



**2014 Halifax International Security Forum
Plenary 8 Transcript
The New Propagandists: The Battle for the Narrative**

SPEAKERS

Steven Blaney, Minister of Public Safety, Canada

Mikhail Kaysanov, Former Prime Minister of Russia, Co-Leader, Republican Party of People's Freedom

Saad Mohseni, Chairman and CEO, Moby Group; The Hon. Frances Townsend, Analyst, CNN

Frances Townsend, President, Counter Extremism Project

MODERATOR

Jeanne Meserve, Senior Fellow, Homeland Security Policy Institute, George Washington University

Jeanne Meserve: Somebody has talked about there's a battle for the narrative. The West is losing the battle for the narrative. The West has to come up with counter messaging and it has to push it across if we're going to lose that proverbial battle for hearts and minds. Here in this session this afternoon, I'm hoping that we can weave those threads together and hopefully take this discussion about the weaponization of information, as it's been called, a little bit deeper and answer some questions like what is the Western narrative? And who should the messenger be? What are the obstacles to getting out the message and how do we overcome those obstacles. We have a terrific panel here today. Let me introduce them to you.

We have here Mikhail Kaysanov. He is the former Prime Minister of Russia and also Co-Leader of the Republic Party of People's Freedom. Sitting next to him is Fran Townsend, familiar to many of you from her appearances on CNN. She also is President of a newly formed organization called The Counter Extremism Project. We will hear more about that. Next to Fran we have the Honourable Steven Blaney. He is the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness here in Canada. And finally on the end we have Saad Mohseni. Saad is Chairman and CEO of the Moby Group.

This is an Afghan Media and Entertainment Company which has a presence in seven companies – countries? Am I correct? Great. Thank you all for being here and thank you all for being here and I hope you're all going to participate in our conversation here today.

Minister Blaney, I want to start with a conversation – the conversation with a question for you. ISIS may be taking the use of social media to a new level but extremists have been using propaganda and social media to send out that propaganda for years. We had rap videos from al-Shabaab. We had Inspire Magazine being distributed by AQAP. With events in Canada, with the appearance of French citizens in ISIS videos, with the beheadings of American and other citizens, have world leaders finally reached the point that Howard Beale did – the man who was in that video – when he said we're mad as hell and we're not going to take it anymore. Have we gotten there?

Steven Blaney: Well, first, these video remind me, I believe, of Andy Warhol saying that we all have our minutes of glory. I think in the world we're living in, there are many opportunities for many people to have their moment of glory. But those who are contributing to the law, those who commit violence, those – for whatever reason, those who are contravening the Criminal Code, have to face the full force of the law and this has come clear to us as Canadian on October the 20th and the 22nd, when two individual, two criminal, two thugs, actually committed the violence and as government, we are invited to make sure that are – we are prepared to deal with these evolving form of threat and also to adjust to the way they are communicating and – including social media. So my answer to you is yes, we need to step up to the plate.

Meserve: What is happening? What progress can you report to us? I know you recently had meetings in Europe.

Blaney: Well, maybe still – I – I can tell you that of course Minister MacKay and I were involved in that, even on that day and many parliamentarian – I know Mr. Doer was also in there that day. Well, what we saw when we were – for eight hours, we were within the vicinity of the Parliament, not willing to communicate to tell whoever where we could be. But when we got back – out of there, when I got back in Quebec City, when I got back in my riding, when I got to my Tweet, I realized that our nation has been shaken and our nation has come together. That's what I can tell you. And if those who want to deter is, I can tell you they made us even more unwavering in our strong will to take whatever is needed to keep our country safe. And of course, by protecting our liberty – this is what this country is made of. So what I can tell you is as government, we are responding. We already have put some laws in place. This is how politician, we react. But we also can reach out and this is what has – our police officer have been

doing. This is what our intelligence have been doing. We are good at – we can have a helping hand, a friendly hand but if you are a criminal, a thug and you are ready to use violence, you'll face the full force of the law. We'll treat you as a criminal. We'll put you in jail and you'll face whatever consequences you have made by your own individual choice.

Meserve: Fran, you spoke yesterday about this in the intelligence session here and said you thought there were limits to what government could do. Explain for those of us who weren't in that session yesterday exactly what it is that you're doing and why you feel this approach is necessary.

Frances Townsend: In that session, Jeanne, what I was talking about – let me start by saying to Minister Blaney and Minister MacKay and our Canadian hosts how sorry I think everyone was to see the attack in October and frankly I think it shook everybody, right. It shook not only Canadians but all of North America because that could have happened anywhere. And so we share your pain and we also share your resolve. What we were talking about yesterday in the intelligence session was – and I was saying it to Admiral Rogers earlier – you know, we use the term open source intelligence when we talk about publicly available material. And it's a little bit misleading because although it's open source to every private citizen, right, because it's publicly available and people have chosen to put it out there, it is not easily accessible to those inside government who have, for reasons of the First Amendment in the United States, restrictions on what they can access. Even though individuals put it out there, the government has to work through policies and procedures that'll permit intelligence officials access – legal access to this. And so, for example, Admiral Rogers said NSA – also that would include CIA – collect what we call foreign intelligence. That is, targets outside the United States. The FBI can target inside the United States but even they have legal constraints and so there needs to be this public-private partnership and that's really what the Counter Extremism Project is about.

Meserve: And what are you trying to do?

Townsend: So the role that we've taken on is to identify – they call themselves Twitter Jihadis. There are cells on the internet that distribute the propaganda and so real time – it was Thursday or Friday in the battle of Ramadi, they were distributing videos of the fight there. They were reporting on the weather and the way the weather impeded the coalition actions to have air support to Iraqi forces. They – we've seen the beheading videos. So the Counter Extremism Project goes out, tries to identify those individuals who are disseminating the propaganda. So far we've identified, for example, 130

accounts. Of those 130 accounts, 75% of them all follow the same ten guys. So if you imagine sort of a pyramid, you've got ten leaders of this cell. If you take those ten out, the rest of the 120 fall apart because they no longer can be a megaphone to something that doesn't exist.

Meserve: Don't they just set up another account?

Townsend: They do and this is where the frustration has come in. They do, right. They can set up another account quicker than you can get an at-home pregnancy test result. So it's pretty fast for them. The problem is our social media companies are not as quick. They've done a very good job using algorithms and technology against pornography. They're not quite on the dime yet when it comes to the extremist propaganda.

Meserve: And why is that?

Townsend: Well, I think there are some that worry about First Amendment, right. Human rights groups would say to you some of these pictures are important to bear witness to the atrocities. But there's a line, right, and what they need is – what I say is three things. You need to have trusted reporting status for organizations and human rights groups that want to report this stuff. You need to have a stated policy on extremists that you won't tolerate it in your – on your platform. And you've got to be willing to have a button. You know how you can push spam? You've got to be able to make it easy for people in a streamlined reporting process.

Meserve: Saad, I'm curious. Your view on this and why you think it is that these messages that are being pushed out on Twitter and elsewhere are resonating so strongly?

Mohseni: Well, I think you have to look at the – I mean they – ISIS Twitter guy or Facebook guy, he's a local. He's on the ground. Or he believes in the ideology. It's organic. So all their messages are very organic. On the other side, the Western kind of narrative is usually managed and handled by people in suits sitting in Washington or in London or in Paris. So there's something very corporate about it. And you can – I mean asymmetrical warfare also applies to cyberspace, right? So the big – you know, the big opposition to ISIS is always going to fail. What you need to do is you need to, you know, work on local – locals challenging the ISIS narrative and what the West could potentially do would be to amplify these messages, provide them with the technology and so forth. Because I think even with the ISIS narrative, I mean I think that they have two objectives. The first one is to recruit. And these groups – I mean the individuals who are attracted to ISIS, I mean I would compare them to Hell's

Angels. They're a bunch of bikers. They're attracted to violence and extremism and killing and everything else. The kind of narrative is along the lines of promoting cleanliness and soap. Right? It doesn't work. The more you target their narrative directly, the more it promotes them. And that's where the whole – the whole strategy is pretty wrong in my opinion. So the other – of course, the other objective of ISIS is to win hearts and minds. Well, they have territory. And the danger is that, you know, if you look at 20-odd thousand people attracted to ISIS, its zero point zero one percent of the Muslim population. But what if they actually start targeting five percent of the population because they have territory. So I think that if you – when you – the battle of the narratives is not that simple. You have to categorize them and you have to, you know, approach it –

Meserve: And there are many of them.

Mohseni: But it has to be a local narrative –

Meserve: And is there any local narrative at this point?

Mohseni: I think that there – I mean you also have to look at the underlying situation. Some of these populations are receptive to the ISIS narrative because of either the sheer dominance of Iraq or various problems that the people have in other parts of the Middle East. So you have to also deal with the underlying situation. I mean you cannot just win this through marketing alone. I think that you have to also address a lot of other, you know, bigger picture issues. But yes, there are local voices and they need to be helped and, you know, I think that we're losing the battle. I don't think we'll lose the war, but we are losing the battle. That's for sure.

Meserve: We've been talking about this in terms of the Middle East, but of course Russia, they have a thing or two to teach us about propaganda. Mikhail, do you want to weigh in here on the value of propaganda – and I would love it if you could give us some sense of what's happening inside the Russian government when it comes to propaganda. We're sort of doing it as an add-on after we've made other policy decisions. In the Kremlin is there a different approach? Is propaganda something that is integrated from the beginning into what they plan to do?

Kaysanov: First let me say that my role today is speak about Russian front on the battle of the narrative and this – with this respect, of course, what we see now, there is absolutely needs to put in some terms to establish, to build up some kind of narrative and to press the mentality of the Western society and to create in the minds of Western politicians the new understanding that the West is – the feeling of guilt, the feeling of, I would say, not fulfilling obligations with the Russian Federation and that Russia has a

genuine interest and the West ignores that. That's why just he tries to require and demand the respect to him and his power. What the government does now – and I mean just Putin, because we have a so-called vertical power – it means just Putin and all other members of the government simply assistant – personal assistant to Mr. Putin to different sectors or whatever – economy or social sphere. What they'd like to do is now, of course – now of course to find the way how to – how to keep power. That's the main goal. And to that extent, the most important thing is right now to impose immobilization spirit for the society, to create a feeling that we surrounded by enemies and just in this sphere Putin is victories. Victories he already was successful. The war with Georgia is one case and that was absolutely demonstrative case when after three months of signing a protocol agreement, after withdrawal of – Putin withdraw all of troops there. But none of the points were implemented by Putin and three months after the West turn to business as usual with his regime. And he draw this lesson as a permission to behave this way. He understood. That's the way how just the West started to recognize the genuine interest of Russia. And therefore now we have another battle, another problem. The West suddenly appear to be more stronger, I would say more principled. Mr. Putin didn't believe how come. Everything is straightable. We should come to the compromise. And the U.S. continued to stand strongly on values. Although of course hypocritical values and just, I think, just what is already mentioned during previous sessions that the West right now is not quite sure about standing on the values. That is absolutely important at this moment. If we want – if we want just to secure what we have – what we established before – I mean the global security and the European security in particular, we should not allow such reckless policy to be successful. It means just not to allow Mr. Putin to establish the – his own narrative and just continuing pressing you and creating the feeling of guilt.

Meserve: We must have some questions out here in this very diverse audience.

Townsend: Jeanne, while you're getting questions, let me just say – while you walk over there. You know, the unifying principle here is that we have to, whether you're talking about Russia or you're talking about ISIS, we have to know that this is a battle space, just like physical battle space. And we must not permit to be uncontested.

Meserve: We've been saying that for years.

Townsend: Right. And I would say, you know, it's not just frankly guys in suits in Paris and London and Washington. Our Arab allies, we work with our Arab allies but –

Mohseni: The problem is that your Arab allies don't have credibility in their own countries. The leadership, the rulers of the region – I wouldn't even call them leaders

because they're not leaders – they have no credibility. The fact that they add – I mean they are your allies discredits you and vice versa.

Meserve: So who are our regional voices? Are you suggesting they're –?

Mohseni: Of course they're our voices. I mean I have to say –

Meserve: Who are they? If they aren't the governments – you're talking about –

Mohseni: They exist. I mean –

Meserve: NGOs.

Mohseni: Civil society, NGOs, political leaders, sports leaders, musicians. They're all leaders. I mean the region is completely different to the way it was 20, 30 years ago.

Meserve: We have a question right here.

Audience: Thank you so much. My name is Josh –

Meserve: Would you please stand?

Audience: Oh, sure.

Meserve: Thanks.

Audience: I'm Josh Rogin. I'm a reporter with Bloomberg View in Washington. You know, I'd like to make a comment that I'm going to turn into a question at the end. As a consumer of, you know, information about terrorism and extremism align but also as a journalist covering these issues, it's always struck me that our response has always been out of proportion with what is the proportionality of the propaganda coming from different parts of this problem. In other words, sure, we have some extremists who are using social media to produce propaganda. At the same time, we have countries investing billions of dollars in huge institutions to build literally media empires that are pushing propaganda on a much more institutional systematic level and that is our weaponization of information in its own right. I'm wondering if the panelists agree with that and if so, how should we as a Western system that's reliant on a free media that doesn't have control over its journalists, much, how are we to respond to that given the fact that what I see is that our government, especially the U.S. government has a broken public diplomacy system, a broken broadcasting system – and God bless you for what you do, but shouldn't the government be doing that? Shouldn't they have already been doing that? Why is it that our response to this problem is out of proportion to the threat but also so basically broken and incompetent. Thank you.

Meserve: Ministry Blaney, do you want to take a crack, even though this was largely directed at U.S.?

Blaney: Well, maybe three points. The first one is if we go back a little bit in history from a Canadian perspective, the National Film Board was created in 1939 at the eve of the Second World War. And its target was at propaganda. Canadian propaganda to justify our engagement in the huge conflict. Of course the mandate has evolved. We as Canadians have a national broadcasting, but I don't – I think if you watch the news, you would not – certainly not see it as a tool of the government. We are in a very free environment which I think is something we strongly cherish. This being said, what we are seeing now is not necessarily those mass media but those new forms. We call it asymmetric. Social media. One individual, a few groups on the internet, on the web, on social – so this is a new form. So we need to adapt, to adjust, and frankly we need to be able to track those carrier of hatred that are totally incompatible with our principle. So that is certainly something I think we need to adjust and from a propaganda, from a communication standpoint, I would think we are involved as a national government with initiative but we also need to be able that if there are things happening that are contributing our loss, well then we have to adjust to these reality and as legislator, we need to provide the tools necessary within the scope of civil rights.

Townsend: And Josh I'd just – I'd just add to this. I mean I think there is a role for both public and private, right. The government – when I was in government I was frustrated we didn't do more. I was outside of government – I mean this is really about contesting the space. It is – it requires government action. It requires the private sector, NGOs, all of that. There are roles to play and they leverage each other, right. There's not a single vector. I think you need all of it, frankly, but in the meantime, you know, when a private individual or a private group goes to do it – so in the meantime in the last week, I get threatened, right. So they try to bully you and intimidate you. Anybody who knows me here will tell you I will not be the least bit pushed back on that because, to me, that they've noticed what we're doing and that we're being effective at shutting them down, that's a threat to them and that's a good thing.

Meserve: You know, it raises the tactical question of how much government should be engaging with them on Twitter. The State Department has done some of this and there's been criticism saying you're legitimizing them by doing this. I'd be interested in hearing your thoughts.

Mohseni: That's absolutely ridiculous that you engage them. I mean – and rather than amplifying the – when I talked about amplification of some of the better voices, you're

amplifying the bad guys. It is going to be a case of self-fulfilling prophecy if you talk about it so much. I mean how many people see their Tweets? 2,000, 3,000? Not millions of people. I think that we are exaggerating – you know, maybe it makes people in the West feel better because they're challenging it so directly. But it's ridiculous. We've seen the same thing in Afghanistan where ISEF challenges the Taliban. And the outcome is quite ridiculous. And first and foremost no one would have looked at the Taliban Tweet and because it was challenged, thousands and hundreds of thousands of people get to see it. And it's a battle that you will never win.

Meserve: Minister Blaney, is the Canadian government engaging with ISIS online? Are you –?

Blaney: I would say – we're not really in the business – of course we have – we have to build intelligence that we are able to convert into evidence. In that purpose, there may be some activity, but not necessarily – not in the –

Meserve: So more monitoring than responding to them. We have another question back here. Could you stand up, identify yourself please?

Audience: Rachel Kleinfeld, Carnegie Endowment. So we treat propaganda as this add-on over here and then the war effort is the main effort over here and the diplomatic effort. But in fact our war effort and the folks that were part of a coalition would sometimes fuel the other side's propaganda. So when we're in bed with a government that looks to the people in the region, corrupt or venal or unrepresentative or ethnically manipulated, then that gets used for their propaganda. So I mean to name some names, when we're in bed with Saudi Arabia or Egypt or these countries and then the people in the locality can say oh look at what this government's doing to my people. This Egyptian government or the Saudi government. The U.S. is behind that. It makes it harder for us to have a propaganda that has any legitimacy within the region. I just wrote a paper with one of the counter-terrorism cell leaders in Afghanistan who was trying to convert some of the hardest to convert tribal leadership in Afghanistan to our side. And he said the hardest part was that the U.S. government – who he was working for – wanted to have a narrative that supported the Karzai government. And there was no way you could get those local tribal leaders to support the Karzai government. What you could is have them not support the insurgents. When are we going to get smart about both integrating our war effort and our propaganda effort to realize you really can't separate these two and also to start looking at being a little less in bed with the venal states, or at the very least allowing for other state – other non-state actors to make some of our points for us, as Saad is saying.

Meserve: Who wants to take that one? Fran?

Townsend: I would say, I mean look. Let's be clear. I can't speak for the U.S. government. I'm not a government official any more. I agree with a thousand percent about the need for it to be integrated. That's why I say it's just another battle space and we've got to treat it as an equally important and valuable battle space. I think we're getting better. There need to be rules – there needs to be rules of engagement in this battle space, just as there are and I think that's lacking. That sort of legal infrastructure that our operators rely on. It should be there already. We're slow and it's inadequate and so I, to that extent, agree.

Meserve: So who establishes these rules of engagement? What umbrella do we do this under?

Townsend: But there's no question that the Director of National Intelligence working with the National Security Council and the White House have got to do that. I mean –

Meserve: And internationally?

Townsend: Well, then you've got to work with your partners. No, absolutely.

Meserve: And is the work – Minister Blaney, I know has just been to Europe. Do you think that there's been enough progress internationally working the dialogue here about these very tough issues?

Blaney: There's been discussion on how to address on a global approach, how we can develop a counter narrative and there are – I really like what I heard this morning when we talk of the illegitimization of terrorism. I think we have to get to the core. We can express ideas. We are a democracy. We can have those debate in a free and open environment. And we can run for it. We can politically run for it. We can write. We can express ourselves. But at the bottom line is if you are willing to use violence, attack a symbol of a government and contravene and do it and purposely for an extremist or ideology. This is terrorist and our nation have to send a strong signal that this is not – this is not – this is not, for my part, this is not the Canadian way. And of course we are invited to respond and adjust to this reality and as we have said in the past, we don't want to over react but we don't want to under react as well. So we are moving forward and I would say on that point, for me, there is no liberty without security.

Meserve: Do you want to weigh in on this?

Mohseni: Yeah, I think it's – I mean again, you have to have multiple efforts. You have to delegitimize, deglamourize ISIS and what they're doing. You have to shame them. You have to see doubt. So people who are already in that, you know, attempt to

fragment the organization. But even before that, you have to address as to why these young people are attracted to ISIS. And I think that in a place like, say, Tunisia, which seems to be the most secular of all the Arab countries – or Arabic-speaking countries – why are so many young people going to Syria or Iraq? You have to look at other issues. You have to look at young people – these angry young people as to why they're going to a place like Syria. Middle class young kids. Why are they going there? Do they have issues with authority? Why are they so angry? Is it an employment issue? That's why it has to be a lot more strategic and we have to have a much longer term strategy in terms of dealing with these sorts of issues.

Meserve: You had a question here.

Audience: Well, I had a remark which – Carl Bildt from Sweden – which is more to do on the Russian side. Because what's been happening since last autumn is quite remarkable in Russia. The Putin regime has consolidated, strengthened and started to substantially augment all of their propaganda resources. All of the news agencies' information, agencies have been consolidated. New leadership. And they are now investing a lot of money into setting up news organizations throughout Western Europe, radio stations. Television is used with evil effects. A lot of the crisis, a lot of the conflict that you now see in Eastern Ukraine is being driven by evil hatred that has been propaganda or put out by Russian State television. That works unfortunately, and we don't have the means to counter it. And they've been fairly effective on Western media as well. What they do is they insert false information into the system. Not expecting the Western media to buy it, because the Western media doesn't. For example, MH17. But Western media often is forced to say there are two versions to the story. And that takes away the real story in a way that sort of opens up the space for what the Russians want to do. One of the leading theorists in Moscow about these things have been saying lately that previously wars were started with an artillery barrage. Now war starts with an information offensive and they are, as a state, putting resources into this in a way that no other is even remotely in the vicinity of.

Meserve: Mr. Kaysanov?

Kaysanov: Yeah, I completely agree with Corbil, just – that's absolutely just new development and that's how I would say – and with intelligence managers the Russian propaganda works at the moment. And in fact, just the psychological poll shows, as many of you know, more than 80% support Putin's, I would say, policy vis-à-vis Ukraine and Ukraine in particular. But that's the issue of propaganda because just we in Russia don't have free media at all. We don't have any single free media. Maybe one radio station, [Russian 00:29:04] with the audience of not more than one million

people but in Russia we have 143 million people. That's somehow just the – simply a sign that we have to demonstrate to you we still have freedom of media, but we don't. And therefore, of course, just this is that intensive propaganda creates such a feeling and in fact, even in the West people see just that maybe the truth somewhere in between what just the BBC and CNN shows or Fox. And what Russia today demonstrates with all those arguments et cetera. It means – it means that it is effective and it works, not only for Russian population but also abroad. What to do with this. In fact, just we should tackle – we – I mean, democratic opposition in Russia – tackle just Putin's regime which is not – not acceptable in 21st century. And Russia violates all international obligations. Russia is member of OAC. Russia is member of Council of Europe and all these common values, universal values just should be [inaudible 00:30:12] on the constitution. Moreover, I would put this way, just that Putin says just the West owe something to us. They promised not to enlarge NATO in particular and they promised not to touch post-Soviet Union new states from Republics. But the West is doing differently. But in reality, it's absolutely a wrong perception because no promises were given to the Russian Federation and if – even were, but there was not. If were given those promises, it was to Mr. Gorbachev, Soviet Union. But the Russian Federation and the Soviet Union completely two different states. It is Soviet Union was totalitarian country. And Russian Federation accordance with the constitution supposed to be a normal democratic state. And Putin would like to establish the line, the breach as a continuation of [inaudible 00:31:13] Soviet Union and the Russian Federation. That's absolutely wrong. Should not be accepted this way.

Meserve: Minister Blaney

Blaney: I think the former foreign affair minister from Sweden is fairly right when mentioning that while our attention, and especially here in Canada – I spoke on terrorists and how to better tackle with it. We have not to be distracted from other threats such as organized crime or more subtle form or of propaganda. We know – we are given example of when a country is using its media and controlling its media. Removing the press – liberty of press, what it can achieve in terms of working the opinion of the people. So that's something we have to keep in mind and while we focus on a much more clear bright, almost exploding terrorist threat that is somewhat more – I wouldn't say easy, but more practical to approach.

Meserve: We have a question here.

Audience: Hello. Alaa Murabit. The Founder of the Voice of Libyan Women. I'm going to bring it back to civil society a little bit and to put my question in context. In the past six months alone my organization and its network have lost three members

who have been assassinated due to their work and they've actually been targeted because of their involvement in media, be it formal or informal media. So when it comes to social media, I think we have to recognize the reason it is so popular in the region is because it's the result of repressive regimes which controlled the media and this was the way in which the younger population in particular felt its voices could be heard and not through politically – political agenda and media based channels. Now this proves to have a double-edged sword because you create these open channels of media but they're also very easily monitored and easily accessible. So civil society activists don't really have a lot of space in which they can maneuver and if they do tend to go to formal or traditional forms of media, which unfortunately in the region tend to be a bit more sensationalist based, they demand to know your name, where you live, and identify you and that's one of the problems with even open source that governments use is they start identifying activists and it puts us in extremely extremely negative positions. So my question for you is is there a plan or a mechanism that you think could exist to speak with civil society in a way in which they're not identified. They can get information out and information in, but that doesn't put them in any way at harm.

Meserve: Fran?

Townsend: So I will tell you your story hits home to me in particular, right. Here in the United States I would never have expected to share that story but in the last week, as I said, because of my activity on social media – and I'm not in the government. I put myself in your camp. I'm a part of civil society now. This guy has made all sorts of violent physical threats against me that require protection. I would never have believed that was possible in the United States where we have a Constitution that protects my freedom of speech. But you're right. Because it's accessible to me, it is also accessible to the bad guys. I do think that we have to talk about a way to allow people in civil society – you're much more at risk – and your folks in the region are much more at risk than I or anybody who works for me will ever be. But we have to find a way to give you the space – I call it building white space for folks in civil society – around the world, because frankly, I'm not as credible in countering them. I can try and name and shame them, but when you talk about a counter narrative, you're much more credible and we've got to give you the space to do that, a safe space.

Meserve: Saad, I'd like to hear you on that.

Mohseni: Well, I think a lot of you here have – you know, you're involved in government. You deal with the region and I think you still have quite a bit of leverage to work with governments in the Middle East and North Africa or South Asia and in

some ways twist their arms to open up the country a bit more. You know, people need to have outlets and I think people need to express themselves and that really will be very helpful. I mean this ISIS – let's call it an opportunity. It does provide your governments with the chance to confront some of your allies and say you have to open up a bit more. I think civil society is very vulnerable in Libya or Afghanistan or Pakistan. They need as much protection as they could possibly get.

Meserve: Saad, I have another question for you and it involves your company, which does entertainment programming as well as other sorts. In the U.S., teen pregnancy rates have come down because of a reality show. Is there programming that can be done by a company like your own that can have a significant effect on the narrative?

Mohseni: Sure. But the thing is, I mean we don't impose anything. I mean for us, as media, we have seen social change in the country. We simply facilitate that social change. We fast track what's inevitable. You know, even in Afghanistan, which, you know, in 2001 was something that, you know, you would have seen in the 14th century. The country has changed very dramatically but the media has certainly opened up the way and I think that's why I think, you know, like a teenager, when you have growing pains. I mean the Middle East and North Africa is feeling these pains. You know, we have – we can express ourselves. I mean look at YouTube in South Africa. I mean – sorry. Arabia. The biggest users of YouTube on the planet in Saudi Arabia. Or in Afghanistan with no internet, zero internet. Today they have 2 million Facebook users alone. Iran, 20, 25 million Facebook users. It's funny, because everything's been banned in Iran but Instagram works. So people now have been posting thousands of videos every single day on Instagram. And they're 15 seconds long. So there's this huge appetite for people, you know, wanting to express themselves. You know, the government are sort of slow to catch up and I think that there are a lot of people like, you know, Google Ideas and others, who are working on various things to help these different societies develop. But from, you know, the young – and this youth bulge, there is an opportunity but the risks are that if they don't have outlets, they don't get the freedoms that they're after, that they will turn to organizations like ISIS.

Meserve: We have a question back here. Go ahead.

Audience: Hi, John Hudson with Foreign Policy magazine in Washington. I have a question for Ms. Townsend. One of the – an uncontroversial way of dealing with ignorant and deplorable speech is the answer is more speech. But as I understand it, your organization is involved with getting people taken off the internet, deleting accounts, putting pressure on Twitter to do that. And I think one of the reasons that

there's a complaint that these Silicon Valley companies are slow to react is because there's a fundamental conflict in terms of their values, which very much are rooted in the free flow of information. And I wonder how you guys respond to allegations that you're not responding to speech with speech but you're trying to cut people off which can be seen as censorship of the internet.

Townsend: Absolutely. Look, this is – I'm glad you asked the question, right. So this is not about – I'm not trying to build the counter narrative. This is a very targeted thing. I think you're absolutely right about why they're slow. It'd be useful if they engage with us so they understood the answer to this question. I can't get them literally to return a letter or a phone call, which is a problem. I will tell you, this is about not – taking down those who are specifically promoting violent behavior, right, who are calling for the violence or murder of others. This is not about – you know, there are going to be things up there that I don't like. That's not what it's about. Right. It really is very targeted against violence on the internet and the promotion of violence. Just as these companies have taken down pornography, right. It's the same – I put it in that category.

Meserve: Although somebody in the tech world said to me, this is a little bit more complicated than you think. That, for instance, 150 hours of video are uploaded every minute to YouTube and it is really hard to keep tabs on everything that's going on.

Townsend: That's right, Jeanne, and the way they've dealt with that on the pornography front is algorithms, right. There's a – it's not a human being's got to look at every one of those. And so there are mechanisms, but again, the tech companies would have to engage and I think these are a force for good, but I think they have an obligation –

Mohseni: But they haven't stopped porn so I'm told. They haven't stopped porn.

Townsend: Right. But they're addressing that issue. But they've undertaken efforts to address the issue.

Mohseni: I think we shouldn't waste energy on things like this. The videos are always going to get out some way, somewhere. They will use a Chinese, you know, version of something or other or some, you know, some other platform. I think we concentrate on the kind of narrative. And I think that at the end of the day – and also once we start censoring, when do we stop?

Meserve: And are we violating the very values we claim we're upholding?

Mohseni: Yes.

Meserve: We have a question back here.

Audience: This is an immediate follow-up. I'm glad this question came up. My name is Alyssa Ayres and I'm with the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington, D.C. Do we think there's a difference between language and social media that promotes violence versus language that's being used by designated terrorists on social media? I mean to me there is a difference and I would argue that one of Twitter's problems is that they are not taking down people who are heads of designated terrorist groups, individually designated terrorists, people like the head of Lashkar e Taiba who's got a Twitter account that's active. It's been brought to Twitter's attention. They don't do anything about it. So to me it would seem like we have a legal framework in the U.S. where that shouldn't be allowed legally and that isn't a question of free speech. It's more a question of material support to designated terrorists, I would think. I mean –

Meserve: I'm sure Fran would agree with you here. We don't have any representative of Twitter in the audience by any chance do we, that would be –

Townsend: Not willing to identify himself.

Meserve: I think we have another question right here.

Audience: David Kramer with the McCain Institute. Mikhail, I wanted to come back to Russia and also to ask Minister Blaney about this because the propaganda coming from the Kremlin is polluting Russians' mind where anti-Westernism, anti-Americanism in particular, is on an astronomical rise. What can we do to confront this to try to change the information, the terrible nonsense that's coming out of the Kremlin? And Minister Blaney, if we think back to the Tsarnaev Brothers at the Boston Marathon less than two years ago, how concerned are you in Canada, how concerned should we be in the United States, that this propaganda coming out of the Kremlin gets into people's minds where they actually believe that North America is a threat to Russia and they take action on their own. They unleash forces that maybe they can't control. Thank you.

Kaysanov: Definitely we can do something and talking about just the Western – the Western attitude and activity how to create a flow information. I think just for the United States it's important to keep – to keep funding of all those channels. Like Radio Liberty and others. And potentially to be engaged more with the Russian civil society organizations which can distribute information through social media through internet and truth. What they can do just to support truth. True information. That is the most important thing. Just we trying to do this in the Russia just as an opposition, just through internet but we have unfortunately very narrow audience, despite of the fact

that we have 50 million users of internet. 50 million people use internet but only 5% of them just use internet as source of information. All others just continue to believe what propaganda says through simple television. Russia has continued to be a TV set country unfortunately. And that's why just we rely on those educated people who live in big cities, who understand that they are not in different – what is going on inside Russia and outside. Therefore just we have marches of protesting in Moscow on the streets, like 50,000 people or 100,000 people just going against – protest against war with Ukraine. But it is – it is very, I would say, surrounded part of population. We just counted 20% right now but we have a clean division right now. Russia, Russia has European choice and those 20% - 20% of people who understand that, now just consolidated or trying to be consolidated.

Meserve: But somebody who I talked to here in the last couple of days suggested to me that really we should just give up the fight when it comes to Russian public opinion. That Putin has such a strong hand on the media within the country that there's really not much help of a pro-Western message getting through. You disagree?

Kaysanov: That is the worst – the most awful thing could happen, if just the West would give up on Russia, close their eyes. They would start treating Russia as a strange country and just saying let those Russians would settle their own problems until we come up. Beg just for cooperate in the oil and gas sector. That is the tragedy. Russia already made its choice when we adopted our Constitution as a Russian Federation and a democratic state. And why we should allow Mr. Putin to turn everything around and to start again saying just there was the greatest catastrophe collapse of Soviet Union and they should – to re-establish Soviet Union with all those fears. And now just what propaganda establishing in people's mind that we Russians just the best in the world. And just the world – the whole world should be scared about us simply about our existence. That's what he tried to perform this way.

Meserve: Part of this question was for you, Minister Blaney.

Blaney: Yes. And I – we are giving example of Afghanistan and I've been in Afghanistan in 2008. I was in the Kandahar Air field and now what I'm seeing is the media, as you've mentioned, are contributing I would think, and positively think, as an evolving factor. We are – this whole event is about modernity. I believe that having mass media communication in Afghanistan is helping the society to be in contact with different realities. We are getting – if I might respectfully say for my colleague, another reality – where without press – liberty of press, the mass media are used to kind of shape the public opinion. So I would say in Canada we're hands off, you know. We let it go and we – in terms of the content, you know. Media – [French 00:46:44]. So how

can we reconcile this basic very fundamental principle with potential propaganda attacks that – to which we could be exposed. I think that's up for debate and I'd be happy to be – I'm happy to be part of it because this is a very own knit of our democracy that is at stake. So that's why I agree with you that we should be aware and develop a counter narrative, not necessarily just about terrorism but other forms of propaganda that are dissipating, whether from nation state where the press is controlled.

Meserve: We have Georgian voice here.

Audience: Eka Tkeshelashvili from Georgia. When we think about the propaganda as part of the battle and then especially about the state actors, like Russia, it's part of the problem and it will be a mistake to exaggerate the importance of propaganda in that sense because actions speak ultimately louder than the words. So would the panelists think that the best way of countering Russian propaganda could be actually started to be proactive against of what Russia does and having a strategy about the very actions of the Russian Federation that undermine the fundamentals of the world order and that happens right now in Ukraine. So the question is, the success – image of success that Russia creates right now, that image needs to be destroyed by counter success of international community, by not allowing Russia to deliver what Putin says to Russian public, that he is able to deliver. So image of success needs to be taken out. That's the best way of winning minds as a chance of that, of the Russian population by not having an idea that we can be competitive in narrative with the Russian population right now because the most stressed propaganda machine that Putin created could not allow that to happen. So by getting proactive and destroying the image of success, I guess that's the best way of building the counter narrative to that and getting an image out there that Russia's understanding that it can actually challenge the rules of the game is unsuccessful and one of the ways of doing that is actually helping Ukraine not only to build up the country per se, but build up defenses and going with the military equipment for that as well.

Kaysanov: Yeah, I think just it's very good point. In terms of Ukraine and in particular just the success of Ukraine. For current regime in Russia for Putin, of course that is the most scared development, if Ukraine success – successful country and building up a democratic state and just overcome those problems, just which now Ukraine has just awful problem in economy. And in fact – and in fact that is one of the reason why Mr. Putin just, by all means, would try to prevent positive developments in Ukraine. In particular in economy. Just association with European Union doesn't bring much to the – I would say, changing of the way of trading between countries, et cetera. But it is success. Success that the economy of Ukraine could potentially be competitive.

Having the same structure as all other countries in the region, Ukraine could be successful country, especially just with its resources in agriculture, which is absolutely necessary for the 21st century in upcoming years. That is one of the reason also why Mr. Putin behaved this way. Moreover, success in the democratic – forming of the democratic basis and building up a democratic state. That's another – another attack against Putin's mind, as against – against his, I would say, post-Empire syndrome et cetera, because Ukrainians same people are Russians as always Ukrainians and Russians. And if Ukrainians successful and they can live in democratic country and just to enjoy those values, why Russians should be without, I would say, democratic fundamentals like free elections, free media, independent judiciary et cetera. That's why it's important to have a success. What we can do to help Ukraine? You said – you said of course not just intelligence, also a military support of Ukrainian army. But successful and important thing is just to help them to pursue reforms. Right now this is a crucial point. They have a President. They have the Parliament. But they trying to form a coalition but the important thing is just to list reforms and to announce that is our goal for upcoming year or two. Right now it's not happening at the moment in Ukraine. They just would creating some kind, I would say, disappointment, for me at least. But we shall help the Ukrainian government and all those elected people just to form the coalition and to form the reforms and start implementing. First implementation, first success even in a year time. That already will be just an important kick on Putin's intention just to foolish people around.

Meserve: Minister Blaney. You wanted to talk I think.

Blaney: Our Prime Minister has answered very clearly that question and directed to Mr. Putin, get out of Ukraine. Now how come our response, overall response as a world is so uncertain? Is it about leadership? Is it about propoganda already working its way?

Meserve: We have a question here.

Audience: Mhanna from Lebanon. I run a freedom of expression organization based in Beirut but it works regionally. I totally agree with the importance of developing a counter narrative that works. But for it to work, it needs to be consistent, credible and at the same time have a wide support base amongst civil society, among all the people who contribute to creating this narrative. How can this happen when the same technology that is used to identify the radical people on Twitter who are spreading hate message, call for murder, the same technology used to identify them is also used in Saudi Arabia and Qatar and Egypt to identify the most liberal voices, the most progressive voices, and these are people also thrown in jail facing long prison sentences. So when the technology that is coming from the West is being shared with

these countries, what kind of conditions, what kind of discussions happening with them to make sure that they don't destroy the whole purpose of surveillance by at the same time targeting the most liberal and advanced voices? Thank you.

Meserve: Fran?

Townsend: Yeah. You know, I would say – look I agree with you a thousand percent and we don't have anybody here, Jeanne, from the companies. But they have – I would argue, a social, moral and business responsibility to deal with the issue as you describe it so that it is not used and then turned against those who would – these are good technologies and they've led to a lot of freedom of expression. And so I'm in favor of the technology but I do think businesses come – when they're making money, to have a social responsibility.

Meserve: Right here.

Audience: Pippa Malmgren, Investment Advisor. My experience working in the White House was that everybody's bandwidth is already at 100%. And so the question is as a practical matter, Lyndon Vance Johnson used to say either we choose the news story tomorrow or someone else will. So this business of having the story to tell becomes important. And then how to get it out. Again, my experience in government is that in Canada and the United States, it has to be approved by so many people and voices and eyes before it can leave the building. You know, that this already creates such an extraordinary delay – and the counter narrative isn't arriving. So I was in charge of terrorism [inaudible 00:54:46] economy after 9/11. The question is what success stories can we show? And the response was well, that's not our thing at the time. Today Tunisia, 12 months after the Arab Spring, record number of IPOs. That's a success story. Does anyone in government even know that even has occurred to tell the counter narrative and to get it out the door in a timely way? So I'm interested in asking as a practical matter, how would we structure the bureaucracy in a way that it could do this?

Meserve: Bureaucracy and speed. Fran, you've been inside so –

Townsend: I was in the West Wing trying to give counter terrorism examples. One, I think we got to come back to basic core principles here. Civil society and not government is the answer to this, right. So nobody – even if you could get the good story out, nobody believes it because it's coming from the government. So let's just accept that. Second, inside the government, I think you've got to break the bureaucracy. Honest to God, I think you've got to sort of make up your mind, speed is the – speed is king and you're going to make mistakes and that's okay. But you've got

to get information out and there's just not the leadership and the willingness to take that kind of risk yet.

Mohseni: But that narrative is for a U.S. audience anyway. That doesn't help back in the Middle East. If the White House sets a news agenda and it's a top story on CNN, it doesn't change anything on the ground in the Middle East. It is important to tell the positive stories that are coming out of the region to at least convince your public that things are not all bad.

Meserve: What's the narrative? We keep talking about the narrative. What is it exactly? Is it just they're bad guys? Is that enough?

Mohseni: No, one very great story that was brought on – by Minister Fallon, U.K. Defence Minister. He was with us – is this Not in My Name campaign in Great Britain. This is the best saying - Not in my Name. You are – you're just a part. You're just – this is the most efficient strategy I can find as a counter narrative and to me, this is not bureaucracy nor government. This is coming from what we call the base. Not in My Name. For me this is the best example of a counter narrative that is efficient, that is targeted, that is coming from those who have influence on individual, who could be lured, tempted or – by extremist ideas.

Meserve: However, there's been some pushback there. Certainly.

Townsend: The importance of this – the Not in My Name campaign was it was run by – led by – run by – British Muslims. Targeted at their own community and has been extraordinarily successful. Does it fill the whole space? Absolutely not. But it is a start because what it has done has been to mobilize and galvanize both leadership and also willingness actually to poke your head above the parapet and be identified as somebody who is, you know, willing to stand for – with the rest of the British community. It has been extremely important politically. But it has then to be followed. That's my view. It has to be followed by, you know, sustained other activity and one of the things we have – we have to invest in this. There's no – we waste our time and our money unless we really get down to the notion that this has to continue for an indefinite period and has to have real quality production in it. One of the things that's very striking about what comes out of the Middle East and particularly on the social media is the – what the [inaudible 00:58:24] then calls the production values. It's sophisticated stuff run by people who know what they're doing. I regret to say that a couple of them at least are Brits. We need to be able to counter that with equal quality but it has to come, and it has to be sustained, you know, inside the community that really understands how to get – how to frame the message and how to get it across to

the audience and it's absolutely crucial. Public money can go into that, but it frankly has to be done by other people.

Meserve: It sounds like you doubt that there is the will to sustain it over time. Is that correct?

Townsend: No, I don't actually. I think – but I – we haven't – we're not organized. I would say that was the real issue. It's not that actually we don't understand and perceive that we need to do this over time. You do have to mobilize and you do have to organize your resources. You have to find the people. Both those who are going actually to be willing to speak in front of the camera, those who are going actually to study how they reproduce the other end. How therefore effectively to counter what the ordinary viewer sees or what the account recipient sees. I mean it is – it's a professional activity. During the Cold War, most of our government, allied governments, had professional departments dealing with counter propaganda. It's a very different game these days. There's no shortage of information. On the contrary. It's equal professionalism, I would argue, that's needed. Produced largely, I would say – well, in fact I would say this has to be done in the private sector and in the civil community itself. But it's a task and it needs to be recognized as something that we – that, you know, is a legitimate part of our ability to counter this evilness that they're purveying.

Mohseni: That's a good example of something that's, you know, it's very organic and then governments or state can use there what they have to amplify it, but I think what is the counter narrative? I think the most – single most important thing we need to – as Muslims, we need to discuss – is what does Islam represent? To characterize this. I mean people talk about moderate Muslims. Who are we? And what do we believe in? And the debate needs to come from the Islamic countries and I think this is very serious. That we need to actually look within and to ask ourselves as to what we believe in. And we – I mean –

Meserve: And is that debate taking place?

Mohseni: I believe so.

Meserve: At the level it needs to be.

Mohseni: You know, at a sort of very micro level, we're seeing it all over the place. But we have to somehow – we have to galvanize it and make it a lot bigger than it is today. It's funny, I was watching the news this morning in Afghanistan where a very prominent Pakistani cleric condemned the strategic agreement between the Americans and the Afghans and NATO as well. And these very prominent clerics came out on their own

and condemned his statements. So we're seeing this at a sort of local level in different parts of the region but I think this is a lot more serious and I think that we have waited for too long and the Islamic – the Ummah, the community, needs to actually come out and define what it means to be a Muslim. It may vary from region to region but certainly not the Islam that ISIS is advocating.

Meserve: We have a question back here.

Audience: Thank you. I'm Zafar Abbas, Editor of Dawn newspaper in Pakistan. I just want to expand on what Saad Mohseni had repeatedly said. I believe one of the most vulnerable class or group that exist are the liberals and the media and the human rights activists in Middle East and many of the countries like Pakistan. And why I say this is a paper like mine which advocates moderate and liberal values, when we question the policies of the Pakistani security establishment vis-à-vis Afghanistan or question what the Taliban are doing or criticize them. You know what my biggest fear is – always is? Is that I am not perceived as pro-West or pro-American. I should be seen as part of a society where a debate is going on within the Islamic community over there and that is where you people should need to be mindful of there, not to openly side, or to be seen to be siding with human rights groups or the media, which is deeply involved in the debate within those societies and challenging or presenting a counter narrative over there. Because if that happens, the whole argument within that society is lost and for the groups like ISIS or the Taliban or other extremist organizations, it's very easy to brush me or to declare me as pro-West and so the argument doesn't exist. And that is – people need to take it very seriously.

Mohseni: He's right. I mean Pakistan is a dangerous place now for reporters, for civil society members. You're either accused of being blasphemous or unpatriotic and it's a real challenge. I mean the small mentality – it's like the Salem witch hunts in a place like Pakistan. So, you know, liberals or certainly people who wish to change their countries or reform it are very vulnerable.

Meserve: Mohammed. We were speaking the other day. You're from Somalia and you were talking about how social media isn't really a factor – as big a factor there but in fact radio is the medium that has a huge impact. You told me a story about what the Somali people were hearing from Somalia outlets and what kind of impact or non-impact Voice of America, BBC and other Western voices were having. Could you tell us a little bit about that?

Mohammed: Right. I'm Mohammed from Mogadishu. And one thing that I wanted to address and something that hasn't been discussed is the issue of ideology. When you go to a place like Somalia, through radio, these organizations are targeting ideological

issues, saying Islam is this way or Muslims should behave in this way. And the biggest challenge is that government, especially the U.S. government, when addressing immigrant communities, are afraid to touch this ideological arena. Because they're talking about religion. And the strongest voices –

Meserve: Hold the mike a little closer to your mouth. People are just having trouble hearing you.

Mohammed: Oh. I think when countering ideological issues, when it comes to Islam, I mean Islamist extremism, it's very difficult for U.S. governments and any other government, because you're talking about – you're talking about religion. And it's often Imams, whether it's in Mogadishu or in Minneapolis – in my area of the world, we're dealing with Al-Shabaab and we've noticed that between 2007 and 2010, about half a dozen young men left the U.S. to fight the jihad in Somalia. And it's been primarily because organizations like Al Shabaab have been really savvy about pushing a certain ideology. And I found that it's been very difficult to counter that – to counter that ideology without supporting local imams and local organizations and giving them a platform to actually say this is not Islam, to deconstruct ideology and replace it with something new. So I'd love to get your thoughts on that and ways do that.

Meserve: Who wants to field that one? Everyone's jumping.

Mohseni: Well, I think that – I think you're right. It's difficult for a foreign government, which is not Muslim, to define what it means to be a Muslim. That's why I think it has to be – it has to develop from within. It needs to be debated. I think we need to have some debates over the next few years. It needs to be discussed. We need to have forums. It needs to be encouraged.

Blaney: Well, if I speak from a Canadian perspective, reaching out to communities with our Royal Canadian Mounted Police, our Reach Out program – actually it's the community themselves who pointed their finger at terrorist who are now in jail because they were attempting to commit terrorist attacks. The Toronto 18 is the best example of the importance of working with communities. Of course from a Western point of views, but I guess we can apply to same everywhere.

Meserve: We have a question.

Audience: Yes. Hello. I am Mauricio Meschoulam from Mexico. And I wanted to ask you if you have a comment. I would like to bring back a topic we were discussing the other day regarding the Gaza War, the recent, very recent engagement there was between Israel and Hamas. Where clearly there was this other battle regarding the narrative and clearly Israel sort of lost it. And Israel tried to contrast this narrative by

using, for example, Twitter accounts which did not fulfill the purpose of really countering the narrative, but possibly the opposite. And I understand the problem is very complex. However, do you think Israel could have done anything else, as many people have suggested, to counter this narrative or does it – or is the Israel policy doomed to failure in social media and elsewhere? What do you think?

Meserve: Fran, are you willing to –

Townsend: Look, I have – two points I would make to you. One, the Israeli government, like the U.S. government, often these departments and agencies are going to have Twitter accounts and they're going to put out their point of view, and that's legitimate and that's fine. And oftentimes they're going to be contested. I really think that governments are not the most effective in the context of social media, partly because of the point made earlier. Speed and consistent – and the need for consistency in terms of the message. And its where – I mean I think that the debate is fine and I don't think it's wrong for the Israeli government any more than the U.S. government to put their message out there, right. It's a free and open platform. I think you've got to be prepared to fail. And I think that's okay. I mean I – you know, we'll learn something from those failures and we'll get better at it but I think the real messaging and the real debate comes from civil society and so I think – I think its okay. Right. I think that we're going to fail and I think that's okay.

Meserve: We're coming down to the end and I'd like to ask each of you for your thoughts on the most important next step that we can take and should take. Saad, why don't I start with you?

Mohseni: In relation to the counter narrative?

Meserve: Propaganda and countering it. The narrative.

Mohseni: I think we have to be prepared for a long battle and I think we have to engage at a much local level. Be a lot more strategic than tactical. But also look for the underlying problems in our neighborhood, whether it's lack of democracy or freedom of expression or civil society coming under pressure. And I think that eventually we'll prevail. I think that these are growing pains for the region. I think longer term I'm very optimistic.

Meserve: Mr. Blaney

Blaney: I met here last Friday with our cross-cultural round table and everybody around the table agreed that we as Canadian won the lottery. We are welcoming. We are a welcoming country. 250,000 new immigrants every single year and we are

treating equally, racial, religious, cultural background and you also have a duty to integrate. So if you don't abide by the law, you will face the full force from the law. So we have an expression in politics, kill them with love. You know, I think we are a great country. But if you don't abide by the law, you will face the consequence.

Meserve: Fran, in terms of propaganda. What can we do? You're trying in your organization.

Fran Townsend: Very small way. I think the most important thing is to invest in this battle space, in contesting this battle space, just as we have in the physical battle space and we haven't done that. I think to do that you've got to – you've got to build the infrastructure and you've got to make the investment, both of which we've not done sufficiently as United States government. And when I say –

Meserve: And do you think there is a willingness to do that now?

Townsend: I do. I think when I say that, in terms of building infrastructure and making the investment, I'm not just talking about inside the government. I think the government's got to help build the infrastructure and invest in the private sector and civil society and understand when you make those investments, you don't control the content. You don't control the message. You are investing in the future in terms of the battle space and so you invest in civil society. It's as important as investing in sort of munitions in terms of battle space.

Meserve: Mikhail.

Kaysanov: First I think just to tackle the propaganda we don't need counter propaganda. We need just, I would say, true –

Blaney: Truth.

Kaysanov: Truth. We need –

Meserve: Truth can sometimes be hard to define.

Kaysanov: And just channel – channel to deliver this information to people. And in fact, in fact just for us in Russia, for opposition, democratic opposition, that's important to take a principled position, not just a popular position just to try to be nice to people but to – we shouldn't shy that we pro-Western values, just party or whatever, just society. We continue – we are a part of society. We continue to explore that and to describe people just how important it is. And I think just for current situation, aggression with Ukraine. I think that's important just to have a real channel of truth, real – a channel of true information and so that we by all means to get a good express

and make colorful picture for people inside Russia and the Ukraine in particular. I think that is possible and we continue doing this.

Meserve: Mikhail Kaysanov, Fran Townsend, Minister Blaney and Saad Mohseni.

Thanks so much for joining us here today. This is our concluding session. I think we should all send out a Tweet, hashtag HISF. Great job. And the man responsible for it is right here. Peter Van Praagh.

Peter Van Praagh: Thank you so much, Jeanne. Thank you. And thank you to our panelists today. In the spirit of shameless propaganda, I just encourage everybody to read this if you haven't had a chance already and keep it close during the year. You'll find that the things that are written here are going to stay relevant during the year. I do want to thank our panelists today in this last session, but all of our panelists, all of our moderators throughout the weekend. You've done a great job and you've given us a great deal to think about. Thank you so much.

--

End.