

Plenary Sessions

Plenary Session I: Transitions in Afghanistan and Pakistan

Bruce Riedel (Moderator), Husain Haqqani, Amrullah Saleh, Michael O'Hanlon, David Sedney

In a panel discussion on the political transitions in Afghanistan and Pakistan and the future of U.S. policy in these countries, David Sedney praised Afghanistan's commitment to building security and military organizations. Sedney pointed out, however, that true success will be measured by next year's elections – namely, in the government's ability to launch a successful political process akin to that of Pakistan.

Amrullah Saleh, on the other hand, warned that while America's war on terror may be winding down, the war between democratic forces and extremist groups in Afghanistan has not come to an end due to the widespread presence of terrorist sanctuaries, ongoing hostilities between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the rising momentum in the Taliban's insurgency. He, along with Husain Haqqani, agreed that the U.S. and the international community should avoid ending their mission prematurely and engaging with these governments. Haqqani did not envision any improvements in Pakistan's approach to Afghanistan, despite its recent change in government.

Finally, Michael O'Hanlon defended U.S. policies toward Afghanistan, arguing that Obama's policies are both resolute and “stronger than his rhetoric.” O'Hanlon said the Obama administration should take credit for the policies it believes in.

Plenary Session II: “Politics Demonizes, Culture Humanizes”: Arts, Conflict, and Security

Cynthia Schneider (Moderator), Nikahang Kowsar, Sultana Siddiqui, Manny Aly Ansar

Arts and culture play a central symbolic and social role in regions beset by conflict. Extremists recognize the power of arts and culture, and target tangible (Bamayan Buddhas) and intangible (Mali's Festival in the Desert) cultural icons and leaders for destruction. In war-torn areas of the world, artists reach for their pens, instruments, and voices to mirror their worlds, to hold governments accountable, and to protest injustice and repression. This panel will examine the evolving roles of arts, culture, and media in areas and situations of conflict and instability. It will highlight how governmental and non-governmental leaders can support the role of arts and culture in promoting human security and in fostering positive political and social change and economic development.

Plenary Session III: Democracy and Development: How Do They Fit Together?

Tamara Cofman Wittes (Moderator), H.E. Amr Darrag, Rabea Ataya, H.E. Nazanin Ash

Two years ago, popular demands for bread, freedom, and social justice overturned the political order in several Arab countries – but since then, governments have struggled to meet public demands, and populations are increasingly skeptical and impatient about their prospects for a better life. While countries in transition have made strides toward establishing new rules for the political game, painful economic policy choices loom. Deepening political polarization, lags in reforming government institutions, spiking sectarian tensions, and ongoing security challenges have all retarded economic recovery and made international investors and donors hesitant to step

in. Meanwhile, lessons of development work around the globe confirm the importance of transparent, accountable, and responsive governance to achieving sustainable economic growth and human development. At times of instability and transition, how can international donors and institutions help advance inclusive governance and development? What are the domestic challenges to promoting democracy and development, and how can they be overcome? What is the best role for private sector actors, and how to engage them effectively on behalf of good governance and development?

Panel Session IV: Arab Opinion, Identity, and the Reshaping of the Middle East

Khaled Elgindy (Moderator), Dalia Mogahed, Samer Shehata, Shibley Telhami, Rashad Hussain

This plenary discussion addresses the prisms through which Arabs view the world, the driving forces behind the Arab uprisings, and how these forces are likely to shape the political battles in Arab societies in the coming years. In the new Middle East, Arab public opinion matters more than ever before; and Arab public notions of “dignity” are not limited to relations between rulers and ruled but, fundamentally, include Arab relations with the outside world. The panel will cover themes including Arab attitudes toward the United States, Iran, Israel, other global powers, as well as attitudes toward democracy, the role of religion, and women. We will feature a discussion of Shibley Telhami’s new book, *The World Through Arab Eyes: Arab Public Opinion and the Reshaping of the Middle East*, with comments from knowledgeable experts.

Plenary Session V: Ripple Effects: the Syria Crisis and its Regional Impact

Salman Shaikh (Moderator), Thomas Pickering, Saeb Erakat

The violence in Syria has claimed more than 80,000 lives and displaced almost 5 million people, either internally or as refugees. The spiraling effects of the conflict on the neighborhood including humanitarian, security, and political challenges. The international community has debated extensively about the impact of this crisis on international security and the interests of neighboring states, but as yet has not achieved consensus on how to respond. This high-level panel will explore the regional impact of the crisis in Syria – on neighboring countries, but also on the strategic balance, regional diplomacy, and on other longstanding challenges in the region.