

ALI ASLAN

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Ladies and gentlemen, welcome back to what is promising to be a very insightful session on probably one of the most pertinent, imminent, geopolitical challenges of our times, of the 21st century. Of course, I am talking about Afghanistan, where events have unfolded rather quickly in previous weeks.

There are many lessons to be drawn from this situation in Afghanistan, therefore, I could not have asked for a more knowledgeable panel to be assembled here on stage today in Abu Dhabi to talk about the present, but also the future, of Afghanistan. Delighted to have with us the Director of the Department of International Security Cooperation at the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Salem Mohammed Al Zaabi. Welcome to you, sir.

Lovely to have *CNN's* Senior European correspondent based in Paris, Jim Bittermann, of course, a very famous fixture whom many of you are familiar with. I am extremely delighted to welcome the Senior Reporter and War Correspondent at *Le Figaro*, Renaud Girard, who knows Afghanistan probably better than anyone here in this room.

We have the Director of Research and Communications at Ifri, Marc Hecker, who has written a very comprehensive book about the war on terror, where Afghanistan, of course, is prominently featured. Also with us is the Head of the Russia/NIS Center of Ifri, Tatiana Kastouéva-Jean.

And last, but certainly not least, I am delighted to welcome back onstage M. K. Narayanan, who is, of course, a former Senior Advisor and National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister of India and currently the Chairman of CyQureX Systems.