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EVENT TRANSCRIPT

The Resurgence of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

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LIZZA BOMASSI: Hello, everybody, welcome. My name is Lizza Bomassi, I'm the programme manager here at Carnegie Europe, the Pan-European Forum of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. It's a real pleasure to have here today a visiting scholar, Christopher Boucek, who works here at the Carnegie Middle East Programme, where his research focuses on regional security challenges.

One of Christopher's most recent publications is called Yemen: Avoiding a Downward Spiral; it paints a pretty, what I'd say, worrying picture of a country facing a multitude of challenges: you have an intense uprising in the north, and increasingly violent secessionist movements in the south, and then there's the omnipresent threat of a resurgent al-Qaeda. And you combine that with the backdrop of the financial meltdown, an ecological catastrophe and a government stretched pretty much way beyond its capacity: they'd had allegations of corruption and inefficiency, and I think you have the perfect recipe for pushing a country like Yemen from the brink of a fragile state to a failed state, really.

But that is my own assessment, and I won't go into it, on the recommendations that Chris raised with us through his job. I'll pass the floor on to Christopher, who'll speak for about 20, 25 minutes, summarise his findings, and then we'll open up the floor to questions. So, Christopher, the floor is yours.

CHRISTOPHER BOUCEK: Thank you very much. It's a great pleasure to be here and I really appreciate everyone coming out to chat about Yemen. Now, I think you make a really great point that as we look at Yemen, there's this fear that Yemen's going from a fragile state to a failed state, and I think one of the most challenging things when thinking about Yemen is, to be a failed state you have to have been a successful state, and I'm not sure Yemen quite makes that bar yet. I think it complicates a lot of the thinking.

I think it's really striking to me that the more you hear from American and Western security, counterterrorism people, they talk about Yemen as a priority, second only, probably, to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Nevertheless, Yemen gets probably a miniscule amount of attention compared to what Pakistan and Afghanistan get, especially the amount of money that is given to support Pakistan.

If you think about it, Pakistan gets, from the Americans alone, over \$1 billion for support; it's to support its government in its fight against terrorism and everything else. Yemen gets probably less than 5% than that. So this disproportionate allocation of resources is really striking, and I think this is something we'll probably come back to again and again.

I think everybody recognises why Yemen's a priority, and with all due fairness, I can see why there are lots of other urgent priorities out there: Iran, North Korea, Afghanistan, Iraq; global financial meltdown – I can see why Yemen is towards the bottom of the list. Nonetheless, I think Yemen has the potential to rise to the top of the list very, very quickly, in a very, very bad way. I think when you bottom-line it, there are bad options on Yemen, and there are worse options on Yemen; and in the future there are even worse options.

I'm just going to say this again to set up where I think we're going, when we're going to talk about Yemen's problems – obviously Yemen is incredibly strategic: right next door to the world's largest oil producer. Over 3 million barrels a day of oil go through Yemeni territorial water every day, waters where Islamist terrorists and pirates have attacked international warships and troop carriers. In the end, Yemen's problems will become the region's problems; they will become Saudi Arabia's problems, the Emirates' problems, the GCC's; and this is why, I think, there's this urgent need to act.

From a policy point of view, there's a fundamental problem, which is we don't know what a state of failure looks like in Yemen; we don't know what state collapse would look like in Yemen. Moreover, we don't know what the events or triggers would be that would lead to state collapse. So, as a result, it's incredibly difficult to try to think about prescriptive policy measures to avoid what you don't know; and I think it's part of this failure of imagination that's frustrated a lot of thinking right now.

Added to that, I would say there's this tendency, I think, to view Yemen as part of the Arabian Peninsula; that's probably not always the best way to look at the situation. I think you also need to look at Yemen as part of Africa and part of the greater East African complex of guns and violence, and terrorism, and corruption, and smuggling. So it's looking at both of these, because Yemen doesn't quite fit in either: it has the Islamic traits of the Peninsula and real Islamic traits with the Horn. So I think in getting all this framework, I think, is going to be quite exhausting for a lot of people thinking about this.

Also, when you think about Yemen, there's this dichotomy between Yemen being a very, very weak state, with the absence of enduring State institutions, yet a pretty strong society; and I don't think that's probably very well appreciated: the power of tribal governance or how resilient a society it is. Now, one of the things when we're thinking about the future of Yemen is, in outlying governorates, if you don't rely on the regime to deliver goods and services to you, what does it matter if the regime no longer is able to do that? So all of these things, I think, I just want to say to stress the fact, is that it

frustrates not only our understanding but some of the thinking that we need to do when we're looking forward.

Yemen is right now in a rapidly deteriorating situation and things are getting worse every day, and this is a fact. It's a result of several, I wouldn't say crises, but challenges. Some of these aren't quite yet a crisis; a lot of them are very close, and the very scary thing for Yemen is that they're all heading on a trajectory where they do go towards crisis. They all go towards crisis, where they also will intersect in about the next five or so years.

So when we think about Yemen - the problems about the economy, about demographics, about human security, about traditional security - all of these things are trending in a very, very bad way, where they will intersect right about the time when Yemen needs to figure out a political leadership transition. This is the big question; Yemen hasn't figured out how that's going to work; Yemen hasn't figured out what a successor to the Saleh regime would look like; and they haven't figured out how they're going to pay for any of this.

What I'd like to do is, I'm just going to quickly go through some of these challenges and then we'll get into the heart of the matter, about al-Qaeda. On the economy, I think it's probably to state right off the bat that economically Yemen is an unviable state; Yemen cannot exist the way it is. Yemen gets about 80% of its government revenue from the sale of hydrocarbons, particularly oil, and the country's very, very rapidly running out of oil.

About five years ago, Yemen would produce just under half a million barrels a day; now Yemen produces probably 180,000 barrels a day. So you've had a rapid falloff in the amount of production. Most of this is exported abroad, and in turn, refined products - diesel, etc - are imported.

So, in 2008, when oil was at an all-time high, about \$147 a barrel, this was masking the fact they were selling fewer barrels per day; this is no longer the case: right now Yemen is selling fewer barrels per day and getting less money per barrel.

There's no serious thinking in Yemen about finding [unclear] for the economy; there's discussions about liquefied natural gas... I was in Paris yesterday, talking to people about how great Total's LNG plans are: I'm incredibly sceptical about this. Even if LNG does come out of Yemen, there are two big questions: one, will the revenue from LNG replace oil? Doubtful. And number two, how long will the gap be between the end of oil and the beginning of LNG? That gap is where all these problems are going to come to a head.

In the end, I think it's pretty obvious that all of Yemen's problems come down to economics. We had events in our office in Washington over the summer and one of the speakers made the straight point that when Yemen runs out of money it's like throwing sand in the gears: everything will grind to a halt; it's going to destroy the machinery. The only thing that holds Yemen together is the ability of the central government to distribute this money that it gets sent. So as money falls off, the government's ability to maintain order and maintain control goes down precipitously.

If running out of oil is bad, running out of water is even worse. Sanaa will be the first capital in modern history to run out of water; the water table falls several metres a year in Sanaa. Water is extracted at rates much greater than can be naturally replenished; about 19 of 21 basins are not being replenished; so in many just running on fossil water.

The Yemenis have a legal regime to share surface water but they do not have a legal regime to share underground water, and it's estimated that about 99% of water that gets pulled out of the ground is unlicensed. So, basically, if you have enough money, and you can, you sink a well and you suck out as much water as possible.

About 80% of conflicts in Yemen come down to water. What we're going to see in the near future, if it's going to be within the next generation, Yemen will run out of water and it's a Game Under for Yemen. Where Yemen populations are going to shift to is going to be a huge question, because they will not stay where they are.

Complicating the issues around water is the fact that as the situation develops - it won't be like you wake up one day and you turn on the tap and nothing comes out - it will affect different parts of the country at different speeds and at different times, and by the time it is at a crisis, it will be too late for the government to do anything. We can talk about some of the things, I guess a little discussion, about how they're thinking about dealing with this.

Other things in the economy: inflation was rampant, about 20% earlier this year; it's come down to about 12%. 35% of the population is unemployed; that's on par with the Great Depression in the United States. Yemen's the poorest country in the Arab world: in Yemen most people live on less than \$2 a day; and Yemen subsists on foreign assistance, foreign largesse. So you've got economic problems.

The second set of issues are these demographic and human security problems, where you can throw unemployment and inflation in the chaos. But the most startling fact that is in about 20 years the population will double: there'll be 40 million Yemenis; in three decades there'll be 60 million Yemenis. All of these Yemenis cannot be employed domestically; they cannot find employment or education within Yemen: at some point they're going to go someplace else.

I've got to say all of this just to set the stage for the questions about security, and I think it's probably important that we went through some of this, in large part, because it's not security or counterterrorism or extremism that's going to destroy Yemen, that's going to overwhelm Yemen; it's these other problems that will overwhelm Yemen - the problems are all connected together. I think one of the most intriguing things about Yemen is, as soon as you start pulling on one string, if it's the economy or unemployment, you see it's connected to everything else; and it all comes down to security, all of this feeds into an insecurity complex - I guess that sounds more funny than I meant - in Yemen that is especially worrying.

So what we see in Yemen is, on the security front there are three major security crises: there's the ongoing war in Saada, the civil war in Saada; the Southern Secessionist Movement; and there's the resurgent al-Qaeda organisation. On the south, things are pretty quiet right now. I think probably a lot of you already know what's going on in the south; it's the former part of the country that was under the Marxist government that believes that they basically are not getting the benefits, or the access, or especially the

economic development that they should for being the home of where most of Yemen's hydrocarbons are located.

On top of this, there's also been, since unification in 1990, the Republic Government in North Yemen has exported its tribal structures and its corruption networks, and its patronage networks to South Yemen, and in many ways locking out South Yemenis. So there's this great feeling of disaffection. That's the first big one.

The second big one is the civil war in Saada, which in August of this year the government launched a new campaign to renew this war; this is the sixth round of fighting. In August the government launched this campaign called Operation Scorched Earth, which I cannot believe anybody would think this was a good thing at all, and it's very, very unclear why the government would have started this fighting again.

Basically, the conflict started about five years ago or so between Zaidi Muslim revivalists in the Northern Province of Saada, up near the border near Siberia. This conflict started based on local Zaidis feeling that they weren't getting the development and the recognition that they were, the ability to practise their faith, but also complaints against the regime about cooperation with the Americans on counterterrorism, cooperation with the Israelis - a whole range of issues.

The sources of what the conflict are about now are very unclear and it's changed an awful lot. In recent months we've seen the conflict metastasize and change; it's spread outside of Saada, it's spread into other governance inside Yemen. As well as including more tribal and religious aspects, the government has deployed a popular army, the religious Islamist-based militia, and in the last two weeks the fight has drawn in Saudi Arabia.

This is a major, major deterioration of the situation, because now you have Saudi Arabia as an active belligerent: shutting the border and engaged in fighting the Houthis. It's unclear why the government would have started this campaign again; either the government thought they could win, which they cannot - there is no military solution to the conflict in Saada - or they thought the Houthis would sue for peace or capitulate, or they thought that the international community would press for a cessation of violence. None of these has happened.

What we see is that as the conflict goes on, more and more people are displaced by the conflict: it's just under 200,000 have been displaced, Saada is in ruins, and now the major power on the Peninsula, the Saudis, cannot be a mediator in this conflict, because they are active combatants.

This brings us to al-Qaeda, the big issue, and, I guess, why all of you showed up today. I think it's important to keep in mind that for the Yemeni government, al-Qaeda is not a first-order priority; they are not concerned about al-Qaeda. The other two issues that were talked about - Saada and the South - are existential issues for the regime: these are regime-ending questions. If half the country secedes, if the Houthis refuse to deal with the government, these are issues that directly jeopardise the regime's ability to stay in power.

Al-Qaeda is a second-order issue; I would say probably much more of a nuisance to the Yemeni government than anything else. Al-Qaeda affects the Yemeni relationship with

Saudi Arabia, the Yemeni relationship with the United States and the Europeans, but it's not a direct threat to the regime.

What we see, with respect to al-Qaeda, is that there has been this recent uptake in violence: in January of this year the Saudi and the Yemeni affiliates of al-Qaeda merged; it's a larger regional organisation of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. This came after two Saudi nationals who had been repatriated from Guantanamo, fled to Yemen, appeared in this videotape announcing the creation of this organisation.

One of the big fears, and this is what we've been seeing, is that as the security environment of Saudi Arabia has become less permissive, there are Saudi militants and extremists who have fled to Yemen, and the organisation in Yemen has taken on a much more Saudi tone than in the past. So for all the Saudi talent that's come into Yemen, personally I would say I'm not very convinced that many of these Saudis think about Yemen or think about the future of Yemen. I think they're focused on going back to the kingdom and fixing what they did wrong the last time.

For the last year, we've seen a number of incidents; so in April this year, the Saudis intercepted 11 people crossing the border with about 30 or 35 suicide vests. This is disturbing at a number of levels. 30 to 35 suicide vests demonstrates a sustained campaign; that's not one, or two, or three attacks, it is indicative of a dedicated bomb-maker, or bomb-makers, inside Yemen. That means that you have a network of people ready to use them. More importantly, suicide vests aren't something you stockpile for use later, they're not like grenades or other things: you make them to use them. This was in April.

In the spring then, the Saudis uncovered a series of hideouts along the border that were designed to house kidnapped or abducted foreigners or security officers, where they could stash away kidnapped victims and make videotapes and things like that. These are stockpiled for holding out for quite a period - along the mountains, along the border.

In August of this year, a Saudi national came back from Yemen and attempted to kill Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf, who was the then Deputy-Minister of Interior in the kingdom and the person in charge of Saudi Arabia's counterterrorism efforts. In the suicide attack, this Saudi national posed as someone who was trying to surrender and trying to repent, allegedly to negotiate the return of other Saudis in Yemen, and then blew himself up within a couple of metres of the prince, who miraculously survived. Had this attack been successful, this would've been a catastrophic propaganda victory as well as decapitating Saudi Arabia's counterterrorism programme.

Interestingly, Prince Mohammed is probably one of the only people in the kingdom who consistently wants to talk to people and wants to engage with militants, and here they're trying to kill the one guy that doesn't want to lock them up and pull out their fingernails and stuff. But had it been successful, this would have been quite an event.

Then, just about three or four weeks ago there were two Saudis crossing the border into Jizan Province of southern Saudi Arabia - one guy, who had come back from Guantanamo, whose brother is the deputy-commander of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. These two were crossing the border on a tarmaced road, they were doing it in the middle of the night, they weren't crossing in the mountains; they were coming

over the border, allegedly, with several suicide vests. They were being met by a Yemeni who was coming down from Jeddah.

So we see there's a steady ramp-up of incidents from Yemen leading back into Saudi Arabia, and I think this is concerning, not just for the Saudis but for the rest of the Gulf. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is very much an organisation, I think, with a regional outlook that's looking to not just launch operations within Yemen, but within the region – a whole host of targets.

When we think about what the Saudis were able to do in their fight against al-Qaeda, the Saudis were very good at driving a wedge between extremists and the population, between the organisation and the general public. And what let them do this was the fact that Saudi Arabia has a strong central government with a lot of resources, with a lot of religious legitimacy, and a lot of credibility. In Yemen, there is none of this; you have a central government that is barely in control, that has no money, has no religious credibility, and no resources.

So when we're thinking about a Yemeni end for al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, there is not one: there is not a Yemeni answer for this. Not only has the Yemeni government either unable or unwilling or unprepared to do this, but even if they were they can't. There are lots of things that the Yemenis would need to be capable to step this up, but those conditions aren't there.

I think probably the last thing I would close on is this question of Guantanamo and what happens with the 93, 95 or so Yemeni nationals who are held at Guantanamo. Approximately, maybe 50, 60 of the Yemenis who are held there at Guantanamo will likely be repatriated back to Yemen. What happens when they get sent back? Many of these guys have family ties, kinship ties, with people who are active in al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, people who have been killed by either the Yemenis or by the Americans or others in counterterrorism operations.

How these guys will be repatriated and not end up serving to reinvigorate the organisation is a huge question. As much as the Obama administration wants to close Guantanamo - and I know they just came out yesterday, saying that's going to be longer than we thought – closing Guantanamo depends on figuring out what to do with these Yemenis, and there's not a good answer. Many people are very reluctant to send them back to Yemen because they're afraid that they're going to end up being turned loose, or going through some sort of revolving door in prison. So addressing that issue, it's going to be critical dealing with the future of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

With that, I think I'll probably stop and maybe have a good discussion.

LIZZA BOMASSI: Yes, thank you, Chris, for that very enlightening review on the situation on the ground. Before we open up to questions, I'd just like you to introduce yourself very quickly, and if I might abuse my situation, I'd like to ask the first question.

You touched on very briefly in the beginning these conflicting priorities, a host of them – what makes you believe, or, hopefully, think, that there is the political will out there to do something, to implement, for example, the recommendations that you make in your paper? Do you think that there is that political will?

CHRISTOPHER BOUCEK: I think that's a very good question. I'm almost on two minds on this; I think, on the one hand, I'm incredibly encouraged even more when people I talk to about how serious they are about Yemen, and coming from Washington, I think Yemen is taking up more and more time, more and more energy. That's not necessarily a good thing, but I think more and more people are thinking about Yemen and recognising that Yemen is going to be the next problem if steps are not taken to address it. In the end, you can't solve Yemen's problems - Yemen's problems are going to be Yemen's problems; they're almost too great to solve - but there are things you can do to offset how bad it's going to be.

In terms of the political will, I think there are definitely some European partners who see this as even a more urgent priority; actively, the British and others are very out-in-front on some of these issues. I think, whenever I shift back to the other side, though, I think the big question is, if in six months or 12 months we're having the same conversation, Yemen's a big problem, what are we going to do, how are we going to deal with that? That's 12 months too late. The problem, I think, is that there's such urgency right now that we can't wait to figure it out.

One of the really awful things in all this is that the policy-planning process, especially in the United States, takes so long, that I'm not very encouraged that they're going to come up with the right options. In the end, it seems that it's the American military who's thinking about this the best, and I don't mean that in terms of there being a military solution, I mean that in terms of I think the military takes issues and tries to figure out answers: there are problems and there are solutions, so what can we do? It seems, I think, that they recognise that if things really go off the rails, we will be the ones who will need to answer for it; so trying to think about other ways.

So I think you find the American military doing things that you would never expect - about development aid, about building schools and wells, and public information campaigns - because American development workers don't want to do this stuff, but the American military will go out and do it. So I think that's halfway between where we'd like it to be there.

LIZZA BOMASSI: Thank you. Do we have any questions yet for Chris?

JOHN LISNEY: A question: you mentioned the demographic growth, you mentioned also the fact that part of the state budget is funds from foreign aid - first of all, who is providing the foreign aid, and to what extent is connected to demographic growth? If the population is doubling, whatever, what's pushing that, and to what extent is aid - a possible element which is encouraging demographic growth rather than for education or whatever - limiting it?

CHRISTOPHER BOUCEK: The answer to your question: I don't know if aid is encouraging demographic growth because there are a number of aid programmes that are trying to curb demographic growth: programmes designed at education, getting people involved in certain programmes in exchange for access to assistant funds. There are a number of family-planning programmes, which are actually very, very popular; they're very small in Yemen, but they're actually very popular.

In terms of the big funders, DFID is one of the biggest funders; the Saudis bail out the budget every year and do lots of other stuff; the GCC states also do Islamic funds; the

American development assistance is relatively small, considering all of the military and security and other stuff that also goes into that.

One of the interesting things is that we see Yemen will need to become a net labour exporter in the future; it will need to export labour, just because there's no way that the 25,000 Yemenis who went to the market every year cannot get jobs. So when some of the thinking is, could you export semiskilled, semi-trained Yemeni labourers to the Gulf, recognising you won't displace current third country nationals in the Gulf, at the same time the Gulf doesn't need any more Yemeni work [?] carriers or unskilled labourers.

But could you send people abroad with some sort of a certification, as a welder, or some kind of a vocational certification? Towards that end, the Saudis and, I think, others have been building technical schools to do just that. One of the encouraging things is, for every Yemeni that goes abroad to work, about six or seven Yemenis back home are supported. So I think that one of the things that they're thinking about.

Population growth is down - it's the highest, I believe, in the region; one of the highest in the world, over 3% - but I don't think that some of the issues, like water or population, have not been made national priorities the same way the government's made other things. The government made small arms a priority; they encouraged small arms in the capital. They did a huge effort and campaign to deliver that message. The regime has not done that on population growth, which is something they would need to do, because that's one of the major problems.

JOHN LISNEY: What do you think is causing the population growth; and joking apart, why does this have a much higher growth rate than other states in the region?

CHRISTOPHER BOUCEK: I think lack of education, I think the fact that if you want to have more children that survive you have more children, I think in Yemen there's a culture wanting to have more and more kids that support you, especially if you're involved in agricultural stuff; I think there's a whole range of issues that feed into that.

LEA ZORIC: My name's Lea Zoric and I'm speaking from Kent University. Can the extremists, from what happens to al-Qaeda, be linked to certain tribes or clans, or are they all over Yemen? Second question: how much does the khat trade mean for the economy and for the use of water - are they concerned about that [?]?

CHRISTOPHER BOUCEK: On your first point, the tribal connections: I think this is something that sometimes is very poorly understood, and I don't want to give you the impression that I do have a good idea. Carnegie will actually be having a paper coming out soon about the relationship between al-Qaeda and the tribes. In the next month or so, I think, that paper should be out. What we do see is that there are certain areas in the country, and it often gets called the tribal governorates if it's Marib, Shabwa, Jouf, etc, where it is believed that al-Qaeda gets refuge from Yemeni tribes.

I think there's an interesting dynamic in terms of what would al-Qaeda have to... Looking at these tribes, I think it's interesting, because either extremists have to offer something or the tribe has to benefit somehow; there has to be a relationship, and I think that relationship is probably not very well understood. It's not just the fact of sheltering them; you're sheltering them, in terms of you're getting something, which leaves interesting options for how you can counter that. The Saudis have been spending

an awful lot of money in Yemen to close some of those doors, to buy off Yemeni tribes who no longer shelter people.

On the second point, of khat, I'm really glad you brought that up, because khat is one of the most destructive things in Yemen: it destroys the environment; it takes up huge amounts of people's disposable income. During the recent crisis, when the food crisis went through the roof, we saw a number of families, especially women and children, going without food and protein so that men can continue chewing khat.

There are good things about khat, in terms of how it cycles money from urban areas to rural areas, and the number of women that are employed in khat cultivation. On the other hand, there are some very destructive things; basically, khat is looked at almost as a bank account: you can turn on the faucet, you can flood your fields, and in two weeks you can have a cash crop. There are things that the Yemeni government will need to do in the future, like stop purchasing khat for official functions, like eliminating the hidden diesel subsidies that make this so cheap, encouraging the importation of khat cultivated in other places.

Just from an environmental point of view, the more land that goes towards khat cultivation is land that doesn't go towards food cultivation, and it destroys the soil nutrients, too. So, already you have a precarious water situation and khat will suck out as much water as you give it; so there's nothing good about khat cultivation in Yemen.

LEA ZORIC: Thank you so much.

DAVE VERGE: My name is Dave Verge; I'm with the EastWest Institute. My question goes back to the first question about the US, actually, about political will, but I think we'll work from the other side, from dealing with al-Qaeda, and when you described the attack on the prince and how he was really the only person interested in speaking to any of the extremists - is that potentially indicative of the fact that the extremists are uninterested in talking back either? If so, what does that mean for us to address that sort of issue from a Western standpoint?

CHRISTOPHER BOUCEK: I think you hit on something really key, and in some senses this is an exaggeration, I think - Prince Mohammed's not the only person who wants to [overtalking], but he is the face of Saudi Arabia's engagement in amnesty, and everything else, programme. I think, as with just about any situation, offender situation, there is a spectrum of offenders, there's a spectrum of engagement. There are people who are 100% hardcore committed, who don't want in, who don't want to talk, and who won't talk; and then at the other end, there are the people who are very tenuously [?] involved, or who are looking for a way out. So on this continuum you find lots of people and I don't know if we can quantify where the majority of people are, but if it's 20% hardcore committed, they'll never change their mind; what you want to do is you want to focus on the other 80%, or whatever percent it is, that is ready to engage.

I think one of the things that is important to keep in mind in the thinking of some of these programmes, that you're not trying to reach that hardcore committed group. This is a group that you kill or capture, right at the top of pyramid. It's everybody else at the bottom, who either hasn't made up their mind, they're still figuring it out, or doesn't quite know; and that's where I think the big struggle to reach those people are.

When we think about Yemen, one of the things, for me, that's really concerning is that I really believe in Yemen there is a huge potential recruitment rule, that you could recruit people to go fight in Saada, in Iraq, in Somalia, in just about anywhere. I think there's a ready group of people, of young men, without opportunities, without education, without etc, etc, that you can draw on.

Something that can be seen in the region is that, and I would even argue, other situations, too, is that you get recruited by an organisation that radicalises you and then you do whatever you do. It's not, I think, this popular idea that you get radicalised and then you find a group that's going to go out and do whatever it is you want to do.

So, in terms of how many people it is that want to talk to the government, I don't know if we can necessarily quantify it the way you want to, but I think there is a bigger group that can be engaged, I would argue, in a few different programmes or strategies than cannot be engaged.

LIZZA BOMASSI: Yes, please.

TOM COONEY: My name's Tom Cooney, I'm from the University of Kent. My question goes back to how do al-Qaeda grow, how do they survive? I don't think myself, in a lot of ways, it's Muslim radicalism; I think it's an economic factor, as we were talking about. But the region, for example, many countries there have over 90% Muslim, but the countries where they prosper are Somalia, Yemen, Afghanistan, Pakistan – the four of the poorest countries in the region. So could you say that it's purely just an economic factor, economic problem?

LIZZA BOMASSI: I'll just take another two questions; is there anybody else? Yes, please.

SIMONA MOROIANU: My name is Simona Moroianu from the European Parliament. You spoke about political will and mediation, trying somehow to sort the civil, more complex mess [?] there – do you see any signs about mediation attempts or interest from the GCC countries? Actually, they are those who are concerned, really, about security problems in the region, and they also have good instruments somehow to try to mediate; and Yemen wants to join the GCC, they depend on plate [?] from the region. So they have some strong arguments, but they don't seem to involve in mediations.

LIZZA BOMASSI: Anybody else? No.

CHRISTOPHER BOUCEK: The first one, the economic factors, economic limitations: I think there's a growing amount of research that shows that terrorism or radicalism is driven purely by economics, but I think one of the most interesting recent studies looks at education, actually, and the type of education you get, especially engineering education: just about every jihadi has an engineering education, which is really interesting, and there's something – I don't want to get too into that, but I think it's really fascinating that, you can look through violent Islamist groups throughout the Muslim world and you'll see a preponderance of engineers and engineering faculty graduates.

In terms of the economic motivations for some of this stuff, I think that's obviously important, I think it's obviously part of the lack of opportunities and the disenfranchisement that you see. One of the big things in Yemen that had led to radicalisation has been shown to be abuse suffered at the hands of police or security

services; so if you get arrested for no reason and you get harassed and abused, will you push you off in a wrong direction, which I think is really quite fascinating in a large sense, because there is a concrete way to fix that: by professionalizing the police service you can avoid some of those things, by professionalizing the prison service you can avoid some of those things; that would have a huge impact.

The other point I wanted to make on that was, I think Yemen is one of the most conservative and religious societies that you'll find, and I think it's very telling that there is a lot of support for this stuff, not necessarily going out and killing people, but about not just being against something or being... You see pictures of Bin Laden in lots of places, you see pictures of Saddam Hussein in lots of places; it's not just being against something, it's also, I think, this sense of larger grievance and symbols of larger Muslim grievance that, I think, resonate inside Yemen. So I think all of that needs to get thrown into the mix.

On the issue of political will in the GCC; I think this is an incredibly issue, because for looking forward, it will need to be the GCC that engages with Yemen. I think as Yemen rapidly deteriorates these problems are going to become Saudi Arabia's and the GCC's, so they're going to feel it first. I think one of the challenges will be how the Europeans and the Americans can help motivate the GCC to take action, because I think that's what they're going to have to do; and it's going to be issues of security. It's going to have to be the West telling the Saudis and the Emiratis and others that's its security: Yemen will adversely affect your security if you don't act. It's not humanitarian interest that will motivate the GCC.

Looking forward, the GCC and Yemen will have to have some kind of relationship. I don't think that Yemen's going to join the GCC; as much as the Yemenis desperately want it, they don't them in the club. But there will be some sort of a junior, deputy, associate relationship, and I think the GCC can offer Yemen what it wants in exchange for some concessions, some kind of painful concessions, that the Yemenis will need to make - on corruption, on a lot of other issues - because the GCC can say, we will open up for labour migration, will open up for greater trade, we'll open up for Yemeni produce: the things that Yemen needs to get, the GCC can offer.

So, if the GCC gets together and thinks about this in terms of: our security is at risk, therefore, what do we need to do to stop 40 million Yemenis from coming to Dubai, how do we keep them there? Therefore, pure, self-motivated interest: what can they do? I think there are some things that they can do, but it's not going to be through any kind of humanitarian motivation. I think that rather [?] it's going to be getting these Ministries of Interior and others to recognise that, what are we going to do to deal with this? I think the Saudis are there. On the one hand, I think they're totally exasperated with the Yemenis and the fact that everything that goes wrong in their country is the result of Yemen; I think it's what they think.

In terms of mediation, this is an interesting point, especially with the war in Saada, because the Saudis can't mediate: the Saudi foreign policy has always traditionally been to stay out and stay uninvolved and to take the bigger picture. [overtalking] So the Qataris tried to do it, it didn't work for lots of reasons; I think the Saudis had some issues. What does that mean? Will the Emiratis be more active? I think that will be very interesting.

I think Emiratis might be more inclined to take a positive role in addressing this, because Saada, they need a humanitarian ceasefire and there needs to be mediation to do that. The Saudis can't do it, the Qataris can't do it; who else? It's not going to be the Bahrainis, or the Kuwaitis who do it. So looking at the Omanis? I don't know; the Omanis – I think it would be unrealistic.

I think that the fact that the last GCC collective voice on Yemen was, yes, there's a serious problem and we need to think about it; so I think things are moving that way. It's going to take a lot of external pressure, to keep it on the GCC to do that, and in dealing with these issues, because, first and foremost, it's going to be their problem and they need to step up to the plate to do it.

NINA LAMPARSKI: Can I take the last question? I work for the Bulletin Magazine and I also study geopolitics at the moment, so that's also a [unclear] I have. I'm interested in the information flow: you said that there's been a merger between the Yemen al-Qaeda side and the Saudi Arabian one – these mergers, will we see more of them and has the information – it happens in regions that are very poor, where I imagine that information structures aren't the same as there would be elsewhere – how good is information flow between these different groups and how much do we intercept things through this kind of...?

CRISTOPHER BOUCEK: How much do we intercept the information [?] [overtalking]?

NINA LAMPARSKI: Yes, how quickly do we become aware of information.

CHRISTOPHER BOUCEK: I think this trend of regionalisation is one we can see in North Africa and the South; and I think al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghrebs are regional. I think we see this franchise or regionalisation going on, and I think there are lots of reasons why organisations do that: to improve their credibility, and to improve their access, and to raise their profile.

In addition to collectivisation and the ability to work towards more resources for any kind of social issues, I think, in terms of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, this is one of the best documented militant organisations in history. Going back to al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia, they have produced so many magazines, and online books, and martyr biographies, and videos; there's so much available to know about them. They say the one thing about jihadis is they always say what they're going to do; they don't ever crouch it, or lie, or hide; they're very straight up.

One of the very interesting things is that it seems that al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula now, because it's learned from its mistakes the al-Qaeda Saudi Arabia franchise went through, and I think they're trying not to do that again this time. I think there's a much more sophisticated relationship with the public and public information. There have been people who have made the point that it seems that it's becoming much more Saudiised, much more focusing on the Shi'i, and issues that weren't issues - obviously they weren't issues in Yemen domestically about the Shi'i being [unclear]; that's a very Saudi thing.

So the idea that are there, in addition to the militants, the extremists, who have come in from Saudi Arabia, more idealised troops, who are bringing with them this

jurisprudence, or this idea of jurisprudence with them - I think there's really something there to that.

NINA LAMPARSKI: Thank you.

LIZZA BOMASSI: No other questions?

DAVE VERGE: May I ask just one?

LIZZA BOMASSI: Yes.

DAVE VERGE: It's not a discussion point, because earlier you mentioned the relationship with an engineering education - do you remember the source for that or where we might be able to find something about that?

CHRISTOPHER BOUCEK: Sure. You can look on our website; it's not our...

DAVE VERGE: It's not. You said about your [unclear] from the...

CHRISTOPHER BOUCEK: Yes, we did an event, maybe two months ago, called Engineers of Jihad, and one of the authors spoke, his name is Steffen Hertog, his co-author is Diego Gambetta from Oxford, but if you Google Engineers of Jihad you'll find their study, and it's book coming out from Princeton University Press, one of their supplements [?].

LIZZA BOMASSI: Thank you again, Chris, for your insights, coming at such an important time. If you'll just thank join me to thank Chris again. Thank you, everyone, for coming.