want to break up Afghanistan.

Now, one of the things that's happened, and I was educated on this last weekend because a couple of candidates were there or one had just been told he couldn't be a candidate the Professor will know of. And Dr. Ahadi, who was a commerce minister and previously the finance minister, even though Ahadi is feeling very bitter about the fact that unless he changes, he's been told he can't take part. The point he emphasizes is that the political groupings that are coming together are deliberately pan-Afghan. They're not sectarian driven. So a Pashtun leader has got a Tajik alongside him. Dr. Ashraf Ghani has got an Uzbek leader beside him. It's because they've all decided they want to come together on a national basis, not on a sectarian or ethnic basis.

So I'm sounding even more liberal and sandal-wary than I meant, but let's just give it fair wind and see if the Afghan people, who have been

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through hell and back in my judgment, can yet pull it off. And, hopefully, these people will slowly be persuaded to do things differently.

Now, attacks on education: Who asked me that, sorry? How much is military trained to protect? If I'm frank, they are trained to protect the children, but not necessarily the schools themselves. So I've seen British soldiers and I'm sure many others, including Afghan soldiers, die to protect children from attack, but they will not be trained to protect necessarily the school. They're trained -- I can only talk for the British Army -- they're trained not to occupy schools if they can possibly avoid it. But if you're being attacked by a heavy group of 200 Taliban and you've just lost a friend in an IED or whatever, it's quite tough to be told no, you've got to stay out in the open and take it rather than seek some sort of protection in a school. So it's the people who are at the heart of it rather than the schools themselves.

How do you protect education processes?

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Well, I think it's sort of linked to that. We absolutely understand the long-term importance of education, and we try to facilitate it. We're up against it. The schools in Afghanistan weren't being blown up by the British Army. They were being blown up at the time by the Taliban or people who said they were the Taliban. I suspect sometimes they just haven't got the contract because the Taliban, as many of you know, aren't necessarily ideologically committed. They can often be the wrong tribe that feel dispossessed, and I think that was the case on some occasions in Afghanistan.

So we absolutely understand it. We train our soldiers to respect and understand the importance of education for the long term. And are we good enough at it? No, of course, not. And there are people who make mistakes, but it's certainly understood in our doctrine and in our training.

And the use of schools by militaries -- who asked me that? What was your question? I was running out of energy. The use of schools by military -- how

will the military --

QUESTIONER: It was two questions. I was wondering if you had experienced that and seen what the impact was on the community, on the children. And also, how receptive you think states' militaries will be to these guidelines that they're being asked to sign off on.

SIR RICHARDS: Okay, I remember. They'll be receptive, but probably my last answer will apply. They will do everything they can to be helpful, responsible militaries. I mean the rule of law is absolutely part and parcel of most good militaries' education. And although everyone now and again makes a mistake or has a rogue, I can tell you we are very strict on our application of it. Certainly in all good armies, and I know the British Army is a good army in that respect. And when we have people that don't get it right, they are punished very severely, as is the case in the American Army. Yeah, but we will have people who get it wrong.

I don't think that you will have a greater

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fan and advocate of what you're doing than me, for example. So if you want me to come and help anytime and prove the military is on your side, let me know. And I have a wife who I can tell you is utterly committed to it. So if I wasn't, she would have to. But well done. I think it's a fantastic initiative.

MR. SHAIKH: Thank you. Thank you very much. Well, we've come to the end. In fact, we've gone a little bit over. So I'm very, very grateful to you, General Sir David Richards.

I couldn't do justice in summarizing what he said, but I will pick up on a couple of things just by way of closing. You said that war is to be avoided unless carefully thought through, properly resourced, and well directed. In terms of interventions, in particular you said they have to be practicable, practical, and achievable. And I think therein lies a lot of lessons from the military interventions that we've talked about in Iraq, Libya, of course Afghanistan. I was also struck by what you were saying that things are getting better in Afghanistan,

and, of course, with regards to education as well as in other areas. And that you stressed the importance of nation building, but that it has to be done right. It has to be well resourced following and during interventions, and you talked very much about the scale of it regarding the day after. And very, very interestingly with regards to Syria, if it's to be a winnable war, it requires a scale that perhaps political leaders are not yet willing to entertain and may never do.

I branded you a number of things and you did yourself as a liberal sandal-wearing general, maybe a rogue general, when it came to Sierra Leone, but I think one headline you've made is in terms of the sober and very realistic analysis you've given us borne out of your own experience, particularly with regards to nation building and education. And for that, I thank you very much. I'd like to say we'd love to have you back anytime. I know you are a busy gentleman. We wish you the best, and I think we'd like to show our appreciation. Thank you very much.

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SIR RICHARDS: Thank you. I enjoyed it. It was very invigorating. It got my gray cells going, so thank you very much.

MR. SHAIKH: And yes, thank you for making it through the traffic. We have some orange juice and some other things in the next room. Please do enjoy them. Thank you.

* * * * *

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