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Annual Conference Transcript

Bombshell Podcast: National Security in a Distracted World

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Begin Transcript

LOREN DEJONGE SCHULMAN: Welcome to Bombshell. I'm Loren DeJonge Schulman.

RADHA IYENGAR: I'm Radha Iyengar.

ERIN SIMPSON: I'm Erin Simpson.

MS. SCHULMAN: And we are here recording live, this week from the Center for a New American Security annual conference. For those who are new to Bombshell, we are a biweekly podcast on war on the rocks with the three ladies you see on stage, unpacking national security and defense issues while debating the best cocktails known to woman. Come for the explainers of the week's crises and wonky obsessions, stay for the Top Gun references and guests that outshine us on every episode.

Bold.

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For the first time, we are so excited to have a live studio audience currently being fed the most excellent rubber chicken and steamed vegetables on this side of the Potomac. So to wash it down, Erin, what are drinking this week?

MS. SIMPSON: We are drinking one of my all-time favorite cocktails, a French 75. It's a champagne cocktail which we thought was fitting for summer. Frankly, it's fitting for any occasion, in my opinion. It's a delicious combination of champagne, gin, lemon juice and sugar. And befitting this audience, the name is a reference to the French 75-millimeter field gun, because when you drink one it's like getting hit with an artillery shell.

MS. SCHULMAN: Okay. Michele, they're watered down. I swear, they're not that bad.

MS. SIMPSON: But we'll pour you one later if you would like one. As usual, we have a lot to talk about. And starting with our very special guests from the "Washington Post," who's the co-sponsor for today's event with CNAS, we have Karen Attiah and Jia Lynn Yang, who are joining us for a discussion of national security journalism in a time of distraction.

Then we follow it up by a few minutes of our usual segments on keeping up foreign relations and White House mayhem. And then we'll do a few fan favorites and host favorites, and maybe, if we have time, take a couple of questions from the audience.

MS. IYENGAR: So let's start by introducing our guests, Karen Attiah, who's sitting here next to Erin, is the global opinions editor at the "Washington Post," a role she started last spring. Before joining the "Post" in 2014, Karen was a social media consultant for the World Bank and freelance reporter for the AP.

And Jia Lynn Yang is the deputy national security editor at the "Post" where she previously worked on Wonk Blog and the Edward Snowden story. Prior to starting at the editorial desk in 2010, she was a reporter at "Fortune" magazine for several years. So welcome. Welcome to Bombshell.

MS. : Hi. Thank you for having us here.

MS. : Thanks for bringing us.

MS. IYENGAR: So we invited you guys to talk about the news and the rest of the country and how we're thinking and talking about national security news or not in the current era. But, first, we'd like to ask our guests some very special Bombshell questions.

So let's start with what fan club or fan community have you been a part of in your lives?
Karen?

KAREN ATTIAH: I'd say back in the day, I was a huge anime fan – Japanese animation.

MS. SIMPSON: Perfect. You're going to fit right in.

MS. ATTIAH: Okay. I'm sure that's not super, super nerdy.

MS. SIMPSON: Oh, it is. That's why you would fit in.

MS. ATTIAH: I don't know. "Neon Genesis Evangelion," gosh, "Akira," "Golden Boy," I used to love – I used to sit and watch anime almost every weekend.

MS. IYENGAR (?): I love where this is going. (Laughter.)

MS. ATTIAH: So I don't know if that's a specific club, but at least in Desoto, Texas, we had a little group going on. So yeah.

MS. IYENGAR: Jia Lynn.

JIA LYNN YANG: The closest – I don't think I've ever practically been part of a fan club or anything but I –

MS. SCHULMAN: You can let it all out here. We're open.

MS. YANG: Yeah, it's true. Many years ago when I lived in New York, I found myself standing in line for an hour to watch the premiere of a 3-D music video of Bjork's, where she was riding a giant yak down a strange waterfall.

MS. IYENGAR: That's makes sense.

MS. YANG: When I saw those people, I was like, I think I'm part of a weird community.

MS. IYENGAR: So our second question is what book have you reread the most or owned the longest.

MS. ATTIAH: Owned the longest – every time I get a question about a book that is – I've reread a lot or had an impact, I'd say Howard French's book "Africa, a Continent for the Taking." I've had it since college and have probably reread it four, five times, even in the last couple of years or so. It just really – my passion, my interest is in Africa. And as a former "New York Times" journalist, he really takes you through his experiences in reporting on the continent and just really kind of developed – helped to develop my passion for journalism in and about Africa. So I'd say that's the first book that comes to mind.

MS. YANG: The book I've owned the longest, probably "Charlotte's Web" just because I've had it – I've always – every time I move, it somehow comes along with all the other books.

MS. IYENGAR (?): Somehow, you don't know.

MS. YANG: And I still think it's just one of the most beautiful books about friendship and the meaning of everything.

MS. SIMPSON: That's perfect.

MS. SCHULMAN: So now that we've gotten to know our guest a little bit better, we've invited you guys on, as Radha said, to talk about how we are perceiving national security news, how we're developing – how they're developing national security news and stories and analysis, because, over the last several months, I think I'm probably not alone in this, I have felt ridiculously overwhelmed between tweets and major scoops that come out at 5:00 p.m. every day, and all the talking on MSNBC and Fox News. And I consume probably more news than I ever have in my entire life, and that includes when I worked in the National Security Council and had news sent to me on a constant basis.

And, as a result, I wonder like how many stories am I missing, because the major scoop of 24 hours ago, I have more or less forgotten by noon the next day because it's hit a point where this is a – you know, Trump has tweeted something, or there's been a Syria chemical weapon threat, or there's something going on in Afghanistan, and they're completely overtaken.

So I have to imagine, as much as it's overwhelming the audience for news, it's got to be a really fascinating and difficult time for the folks who are bringing us the analysis, the stories, and the news that's being produced today.

It's a really a golden age I think in a lot of ways for folks in journalism. At least that's how it seems from the outside. And we asked Karen, Jia Lynn on today to talk about how they're thinking about communicating game-changing events and challenges in an era of incredibly short attention spans, information overload, and, of course, fake news.

So, Erin and Radha, if you guys want to start with the questions.

MS. SIMPSON: Sure. I mean, I think – I tend to agree that it is a golden age. I mean, we were talking about that a bit backstage before we came out. I guess from you guys' perspectives, you cover different parts of the globe and different parts of the paper. What are the big international affairs stories that are not getting coverage, either because there's so much craziness here in D.C. or we're creating so much craziness in other places, what are the stories that we aren't covering, and what's that frustration like as both a journalist and an editor?

Jia Lynn, do you want to go first?

MS. YANG: Well, I have kind of mixed feelings about it because a lot of the scoops that are coming out are coming from the reporters I work with, but that's not all of what national security cover is. The team, in addition to covering – you know, doing this (run-up ?) coverage that we're all really proud of on Trump and Russia, we also cover the Pentagon, what the

secretary of state is doing or maybe not doing these days. And, you know, we cover all of the U.S. foreign policy.

And so I think for our reporters who work on, you know, Afghanistan, for instance, which has constantly – it's been the forgotten war for a long time now, I think we've tried to write stories talking about what the Trump administration wants to do, and I think that gets people's attention, but in terms of other parts of the world, I think it's tough right now.

And it does feel like we – you know, in the way that Trump sort of jumps from thing to thing, it's hard for us to also maintain longer length of coverage, but I think that we – you know, for instance, we have a reporter, Thomas Gibbons-Neff, who is a veteran of the war in Afghanistan and so having people – we have many people who aren't writing about Russia, I can promise. But there's not that many people who are and breaking those stories.

But I think having people who (are ?) doing that, who are supposed to be writing breaking – you know, breaking stories about very important policy issues, I think that helps us stay focused.

MS. SIMPSON: Karen?

MS. ATTIAH: Yeah. So, on the opinion side, right, so I think one sort of approach at least is some policies that come out from the Trump administration, we at least can try to find perspectives from on the ground for how these policies are affecting people, so, you know, the first thing that comes to mind.

So, you know, the Mexico City policy, the global gag rule; a few weeks ago when the Chibok girls, they found of the Chibok girls in Nigeria, you speak to UNFPA, which is charged with – the U.N.'s Population Fund, and they're often the ones who are helping rehabilitate these rescued women. They work with women in conflict zones. They, you know, will tell us that they told their side that we now no longer have the resources or the funds to help –

MS. SIMPSON: Because people think the story is over. They're not –

MS. ATTIAH: Yeah. Or you just – you just don't always hear kind of the end tale. You hear sort of the Twitter storm and the fuss over cuts to this or potential changes to that and not always necessarily, okay, how is it going to affect actual people, humans around the world. So I think one good thing about having this section, the global opinion section, is to try to find that angle.

But it's tough. It's hard. I think it's hard to – I mean, there's so much happening. I mean, there are elections in Kenya that are worrying. Rwanda also is having elections.

MS. SIMPSON: There's a famine that's in both in East and West Africa right now.

MS. ATTIAH: There are famines. There's the largest, you know, refugee and displaced persons – so it is really tough to try to keep eyeballs on these things, and we try to – we just try.

MS. IYENGAR (?): So let me dig in a little bit into something you said, which is – you know, there's this sort of set of policies that are coming out, that generate a lot of real fear and hardship in people. And I'll tell like a really short story, which is this week, I got one of the scam phone calls from DHS claiming to be USCIS, and they were like, you know, your identity has been stolen, you need to come in and turn in all of your documents and come to this special facility.

And I was like, I've like literally never spoken to USCIS in my life. What are you talking about? And it turns out it's a scam for nationalized citizens to like charge them a bunch of money for fear of deportation and losing your credentials, which is very much sort of living off the fear of national security policies, and, frankly, really targeted at people who maybe don't have as much information – I mean, I could like call my colleague down the hall who works with the director of USCIS and be like, hey, guys. Is this really a thing? Right? Most people aren't going to do that.

So how do you think about responsibly covering really scary things that are happening, that have real impacts on people and representing those impacts without sort of playing into this politics of fear, right? How do you think about balancing those two things?

MS. YANG: Well, I've been working with reporters ever since the Trump travel ban came out, just to sort of tee off the idea of immigration. That has just generated a ton of fear, obviously. You know, I think the best we can do is once the – to take this week, for instance, when the Supreme Court came out and said that they're going to hear the full – I think a little bit lost on this that they haven't made a decision yet actually.

MS. IYENGAR (?): Yeah. Yeah.

MS. YANG: They have not really – I mean, they've done something but they're not really – they haven't like fully considered the cases. So they're doing that in the fall they said earlier this week. And in the meantime, they are reinstating parts of the ban. And I think that's a case where if you just saw the headline of they've sided with Trump somehow, you can freak out.

But we tried to do stories that said, okay, what does this actually mean for people who are trying to get here, people whose relatives are trying to get here, people on visas. And it turns out, as much as it is something of a partial victory for Trump, if you are – you know, if you have a family member here, if you are coming to study, you're fine. So the bulk – obviously, it still affects refugees and many people, but for a lot of people who were affected by the original ban, it's actually not going to change anything for you.

So I think making sure that we are offering clarity and always saying, like, you know, for all these very complex policy issues, you just want to often, as much as you can, boil it down to

what does it mean for people. And I think that's how you hopefully cut through the fear, but I also think just having a very sober – you know, when we would even write our story that President Trump was under investigation, that's, you know, just presenting the facts plainly and in a straightforward way I think is, you know, the best way to do it.

MS. ATTIAH: Yeah. I mean, I think the same is to offer sort of a – a little bit of altitude. I think sometimes not just policy but just in general, this moment, this global moment that we're finding ourselves in with politics in Europe and the rise of nationalism and things like that, it's to also offer historical perspectives.

So we tend to like, you know, do these sort of stories where, actually, maybe we've been here before or actually this is what happened in – I'll throw out a date here – 1950s when we had a similar sort of America first like policy.

So I think that's part of our role I think as the media is to do – is to not just explain but kind of illuminate and help people understand and navigate everything that's being thrown at them right now.

MS. SIMPSON (?): So the idea of fake news, like many things, started as a very specific construction and is now labeled – sort of thrown at anything that we don't agree with or don't like. I don't know how many of the president's tweets, you know, have tapped the letters of fake news but there's a lot of them.

You know, as both an editor and a reporter, how does that help you – how does that complicate the job of framing a story or fact-checking a story? Do you feel like you're almost self-censoring or does it create more challenges, or do you feel like it's still necessary to just push and push and push as hard as we can to get through the news bubble? Karen, do you have thoughts on that?

MS. ATTIAH: I don't really think it affects my job, I mean, in the sense of – maybe there's a sense that we're competing with untruth and propaganda basically, right, for attention. I think that's maybe come to the mind, but I think, frankly, we still have the same responsibility to present the facts as best as we can, as much as we do. I mean –

MS. SIMPSON: Sometimes personal stories maybe help with that in a different way than –

MS. ATTIAH: Yeah. Of course. And, yeah. I think this whole label of fake news just applies to such a broad – like you said, a broad swath of – it could be information we don't agree with, to like actual sort of – you know, teenagers in Macedonia like producing fake news or –

MS. SIMPSON (?): They're the worst.

MS. ATTIAH: Right. They have – (off mic). But, you know, frankly, it doesn't particularly – and then there's this discussion about how much – when we cover stories about

fake news, how much are we amplifying, you know, the news itself when we write a story about, or stories about how fake news is affecting elections in Europe. But, you know, there's a bit more of that discussion happening. I don't know. My view is that we still should, again, cover this issue.

MS. SIMPSON (?): Jia Lynn?

MS. YANG: I mean, I think for us it's an extraordinary time. I don't think any of the reporters I work with have ever – and I've never worked in an environment like this, where sometimes you feel like the White House is actually rooting for you to get your story wrong. So I'll give you an example.

MS. SIMPSON (?): It's certainly not doing a lot to help you get it right in a lot of instances. Yeah.

MS. YANG: Right. Right. So I'll give you a pretty, to me, incredible example among – it happens in every story but this one is pretty memorable to me, which is when we ran a story a few weeks ago that Trump had wittingly or unwittingly relayed classified information to the Russian foreign minister and ambassador in the White House during that visit.

And, you know, we gave the White House all day to respond, reached out to them in the morning. We talk. And then we run the story. And then, it comes out, and, immediately they're saying this is totally false. And we're like, we gave you all day to talk about this, like what's going on? And then they say, we're going to have McMaster come out, and so – I don't know if you all remember but McMaster sort of walks out –

MS. SIMPSON (?): We remember.

MS. IYENGAR: It's memorable.

MS. YANG: And we're all – I mean, all of us were there, like, what is he going to say? Like they had all day to tell us this was completely false and now they didn't say that and now they're going to trot this person out and he says, you know, the story is false.

And then, at first, you're like this is – you know, it's us versus the White House. And then it emerges, of course, that he's parsing words. He's saying the premise of the story is false, not the actual substance of it. And so, after a while it becomes –

MS. SIMPSON (?): The story as written.

MS. YANG: Yeah. Story as written. So it's just a bizarre situation because in the last administration or in prior ones, you know, there's sort of a combative relationship just because that's – you know, the press is holding the government accountable, it's going to be a little bit tense sometimes, but I think the idea that the White House wants you to fall on your face and then uses that to propagate the idea of fake news, it's just totally extraordinary.

MS. IYENGAR (?): And sort of teeing off that a little, how do you think the sort of changes in policies related to the press, so the no cameras in the briefing room, the lack of traveling pools with Tillerson and I think now Dunford is traveling without it, how do you think that makes it harder to get it right or changes the dynamic or sort of how do we think about that in this sort of broader context?

MS. YANG: I mean, it is tougher. We're seeing it with Pentagon coverage much less open. Certainly the State Department – I mean, again, unprecedented.

MS. SIMPSON: No briefings, really.

MS. YANG: No briefings. The secretary of state just doesn't really travel with the press anymore, you know. Even at the Pentagon they're talking about cutting back.

MS. SIMPSON: Barbara Starr was upset this morning actually about not being any broadcast press on the most recent trip, only print.

MS. YANG: Yes. Right. And so, you know, it's a little bit alarming because it makes you think, well, they could just shut things off at any moment. But it also can be freeing. I mean, I've been on one of those secretary of state trips, like very little – it was already kind of eroding in a way. I mean, a lot of – very few things were on the record. It's very controlled. You're kind of just moved like in a pen of almost animals from like site to site and herded. You know, you don't really get to see things that clearly. So as much as we want to make sure we have that access at a minimum on those trips, I also think it's important for us to not be dependent on them.

MS. SIMPSON (?): Karen, I give you an opportunity on the opinion of global voices side to get out of this formal, you know, D.C. gaggle rodeo sort of thing.

MS. ATTIAH: Of course. Yeah. Sure. I mean, I think – you know, which is where opinions can come in and we can come in and say, this is absurd or – I think though it does lead to – from, again, as other countries are watching what's happening, this sort of uncertainty, right, about the direction of the U.S., and you're seeing kind of the pieces, you know, that are added, it's like, well, wither U.S. global leadership, right, so we're seeing a lot of those sort of pieces.

And I think it's really kind of a moment for I think also Americans. I've seen and noticed most of our readers, even though it's global opinions, a lot of the readers are actually still domestic U.S. And I think there's a real interest in what the world is thinking about what's going on here.

And so the less in a way that we're hearing maybe from the administration as far as clear-cut, you know, sort of policies, then, of course, that's plenty of more like fodder for, you know, opinions and commentary.

But it just – I think it’s a new moment to even sort of reconsider what the typical op-ed or editorial was. It used to be – I mean, it still is, like X, Y, Z, this is a problem in a certain part of the country, this is what the administration should do, and now what happens when you have, you know, an administration that, you know, not only calls us fake news but doesn’t seem to be really responsive to some of these older arguments.

So it’s – I will say it presents challenges, but, obviously, opportunities, you know, to put it in diplomatic speak. But, no. It’s an astounding time I think, you know.

MS. SCHULMAN: So your point about – going to sort of alternative voices, reminds me of a comment that a journalist friend of mine had – I guess it – I suppose it must have been a couple of months ago that previously, like when the president had a meeting or a phone call with another foreign leader, you would wait for the White House statement. That was moderately substantive, fairly benign, but at least that said what the call was about.

And you had a series of weeks went by where the White House was not necessarily releasing statements as such or was just saying there was a call, and that he and his other colleagues – like he was very happy about the fact that he and his other colleagues were paying a lot more attention to what the foreign counterpart’s staff was saying and what their press releases were saying and what their commentary was.

So while – to your point about it being, you know, it’s a problem for me or our own domestic audience, it’s a real opportunity to bring in, you know, other voices, other sources, other perspectives into how we’re consuming information that we wouldn’t have necessarily had before. And I’m curious especially, Jia Lynn, how has that kind of impacted the process of reporting these days?

MS. YANG: Yeah. We sometimes get more on the call – we learn more about the calls from the other side – (inaudible) – this one, and that was extraordinary because in the first days of the administration, you know, the president has to make all these calls, introducing himself. And we just heard, you know, all kinds of stories coming back from the other side.

And I think – yeah, I think it makes you more creative in your reporting. You’re not just going to call the unnamed background source at NSC for what happened. You’re going to actually make some other calls because you – and I think, generally, like because you – the administration just governs in a fractured way – it’s another way of diplomatically saying that – you do have to just talk to more people because if you talk to just even two people, which ordinarily you would, oh, these two people said the same thing –

MS. SIMPSON: The Rashomon effect for –

MS. YANG: Totally, yeah. All the time. You know, the State Department says something, you’re like, oh, well, that probably aligns up with the White House. And now, it’s just they’re on different planets. So on any given call or event, you’re forced to – I think the reporters are just – that you just have to talk to more people.

MS. SIMPSON (?): Well, thank you guys so much for joining us here today. This is a – you know, very special event for us and we’re glad that we were able to have our partners here from the “Washington Post” join us. So if you’ll join me in a round of applause for Karen and Jia Lynn. (Applause.) You guys are welcome to hang out on the stage or exit –

MS. YANG (?): Let’s finish our drinks.

MS. SIMPSON (?): Oh, you should finish your drinks, for sure. So we’re going to move on to keeping up foreign relations and do just a couple of segments for our usual podcast listeners. By the way, how many of you listen to the podcast.

MS. SCHULMAN: Thank you very much.

MS. SIMPSON: Everybody open up, you know, iTunes or the podcast app in your phones, give us a rating.

MS. SCHULMAN: Give us ratings.

MS. SIMPSON: If you can. You know, it’s a good use of your time while you’re eating your very yummy looking desert which we’re going to have to snag for later. So it wouldn’t be keeping it foreign relations if we didn’t talk about Syria. We’re going to get to that but I want to start actually in South Asia and talk about Prime Minister Modi’s visit, which sounds like by all accounts was reasonably successful?

MS. IYENGAR: Yeah.

MS. SIMPSON: Radha, do we have comments on this?

MS. IYENGAR: I mean, I think from our end, on the U.S. side, it was just fine because we – yeah, that sure is. Don’t drink my drink. So, I mean, on the one hand, we had a pretty successful public relations visit. There’s a lot of sort of similarities in the politics and the styles of Trump and Modi. We saw them big social media users, direct contact with their populations. I think they both bragged about how many –

MS. SCHULMAN: How many followers.

MS. IYENGAR: Twitter followers they have.

MS. SIMPSON: I missed that.

MS. SCHULMAN: The key metric of democracy these days, how many followers.

MS. IYENGAR: And I think our – it’s an interesting relationship we have with India because, on the one hand, Trump has obviously really kind of put his arm out on China and on

Europe, especially Germany for this economic competitiveness issue. He has not had the same rhetoric or hardline on India. At the same time, they didn't talk about really important things that came up in the Indian press like H1B visa, immigration, hate crimes against Indians that have been happening –

MS. SIMPSON: In my hometown.

MS. IYENGAR: – in Kansas. And sort of the – sort of broader issues of sort of U.S.-India relations in the context of where we have overlapping interests, sort of fighting extremism, some trade issues, and where sort of the America first doctrine really butts heads with India's objectives, right? And so kind of punted all of the hard questions. So it was publicly successfully. I'm not sure either side got as much out of it as they wanted. Maybe the Trump team got like, you know, public success counts as success?

MS. SCHULMAN: Yeah. A couple of other points on that Modi visit. There's a couple of South Asia analysts that I follow on Twitter, one of whom repeatedly tweeted throughout the weekend that the general public perception of the visit was in India that like, wow, Modi is in the United States and he's meeting with the president, and that the United States' reaction was, who? Modi is in the U.S. I had no idea. That's – like the shock that this major visit, which is really important to U.S. interests was going on without a lot of fanfare.

MS. SIMPSON: But was part of an expectation management game at some level, right?

MS. SCHULMAN: Absolutely. And, you know, we saw in the initial foreign leader visits to President Trump where they would go down to Mar-a-Lago or there would be, you know, a large sort of public facing events on this. There was a lot more White House push in like, look at us turning out the red carpet. A lot less so for Prime Minister Modi. And I don't think that's necessarily about relationship and more about how this White House in some ways is maturing.

MS. SIMPSON: But the Indian press made hay out of that and said, look, we got – everybody else got shunted off to Florida. We got to go to the White House.

MS. SCHULMAN: Right. We got the White House. The last point on the Modi visit, there was a great piece by a friend of ours in the "Post" last week about how foreign intelligence is perceiving the president, particularly his tweets, and what they're learning about his emotional state, what they're learning about how he reacts to crises, or how he reacts to good news. So, from that, they're getting just an incredibly rich profile of the president that, frankly, prior presidents haven't really given to our foreign counterparts.

As a result, you saw in the first exchange that the president had with Modi in public was about the trade deficit the United States has with India, which is something he's brought up with every foreign leader, and he always gets quite exercised about this, and other counterparts have not done quite as well in responding. I'm thinking of Angela Merkel as well as the Vietnamese counterpart, whereas Modi had like a pretty good answer of like, yeah, this is something that we

should address and we should talk about and we should do something about. They're studying him. They're learning. And it's going to be fascinating to see how this plays out over time and if it plays out in the United States' favor.

MS. IYENGAR: And it's interesting you say that because, of course, Modi is – you know, he does his weekly address. He has a lot of social media and radio presence in India. So, in principle, our side could be doing the same thing.

MS. SCHULMAN: Totally.

MS. IYENGAR: You don't see quite as much strategic adaptation, at least not in a way that's visible from the sort of publicly released events, so that's also I think something to keep an eye on.

MS. SIMPSON: One bit that I read, Josh White was talking about how the need rhetorically for both chiefs or heads of state, both in the U.S. and India, to have these sort of these, you know, increasingly rhetorical flourishes around the specialness of the relationship between U.S. and India because that historically has not been true, right? India was not aligned during the Cold War, in fact, had a fair amount of sort of Soviet assistance. And so we really kept them at arm's length instead choosing to ally with Pakistan, which bears all kinds of fruits today.

And so the challenges of getting the bureaucracies more accustomed to working with each other and seeing each side, Indians seeing, you know, Americans, Americans seeing Indians as potential partners is a part of kind of the song and dance that goes along with that. And, to that end, there was a fairly major arms deal that was announced. We're going to sell MQ-9 Reapers to India.

MS. SCHULMAN: Guardian.

MS. SIMPSON: Yes, that will be for surveillance in the Indian Ocean and some other things. So, you know, that's – we're selling one C-17 which I actually thought was fascinating. So that will –

MS. IYENGAR: One big plane goes a long way.

MS. SIMPSON: It's kind of a big plane. So that kind of –

MS. IYENGAR: So we haven't talked about Syria yet.

MS. SIMPSON: We haven't talked about Syria. There's actually a ton we could talk about in South Asia because Afghanistan remains sort of unresolved. I think there's going to be – there's a new acting secretary of state for South and Central Asia, which is interesting. But we're going to put Afghanistan on hold and shift to Syria as we kind of segue into White House mayhem.

What is going on in Syria? There was a chemical weapons threat? There was maybe good intelligence? I thought we had like – it was like Late Night Shots. It's like reading Wonkette from 2008, you know, about –

MS. SCHULMAN: Who remembers Late Night Shots? I'm so old.

MS. SIMPSON: God, I'm old. So old.

MS. SCHULMAN: Oh, my gosh. Wow. Okay. We don't have time to explain.

MS. SIMPSON: No, not at all. We have no time to explain.

MS. SCHULMAN: Use Google. Google when you go home.

MS. SIMPSON: But there was a press release, an official White House press release, not even a tweet but an official press release earlier this week that there had been observations that the Syrians are preparing for chemical weapons attack and we were putting them on notice, which, again, it's not a (political ?) term.

MS. IYENGAR: Right. But not a red line.

MS. SIMPSON: I don't know what that means. Buzz Feed is sort of like, you know, added insult to injury by saying they called some folks at CENTCOM and they had no idea what was happening, which, I mean, maybe kind of happens sometimes but not usually on issues of this magnitude. So where are we on Syria as of, you know, Wednesday afternoon?

MS. IYENGAR: So, in my mind, what's particularly strange about this is normally there's dribs and drabs of more stories that come out about like here's the proof that we had and there's been a little bit of that, but there's been more process stories about, here's how this press release –

MS. SIMPSON: Which makes you two so happy.

MS. IYENGAR: God, I'm so happy about this. And more process stories about this press release was generated, which seemed to be at a very high level. We are paying the secretary of defense and secretary of state and chairman of the Joint Chiefs and others a lot of money to kind of – (inaudible) – press releases, in my mind, with no principals meeting. It was coordinated with the president and this ultimately came out, and there's this sort of – there's a background source I believe in the "Politico" story that talks about like, it's okay that these decisions and this information were made at such a senior level and that the bureaucracy itself, they don't need to know when these sorts of decisions are made.

To which I thought, well, if you have to act on it – like they kind of have to do things. They're going to have to call their counterparts. They're going to have to – I don't know –

CENTCOM maybe needs to get a plan ready. All of these things didn't make sense. I had a tweet storm the other day. It was basically statements are not policy, they're a really important part of policy. If you don't have a meeting, if you don't talk about what the statement means in terms of so what, if your deputy's, deputy's deputy does know about the statement, it's not a policy. It's just a really expensive press release that you put out.

And I think there's some interesting dynamics beyond that in terms of what was actually going on, apparently in Syria, of whether or not this is actually a threat that we need to break out.

MS. SIMPSON: It's an interesting indicator and warning problem, you know, for intel folks, you know, how can you tell ahead of the fact what are the signatures associated with an impending chemical weapons attack. I don't usually like that to play out over press releases at 9:00 p.m. at night. But, you know, that seems to be where we are.

MS. IYENGAR: Well, and I think it really highlights the difference in the idea of what is policy and strategy in this administration compared to sort of what we're typically used to, which is we typically have a bureaucracy that's churning up with lots of lower level meetings and lots of conversations and a broader policy, and then there's a push to like, okay, this is happening. We need a statement on this so we can signal consistent with our policies.

MS. SCHULMAN: It's the end, not the beginning of a process.

MS. SIMPSON (?): And this is sort of the reverse, which is the president saying, I want – I assume – sort of reading between the lines – somebody at a very senior level saying, we need to take a strong stand on this and make sure Syria knows – like, we're watching, don't be doing that chemical weapons stuff anymore, which as a policy is probably not one like I personally object to, but it's not clear how it fits into what other strategies – like what does it mean to be on notice? Who are they on notice with? It doesn't seem like the military combatant command, who would need to provide the military action to that was also on notice until they saw the press release, right?

MS. SCHULMAN (?): But now they are, I assume.

MS. IYENGAR (?): So it's a slight rearranging, for lack of a better term, of how we think about policy priorities. And I think to Loren's tweet storm, like really highlights why we always harp on about why processes are – (inaudible) – because you really – if you want to put someone on notice and have that have teeth, there needs to be a process behind it that has diplomatic, aid, military, whatever consequences.

MS. SIMPSON: But there could be minimal success, right? I mean, Secretary Mattis today was like they've been minimally deterred. They aren't going to do what they said they were going to do, which is the great argument – I mean, I thought about this when that press release went out. I was like, this is actually kind of brilliant, right, because if they weren't going to do it, we're now going to claim that it was because of us that they aren't doing it. And so there's –

MS. IYENGAR (?): You can't actually prove deterrence works, but this is actually a really nice little footnote in there.

MS. SIMPSON: It is. It's totally going in somebody's dissertation, you know.

MS. SCHULMAN (?): This is sort of – as a closing point –

MS. SIMPSON: They should cite the podcast, look up the MLA rules on how to do that.

MS. SCHULMAN (?): At the end of the last directive they had in Syria, there was all the confusion about, you know, what was this for? Was this to deter future action? Was this to actually prevent them from doing anything in the future by destroying key capabilities? Was it to signal the beginning of a regime change policy? You know, what was it?

And, as we saw, Secretary Tillerson, Ambassador Haley, H.R. McMaster and others all had very different statements ultimately about what this actually meant. And I think we're seeing to some degree the fruits of this now, where we're raising our hands to say, so what was that? Like that's fine. It seems kind of like a good idea. I want you to prevent chemical weapons attacks. But where does this fit into the broader range of your strategy? And as an Obama administration person who was frequently accused of having no strategy, it pains me a little bit to continue to ask these questions but here we are.

MS. IYENGAR: Shifting us to other forms of mayhem in the White House and otherwise, there have been a number of defense personnel issues that have come up again. Handily, these issues continue to resurge and so I can maintain expertise on them by just repeating things I've said before.

MS. SIMPSON: That's very useful. Yes.

MS. IYENGAR: Don't even need to prep anymore. But, you know, we had two big issues –

MS. SIMPSON: There are people who will do that for the next 30 years so you're in great company.

MS. IYENGAR: Excellent. You know, there have been two big issues, one related to foreign nationals and their pathway to citizenship and the other on sort of accessions and the joining of the military of openly transgender personnel. So the transgender piece, there's been a discussion still to be decided I think by the secretary of defense on whether the services can delay for six months the process by which they allow openly transgender people to access into the military, which is sort of contra – or at least delays the last administration's decision to do that.

And so we ran – actually worked on – this is one of these personnel issues that actually there is data on and it turns out the cost, the readiness costs and the health care costs and generally really any evidence that you can find on this suggests the accessions part at least and the integration are pretty minimal in terms of cost.

So this is a real question on sort of why, given the really small percentages of people doing this and the really low impact, both in terms of readiness costs and in terms of monetary cost, why sort of bring this up in an era where what they're really talking about is increasing force sizing numbers and sort of realigning military priorities.

MS. SCHULMAN: This is what's always fascinating to me about the Department of Defense is that they particularly for ground forces have been making big pushes to either continue to grow or restart the growth of the Army and the Marine Corps, as well as some of the other services. And yet, over and over again, they come up with these policies that will limit the pool of people who will either be interested in serving or will be actually capable of serving, not because they are not actually able to do so but because there is a view that it will become more difficult for readiness, which is sort of a catch-all for all sins.

And we have done this now for the transgender policy but also as you're talking about with the folks that – the MAVNI policy, but, you know –

MS. SIMPSON: Explain that acronym.

MS. SCHULMAN: I can't.

MS. IYENGAR: Military Accessions Vital to the National Interests. So either foreign nations who we allow to access in the military because they have critical skills, and that's really the key aspect of it, right? These are trained linguists, translators –

MS. SCHULMAN: Doctors.

MS. IYENGAR: Medical professionals to provide key gaps in capabilities that we desperately need.

MS. SCHULMAN: We freaking want them.

MS. IYENGAR: And that it's like a proactive pull to get these people so we can meet operational requirements. And that's in fact a test to decide whether you've accessed.

And the point is once we've – now there's a sort of – there are vetting costs to these folks. I'll just note there are vetting costs to all of the folks joining in the military, and I can have a very, very long conversation about the inefficiencies in how we do all of our background checks, including and up through security clearances but there's also a sort of related issues that has come up on whether the vetting costs for these foreign nationals are too high and they should delay the accession and also delay their sort of pathway to citizenship, which is funny, because,

again, to Loren's point, these are people we really need for these operational requirements that we want to expend for our super-lethal fighting force that we are going to grow.

MS. SCHULMAN: Because recruitment's already pretty tough. Like we are – we are not significantly growing the Army right now and they're already struggling in many ways meeting some of the recruiting goals in a large part because a lot of other policies that they have. So to throw in additional things – like actually we're going to make this harder for you, both by saying you literally can't recruit people or that you're going to disincentivize them from wanting to sign up.

These are things that are difficult to recover from. You can't just turn on a dime and say, actually, hey, wait, guys, we love transgender people, even though last year you did not. Or, hey, wait, guys, we love people to come and be of the MAVNI program. That works in policy, but, in practice, you've just told them over the last several years, we don't really want you guys and we may change our mind.

So it's something that I really have been just sort of fascinated by in terms of DOD's understanding of its own incentives. I could write a dissertation on this but I won't. I'll leave that to Erin and Radha.

MS. SIMPSON: I already wrote one. I'm never doing it again.

MS. IYENGAR: But just to sort of close out this general discussion, I think the thing that's often missing from it and that's hard to quantify is this sort of like making the Department of Defense be a place that people want to sign up for. And if you look at the demographics of attitudes on things like immigrants, transgender, gays in the military, women in the military, right, a whole host of social issues, younger generations are just more permissive and less, frankly, bothered by it as a whole. And those are the people you're trying to recruit into the military.

MS. SCHULMAN: Right. Twenty-year-olds, 19-year-olds.

MS. IYENGAR: But those are not the people making the decisions on how to implement this or the timelines to implement this or the potential morale –

MS. SIMPSON: It's a great point, Radha.

MS. IYENGAR: – or readiness or cohesion, right? And so there needs to be a broader conversation that, hey, look. We want to signal that the Department of Defense is a place that the best and brightest want to come, even if you're not transgender, there are probably some of those people who have a problem going to a place that has a proactive prohibition against transgender people or going to a place that appears to be anti-immigrant. And that's a signal that, as Loren says, just can't be reversed on a dime, and so it needs to be taken into account when we're in a world where we want to extend the military and we're thinking about

diversifying or having these divergent sort of sets of threat streams that we want to build a fighting force to (counter ?).

MS. SIMPSON: And this has been a policy challenge and an academic question for quite some time, which is that to what degree do you want your fighting force to reflect the full fabric of your society versus is that fighting force by definition separate from that society? I mean, Tom Ricks talks about this in “Making the Corps.” You can read about it in the Peloponnesian War. I mean, it’s fundamentally differences between Athens and Sparta. Everybody knows that I’m tired of talking about the Peloponnesian war at this point.

MS. SCHULMAN: You guys were drinking right – I would say drink because she just mentioned the Peloponnesian war.

MS. SIMPSON: But these are – these are not obvious – there are not clear or prescribed answers to these questions. I think all states, particularly democratic states, particularly democratic states with volunteer forces struggle with how representative the armed services should be. And the services have competing incentives for how exclusionary they want to be at the end of the day. I mean, there’s a reason why the Army looks quite a bit different from the Marine Corps. And those are things that, you know, a full and fruitful debate I think really benefits from. Are we going to talk about the travel ban?

MS. SCHULMAN: Let’s get to the fun part, unless you want to.

MS. IYENGAR: No, no. We talked about it a little before. I think the “Post” had some good coverage of it and we’re just going to have to wait and see what the Supreme Court says.

MS. SCHULMAN: Yeah.

MS. SIMPSON: In like October.

MS. IYENGAR (?): So let’s move on to the fun part because, presumably, you guys (don’t necessarily listen ?) to us because we can pontificate on recruitment or retention policies over time.

MS. SIMPSON: But we can.

MS. IYENGAR (?): But we totally can. Instead, I talked about like basically what are the most fun parts of talking about national security policy, and we have a couple of riffs that we want to do on things that we love, we want to make fun of, and then we’ll do some questions from the audience.

So, with that, Erin, you were very well known many years ago for writing a famous piece that I will allow you to expand upon now.

MS. SIMPSON: Yes, it was on the data generating process associated with indigenous competitive – no, no. It wasn't.

MS. SCHULMAN: Tell me.

MS. SIMPSON: It was about how not to dress like an Army colonel. And I think it's an important –

MS. SCHULMAN: Or a Navy captain.

MS. SIMPSON: Or a Navy captain.

MS. SCHULMAN: Or a Navy captain. Are there any current or former Army colonels or Navy captains in the room right now?

MS. SIMPSON: There's only one.

MS. SCHULMAN: Only one. There's two.

MS. SIMPSON: Two. Two. Well, as usual, no Army colonels or Navy captains were hurt in the –

MS. IYENGAR: But their spouses were helpful.

MS. SCHULMAN: Yes.

MS. IYENGAR: I put in a special request for that.

MS. SIMPSON: Because we were reminded earlier of just how freaking old we are, you actually may not know that I wrote this once upon a time. Those of you who follow me on Twitter may know that I am Charlie Simpson on Twitter. That is because once upon a time, there was a blog eventually hosted by the august institution, the Center for New American Security, called Abu Muqawama, which I did not name. And on that blog, I was known as Charlie, and that was because I worked at the Marine Corps Staff College and everybody said, oh, like Charlie in "Top Gun," so that's what we did there.

And we did a whole variety of really inappropriate snarky things because we were young, dumb and writing under pseudonyms. But the most important thing that I ever wrote, more than my dissertation, more than an op-ed, more than any policy documented I ever contributed to was how not to dress like an Army colonel.

So I will start, just remind you all of the basics. No acid wash jeans. No unit insignia Polos. No braided belts. And no pleated kakis ever.

MS. IYENGAR: Regardless of color.

MS. SCHULMAN (?): This was true 10 years ago. It is possibly less true today. I think there's some fashion people that have no idea what they're talking about, but anyway.

MS. SIMPSON: Next, and I can't believe I have to say this, no Crocs, no muscle Tees, no sport shorts, no silkies (sp), no range panties, no basketball shorts, no rugby shorts. No one wants to see your upper thighs in any public setting basically ever, okay? I should point out this is all just geared toward the gentlemen of the audience, right? Women, for the most part, more or less know how to dress themselves.

On the dressy side, right, no two-tone shirts. If your shirt is blue and your collar is white, I would like you to leave the room. That is not necessary for –

MS. SCHULMAN: Any board members here with that? Okay.

MS. SIMPSON: No brown suits. If you have a brown suit, please don't wear it with a yellow shirt. And you might just throw out the yellow shirt while you're at it. I'm talking to you, John. Okay. So what are you to do in this situation, right? You are a man about town. You are a retired colonel, you may be a Marine lieutenant who's on leave from the basic school going to Georgetown. We can pick you out from a mile away just in case you were wondering.

For your casual fare, you're going to want to twill shorts, khaki, stone, Navy, Nantucket red, although, if you're taking notes on this advice, you probably don't want to start with the Nantucket reds. If you're feeling really feisty, grab some board shorts or madras or a little bit of a plaid, right? Careful on your matching, but, you know, I'll leave that up to you.

MS. IYENGAR: I think the key point here is lengthen your shorts, that's what she's emphasizing.

MS. SIMPSON: The knee is an appropriate length for your shorts, yes. And that's –

MS. SCHULMAN: We're not going to talk about cargo shorts.

MS. SIMPSON: You all do what you want with the cargo shorts. I'm going to leave that to Dan Drezner, you know, figure out, you know – but you're going to carry my phone if you're wearing cargo shorts, that's pretty much how that's playing out. Straight-leg jeans, you don't have to have skinny-ass hipster jeans unless you want to.

MS. IYENGAR (?): You probably don't want to.

MS. SIMPSON: I mean, that's fine. You can have a relatively dark wash. I wear Levis, you can too. You don't need to spend a fortune. But your legs aren't like the width of, you know, a 50-gallon drum, you don't need, you know, 1990s era carpenter jeans. Winning shirts – comfy soft Polos, maybe a little gingham, just whatever you do, for the love of God, don't tuck

them in. No braided belts, don't tuck in your shirt, no pleated shorts, seriously. This is all going to take you out.

Last point – shoes, I love shoes. I love shoes. Why are you all such a disaster when it comes to shoes? Jim Perkins from DEF has better shoe game than all you all. First off, no Rockports with your suits. Maybe somebody here today has some of that. I don't know. To quote my favorite Navy captain, go Allen Edmonds or go home. That's a shoe brand. You can Google it.

On the casual side, Converse Tom Tailors are back, so are three-stripe Adidas. There's no reason why you can't all be wearing those instead of some like very cushiony Reebok. Asics Tigers, maybe a nice driving moc with or without a sock. Boat shoes, if you must, though, from my perspective, that should ideally involve a boat. (Laughter.) Go get some no show socks, Bombas, whatever. I mean, this is the world that we're living in. And if you're going to insist on wearing your leather rainbow flip-flops, I provide you the rule that I had when I was at Caerus, everyone wearing sandals must get a pedicure. So, with that, I turn it back to Loren. These are your guidelines for how not to dress like an Army colonel.

MS. SCHULMAN: All right. I will leave as my brief aside of like what is my joy in working in the national security world. So I started working at the Pentagon when I was 24 and I knew nothing about the military to the Pentagon whatsoever. It was just a bizarre coincidence that I ended up there as a presidential management fellow.

And, I've got to tell you, people who work in the Pentagon, you talk weird. Particularly if you're in the military, but not necessarily. But there's a lot of phrases that you use that nobody else on the planet does. And I know this because, occasionally, I would send my mother e-mails with the word hot, exclamation point in the subject line, and she'd write back and be like, this went to my spam folder because they thought it was porn. I was like, oh, okay. So that's what we tell people when it's (urgency ?).

Some are really – for years, I have been saying phrases like pull socks, pop smoke, (Danny ?) rabbits.

MS. SIMPSON: Ass over tea kettle.

MS. SCHULMAN: Ass over tea kettle. Any number of things. Saved rounds, things that I see I know the sort of interpretation of but I have absolutely no idea what they mean in practice because they've indoctrinated me in a way that I feel like I have to talk this way in order to be perceived as a moderately intelligent national security woman. But, at the same time, I could be saying like horribly insulting things to all of you and I have no clue.

MS. SIMPSON: Have you ever tried to Google pulled socks in order to like write it down?

MS. IYENGAR: I was just going to say. Here are things you shouldn't do: ask a group of military men to explain in detail what any of those things mean.

MS. SCHULMAN: No. Do not. No.

MS. IYENGAR: Bad things happen.

MS. SCHULMAN: I will close this, because I could go on for a while. There's many people who have written about lots of these things to say that, for years, people would respond to my very urgent tasking e-mails – and I sent so many of them – with ack (sp), ack dot, dot, dot. And I thought they were being like oh, why.

MS. SIMPSON: Like a Cathy comic.

MS. SCHULMAN: Gross. Why? And I finally realized they were saying acknowledged. This was a long time after. And I thought so many – probably of many of you hated me because you're constantly responding to my e-mails with ack. So I leave that with you. If you have been responding to e-mails with ack, just spell out the whole word. Yeah.

MS. IYENGAR: And I will do a very short one, which dovetails nicely with Loren's, which is my favorite, is to try to see what random acronyms I for no obvious reason use in day-to-day speech that confuses anyone who's a normal human, well-read, but not in the military. So my favorite example is FYSA. I don't know why we say that instead of FYI, like what is situational awareness? How is it different than information? I have some thoughts but I think ack is another one. You don't need to sign all of your e-mails V/R.

MS. SIMPSON: You could sign them S/F. That's acceptable.

MS. IYENGAR: It's true. You just – you know, there's a transition back to normal human speech. And as one of my friends said, when I forwarded an e-mail with the top of it saying FYSA, you get one of those.

MS. SCHULMAN: And after that, no more.

MS. IYENGAR: That's right. So to make more friends, stop using acronyms.

MS. SIMPSON: We have a very limited period of time for – I will limit you to two questions. So there's got to be – (inaudible) – desperate who really wants to ask something. It's got to be a damn good question so –

MS. IYENGAR: And a question, not a speech.

MS. SCHULMAN: A question, not a speech. Anyone have a question? I think we have microphones, Jasmine and others. Raise your hands, stand up, do jumping jacks, whatever you need to do.

MS. IYENGAR: This is your time.

MS. SCHULMAN: This is your time. We don't do questions usually. All right. We have a question. Brave man.

Q: Hi. My name is John Soo Kim (ph). I'm a rising junior undergrad at the University of Southern California. I'll just ask this question because no one else is going to, but do you have any advice for undergraduate students who want to get into this field and so what everyone here is probably doing? Thank you.

MS. SCHULMAN: Okay. We all have very different advice to you because they'll say, don't go do a Ph.D., and I'll tell you to go do a Ph.D. or join the military or something. So wants to –

MS. SIMPSON: I was going to say join the military, which maybe isn't very helpful. Play the long game. First, step one, get here. Figure out whatever job or whatever opportunity lets you be in Washington. Washington is a parochial place. It is very difficult to find jobs in Washington if you are not in Washington. So that's sort of – you know, and whatever else you have to do while you're doing that, if you're interning in some God forsaken unpaid internship, wait tables, make coffee, work at a bookstore, tutor, do whatever you need to do to pay your rent while you're doing the resume thing in addition to that. Being here matters.

MS. IYENGAR: And I would say, with that, your job might feel like it's stupid and you're like, I know so much more and I could be contributing so much more. Be useful. So I like definitely had a Ph.D. and definitely punched a lot of holes in – (inaudible) – binders a lot. One time, I had to hunt down a new light bulb for a lamp in my boss' office because it was out and we were having senior people visit. I had a Ph.D. from Princeton, had done a post-doc, had been an assistant professor. I found a light bulb because that was useful.

MS. SIMPSON: I unloaded the dishwasher a lot as CEO of a company.

MS. IYENGAR: Right. So like I think there's a sense like you're going to be doing a lot of cool stuff, and you will totally do cool stuff. You'll also do really crappy stuff. Just do it and be useful.

MS. SCHULMAN: On Radha's point, I had an Army colonel hand me these beautiful binders that were build for the secretary of defense on a weekly basis and say, Loren, I used to kill people for a living. Here's your binder. So everybody does that stuff. (Laughter.) The last thing I would say on that point is use your networks. And you have two networks, neither of which you really think about that much.

One is your good friends, all of the friends that you have in school and grad school, anywhere else. These are going to be your peers for like the next 20 years of your life and they'll get you jobs you don't know exist. And the second one is you've either worked for or

studied with or known closely senior level people who are well respected in Washington. They are your best entrees, not the random people that you have informational interviews with or coffees with. It's very rare that you have coffee with somebody and they say, you are amazing. I want to hire your right now. It's much more frequent that like a professor of yours who loves you recommends you to somebody else and they say, I want to hire that guy because this guy I respect really recommended him. So use those networks as much as you can.

One more question. Over here, sir.

Q: Let me just offer a comment.

MS. SIMPSON: That's not a question.

MS. SCHULMAN: But a question mark at the end.

Q: Okay. Can you tell me about the president management fellow program because I think it's a great way for people to get into government service.

MS. SCHULMAN: Absolutely. So the presidential management fellow program is one of many interesting avenues to go into the federal government, where once you have completed a graduate degree, if you get a PMF, you're basically given a fun study tour of the United States government for two years, along with time to go do training as well as fairly automatic promotions across those two years that you're there.

I did that. I started at the FBI, hated it. Don't necessarily do FBI. Moved to the Department of Defense, got to work in the Secretary of Defense's Office, got to work on transition, do all kinds of cool stuff. I know people who did a PMF rotation on an aircraft carrier. It's great. And the federal government pays you to do it. Now – right now it's weird because there's like hiring freezes, all kinds of awkwardness in terms of hiring. But in terms of getting into the government as a young person –

MS. SIMPSON: It's almost the only way unless you're coming out of the military.

MS. SCHULMAN: It is almost the only way. If you come out of military, you have veterans' preference, we get into a whole another discussion about that, but PMF is the best possible way if you're a young person, you want to go into government, that is your time. Don't think that you're going to go in when you're 40 and you've gotten experience. You can do that politically but it's much more difficult to just go at it as a GS employee. On the other hand, if you go into the government, you might end up like one of us. So I leave that to whether or not you want to make that your career.

MS. IYENGAR: But I would just add that, you know, the PMFs are useful for learning about the government. It turns out when you're outside of the government and you want to hire folks at say places like RAND or even at universities, there's a lot of value placed on that awareness and experience in the government. So don't feel like you have to have a 30-year

government career to feel like that's a track. It's useful track I think if you want to be a person involved in or around government.

MS. SCHULMAN: Absolutely. Okay. With that, thank you very much for our first studio audience participation session of Bombshell. This has been fantastic. We probably won't do this again for a while. But we appreciate you being in our audience and hope to everybody to please subscribe, give us a rating, and you'll hear our voices soon. Thanks, guys. Thanks. (Applause.)

End Transcript