



GLOBAL SECURITY FORUM 2023

# OVERVIEW & FINDINGS REPORT

THE SOUFAN CENTER



Qatar International Academy for Security Studies  
أكاديمية قطر الدولية للدراسات الأمنية

**GLOBAL SECURITY FORUM**

Reshaping the Global Order:  
Conflict, Crises, and Cooperation

MARCH 13 - 15, 2023  
DOHA, QATAR

[globalsecurityforum.com](http://globalsecurityforum.com)

# 2023 GLOBAL SECURITY FORUM

The 2023 Global Security Forum took place from March 13-15, in Doha, Qatar. The 2023 Global Security Forum theme was *Reshaping the Global Order*. The conference focused on international approaches to conflict, crises, and cooperation and included discussions on topics such as: the global energy crisis and approaches to strengthening sustainable economies; great power competition, shaped by the war in Ukraine; the evolution of global terrorism and emerging threats; violent far-right extremist networks and financing; and the disinformation-terrorism nexus.

## ORGANIZERS

THE SOUFAN CENTER



## PARTNERS



It was wonderful to return to Doha as The Soufan Center (TSC) hosted the fifth annual Global Security Forum (GSF), organized in partnership with The Soufan Group, the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), the Center on National Security at Fordham Law, the Airey Neave Trust, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Defense One, New America, and Strong Cities. We were honored to have Qatar's newly appointed Prime Minister, His Excellency Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, inaugurate the conference as his first public appearance following his appointment. I am grateful to Prime Minister Al Thani for sharing with the GSF audience his reflections on Qatar's strategic priorities and interests in international affairs.

Our distinguished speakers and guests shared insights on issues ranging from the situations in Afghanistan and Iraq to energy insecurity; from countering online hate to conflict prevention and mediation; and on jihadist threats and far-right movements. Several sessions highlighted the complex and interconnected threats confronting states across Africa, and our panelists highlighted the importance of conflict prevention and mitigation, as well as

the value of regional cooperation and integration in addressing challenges terrorism, migration, and climate change on the continent. Speakers discussed how states can and must rebuild trust with their citizens, particularly in areas where poor governance presents terrorists and other illicit groups with opportunities to recruit and mobilize disaffected populations. They also reminded us how many communities devastated by groups like ISIS still await accountability and justice.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our audience, both in the room and virtually. The interactions at GSF have led to many enriching exchanges and collaborations, and I look forward to taking these insights forward into new initiatives and partnerships.

Finally, I would like to extend my deep appreciation to the TSC Board, our strategic partners, and most of all, the team that helped put this Global Security Forum together, from inception to implementation.

Sincerely,

**Naureen Chowdhury Fink**  
Executive Director  
The Soufan Center



## KEY FINDINGS

Since our last Global Security Forum, the geopolitical landscape has undergone seismic shifts. Even through the unifying and stabilizing power of economics and institutions, the world still has not outgrown inter-state conflict. Great power competition now dominates foreign policy calculations, while issues like counterterrorism have taken a backseat in capitals that once championed such efforts. Global security dynamics have shifted away from unipolarity towards multipolarity, and hegemony may be up for grabs once again. Alliances and partnerships, old and new, are rising to the forefront to address emerging challenges. Discussions at the 2023 GSF highlighted how states have turned to regional and subregional organizations, such as Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and established new international security partnerships, such as the trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (AUKUS) or the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue. These geopolitical shifts hold important implications, not only for addressing the multi-faceted and intersectional issues facing the modern world, but also for how such issues might serve as a catalyst for societal disruption and insecurity.

The 2023 Global Security Forum highlighted hotspots of tension and risk, particularly where poor governance, human rights violations, terrorists and other violent non-state actors and predatory governments coincide. In places like Africa's Sahel region, factors such as environmental degradation, poverty, economic instability, climate change, migration, and displacement can serve as threat multipliers, exacerbating tensions and enabling violent armed groups to capitalize on grievances to recruit and radicalize populations. Private military companies such as the Wagner Group can serve to deteriorate these conditions further, risking the violation of human rights, the denial of transitional justice, and the exploitation of natural resources. The emergence of such actors in conflict zones, especially in those where terrorist groups are active, makes peacekeeping missions even more complex. Further, the exploitation of societal fissures by external actors heightens the risk of intra-state tensions, creating a fertile breeding ground for inter-state conflict and competition.

Yet this year's forum also presented opportunities to cooperate, build resilience, and strengthen prevention efforts. These opportunities are underscored by the urgency of mitigating conflict. It is necessary to equip states, civil society organizations, and multilateral institutions with the appropriate tools and resources, both financial and operational, to address the multi-faceted issues facing conflict-prone areas. Ensuring that civil society spaces are protected – particularly for women, youth, indigenous peoples, and other traditionally marginalized groups – is critical to building and sustaining peace in areas of risk. Further, these efforts must be underpinned by protections for human rights and humanitarian efforts. It will be essential to prioritize accountability and justice mechanisms when human rights violations do occur in and around peacebuilding efforts. We must also continue to work to break the cycles that terrorist groups and other violent actors exploit for recruitment and radicalization.

As technology offers global benefits to society, it also poses severe risks. It allows hate and disinformation to proliferate with remarkable speed, and some technologies can be used relatively cheaply by violent extremists as well as by hostile states seeking to amplify divisions and weaken their adversaries. Yet as we well know, hate and violent rhetoric rarely stays contained to online spaces. This is one important reason why it is so important to counter this trend, all the while ensuring that human rights are safeguarded in the process. Public-private partnerships will prove increasingly important to address the role of technology in conflict and radicalization, but also in addressing other existential issues – such as climate change, food insecurity, and water scarcity.

From Africa to Asia, the Middle East to Europe, we heard of efforts to counter hate and intolerance; to foster energy security and enhance conflict prevention and mediation; to re-purpose existing tools for new and emerging global security challenges; and to deepen our understanding of the world and the complex issues facing it. Although current events like the war in Ukraine indicate that, in some ways, little has changed when it comes to modern conflict, technologies like drones and artificial intelligence will impose new complexities for security and peacebuilding efforts. Traditional war making resources such as bullets, troops, and tanks may not be obsolete, yet the widespread availability and low adoption costs of newer technological resources will surely complicate efforts to prevent and counter violence, and likely add entirely new dimensions to future conflicts. The use of these emerging technologies by violent actors across the ideological spectrum, including Salafi-jihadists and far-right terrorists, impresses on us why we must understand how these tools are utilized, and why we should protect their legitimate uses while ensuring they are not abused.

As always, the strength of the Global Security Forum lies in the diversity and dynamism of its speakers, from heads of state to experts and practitioners in the field, and from civil society actors to intergovernmental entities. This year, our audience heard a wide range of global perspectives, as our panelists and speakers shared insights into the world's most pressing challenges. Each of these contributions ensured that our conference was truly global in scope, and highlighted issues that are often under- or insufficiently discussed in other fora. All of this provided our participants with the incredible opportunity to exchange ideas and engage in critical dialogues with peers and influencers from around the globe.

The 2023 Global Security Forum report captures the overviews and highlights of the conference. We hope you enjoy it and encourage you to view the sessions online so that you may experience these important conversations for yourself.

# DAY 1

MARCH 13, 2023



## OPENING CEREMONY & WELCOME REMARKS

H.E. Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani,  
Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, State of Qatar

“

The global crises have posed great economic challenges, which require collective action to face them, and the state of Qatar has taken great steps early in this path.

— H.E. Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani

Having just ascended to the role of Prime Minister for the State of Qatar, H.E. Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani inaugurated the 2023 Global Security Forum by reflecting on the conference's overarching theme: "Reshaping the Global Order: Conflict, Crises, and Cooperation." As Qatar's prime minister and minister of foreign affairs, he discussed the intersections between security issues, economic development, and humanitarian crises on regional and international affairs, and noted that international cooperation remained important to resolve issues of food insecurity, energy crisis, and global economic advancement at a time when war and other crises had exacerbated access to essential staples like water, energy, and medicine for many in the world. He highlighted Qatar's role in supplying Europe with energy supplies amid the price hike brought on by the war in Ukraine and said that his country would play an important role in the energy transition, with plans to increase its production capacity by 2026.

He said Qatar had worked to stabilize and diversify supply chains and cooperated with international partners supporting efforts to increase energy security during the past year, which had been marked by the need for responsible energy transition. Al-Thani called for sustainable efforts to bring peace and security to the region modelled on shared values of justice, equality, and solidarity. He stressed the sensitivities of states in the region to real or perceived external interference in their internal affairs. Looking forward, he said his country would continue to build on a foreign policy that prioritizes its role in mediation and conflict resolution, positioning Qatar as a reliable partner in peacemaking and global stability.



SCAN TO WATCH



H.E. Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani



## FIRESIDE CHAT

H.E. Paul Kagame, President, Republic of Rwanda  
Mr. Steve Clemons, Founding Editor-at-Large, Semafor



Even in our history, when we have wanted to move on and make this progress, we came to a point where we forgive the unforgivable. We don't get stuck with our past.

— H.E. Paul Kagame

Reflecting on the recent U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, moderator Steve Clemons commenced the discussion by examining President Paul Kagame's vision for Rwanda in today's geopolitical climate. On Rwanda's economic development aspirations, Kagame had previously likened his ambitions to shaping his country to become the "Singapore of Africa." He illustrated Rwanda's positive economic development by highlighting key indicators such as increased health, life expectancy, and government stability in the country. The President also touched on Rwanda's commitment to gender equality and the importance of women's meaningful participation in Rwandan society and politics.

On his country's role on the international stage, attention turned to Rwanda's migration partnership with the United Kingdom. Reflecting on the situation of African migrants and refugees who have departed their homes for Europe and other destinations, Kagame noted the poor conditions in places like Libya, where thousands of migrants have languished. He said agreements like the one between Rwanda and the United Kingdom could offer options to those unable to return to their home countries or settle in European countries. The President also reflected on the need for regional and Africa-led solutions to a range of political and security challenges on the continent, noting that while external actors often criticize localized efforts, it was often their own interests that shaped their engagement in Africa and not those of the local communities and states. The crisis in Eastern Congo served as a good example where root causes are not adequately addressed, he added.

The case of Paul Rusesabagina, whom the United States determined had been wrongfully detained by Rwanda, was also discussed. In the lead up to his eventual release on March 24, 2023 — in a deal brokered by the United States — Kagame offered an early indication of this development, telling the GSF audience that it was possible to move forward with his release. "We're not people who want to get stuck in one place and not make any movement forward."



ON SCREEN: H.E. President Paul Kagame - ON STAGE: Mr. Steve Clemons



SCAN TO WATCH

## PANEL: WAR IN UKRAINE – IMPACTS & IMPLICATIONS

Mr. Jason Blazakis, Senior Research Fellow, The Soufan Center

Ambassador Nathan Sales, Senior Fellow, The Soufan Center

Dr. Kacper Rekawek, Postdoctoral Fellow,

University of Oslo Center on Research and Extremism

Dr. Bilyana Lilly, Chair of the Resilience Track, Warsaw Security Forum



SCAN TO WATCH

The first panel of the 2023 Global Security Forum brought together expert researchers Kacper Rekawek and Bilyana Lilly together with former U.S. government officials and TSC fellows Nathan Sales and Jason Blazakis, the event's moderator, to examine the contours of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. The panelists agreed that Russia's war in Ukraine had gone poorly for the aggressors thus far, but also believed that Ukrainians still had to address some critical needs to withstand Russian advances. On what more the world, specifically the United States, could do to counter Russia's aggression, Sales explained that incremental support to the Ukrainian government was insufficient: "The [Biden] Administration has unhelpfully signaled a reluctance to arm Ukraine with the tools that it needs out of a misplaced fear of Russian escalation." When the Biden administration finally provided the Ukrainians with more advanced military technology, he said, the Russians sustained greater battlefield losses.

The conversation shifted from conventional aspects of the conflict to Russia's asymmetric efforts to destabilize Ukraine. Lilly explained that the documented lack of Russian success in using tools such as its cyber capabilities did not mean it was not trying to deploy these weapons, but rather, reflected Ukraine's robust cyber defense capacities. Indeed, Lilly noted how Ukraine had managed nearly 2,200 cyber incidents caused by Russian actors in 2022, calling the number "quite...significant." Russia's cyber and disinformation campaigns also look outward, targeting countries that are providing support to Ukraine. While the Ukrainians were able to manage many of those cyber challenges manually, they mitigated more than seven thousand attempted Russian cyber intrusions when automated tools were included in the count. It was also important to note the significant role that private sector actors like Microsoft and Google had played in assisting with countering Russian phishing campaigns targeting Ukrainians.

Rekawek, an expert on far-right extremism who has been on the ground in Ukraine to interview individuals involved in the conflict that subscribe to far-right ideologies, added that the latest iteration of Russian-Ukrainian conflict was very different than 2014, when the flow of far-right foreign fighters to both sides was more significant. In comparison, 2022 didn't witness the degree of foreign fighter flows many analysts anticipated. However, in addition to fighting, foreigners were involved in many non-combat roles within the conflict, serving as logisticians and even providing humanitarian services for frontline combatants, he noted. The conflict stemming from the 2022 invasion was seen as more conventional than the hybrid conflict that shaped the 2014 Russian invasion and subsequent occupation of Crimea. This, coupled with Russia's failure to recruit Africans and Syrians to fight in the conflict as initially anticipated, had contributed to a slower flow of foreign fighters to the Russian side. Bucking traditional thinking, Rekawek explained that a longer conflict would hurt Russia more than Ukraine. He explained, "there's going to be a 'Boogaloo' [referencing an American euphemism for civil war favored by many far-right groups] in Russia .... [T]he far-right has killed more than 500 people in Russia between 2000 and 2017, but nobody's heard of it." Rekawek explained that Russia had brought this risk upon themselves by emboldening the far-right by using false information, among other things, to invade Ukraine.

In sum, the panelists agreed that the longer the conflict went on in Ukraine, the greater risk there was to achieving long-term international peace and stability in Europe. As such, the world's attention must remain on Ukraine, lest the humanitarian catastrophe and political instability expand westwards.



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Mr. Jason Blazakis, Amb. Nathan Sales, Dr. Bilyana Lilly, Dr. Kacper Rekawek

“

The strategy [the United States has] been pursuing is one that has given Ukraine just enough to not lose, but not enough to win decisively.

— Ambassador Nathan Sales

## PANEL: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE STATE OF THE JIHADIST THREAT

Dr. Colin P. Clarke, Senior Research Fellow, The Soufan Center

Dr. Daisy Muibu, Assistant Professor, University of Alabama

Dr. Amira Jadoon, Assistant Professor, Clemson University

Dr. Tore Refslund Hamming, Director, Refslund Analytics

Ms. Tanya Mehra, Senior Research Fellow and Programme Lead, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism



SCAN TO WATCH

At a time when many states seemed ready to deprioritize counterterrorism while the threat still deeply affected particular regions of the world, TSC Senior Research Fellow Colin Clarke moderated a panel bringing together global perspectives on the state of the jihadist threat. The panel featured Daisy Muibu, Amira Jadoon, Tore Hamming, and Tanya Mehra – some of the world’s leading experts on terrorism subjects related to sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, and South Asia. Offering an overview of the current state of global jihadism, particularly in the West, Hamming noted that Western intelligence services did not pay as much heed to Salafi-jihadist terrorism as they had during its prime period in the post-9/11 and post-ISIS years. Although the frequency of such attacks in the West were certainly down compared to the years of 2015-2017, they were still well above that of the early 2000s. “We continue to misunderstand Al-Qaeda in terms of the threat it poses on an international level,” Hamming stressed. At the time of the event, Al-Qaeda appeared less focused on conducting international terrorist attacks than on concentrating its resources to make inroads politically in different parts of the globe. Sharing insights from her work on rule of law-based approaches to terrorism and accountability issues, Mehra said that states were concerned about the prospect of Salafi-jihadist offenders being released from prison throughout Europe. Although these offenders had a low recidivism rate, several countries in Europe were amending their laws to extend the length of their sentences and limiting early releases from prison. At the same time, several European countries were slowly picking up the pace of repatriations of individuals associated with ISIS from the camps in northeast Syria. However, the initial tranche focused largely on women and girls, leaving the issues of detained men and boys unresolved.



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Dr. Tore Refslund Hamming, Dr. Amira Jadoon, Dr. Colin P. Clarke, Ms. Tanya Mehra, Dr. Daisy Muibu

Jadoon said that the Taliban victory in Afghanistan had not only “emboldened jihadists globally,” but the effect of their success had been “even more pronounced [in South Asia] because of the proximity of the jihadist victory and also the contributions of local groups to the battle with international forces in Afghanistan.” Rounding out the panel, Muibu explained how local political dynamics in sub-Saharan Africa, especially in the Horn of Africa, impacted groups like Al-Shabaab in Somalia. To make progress, states need to think beyond kinetic responses to terrorist groups, panelists stressed, noting that such responses to date had failed, especially when used in isolation from more comprehensive approaches targeting the enabling conditions.

The panelists almost uniformly agreed that the global jihadist landscape had changed considerably over the last several years. With the dissolution of ISIS’ physical caliphate, the center of gravity of the global jihadist movement had shifted from the Middle East and North Africa to sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Regional ISIS affiliates, including Al-Shabaab and Islamic State Khorasan Province, had come to represent the face of global jihad, adapting and evolving as Western countries pivot from the Global War on Terrorism to great power competition with China and Russia, they noted. The future of the movement would depend on whether ISIS and Al-Qaeda can appeal to a younger generation while also replacing charismatic leaders who have been killed and captured over the past two decades.

“

The Taliban’s victory [has] emboldened jihadists globally, but the effect of their success had been even more pronounced [in South Asia].

— Dr. Amira Jadoon

## REMARKS

Hon. Sheikh Imran Abdulla, Minister of Home Affairs,  
The Republic of the Maldives



SCAN TO WATCH

“

Today, more than ever, our sovereignty is being challenged on multiple fronts ... [through] soft power influence, geopolitical disputes, economic pressures, and disinformation campaigns.

— Hon. Sheikh Imran Abdulla

Imran Abdulla, the Minister of Home Affairs for the Republic of the Maldives, highlighted some of his country's key challenges and achievements for the GSF 2023 audience. He noted that security challenges like terrorism and interstate conflict, such as that between Russia and Ukraine, had become interlaced with newer challenges such as public health crises, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted national and regional security. He re-iterated a well-documented assertion that terrorist groups had proved themselves adept at inflaming local grievances, and therefore, a one-size-fits-all approach to countering such threats would not be able to address specific situations.

Additionally, Abdulla outlined some specific challenges facing the Maldives, including the challenge of returning foreign fighters associated with groups like Islamic State, as well as that of environmental crises like climate change, a particularly key concern for a nation of many islands like his. “Global events demonstrate the necessity of tackling non-traditional security risks with the same urgency of conventional security challenges,” the Minister underscored. In light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Abdulla said that the countries of Asia were also not immune to having their sovereignty threatened, and that sovereignty was being challenged on multiple fronts: “soft power influence, geopolitical disputes, economic pressures, and disinformation campaigns.”

In this regard, Abdulla explained the importance of establishing strong bilateral and multilateral relations to fend against the challenges that were reshaping both global and regional order. Indeed, he underscored this point when he said, “despite differences, we all want to live in a region that is stable, secure, and prosperous.” Abdulla emphasized that pooling of resources and knowledge would be paramount to deal with these diverse challenges.



Hon. Sheikh Imran Abdulla

## IN CONVERSATION

H.E. Mohammed Al-Darraji, Advisor to the Prime Minister, Republic of Iraq  
Mr. Peter Bergen, Vice President for Global Studies and Fellows,  
New America



SCAN TO WATCH



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: H.E. Mohammed Al-Darraji, Mr. Peter Bergen

Mohammed Al-Darraji began by discussing the challenges and obstacles Iraq had overcome during the past 20 years, the significant progress his country had made since the United States ousted Saddam Hussein in 2003, and where Iraq needed to go and what progress was possible in the future. Despite being a democracy “on paper,” Al-Darraji said his country’s political system was unfortunately perceived by its citizens as a means of legitimizing existing political disparities for elite groups. Iraq should work to maintain itself as a neutral arbiter in the region so that it can help ensure stability in the Middle East, he said. Success in the fight against Islamic State had produced islands of stability throughout Iraq, freeing the government to engage in meaningful diplomacy throughout the region. This, combined with fostering a neutral position in the region, had allowed Iraq to initiate the dialogue that led to the Saudi-Iranian rapprochement announced in March 2023, which restored diplomatic relations between the two nations after a long fissure. Al-Darraji also spoke of important economic factors at play in the country, such as its large youth demographic and oil access, which could help stabilize international energy markets.

Transitioning from his initial remarks into a discussion moderated by Peter Bergen, Al-Darraji addressed the sensitive question of whether Iraq today qualified as a failed state. It was, Al-Darraji said, in the sense that the state as whole is not functioning properly, but efforts are still underway to build proper state institutions can “start a real economy” and “deliver real security to give ... well-being to our people.”

Bergen questioned whether Al-Darraji agreed with the U.S. Army’s official interpretation of the history of the Iraq War, which claimed that Iran won the conflict in light of Tehran’s creeping influence in and continued support of proxy forces in the country, especially Shia militia groups. To this, he responded that proxy conflicts, such as those between Iran and the United States, generally undermine Iraqi sovereignty, and that the U.S. Army’s position on this matter had undermined Iraq’s sovereign status. Recognizing the reality of this proxy conflict and Iraq’s position caught in between the two powers, however, he said that Iraq would benefit from a negotiated deal between Iran and the United States that would halt conflict in its territory. However, Al-Darraji believed the Middle East had become a lesser priority for the United States, which in part opened the door for China to raise its profile in the region and serve as a more credible interlocutor for the Saudi-Iranian rapprochement.

“

This government is the last chance to build the ideal model of democracy in the Middle East that the American administration used ... as an excuse for their invasion [of] Iraq 20 years ago.

— H.E. Mohammed Al-Darraji

The young people of Iraq wanted a state built on institutions, not political parties, and demanded that the state deliver services and build a robust economy, Al-Darraji reiterated. Reflecting on the legacy of the U.S. invasion, he reluctantly shared that it had not been worth ousting the country’s former leader Saddam Hussein, given all of the struggles the country had been through since the dictator’s fall: “The country was destroyed and the economy decimated, so Iraqis paid a major price, and then still had to fight ISIS on behalf of the region, on behalf of the whole world.” He cautioned against power vacuums in a region where countries like Iraq needed a stabilizing force. When such a vacuum exists, a strong country will attempt to fill it, just as Iran had attempted to do, he explained. As Bergen pointed out, corruption was a major reason why Iraq was not as wealthy as it should have been. Al-Darraji conceded that corruption was a direct result of a political system lacking accountability and whose parties were based on ethnic and sectarian ideologies, many of which have their own armed wings and militias. In turn, anti-corruption measures need to be implemented, beginning at the grassroots level and extending to the elite and political leadership, he reaffirmed.



## PANEL: INVASION OF IRAQ – 20 YEARS ON

Mr. Peter Bergen, Vice President for Global Studies and Fellows, New America

Ms. Simona Foltyn, Special Correspondent, PBS NewsHour

Mr. Ioannis Koskinas, Chief Executive Officer, Hoplite Group

Mr. Omar Mohammed, Founder, "Mosul Eye"



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Mr. Peter Bergen, Ms. Simona Foltyn, Mr. Omar Mohammed, Mr. Ioannis Koskinas

Marking the 20th anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, GSF 2023 brought together a group of experts to discuss the consequences of the war, and the state of the country – including future prospects – two decades later. The panel was moderated by Peter Bergen and included Simona Foltyn, Ioannis Kosnias, and Omar Mohammed. Speaking from her experiences as a reporter on the ground, Foltyn observed that Iraq vacillates between peace and war, but it “remains a fractured nation with ongoing power struggles, internal and external,” and that the U.S. intervention had simply taken the country from a dictatorship to a “dysfunctional kleptocracy.” The U.S. invasion also introduced a high-level of corruption into Iraq’s economy, which continues to reverberate today. “Iraq suffers from being the battleground in all of these conflicts,” said Foltyn, referring to the proxy wars and sectarianism shaping geopolitical trends in the region.

While he agreed the country needed a change from its former dictator, Saddam Hussein, Mohammed said it should have been the Iraqi people rather than the United States military who toppled him. He also critiqued the United States for its lack of post-invasion planning, which confounded reconstruction efforts from the very beginning. Today, “poverty is the most brutal enemy of the Iraqi people,” Mohammed posited, to such an extent that water had become in his view a sacred resource in the city of Basra.

Koskinas concurred, calling the U.S. approach to Iraq “flawed,” “incredibly unprepared,” and plagued by transactional, short-term thinking. While the United States was proficient at wielding hard power, it must consider what action it must take after its military victories, he said. Bergen was careful to note that U.S. foreign policy blunders transcended partisan lines, pointing to interventions in Libya and Syria initiated under former President Barack Obama. Nonetheless, there was broad agreement among the panelists the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq remained one of the most significant foreign policy blunders in national history, and both Iraq and the United States had suffered significantly from the decision.

With great power competition reignited around the globe, panelists shared concerns that Iraq will either be forgotten once again or fought over by external powers. Mohammed argued that the human toll taken on the Iraqis themselves was too often overlooked when discussing the legacy of this war. While the country’s problems needed and deserved continued international attention, traditionally, “when the guns fall silent, the world looks away,” Foltyn observed. Iraq’s best chance for survival was to maintain balanced relations with all countries in the region and beyond, noted Mohamed. Koskinas discussed the regional implications at length, highlighting the recent Chinese-brokered rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran, in which Iraq had played a prominent role. He cautioned the United States against disengaging from the region as it sought to pivot to other areas of strategic competition around the world, and specifically disagreed with Mohammed Al-Darraj’s earlier claim that it would not make a difference if the United States withdrew its 2,500 troops stationed in Iraq. He stated that doing so would cost the United States an important ability to understand the environment. This would have implications not just for countering Iran or ISIS, but for Iraq’s own security.

The session was concluded with a simple question by the moderator: “How does this end?” Mohammed spoke not about an end, but about a new beginning for the country, especially post-ISIS, and stressed political reforms, while Simona Foltyn talked about other obstacles, including the country’s economy and a growing drug problem, in addition to immense challenges posed by climate change.



The U.S. tends to define our enemy, and then we fight that definition.

—Mr. Ioannis Koskinas



“

It's important to provide the public with transparent, relatable examples of how we utilize different tools, whether it's to identify critical child exploitation material online... or identifying victims of massive cyber attacks.

— Ms. Larissa L. Knapp

## FIRESIDE CHAT

Ms. Larissa L. Knapp, Executive Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Dr. Karen J. Greenberg, Director, Center on National Security, Fordham University  
& Senior; Visiting Fellow, The Soufan Center



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Dr. Karen J. Greenberg, Ms. Larissa L. Knapp

In a conversation with TSC Senior Visiting Fellow Karen Greenberg examining the changing threat landscape and its implications for U.S. national security, Larissa Knapp highlighted the ideological and geographical diversification of the security challenges facing the United States, and the challenges of tracking and countering increasingly diverse and diffuse threats. Utilized by terrorists and extremists to spread propaganda for recruitment and training, the online space had created a new set of challenges for law enforcement to identify potential threats. The rise in online radicalization of young people and minors was particularly concerning, she said, and whole-of-society, tailored approaches and partnerships beyond law enforcement were needed to address this trend. Even faced with diverse ideological threats, however, Knapp emphasized law enforcement's ability to leverage traditional counterterrorism tools.

While U.S. counterterrorism efforts historically focused on non-state threats, state actors were a growing concern, exemplified in the murder-for-hire plot against a former National Security Agency official and the targeting of an Iranian dissident on U.S. soil. To accommodate the renewed impetus on great power rivalries, Knapp said the FBI was reallocating resources and taking care to guard its intelligence tools. Knapp highlighted the importance of law enforcement cultivating transparency, trust, and partnerships with businesses and academia to increase awareness of threats and better protect intellectual property. Transparency was also seen as key to reassure the public that tools like Section 702 (a U.S. foreign surveillance authority meant to protect "U.S. persons" on American soil from being targeted by the U.S. intelligence community) are not misused to allow for warrantless surveillance.

Despite new and evolving threats, Salafi-jihadist groups such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS remained intent on inspiring attacks in their home countries and abroad, Knapp said. With terrorism becoming more concentrated in Africa, groups like Al-Shabaab were seen as particularly concerning, underlining the importance of increasing in-country capabilities to counter the threat. The changing threat landscape, however, means that government agencies always need to be agile, she underscored.

## REMARKS: FOSTERING ENERGY SECURITY AMIDST SHIFTING GEOPOLITICAL DYNAMICS

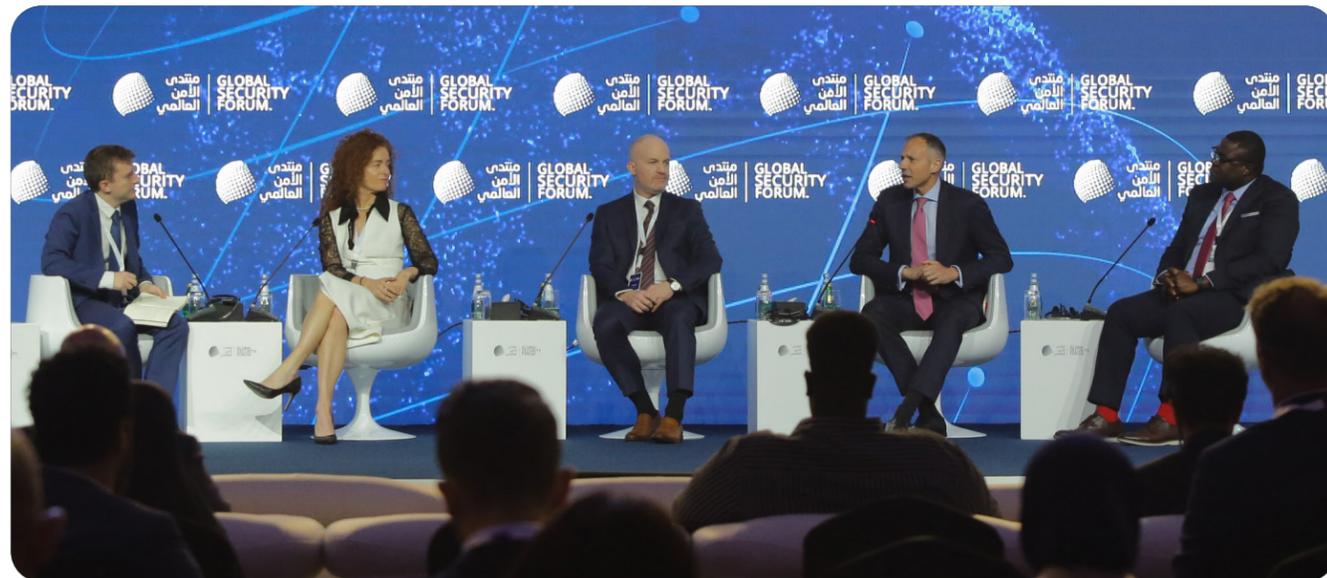
Mr. Paul Wallace, Team Leader for Energy and Commodities in the Middle East and Africa, Bloomberg News

Dr. Carolyn Kissane, Assistant Dean, New York University Center for Global Affairs

Dr. Damilola Olawuyi, Professor and UNESCO Chair on Environmental Law and Sustainable Development, Hamad Bin Khalifa University

Mr. Scott Modell, Chief Executive Officer, Rapidan Energy Group

Hon. Frank Fannon, Former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Energy Resources, United States



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Mr. Paul Wallace, Dr. Carolyn Kissane, Mr. Scott Modell, Hon. Frank Fannon, Dr. Damilola Olawuyi

Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine was a constant specter in the background of this panel discussion on energy insecurity. The discussion featured energy experts from government, academia, media, and the private sector: moderator Paul Wallace, Carolyn Kissane, Damilola Olawuyi, Scott Modell, and Frank Fannon. While the war – and the resulting international backlash – sent shockwaves across global energy markets, speakers agreed that European nations had fared better than most had anticipated at the conflict's outset, when many predicted price spikes would bring on a surge of blackouts and could leave Europeans without reliable energy supplies during the winter, threatening in a worst-case scenario to debilitate the continent. Europe's good fortune was owed to a combination of reduced consumption, the re-allocation of energy shipments to European destinations, and the sheer luck of an unexpectedly warm winter. Nonetheless, Kissane said it was too early to assume the crisis had been avoided altogether, as the war could go on for some time and these same energy security concerns could rear their heads again the following winter.



SCAN TO WATCH

The impact of Russia's war in Ukraine had vividly illustrated how the drive to alleviate the effects of climate change by reducing fossil fuel dependency can conflict with the promotion of energy security. The impact of fossil fuel disinvestment became apparent in both developed and developing countries. As international financial institutions restricted investment in fossil fuel projects, some developing countries were left ill-prepared to leverage their ample oil reserves to meet the sudden jump in energy demands created as the West attempted to cut itself off from Russian energy, while the United States had chosen to cease investing in long-term exploration projects such as deepwater drilling. Both cases reinforced energy insecurity and reliance on traditional, large-scale producers like the Gulf states, as Olawuyi pointed out. While some argued that the push to decrease reliance on Russian energy exports had driven a transition to greener energy sources, Fannon pointed to Germany – which had replaced Russian energy with a greater reliance on coal – as an example disputing this narrative. Modell said all that across the world, politicians facing popular unrest over energy shortages tended to opt for policies that ease consumer distress rather than preserve aggressive climate policies.

Panelists agreed that, despite lofty and ambitious rhetoric, the U.S. government had proved unwilling to endure the consumer pain and backlash that would be required to apply a sanctions program that could truly put a dent in Russia's oil revenue. Without – for example – applying secondary sanctions to adversarial countries like China or U.S. partners like India who continue to purchase Russian oil, Russia could continue evading Western sanctions. Kissane said this dynamic had remapped energy partnerships to the extent that "Russian hydrocarbons that used to go west are now going east." Meanwhile, countries that abided by sanctions restrictions had begun to look to new suppliers to satisfy their demand: to the familiar and established, like Qatar and other Gulf states; to less experienced states like Nigeria, which lacked the necessary infrastructure to supply new clients; and even to adversaries. Participants pointed out that the demand for illicit Iranian oil was through the roof and noted that the United States had begun to permit conditional orders of Venezuelan oil.

“

The psychology of a state meaningfully changes when they are in a dependency mindset.

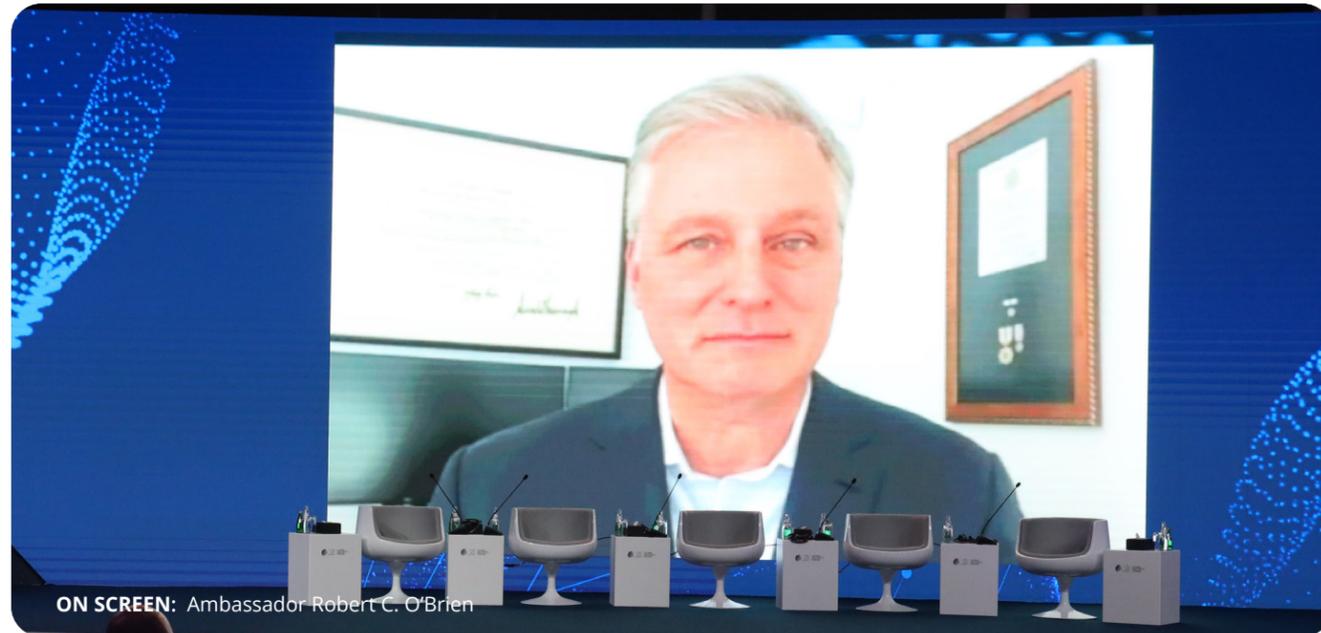
— Hon. Frank Fannon

## FIRESIDE CHAT

Ambassador Robert C. O'Brien, Co-Founder and Chairman, American Global Strategies, LLC; former U.S. National Security Advisor  
Mr. Steve Clemons, Founding Editor-at-Large, Semafor



SCAN TO WATCH



Discussing the range of security threats confronting the United States and its allies, potential national security responses, and impacts on U.S. alliances, Robert C. O'Brien emphasized the need for U.S. leadership on the world stage in a conversation with Steve Clemons. O'Brien highlighted U.S. responses to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, while also emphasizing the need for partner countries to continue or increase their support – financially and materially – for the Ukrainian defense. With attention, particularly in the West, focused on the war in Europe, countries such as China may see opportunity to escalate conflicts or invade disputed territories like Taiwan, but O'Brien warned that the United States would not tolerate such actions. The geopolitical importance of Taiwan's semiconductor production, in particular, could necessitate a strong U.S. response to the country's invasion, he underscored. Emphasizing China's role in the drug and fentanyl trade, he also noted the potential for strong, kinetic responses to stem the flow of opioids, including taking measures to deter or turn around shipments of precursors to Mexico from China.

The practice of hostage taking, particularly by state actors, was a growing concern, he observed. Reflecting on his former role as the U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, O'Brien underscored the cruelty of the practice, saying it should be viewed as severely as crimes against humanity. He called for enacting solutions to deter states from the practice, rather than inadvertently encouraging states to take up the practice to gain concessions or other desired outcomes.

Alliances would be key to address the range of national security threats facing the United States, O'Brien stressed, drawing on examples like U.S. security guarantees for Middle Eastern allies and the country's facilitation of the Abraham Accords. He also highlighted how seismic events like Russia's war in Ukraine can strengthen alliances, such as NATO, that may have once been seen as faltering. NATO's expansion could prove to be a harbinger for the reinforcement of other alliances, such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, should tensions increase in the Indo-Pacific region, he added.

“

I don't think [semiconductor] factories, research facilities, things of that nature will fall into the Chinese hands, even if they were somehow successful in the invasion [of Taiwan].

— Ambassador Robert C. O'Brien

# DAY 2

MARCH 14, 2023



## FIRESIDE CHAT

H.E. Teo Chee Hean, Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Singapore

Mr. Bobby Ghosh, Bloomberg Opinion Editor, Bloomberg



Speaking with Bobby Ghosh, Teo Chee Hean provided Singapore's perspective on current global challenges while offering analyses and policy recommendations. As the Russia-Ukraine conflict, U.S.-Chinese tensions, and climate change disrupted energy and food supplies, intensified geopolitical tensions, and caused extreme weather events, Hean prescribed three key pillars for ensuring future global security: multilateral cooperation, strengthened resilience, and a focus on sustainability. These would apply not just to armed conflict, but also to threats like climate change, which were particularly prevalent for low-lying and small island states. In his view, an improved multilateral framework should recognize current global needs and fairly balance those of all countries, while preserving the current system's commitment to principles, rules, and standards.

The impact of Russia's war on issues like energy and food security demonstrated the consequences that international conflict generates even for states who are not party to the conflict. While much of the global conversation around the war during the prior year had focused on bringing a swift end to the conflict, it had re-focused on how best to fight it. In contrast, Hean stressed prioritizing diplomatic solutions to prevent further escalation and to mitigate the war's negative impacts on global stability and prosperity.

Hean also acknowledged the increasing competition between major powers and the potential for it to undermine areas of international cooperation. He emphasized the importance of maintaining trust and finding common ground in areas like trade to prevent conflicts from spilling over. Regrettably, however, U.S.-China relations had not improved as some had hoped after Presidents Biden and Xi met during the G20 Summit in Bali, Indonesia, he noted.

Hean cautioned that the China/Taiwan situation was not totally analogous to that of Russia and Ukraine, as most countries officially recognize Taiwan as Chinese territory. Further, the historical context shapes the issue differently. While he observed that China did not likely want to go to war over Taiwan, he also believed that China would not allow Taiwan to become independent. He proposed that any efforts to address Taiwan's status must recognize historical context and foster a peaceful resolution.

“

In our part of the world, we have benefited from the presence and the investments of the U.S. and we have benefited from the growth and development of China ... [That is why we have worked] to bring the economic competition between the U.S and China [into] some kind of framework where they would be able to compete in a constructive way, with a set of rules which both would accept.

— H.E. Teo Chee Hean

## FIRESIDE CHAT

H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson, African Union Commission  
Mr. Bobby Ghosh, Bloomberg Opinion Editor, Bloomberg



SCAN TO WATCH

“

Africa is absent from international political and financial decision-making platforms. It is left out of the [permanent membership of the] UN Security Council, the World Bank, and IMF decision-making organs.

— H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat

Complex and interconnected issues like war, economic disruptions, climate change, and systemic injustice and inequity disproportionately impact the African continent, and the current international order's limitations in addressing these issues warrants a reimagining and reshaping of world governance, Moussa Faki Mahamat told interviewer Bobby Ghosh. Despite hosting a substantial share of the world's population, Africa lacked sufficient representation within international and political and financial decision-making platforms, including the UN Security Council (where it has no permanent members), the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, he observed. Although often an arena for proxy wars, Africa has its own set of priorities, requiring investment in sectors such as energy and technology to operationalize its own agenda. Faki underscored Africa's willingness to pursue diverse partnerships to actualize these plans.

With the Sahel region the latest epicenter of global terrorism, security had become a key priority for the African continent, especially since the threat could rapidly spread across borders. To sustainably address this pressing concern, African-led missions and task forces required financial and material support, he underscored. The four recent coups across the continent highlighted the need to prevent the conditions conducive to military intervention by maintaining peace and security and creating an environment where democracy can flourish. Demonstrating that democratic governance could address security concerns was seen as key to ensuring key democratic norms, such as elections, can actually take place. Faki stressed that African-led solutions, with buy-in from African states and underpinned by financial and material support from the international community, were key to address threats to peace and security, as well as the intersecting issues that can serve as threat multipliers. The African Union – and Africans writ large – had proven capable of negotiating African-led, internationally supported conflict solutions by facilitating the ceasefire in Ethiopia. This example also offered lessons for conflicts outside the African context.



H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat

# 30

## FRAMING REMARKS: REFLECTIONS ON QATAR'S EXPERIENCES IN MEDIATIONS & CONFLICT RESOLUTIONS

H.E. Dr. Mohammed Bin Abdulaziz Al-Khulaifi,  
Assistant Foreign Minister for Regional Affairs, State of Qatar



“

The constitution of Qatar clearly ... plac[es] mediation at the heart of Qatar's foreign policy.

— H.E. Dr. Mohammed Bin Abdulaziz Al-Khulaifi

Presenting his country as a globally recognized international mediator, and addressing the benefits this status brings to its international relationships and foreign policy initiatives, Qatar's Assistant Foreign Minister for Regional Affairs, Mohammed Al-Khulaifi, discussed the important role that Qatar continues to play in conflict mitigation. After moving through the broader contours of mediation theory, he explained the traits of a successful mediator and described the advantages and challenges that mediation presents for parties of inter-state disputes. A state's reluctance to identify the root of the problem also offered opportunity for a trusted mediator to ensure all sides are heard. Through its experiences, Qatar had learned that the end-goal of mediations should be ensuring the deal remains sustainable long after the ink dries, he underscored.

Stressing that support for mediation lay at the heart of Qatari foreign policy, Al-Khulaifi went on to highlight some of his country's mediation efforts and regional success stories, such as fostering truces between the Houthis and Yemeni government, bringing an end to a Lebanese political vacuum after the country's presidency had gone unfilled, and facilitating four ceasefires relating to Palestine. In Africa, Qatar contributed to intra- and inter-state peace agreements in Darfur, Sudan, Chad, and between the states of Djibouti and Eritrea, and enabled the resumption of diplomatic relations between Somalia and Kenya. Thanks to its understanding of regional cultures, Al-Khulaifi said Qatar had been well-positioned to mediate the U.S.-Taliban peace deal, the outcome of which the international community and 2023 GSF participants were keenly concerned. Qatar was also seen as a "traditional partner" for any country hoping to engage Iran in dialogue.

H.E. Dr. Mohammed Bin Abdulaziz Al-Khulaifi



## PANEL: AFRICA & THE SPECTRUM OF CONFLICT

Dr. Daisy Muibu, Assistant Professor, University of Alabama

Mr. Rami Khouri, Journalist; Director of Global Engagement, American University of Beirut

Mr. Idriss Lallali, Acting Director, African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism

Mr. Wassim Nasr, Journalist, France 24



SCAN TO WATCH

With the African continent facing internal civil wars, insurgencies, terrorism, and conflicts involving outside states and their proxy forces, moderator Daisy Muibu and her fellow panelists Wassim Nasr, Idriss Lallali, and Rami Khouri shared their perspectives on the range of conflicts throughout the continent. Lallali spoke at length about some of the work conducted by the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (CAERT), including threat assessments of various conflicts and terrorist groups throughout Africa. Lallali's research team had looked at capacity gaps in African counterterrorism forces, while also looking at ways to assess progress in building partner capacity and security cooperation. Uniquely, until 2019, the Sahel stood as one of the few regions where Al-Qaeda and Islamic State branches tolerated each other, in what Nasr called "the Sahel exception" to the violent rivalry that manifests between the two groups elsewhere. Having recently interviewed the head of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Nasr spoke of how the ongoing conflict between the groups is driving radicalization and recruitment.

Examining the drivers of radicalization, Khouri spoke about material deprivation and the spread of discontent throughout North Africa, and how these feed drivers of instability, as anger, humiliation, degradation, and dehumanization all feed into radicalization and mobilization dynamics as some of the main drivers of extremism throughout Africa. In places like Tunisia and Egypt, groups like the Muslim Brotherhood had provided goods to citizens when the state either could not or would not assist, though several states vary with regard to their views of the group.

“

They don't just do terrorism ... for the fun of it. They blow up cars, they kill people for political reasons.

— Mr. Wassim Nasr



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Mr. Wassim Nasr, Mr. Idriss Lallali, Mr. Rami Khouri, Dr. Daisy Muibu

However, most contemporary analysis of conflict and counterterrorism practice fails to find off-ramps for violent extremism, especially in Africa, according to Muibu. Local governance and tailored approaches were also a part of the discussion, which then shifted to the role of the Wagner Group in Africa, but particularly in the Sahel. There was also a discussion of the spillover of violence in coastal West Africa, particularly Togo and Benin, as well as questions about the future of Wagner in countries like Mali, Central African Republic (CAR), and elsewhere. Wagner's presence had energized recruitment to jihadist groups, both Islamic State Greater Sahara (ISGS) and the Al-Qaeda-linked Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), Nasr said.

Given how rarely sustainable settlements had been achieved through force on the continent, it was seen as critical to shift the counterterrorism conversation from advocating for kinetic responses to determining what conflict resolution tools should be enhanced. Negotiated settlements, including power sharing agreements and other confidence building measures had proven more durable over time, both in and beyond Africa. Yet too often, the political realities of certain countries or regions are ignored, and the military is seen as the only solution to conflict. As Khouri noted, there must be a better grasp on promoting good governance and helping states provide critical services to the most vulnerable populations in the region.

33

# PANEL: EXPLORING INTERNATIONAL VIOLENT FAR-RIGHT MOVEMENTS AND MEASURES TAKEN BY STATES AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Michael Isikoff, Chief Investigative Correspondent, Yahoo! News

Dr. Bethan Johnson, Ernest May Fellow, Harvard University

Ms. Jessica Davis, President, Insight Threat Intelligence;

Senior Visiting Fellow, The Soufan Center

Mr. Irfan Saeed, Head of Anti-Terrorism Unit, OSCE

Ms. Maya Mirchandani, Senior Fellow, Observer Research Foundation

Opening a session focused on exploring international violent far-right movements and the responses they generated from states and international organizations, Sebastian Neave offered framing remarks related to the struggles of fighting extremism. On a personal note, he explained that the Airey Neave Trust was founded in the name his grandfather who was killed in car bomb attack by Irish nationalists, having escaped thrice from Nazi concentration camps and having had the honor of reading out indictments at the Nuremberg trials. Since its founding after his death, the organization has supported research by academics and non-governmental organizations investigating all aspects of extremism and terrorism. To this end, the subsequent panel, moderated by Michael Isikoff, examined the global threat posed by far-right extremists, with panelists Bethan Johnson, Jessica Davis, Irfan Saeed, and Maya Mirchandani presenting new trends, research, and policy approaches to counter the rising threat.

While he agreed the right-wing threat was indeed growing, Saeed explained that it had not emerged suddenly, but rather represented a “reinvigorated and improved threat” which the world had already seen in instances like the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995. The latest iteration of the threat was more inclusive, bringing together anti-government, anti-COVID prevention measure groups, and others into the same camp. While Saeed noted how the threat is “metastasizing in western societies” like the Nordic countries, United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, Mirchandani reminded the audience that right-wing extremism was not bound geographically to the West. Indeed, she noted how “muscular, identity-based, nationalist, hyper-nationalist politics...has become a rallying point for the politics of religious and cultural” identity in countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka.

“

I think the international connections are difficult to unpack because they're rather diffuse and not all that concrete.

— Ms. Jessica Davis



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Mr. Michael Isikoff, Mr. Irfan Saeed, Ms. Jessica Davis, Ms. Maya Mirchandani, Dr. Bethan Johnson

While some commentators have discussed international connections between various far-right groups in different countries, Davis said it was not actually clear how strong these connections were, although it was evident the groups were sharing ideology and propaganda. This put them in contrast with the Salafi-jihadist networks the West had been preoccupied with in recent decades, whose networks were clearer and easier to identify. This made right-wing ‘networks’ more difficult to tackle through financial controls and mechanisms. As some groups and individuals profited from the spread of right-wing ideology online, however, this brought up a conversation about whether freedom of speech should protect an individual’s right to earn money from potentially dangerous messaging.

Discussing targeting choices, Johnson noted how the rise of right-wing extremism in the United States had also taken place alongside an upswing in attacks on electrical power stations, while Saeed mentioned that these groups seemed more interested in targeting gatherings of minority groups. While hitting soft targets would allow them to generate headlines without significant funds or coordination, attacking critical infrastructure could serve as fodder for accelerationist ideologies by exposing the vulnerability of the state, Johnson highlighted.

Pressed to discuss solutions to the rising global tide of right-wing extremism, both Davis and Johnson offered some practical solutions. Given the amorphous nature of the far-right movement, Davis explained that “tackling the networks from a financial perspective is vital...especially looking at things like financial de-platforming and preventing people from making money on extremist propaganda.” Johnson explained that the enduring solution to combatting far-right extremism lies in confronting its spread online, where far-right messages are amplified, but that long-term solutions lie in, “critical conversations around education and how we raise children, [and] how we communicate between each other as adults in complex ever-changing society.”

Ultimately, the panelists agreed that confronting the increasing challenge of the global far-right movement would require a wide-ranging approach – one that should be based on local solutions and context.

35

## FIRESIDE CHAT

Hon. Ambassador Timmy T. Davis, U.S. Ambassador to Qatar

Mr. Ali Velshi, Host of “Velshi” and Chief Correspondent, MSNBC



SCAN TO WATCH



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Mr. Ali Velshi, Hon. Amb. Timmy T. Davis

Recalling how the United States had distanced itself from Qatar under the administration of former President Donald Trump, leaving its ambassadorial post vacant for five years while Qatar faced an international blockade imposed by its increasingly bold regional neighbors, interviewer Ali Velshi asked Ambassador Timmy Davis what the United States could do to prove itself a reliable partner to Qatar once more. To make the two countries’ bilateral relationship “transition-proof,” Davis said it was critical to establish Qatar’s significance in the minds of Americans, something he had been striving to do while engaging both U.S. officials and the American public.

To this end, Davis recounted how Qatar not only donated \$100 million to help American communities recover from Hurricane Katrina two decades prior, but also how it supported international causes that benefit American interests. Qatar had been early to speak up against the Russian invasion of Ukraine, delivered natural gas to Europe during its energy crisis, and had been steadfast in opposing normalization of the Assad regime in Syria. It also offered humanitarian assistance to the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip and maintained an important relationship with Iran at a time when the United States had largely walked away from both of those tense geopolitical situations. Where the United States lacked standing with Iran, Qatar had leverage that could be used for a number of important issues, whether that be re-negotiating the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action that once restrained Iran’s nuclear program, or to stymie Iran’s provision of weapons and drones to Russia in its war against Ukraine.

As Velshi pressed Davis on Qatar’s positions on issues like democracy, human rights, and labor rights – issues that were flagged in the international press as the country sought to burnish its reputation by hosting the World Cup – Davis acknowledge that the country was not yet “where they need to be” on a number of labor and human rights issues, but nonetheless, he believed the country remained a regional leader on these issues, given the progress it had made to date.



Qatar is open and optimistic and, I think, unhindered by the barnacles of history.

— Hon. Ambassador Timmy T. Davis

## IN CONVERSATION: THE ROLES OF CITIES IN FOSTERING RESILIENCE AND PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM (STRONG CITIES NETWORK)

Mr. Eric Rosand, Executive Director, Strong Cities Network;  
Senior Visiting Fellow, The Soufan Center

Dr. Jean-Yves Camus, Special Counsel of the Department of International Relations,  
City of Paris



SCAN TO WATCH

Cities deserved greater attention in the terrorism context when so many were concerned primarily with geopolitical and national dynamics, moderator Eric Rosand noted in his conversation with Jean-Yves Camus. National and regional-level responses are influenced by factors – partisanship, political cycles, divergent priorities – often unaligned with the needs of those directly impacted by terrorist violence. Only local leaders, he said, had the necessary grassroots access to craft effective prevention measures that could directly impact their communities. They could also work to shield their citizens’ rights from infringement via counterterrorism policies.

Speaking from his experience with the mayor’s office in Paris, Camus noted that although much of the power to prevent and police terrorism in France was in the state’s hands, the mayor was still criticized for failing to prevent violence. However, this did not mean the city was not powerless; the mayor could instruct local police to monitor communities for signs of radicalization, and formulate the initial emergency communications strategy, since city agents were more likely than national actors to be first on-site after an attack. City officials could also offer mental health resources – not just for victims, but for anyone living near the attack who might be struggling to process the traumatic event. In fact, Camus said his country’s decaying mental health system was one of France’s biggest obstacles to preventing terrorism.

While the world had grown more accustomed to planned acts of terrorism, Camus said he and the City of Paris had two new concerns: random acts of violence, as well as a growing national far-right movement driven by anti-immigrant backlash. While right-wing candidates polled poorly at city-level elections in Paris, it still had to contend with far-right demonstrations, something that was on the city’s radar ahead of the upcoming Olympics.



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Mr. Eric Rosand, Dr. Jean-Yves Camus

“

Local leaders and practitioners ... can’t wait for those conversations in these big conference rooms around the world to trickle down to their communities, to their cities. They have no choice but to act.

— Mr. Eric Rosand

## PANEL: CONFLICT PREVENTION AND MEDIATION AMIDST SHIFTING GEOPOLITICAL CHALLENGES

Mr. Ali Velshi, Host of “Velshi” and Chief Correspondent, MSNBC

H.E. Dr. Monica Juma, National Security Advisor to the President, Republic of Kenya

Mr. Aaron Nuutinen, Director for South and Central Asia and the Middle East, U.S. Department of State Bureau of Counterterrorism

H.E. Djibril Bassolé, Former Foreign Minister, Burkina Faso

Hon. R. Clarke Cooper, Nonresident Senior Fellow, Atlantic Council’s Scowcroft Middle East Security Initiative



SCAN TO WATCH

Challenges like perpetual political transitions, weak governance systems, retrenching democratic values, migration, terrorism, and climate crises do not exist in a vacuum, but often serve as threat multipliers, amplifying and catalyzing conflict and instability. These trends were the focus of moderator Ali Velshi’s conversation with Monica Juma, Aaron Nuutinen, Djibril Bassolé, and R. Clark Cooper. Juma stressed that while the Horn of Africa was particularly hard-hit by these “megatrends,” their impacts would not be confined to the region. Resolving them required multilateral and international solutions, which was why she said that her country, Kenya, engaged with neighbors like Somalia, South Sudan, and Ethiopia. Because her region does not experience the sort of nativism that limits international attention as it does in the West, Juma said Kenyans living in border areas do not see themselves as wholly distinct from their neighbors across the border. Instead, she said states in her region needed to run “soft borders” that allow for regional integration and mitigate tensions and conflict between cross-border communities.



H.E. Dr. Monica Juma

“

History has demonstrated that where women are involved in conflict prevention, peace is more sustainable.

— H.E. Dr. Monica Juma



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Mr. Ali Velshi, Hon. R. Clarke Cooper, H.E. Djibril Bassolé, H.E. Dr. Monica Juma, Mr. Aaron Nuutinen

Bassolé brought the discussion to West Africa, where he noted that surging terrorism was driven by the youth’s lack of confidence in their governments, which made them more sympathetic to terrorist movements. For this reason, governments needed to promote a dialogue-based approach and bring youth to the table to counter terrorism, as purely military responses “cannot bring peace and stability,” he reiterated. Nuutinen, from the U.S. Department of State, said the United States agreed with these concerns and had recently adopted a more civilian-led approach to counterterrorism. In this vein, he said the United States was moving to enable African partners to lead these efforts on the continent. Meanwhile, military partnerships such as the Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa and the Sahel G5 remained viable counterterrorism tools when hard force needed to be applied, Cooper pointed out.

Limited state capacity could exacerbate issues like poor governance, water insecurity, unemployment, and other local concerns that allow terrorist and illicit groups to easily recruit from among populations; Juma said it was therefore imperative to build states’ capacities to mitigate and prevent conflict, and to ensure instability does not impact neighboring countries and spread throughout a region. This could be accomplished by partnerships at multiple levels, as other entities can come to states’ aid to share their burden. State partners like Qatar could serve as mediators, she noted, though Cooper said that burden could also be shared by members of the private sector, who could also help address government capacity and budget issues, as sustainable development could support growth, build capacity, and manage risk.

Juma called for resources and support to be directed to areas where instability is most acute, such as the Sahel, and to regional bodies. Instability in the Sahel was also used as an example illustrating how military solutions have failed to bring lasting peace or stability. In light of the growing presence of mercenary organizations like the Wagner Group in the region, the panelists discussed how conflicts can be complicated further when governments invite private military companies to compensate for their own capacity issues, especially since these groups may further grievances in the long run and run afoul of local solutions to conflict. Stating that socio-economic concerns more often drive people towards terrorism or violent conflict rather than ideology, Nuutinen highlighted the necessity of whole-of-society, local approaches to address the root drivers of terrorism and violent extremism. Ultimately, the panelists agreed that upholding the values of the rules-based system, often exemplified in the UN Charter, takes commitment and responsibility from the international community.

## PANEL: EVOLVING SECURITY CHALLENGES AND THREAT LANDSCAPES

Mr. Mark Mazzetti, Washington Investigative Correspondent, New York Times

Ms. Rebecca Weiner, Assistant Commissioner of the Intelligence and Counterterrorism Bureau, New York City Police Department

Mr. Gregory LoGerfo, Deputy Coordinator for Regional and Multilateral Affairs, U.S. Department of State

Ms. Anjana Rajan, Assistant National Cyber Director for Technology Security, The White House

Col. Chris Costa (Ret.), Executive Director, International Spy Museum; Former Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Counterterrorism, U.S. National Security Council



SCAN TO WATCH

In the two decades since 9/11, global security threats have evolved significantly. Moderator Mark Mazzetti challenged panelists – all current and former government officials – Rebecca Weiner, Gregory LoGerfo, Anjana Rajan, and Chris Costa to explain their perspective on these trends. Although concerns about groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS remained, the advancement and proliferation of new technologies, shifting ideological frameworks, dissatisfaction with governments, and ever-changing geopolitical realities had broadened the focus of security practitioners. The multiplicity of threats, including those stemming from Salafi-jihadism, far-right and anti-government extremism, increasingly aggressive attempts to conduct targeted assassinations by states, and the war in Ukraine, to name a few, was underscored as a key challenge to both U.S. national and global security. The emergence of new threats and new actors, such as private military companies (PMCs) like the Wagner Group, in Africa was highlighted by LoGerfo as an important priority for the U.S. Department of State and its partners – and was also a recurring theme throughout the 2023 Global Security Forum. PMCs could bring further complexity to environments with active threats, including in the case of documented human rights abuses by Wagner, sophisticated disinformation campaigns, and access to valuable resources. The rise of anti-government extremism and political violence was seen by both Chris Costa and Rebecca Weiner as another key area of concern globally, demonstrated by recent cases in Germany and the United States.

“

It's been over fifty years since we first landed on the moon, and a lot of the world is looking kind of similar .... [T]he difference with 'Space Race Two' is that software is leading the way. And so cybersecurity policy will write the history books of how this plays out.

— Ms. Anjana Rajan



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Mr. Mark Mazzetti, Mr. Gregory LoGerfo, Ms. Anjana Rajan, Ms. Rebecca Weiner, Col. Chris Costa (Ret.)

The rapid development and expansion of technology, particularly in relation to cyber capabilities and social media, had helped evolve the threat landscape, but had also provided tools to tackle emerging threats, panelists highlighted. Weiner noted that the way that technology had widely undermined public faith in governance and institutions may have been even more socially destabilizing than traditional terrorist ideologies. She emphasized how easily violence proliferated from the digital space to the real world. New and emerging technologies such as generative artificial intelligence posed a potent threat by offering to enhance disinformation campaigns that have already helped destabilized democracies globally, Anjana Rajan and Weiner both pointed out. With the advancement of cyber technology and an expanding range of actors involved in cyberspace, cybersecurity will remain both a national security and economic prosperity imperative. The future of global conflict would not be limited to terrestrial arenas, Rajan told the audience, with cyberspace and outer space becoming increasingly important in security strategies. As technology continued to evolve, security practitioners at various levels would need to adapt their responses and the partners they engage with, including private sector companies. LoGerfo highlighted the importance of adaptability, flexibility, and public-private partnerships in addressing this threat, which was reiterated by several other panelists.

Despite the evolution of the terrorist threat landscape, all panelists called for embracing the lessons learned from the last two decades of counterterrorism efforts. Rather than abandon knowledge and tools developed in the wake of 9/11, panelists emphasized the importance of repurposing them to tackle the emerging threats outlined. Thus, using pre-existing tools, building partnerships in the private sector and with other governments, and empowering those partners with resources were all highlighted as important solutions for addressing current and future challenges.

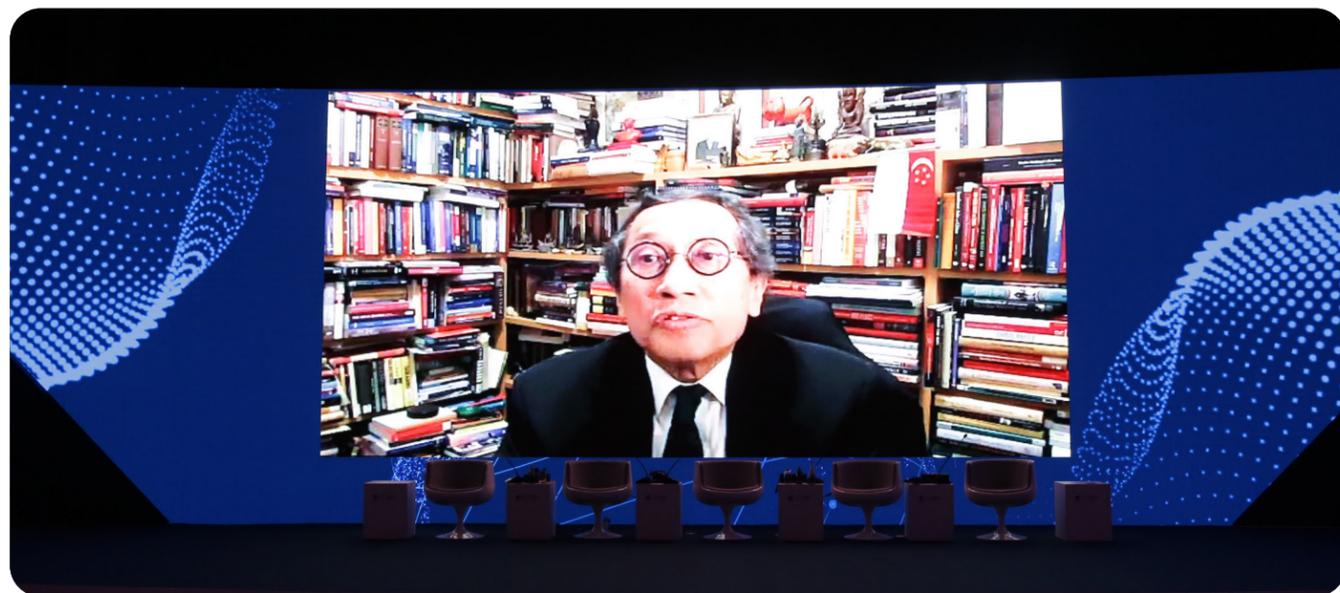
## FIRESIDE CHAT

H.E. Ambassador Bilahari Kausikan, Chairman, Middle East Institute, National University of Singapore; Former Ambassador-at-Large, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Singapore

Mr. Peter Bergen, Vice President for Global Studies and Fellows, New America



SCAN TO WATCH



ON SCREEN: H.E. Amb. Bilahari Kausikan

Days after news broke that Chinese mediation had helped renew diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Bilahari Kausikan of Singapore spoke with Peter Bergen about China's influence and strategy in the Middle East. Kausikan argued that it made sense that China's growing status as a global superpower would draw it into the Middle East. This was particularly significant for the fact that it was happening at a time U.S. interest in the region appeared to be waning. For a long time, the United States was, in Kausikan's view, the most important external power in the Middle East, with a core interest in securing stable energy supplies for its partners, allies, and itself. However, as the United States had worked to wean itself off its Middle Eastern energy dependence, and as its government no longer seemed to believe it faced an existential threat from Middle Eastern terrorist groups or adversary states like Iran, he concluded there was no longer as clear a need for direct U.S. involvement in the region.

While the United States appeared to be shifting away from a policy of directly intervening in the region's affairs, Kausikan suggested the country still held a vital role as an "offshore balancer." Meanwhile, China's fundamental choice in engaging with the region should be based on economic rather than security considerations. To continue its offshore balancing role in the Middle East, Kausikan said the United States should prioritize its core interests in the region, such as counterterrorism, without overreaching or engaging in a "forever war." Meanwhile, the United States could continue to act as the security provider for all Gulf States, even if it did not do so indirectly through partnerships with countries like Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, he added. Seasoned by the lessons of recent American ventures in the Middle East, Kausikan cautioned Beijing against overextending itself in the region, suggesting that China consider the long-term viability of its current relationships with Israel, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. Instead of panicking over China's entry into the Middle East, the international community should instead monitor China's behavior and hold it accountable for any negative impacts its actions have on regional stability, he said.

“

I saw [China's Belt and Road Initiative] as a collection of projects wrapped up in a slogan presented as a strategy.

— H.E. Ambassador Bilahari Kausikan

## FIRESIDE CHAT

Dr. Joshua Geltzer, Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy Homeland Security Advisor, U.S. National Security Council

Mr. Mark Mazzetti, Washington Investigative Correspondent, New York Times



ON SCREEN: Dr. Joshua Geltzer - ON STAGE: Mr. Mark Mazzetti

“

The REMVEs are ... better described as a movement than a network.

— Dr. Joshua Geltzer

Setting the stage, Joshua Geltzer shared insights with Mark Mazzetti about how the U.S. government's understanding of terrorism had evolved under the administration of President Joe Biden. Geltzer pointed to the recent shooting in Buffalo, New York as a “microcosm” of the new American domestic extremism movement, as the shooter was radicalized online into racially/ethnically-motivated extremism (“REMVE” in U.S. government parlance) and took inspiration from extremist acts beyond U.S. borders to plot his own attack.

He also asserted that there was a transnational element at play in the REMVE movement: individuals reveled in and encouraged each other's acts of violence, shared ideologies and world views, travelled to meet one another, and, to some degree, shared finances. However, the relatively low cost of REMVE attacks – often shootings carried out by individuals or small groups – meant right-wing groups were not dependent on significant cross-border financial flows, limiting the ability of the U.S. government and its Department of Treasury to identify and cut them off. So-called REMVE ‘networks’ were actually more akin to ‘movements.’ They were dissimilar from organizations like Al-Qaeda or ISIS, in that they were more diffuse and lacked clear hierarchies. As Geltzer put it, individual extremists may not consider themselves “card-carrying adherents” of any particular organization or fit neatly into its structure. Their ideologies and justifications for violence were also vaguer and less consistent, as they incorporated new elements like false claims of rigged elections or concerns about the overreach of public health restrictions enacted to combat COVID-19, he added.

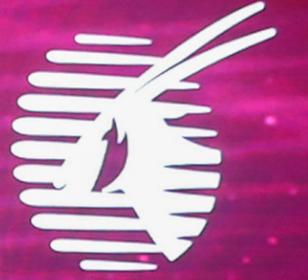
Why had the Biden administration not done more to designate domestic terror organizations, especially those of the far-right, Mazzetti asked, particularly after the Trump administration set the precedent by designating the Russian Imperial Movement as a foreign terrorist organization? He noted that some of the country's “Five Eyes” allies had designated American groups like the Proud Boys. Geltzer said the movement's de-centralized nature made it difficult to comport these groups or their individuals within U.S. legal and policy thresholds for “foreign terrorist organization” or “specially designated global terrorist” designations. However, he hinted that the government was working to overcome these hurdles: “Ideologically, nothing's off-limits.... I think you'll see more to come.”



منتدى  
الأمن  
العالمي

GLOBAL  
SECURITY  
FORUM™

QATAR  
القَطْرِيَّة  
AIRWAYS



QATAR AIRWAYS GALA DINNER

# DAY 3

MARCH 15, 2023



## FIRESIDE CHAT

Hon. Christopher Miller, Author; Former Acting Secretary of Defense, United States  
Mr. Ali Velshi, Host of “Velshi” and Chief Correspondent, MSNBC

Discussing U.S. national security and foreign policy concerns with Ali Velshi, Christopher Miller characterized U.S. military spending as one of the biggest threats to the country's national security and called for cutting military spending by 40 to 50 percent. While great power competition and a transformed threat landscape are often used to justify large military expenditures, Miller said an outsized military budget could be seen as aggressive by other nations and reinforce the narratives of adversarial states. Redirecting spending toward technology, including cyber technology and information operations, as well as diplomacy, would better position the United States to better handle evolving threats, he argued. Miller underscored that the United States should recalibrate its strategy by repositioning operational capabilities without disengaging from the world, including drawing down forces stationed across the world to operate from U.S. soil.

Despite advancement in areas such as drone warfare, the impact of emerging technologies was subject to limitation, Miller noted. Supply chain disruptions, for instance, could severely impact the battlefield and warfighting abilities. Russia's war in Ukraine and the resilience of the Ukrainian people had also illustrated the existential and unquantifiable dimensions of warfare that exist beyond the scope of technology. International institutions should be reimagined to be agile enough to respond to situations like the war in Ukraine, said Miller, who called for the United States to move beyond a Cold War paradigm of geopolitics. Public-private partnerships and recruiting young people into public service would be key to cultivating a sense of agility and to recalibrate how the United States deals with national security concerns, Miller said.



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Mr. Ali Velshi, Hon. Christopher Miller

“

We thought that technology could replace mass and manpower...[but] they really didn't put in their algorithms [human elements] like the fighting spirit.

— Hon. Christopher Miller

## FIRESIDE CHAT

Maj. Gen. Michel Friedling, Former Commander of French Joint Space Command, French Republic

Dr. Colin P. Clarke, Senior Research Fellow, The Soufan Center



SCAN TO WATCH

Discussing the space domain's challenges and importance with TSC Senior Research Fellow Colin Clarke, Michel Friedling spoke at length about different ways that space impacts daily life, from the economy to defense and security. He mentioned that security on earth plays out in space and vice-versa, before going on to speak about why information sharing amongst likeminded countries is so critical, and how this extended to public-private partnerships. The conversation also highlighted the role of satellite-based private internet companies like Starlink, which had been used in the war in Ukraine, as well as Amazon's Project Kuiper.

The siege of Mariupol – a bloody battle in the Ukrainian war, where satellites were critical to helping the Ukrainian forces get information out to the world about the brutality they were experiencing – illustrated the relationship between space and information warfare on the ground. Searching for historical analogues to understand the evolution of the space domain, the conversation pivoted to the 15th and 16th centuries, a period in which Portugal took risks to dominate the high seas. This era could offer lessons in 2023 as the United States, Russia, China, and other near peers engaged in great power competition. Friedling also spoke of the relationship between submarine cables and space infrastructure; a recent saga in which a Chinese surveillance balloon had been detected and shot down over the United States; and challenges related to space congestion, space debris, and orbital threats. The fireside chat also featured a discussion on the role of international law and treaties as applied to space, and steps that the international community could take to promote norms of good behavior. However, even if such norms were established, this raised further questions. Would nations even know if countries were to consistently violate those norms of space, and if such a violation could be proved, what consequences should be imposed on the violator?



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Dr. Colin P. Clarke, Maj. Gen. Michel Friedling

“

Security on earth is played out in space and in cyberspace, and it works the other way around: security in space is played out on earth.

— Maj. Gen. Michel Friedling

## PANEL: ADDRESSING THE PRACTICE OF HOSTAGE-TAKING BY STATE AND NON-STATE ACTORS

Mr. Ali Velshi, Host of “Velshi” and Chief Correspondent, MSNBC

Ambassador Roger Carstens, Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, United States

Mrs. Diane Foley, President and Founder, James W. Foley Legacy Foundation

Mr. Christopher O’Leary, Director of Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell, Federal Bureau of Investigation

Mr. Sam Goodwin, Advisory Board Member, James W. Foley Legacy Foundation,

Ms. Vina Nadjibulla, Adjunct Professor, University of British Columbia



SCAN TO WATCH

The practice of hostage-taking by both state and non-state actors was a growing concern at the time of this panel. While global power shifts had created enormous challenges for advocates of hostages and those who had been wrongfully detained, they also created new opportunities for international cooperation. Speakers in this session presented the challenges, explored ways to better support hostages and their families, and shared lessons learned and insights that can inform critical national and international efforts to stem this cruel practice.

This session commenced with a conversation between Roger Carstens and Ali Velshi. Following a comprehensive hostage policy review in 2015, spurred on by the killings of four American hostages by ISIS, the U.S. government had made important strides in its hostage recovery enterprise, including the creation of a dedicated diplomatic office to support hostages and their families. Entities across the U.S. government had begun working together in a more strategic and streamlined fashion after learning from past failures, Carstens explained. As the conversation folded into a panel discussion, Diane Foley noted clear signs of progress, such as the passage of the Robert Levinson Hostage Recovery and Hostage-Taking Accountability Act, but also flagged troubling new developments, such as a surge in Americans detained abroad by state actors. Sam Goodwin, who himself was previously held in Syria, noted the importance of the strengthened U.S. hostage recovery enterprise, while also recognizing the important work needed to support hostages following their release. Former hostages may struggle to reintegrate into society following captivity, and Goodwin pointed out that individuals may need support addressing their physical and psychological health needs, financial struggles, and other challenges.

Hostage-taking and wrongful detention posed a problem not only for the United States, but also for its allies in the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada. Only the United States, however, had developed such a comprehensive hostage recovery enterprise, and thanks to the Foley Foundation, it was also the only member of this group that possessed data testifying to the scale of the problem. Vina Nadjibulla stressed the importance of multilateralism in confronting the hostage issue, and highlighted Canada’s leadership in the Declaration Against Arbitrary Detention in State-to-State Relations. With over 70 endorsements to date, Canada was building a coalition of like-minded countries to band together against the practice at the international level, she explained. While the United States had taken important steps to restructure its hostage recovery enterprise since failing to secure the release of James Foley and other ISIS captives, Christopher O’Leary agreed that there was still a need to further develop international partnerships and multilateral consensus to better address the threat. He pointed to the International Convention against the Taking of Hostages, adopted by the United Nations in 1979, as a good basis for his recommendations for how the international community should respond to this threat.

Key themes appeared throughout the session: recognition of the important strides the U.S. had taken since 2015 to build up its infrastructure in the face of past failures; the need for evidence-driven hostage response policies; the role of civil society, non-governmental actors, the media, private sector entities, and trusted third-parties; and, the need for multilateral efforts and recognition of states like Qatar, who had assisted in the safe return of several American hostages.

“

There’s some element of wanting to get the message out to Americans that the world’s a risky place. Some places are risky for Americans to go, even if you’re involved in tourism or normal business practices.

— Ambassador Roger Carstens



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Mr. Ali Velshi, Amb. Roger Carstens, Mrs. Diane Foley, Mr. Christopher O’Leary, Ms. Vina Nadjibulla, Mr. Sam Goodwin

# PANEL: AFGHANISTAN – CURRENT CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

Mr. Bobby Ghosh, Bloomberg Opinion Editor, Bloomberg

H.E. Hekmat Karzai, Chairman, Centre for Conflict and Peace Studies;

Former Deputy Foreign Minister, Afghanistan

H.E. Fawzia Koofi, Former Second Deputy Speaker of Afghan Parliament;

Leading Women's Rights Activist

Mr. Saad Mohseni, Co-Founder and Chairman, MOBY Media Group



More than a year after the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Taliban's subsequent takeover, the prospects on the ground looked far bleaker for civil society and women. Meanwhile, conflict between various terrorist groups there posed major challenges for the country and its citizens. This panel brought together leaders of Afghan politics, women's rights, and media – Hekmat Karzai, Fawzia Koofi, and Saad Mohseni – together with moderator Bobby Ghosh to discuss the state of Afghanistan amid major upheaval. While the Taliban had initially promised to change its governance style upon taking power to be less repressive in order to soothe the concerns of the international community, the panelists noted how they had failed to live up to these assurances.

“In reality, it's the same Taliban [as before],” said Koofi. The group had failed to deliver on its security promises to national and international audiences, she added, noting that she believed ISIS was active in the country and pointing to the fact that the deceased former Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri had been housed in Kabul when he was killed by a U.S. airstrike. Karzai seconded these views and stressed his disappointment in the Taliban's governance, noting how the group had excluded women and girls from sectors of everyday life, especially education, and how this was a commitment made by the upper echelons of Taliban leadership. However, access to school on its own would be insufficient to cure the problems created under the Taliban regime, Koofi noted, since a Taliban curriculum would inherently be a radicalizing one.

Speaking to the Taliban's approach to his media company after the takeover, Mohseni said the group was initially “actually quite accommodating and tolerant simply because they didn't have the bandwidth. But then they became quite restrictive,” whether that was in terms of women appearing on camera or in airing music and entertainment programs. However, he said there was a “tug of war” occurring within the Taliban that may not be apparent to observers outside the country, with internal debate over how to govern the country.

“

There was a general consensus that we were going to work on issues collectively, but after the collapse, many of the specific points we agreed upon ..., particularly girls' education, many of us are quite disappointed in.”

— H.E. Hekmat Karzai

“

The ideology and existence of the Taliban is based on hegemony of power and ideology. The moment they open up and melt into the society, their existence is called into question.

— H.E. Fawzia Koofi



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Mr. Bobby Ghosh, H.E. Fawzia Koofi, H.E. Hekmat Karzai, Mr. Saad Mohseni

In striving to understand the Taliban's hardline approach to governance, moderator Ghosh also considered the possibility that competition with Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISIS-K) in Afghanistan had driven the Taliban to adopt hardline positions out of concern that should they show laxity in religious rulings cost the group members to ISIS-K, from its foot soldiers all the way up to senior leaders.

After the Taliban released thousands of Islamic State members from prison following the takeover of Afghanistan, Islamic State began recruiting more foreign fighters, especially from the region — Arabs, Central Asians, and Pakistanis. ISIS-K has focused a lot of its attention on attacking minorities in Afghanistan, especially religious minorities like Shia Hazara, and had also targeted foreign entities, including Russian, Chinese, and Pakistani state targets.

The international community had thus far failed to hold the Taliban accountable for its actions over the past year and a half. Koofi argued that other Islamic countries, where girls do enjoy the right to attend school, had a particular responsibility to pressure the Taliban to reverse this disastrous decision. The United States and other countries need to use leverage they hold with the delivery of food aid and other resources so long as the Taliban continues down the path it is on, she stressed.

## FIRESIDE CHAT

H.E. Hassan Al-Thawadi, Secretary General of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, State of Qatar  
Mr. Kevin Baron, Executive Editor, Defense One



“

There was a sense of Arab unity and ownership, a sense of pride. Arab people felt represented. We showcased an Arab nation’s ability to execute at the highest level and do it in a safe manner.

— H.E. Hassan Al-Thawadi

As a platform for cultural exchange, the recent 2022 World Cup offered Qatar and other Arab nations an opportunity to showcase national and regional cultures, customs, and hospitality. Joining Kevin Baron to discuss the staging of the international sporting event in Qatar – particularly notable as the first World Cup hosted by an Arab nation – Hassan Al-Thawadi discussed the multi-year preparation Qatar went through to prepare for the event, the cultural influence of the tournament and what that meant for Qatar and the Gulf, and addressed criticisms that had been directed at the tournament.

Al-Thawadi described the tournament as a “celebration of the Global South,” providing unprecedented access to fans from countries that were often unable to attend tournaments hosted in other parts of the world. He also highlighted it as a platform for cultural exchange and said that international sporting events should steer clear of international politics, referring to instances when activists and governments had called for the banning of athletes from countries like Russia or Israel to participate in such events. Pressed by Baron to address the criticisms Qatar faced around the treatment of migrant workers, the LGBTQ+ community, and other human rights issues in the country, Al-Thawadi noted that the tournament had in fact contributed to the government accelerating several reforms, particularly with regard to labor. In addition to its inclusivity and attendance, he said another clear success of the tournament was security and fan safety. In the lead up to the tournament, Qatar built on strong relationships with security stakeholders internationally to focus on prevention, but had done so without having to employ an overwhelming visible security presence. Al-Thawadi said that after putting thirteen years of planning and preparations into this World Cup, Qatar had “a wealth of experience to build upon” as it prepared to host the AFC Asian Cup in 2024 and the Asian Games in 2030.



H.E. Hassan Al-Thawadi

## PANEL: TERRORISM & TECHNOLOGY IN A POST-COVID WORLD (CTED GLOBAL RESEARCH NETWORK)

Dr. David Scharia, Chief of Branch,  
UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED)  
Mr. Malik Samuel, Researcher, Institute for Security Studies Africa  
Dr. Laura Courchesne, Future of Conflict Fellow, International Crisis Group  
Ms. Rachel Fielden, International Campaigns Manager, Moonshot  
Mr. Priyank Mathur, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Mythos Labs



SCAN TO WATCH



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Dr. David Scharia, Mr. Malik Samuel, Dr. Laura Courchesne, Ms. Rachel Fielden, Mr. Priyank Mathur

As technology emboldened terrorist actors while becoming more centralized in everyday lives as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, moderator David Scharia discussed the implications of this shift with experts in extremism and technology: Malik Samuel, Laura Courchesne, Rachel Fielden and Priyank Mathur. Extremist groups do not all employ the same social media tactics, these panelists pointed out as they discussed at least three separate categories of non-state armed groups' use of digital platforms and tools. The first type took aim at international audiences and included English-language content created by the Taliban to denigrate their U.S. opponents and draw scrutiny on them by human rights groups.

Discussing the second category – social media content aimed at domestic audiences – Courchesne recalled how Libyan and Syrian armed groups used social media to highlight their governance offerings to local populations as well as their own judicial and legal developments during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this vein, Fielden also mentioned how Indonesian extremist groups took advantage of the pandemic – a period in which politicians and government officials were busy smearing one another – to gain credibility as “arbiters of health information on Twitter.”

“

[Islamic State – West African Province] uses technology ... to show its activities, but also to counter the narrative of security forces. Because like it or not, the security forces, to some extent, also engage in propaganda.

— Mr. Malik Samuel

In the third category, non-state armed groups geared social media tactics towards the battlefield. This could be seen when the Taliban encouraged members of the Afghan National Security Forces to defect, livestreaming conflict as part of a “psychological strategy” days before taking over a town. It could also be seen when they sent “Taliban reporters” to tout the benefits of life under Taliban occupation after gaining territory. Likewise, Samuel pointed to how, as the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) shifted to a “hearts and minds” strategy to win over local populations, it used technology to distribute propaganda and counter the narratives of national security forces. In doing so, the group sent dedicated video teams into the field with its fighters, equipping vehicles with Wi-Fi so they could upload video content within hours of combat and delegitimize local and national security efforts.

Whereas armed extremist groups thrived on the power of social media, the panelists agreed that governments and others seeking to combat these groups often fell flat in this space. Practitioners and researchers combatting disinformation often fell into a game of “whack-a-mole,” said Fielden, debunking falsehoods with methods and messaging that were could not match the engagement and entertainment of the conspiracy-minded content they were seeking to block out. For this reason, her organization used gamification to better engage users in media literacy efforts. Likewise, Mathur said the U.S. government had not demonstrated strong competencies when it came producing content that resonated with target audiences, falling short of ISIS' flashier, more enticing propaganda, for example. In his own career, Mathur had drawn from his professional experiences in advertising and comedy to craft humorous content that could capture audiences more effectively as he sought to counter radicalizing narratives online.

While governments needed more nimble strategic communications to operate in this domain, Fielden recognized they also may not have “a huge amount of risk appetite.” To learn from their social media failures – where governments refrained from adopting these technologies early on while non-state adversaries stole the initiative – Mathur said governments must look ahead to employ emerging technologies like generative artificial intelligence (AI) and the metaverse. Generative AI was already being eyed by illicit transnational groups and even state actors to “flood the information space and create large volumes of disinfo and propaganda.” To prepare for this threat, Mathur called for governments to employ “systemic upskilling programs” for information operators to make sure they stayed abreast of the threat.

## PANEL: COUNTERING EXTREMISM, HATE & ONLINE EXTREMISM

Mr. Michael Iskioff, Chief Investigative Correspondent, Yahoo! News

Ms. Amy Larsen, Director of Strategy and Business Management, Microsoft

Ms. Dina Hussein, Global Head of Policy Development and Expert Partnerships for Counterterrorism and Dangerous Orgs Policy, Meta

Mr. Zach Schwitzky, Co-Founder, Limbik



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Mr. Michael Iskioff, Ms. Dina Hussein, Ms. Amy Larsen, Mr. Zach Schwitzky

Given the cross-cutting nature of modern information, technology, and security environments, it was valuable to bring together the complementary perspective of those operating from within major technology hubs and social media platforms – Dina Hussein and Amy Larsen – with those like Zach Schwitzky working outside these spaces and monitoring them for dangerous content. In light of recent widespread scrutiny and criticism of major social media platforms in recent years, moderator Michael Iskioff pressed Hussein to explain how Meta monitored and/or moderated potential terrorist and/or hateful content on its platform.

The company, she said, took a three-pronged approach: policy creation, content assessment, and partnerships. With bespoke policies covering dangerous organizations and individuals – a category which encompassed terrorists, hate organizations, criminal organizations, and mass murderers – Meta identified content deemed to be in violation of these policies and then removed the content from the platform. To counter information threats, Schwitzky of Limbik said his organization evaluates content based on whether the information is believed by a segment of the population and whether it is likely to elicit engagement online. Regardless of veracity, he said content is potentially consequential just by meeting those considerations. To identify dangerous content on Facebook, Meta also deployed automated tools like image and audio matching to block predetermined pieces of policy-violating content from being uploaded in the first place. Partnerships, including collaborations with third-party organizations, were seen as important to Meta, as was the need for a nuanced approach to content moderation that did not overly infringe on free speech protections.

Larsen of Microsoft discussed the importance of technology in maintaining democratic infrastructure, particularly in response to the war in Ukraine, which involved cyber activity and disinformation. Microsoft had responded to the crisis by providing free cloud services, tracking cyber activity, and using AI mapping to expose Russian war crimes. The company also provided 31 million minutes of free calling, donated \$430 million in goods and services, and created partnerships to provide training, grants, and connect Ukraine's schools. With 97% of Microsoft's business derived from democracies, by her count, it made sound business sense to support democratic countries like Ukraine by promoting stability, predictability, and a positive economic environment. To support the goals of promoting and protecting democratic processes, Microsoft had broadly worked to restore and rebuild journalism, protect journalists, and produce media literacy content.

Discussing lessons learned and successful approaches, Schwitzky argued that, from his organization's standpoint, "pre-bunking" is more effective than debunking, and said that predictive capability is key to do this is. Calling for a more proactive approach to countering hate speech and disinformation, he recommended investing in education and awareness-raising efforts, as well as fostering more meaningful dialogue and engagement with people who hold different perspectives.

Overall, the panelists all stressed the importance of collaboration and partnership between government, civil society, and the private sector in addressing the complex challenges of extremism, hate speech, and disinformation online. They emphasized the need for a multi-stakeholder approach that prioritizes transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights and civil liberties. They also acknowledged the limitations of technology in addressing these issues and emphasized the need for broader systemic change to address underlying social, economic, and political factors that contribute to the spread of hate speech and disinformation online.

“

The actual first cyber shots [of the Russian invasion of Ukraine] were fired on February 23rd .... And we were able to see those from our headquarters in Redmond, Washington, before anyone else was able to.

— Ms. Amy Larsen

“

I hope that we continue to be humble enough to say we're not going to be able to do this perfectly alone.

— Ms. Dina Hussein



## CLOSING REMARKS

Ms. Lori Wachs, Board Member, The Soufan Center; Partner, Springboard Capital

Lori Wachs, a member of The Soufan Center's board of directors, closed the 2023 Global Security Forum by thanking the audience for engaging with this year's event, and thanked Qatar's new prime minister for setting the stage with his opening remarks. Wachs recalled the topics of this year's discussion topics, which highlighted moments of resilience and opportunity that shone through a year filled with much instability and insecurity – the rebuilding of Mosul, the ongoing fights by both Ukrainian soldiers and Afghan activists to defend their futures, the promising future of Africa, and the first FIFA World Cup hosted by an Arab nation. Finally, she reflected on the theme of cooperation that had persisted throughout many of this year's sessions, reminding her audience of the important roles that national, regional, and international actors and institutions played in creating necessary frameworks.

## MEDIA COVERAGE

The 2023 Global Security Forum included participation from journalists from national media outlets in Qatar, as well as from among international media. This year's GSF included moderators from a range of leading media outlets, to include MSNBC's Ali Velshi, Semafor's Steve Clemons, Bloomberg's Bobby Ghosh and Paul Wallace, the New York Times' Mark Mazzetti, Defense One's Kevin Baron, and Yahoo! News' Michael Isikoff. The event was covered by national and international media outlets and coverage addressed a wide range of topics: the situation around hostages and wrongful detainees, including the release of Paul Rusesabagina; reflections on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; the impact on the energy sector following Russia's invasion of Ukraine; the successes and opportunities following the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar; the impact of disinformation on online safety; and, the need for mediation and peaceful mechanisms for resolving conflicts in today's geopolitical landscape – among other topics and themes.

News and commentary from this year's Global Security Forum was covered by outlets including the New York Times, MSNBC, Reuters, AFP, Al Jazeera, The Times of London, and Semafor. Defense One continued to serve as a GSF media partner in 2023, publishing a wide range of opinion pieces on topics ranging from defending values in a complex international climate, the rise of China on the geopolitical stage, the evolution of hostage-taking by state and non-state actors, far-right violence in the global south, the financing of far-right movements, and justice for victims of the Islamic State.

### The New York Times



"The official said that the arrangements were discussed during a meeting last week between Mr. Kagame and the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, at the Global Security Forum in Doha."

### MSNBC



"Nobody is going to come home if we will not speak to the people holding our citizens," says Diane Foley of the James W. Foley Legacy Foundation with MSNBC's Ali Velshi. She discussed the importance of dialogue in securing the release of Americans held captive abroad following the Global Security Forum.

### REUTERS



"Kagame has said his country would not be bullied over Rusesabagina, but on Monday appeared to suggest that there was room for compromise. "We don't get stuck with our past. We move into the future," Kagame said during a video interview at the Global Security Forum.

### Defense One



"I write this from yet another international security conference, the Global Security Forum...Many of the attendees have experience in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Ukraine conflict."

### SEMAFOR



"The United States and its allies are never going to let those factories fall into Chinese hands," Amb. Robert O'Brien told me during a conversation airing today at the Global Security Forum organized by the Soufan Center in Doha, Qatar.

### Financial Afrik



"We must dialogue with armed terrorist groups". This serious sentence pronounced by General Djibril Bassolé, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso, caused a sensation during the very restricted Global Security Forum in Doha (Qatar).

# INTERVIEWS



**AMBASSADOR NATHAN SALES**  
Senior Fellow  
The Soufan Center



**NAUREEN CHOWDHURY FINK**  
Executive Director  
The Soufan Center



**DR. COLIN P. CLARKE**  
Senior Research Fellow  
The Soufan Center



**COL. CHRIS COSTA (RET.)**  
Executive Director  
International Spy Museum



**DR. DAISY MUIBU**  
Assistant Professor  
University of Alabama



**MAX ROSE**  
Vice-Chairman  
The Soufan Group



## ملتقى الأمن العالمي يناقش المشاركة في رسم معالم النظام العالمي الجديد

شهد رؤساء دول وغرباء وفاعلون وصناع قرار على صهوة الجاهل والجهل والجهل العالمي من أجل مواجهة التحديات العالمية ومعالجة القضايا الملحة الملحة والملحة والتهديدات المبرحة والتهديدات المبرحة والتهديدات المبرحة... (The text continues with details of the forum's discussions on global security challenges and the role of international cooperation.)

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

He said it wasn't clear, beyond anecdotal suspicions, that Russia had been emboldened to detain Americans in order to be able to negotiate for the release of Russian prisoners held in the U.S. And he focused on a recent string of successes in securing the release of 26 Americans, and pledged to bring Messrs. Gershkovich and Whelan home.



"We'll find a way and a path to bring both Paul Whelan and Evan Gershkovich home," said Roger Carstens, the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs. PHOTO: KARIM JAAFAR/AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

"We'll find a way and a path to bring both Paul Whelan and Evan Gershkovich home," he said on MSNBC.

Mr. Whelan is a corporate security executive from Michigan whom the U.S.



## انطلاق أعمال منتدى الأمن العالمي في الدوحة غداً

من سفير حسن كركاشي رئيس مجلس الوزراء وزير الخارجية... (The article discusses the launch of the Global Security Forum in Doha and the participation of various international leaders.)

## قادة وصناع قرار في أكثر من 40 دولة يشاركون بالمنتدى

يشهد المنتدى العالمي للأمن العالمي... (The article highlights the participation of over 40 world leaders and the forum's focus on global security challenges.)



US ambassador Timmy Davis in conversation with Ali Velshi yesterday at the Global Security Forum 2023. PICTURE: Shaji Kayamkulam

## Qatar a remarkable place with great stability, modernity, culture: US envoy

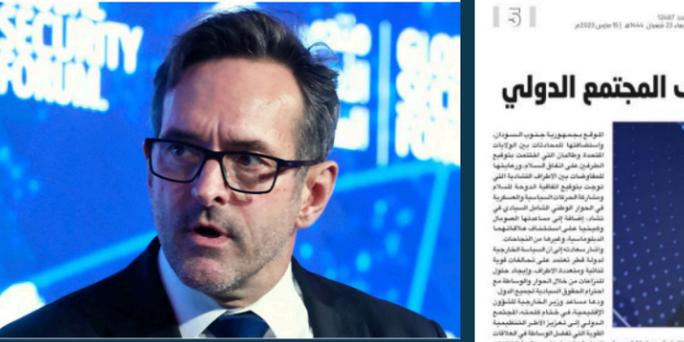
The Global Security Forum 2023, under the slogan "Reshaping the features of the global system: conflicts, crises and co-operation," focuses on the international approach to managing conflicts, crises and co-operation.

The US envoy also praised the remarkable development witnessed in Qatar at various levels and its stability, security and openness to the world. He highlighted the stable and distinctive environment it provides for companies, businesses and other areas as well.



## US hostage envoy quietly traveled to Venezuela this week

By Jennifer Handler, CNN Updated 7:33 PM EDT, Wed, June 21, 2023



## قطر شريك موثوق ووسيط ناجح باعتراف المجتمع الدولي

استعرضت تجارب الدولة في الوساطات وحل النزاعات... (The article discusses Qatar's role as a mediator and its international recognition.)

highly appreciates what Qatar is doing at the regional and international levels, and

ist Ali Velshi, host of Velshi and a chief correspondent at MSNBC.



The 2023 Global Security Forum convened hundreds of participants from across the world. This year marked the fifth installment of our annual gathering, which came together in Doha to discuss the theme of conflict, crisis, and cooperation in a geopolitical system marked by seismic shifts in power and norms. I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to all of the speakers, partners, attendees, and others involved in a successful event this year. I thank the team at The Soufan Center, alongside teams from the Qatar International Academy for Security Studies (QIASS) and The Soufan Group, for their hard work and dedication on this year's forum. I thank our hosts in Qatar for welcoming our attendees once more, and the 2023 GSF Strategic Partners for their incredible support and engagement.

This year's GSF addressed a diverse range of issues from ongoing conflicts and insecurity in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Ukraine; regional dynamics in Africa, the Asia-Pacific, and across the Middle East; shifts in terrorism from jihadist groups to a transnational far-right; the impacts of global energy insecurity; and the role for mediation and negotiation in resolving contemporary conflicts. The event convened speakers representing diverse views and perspectives to equip our audience with a comprehensive understanding of today's evolving security dynamics. We heard from the Prime Minister of Qatar and the President of Rwanda; from officials representing the United States, Qatar, Singapore, Iraq, the Maldives, and Kenya; perspectives from the African Union, the United Nations, and the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe; and from experts, journalists, and academics from all over the world.

The defining feature of the Global Security Forum is its distinctly global makeup. Our diversity of topics, speakers, and perspectives allows us to understand global shifts and challenges. A recurrent theme throughout this year's forum was the need for multilateral responses to shared challenges, underscoring the important role that partnerships and cooperation can play in global peace and security. As the geopolitical climate becomes more complex and great power rivalry shapes the international system, this year's forum shed light on the trendlines in global security.

I hope the findings and recommendations set out in this report will contribute to informing conversations and policy decisions in the years ahead. I thank our attendees and audiences once more, and hope to see you all at next year's Global Security Forum.

With great thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ali Soufan".

**Ali Soufan**  
Founder, The Soufan Center

## ABOUT THE SOUFAN CENTER

The Soufan Center (TSC) is an independent non-profit organization offering research, analysis, and strategic dialogue on foreign policy challenges with a particular focus on global security, conflict prevention and resolution, and the rule of law. Our work is underpinned by an emphasis on prevention, mitigation, and a recognition that human rights and human security perspectives are critical to credible, effective, and sustainable solutions. As a bipartisan organization, TSC fills a niche role by producing objective and innovative analyses and recommendations that shape strategic policy and dialogue and equip governments, international organizations, the private sector, and civil society to act effectively.

## ABOUT QATAR INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY FOR SECURITY STUDIES

The Qatar International Academy for Security Studies (QIASS) is a professional institute working to help raise security standards, promote knowledge, and facilitate cooperation within the Gulf Region and across the globe. At QIASS, we prepare our clients for the complex challenges of today's world through meticulous training and innovative techniques, by facilitating excellence in education and research, and by forging lasting security partnerships across nations and cultures.

QIASS serves multiple market sectors, including government, commercial, and non-profit. We work collaboratively with our clients, often partnering with leading global education and strategic policy organizations, to ensure exceptional results measured by the most rigorous standards.

QIASS is a City and Guilds (C&G) accredited institution. Clients gain additional assurance knowing that our training services are externally monitored, assessed, and evaluated by a prestigious UK-based academic awarding body established in 1878. As a City and Guilds Centre, QIASS delivers and awards International Vocational Qualifications (IVQs) and is the longest-standing C&G provider in Qatar.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Soufan Center and Qatar International Academy for Security Studies would like to sincerely thank our 2023 Global Security Forum partners, Zoom Arts & Design production company.



GLOBAL  
SECURITY  
FORUM™