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THE AFGHANISTAN DEBATE: ASSESSING THE PRESIDENT'S POLICY OPTIONS

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. INDYK: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I'm Martin Indyk, the Director of the Foreign Policy Program at the Brookings Institution. Thank you very much for joining us on this difficult Friday morning, in terms of the weather. It's also difficult in terms of the challenge that President Obama and his National Security Advisors are confronting when it comes to what to do about the challenge of Afghanistan.

As you all know, that question is being given a lot of consideration in the White House these days, and also on Capitol Hill. And, of course, the debate is taking place in the public arena as well And that's where we felt it was important to participate by bringing together a group of experts with diverse views to consider the options and discuss with you in the audience what the best course should be.

As in most foreign policy challenges these days -- national security challenges -- the President seems to be faced with a series of bad options. If there were a clear good option, I don't think we'd be having this discussion today.

But it's in that spirit of understanding that there is no clear correct path, but basically a judgment has to be made about the costs and benefits of each of the paths forward, that we wanted to have this discussion.

Joining me on the panel -- and I'll introduce them in the order that they're going to give their initial remarks -- on the right, Bruce Riedel, who is a Senior Fellow in the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings. Bruce has had a long and distinguished career in the U.S. government, starting in the

intelligence community but then in high policy positions in the National Security Council, where he advised three Presidents -- the three most recent Presidents -- and also in the Defense Department, and also in the Embassy to NATO, where he was Intelligence Advisor to the Secretary General of NATO.

Earlier on this year, President Obama called on Bruce to chair the initial strategy review process that was undertaken before the President outlined his initial strategy in March of this year.

And so Bruce brings a particular knowledge of the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan. His most recent book, *The Search for Al Qaeda* is, I think, one of the most important books that has been produced recently on the general question of how to carry on the war against Al Qaeda, which is at the heart of what we're going to be discussing today.

We're very honored to have Congresswoman Jane Harman, Democrat of California, joining us on the podium today. Jane is an authoritative legislator and commentator. She served for eight years a member of the House Intelligence Committee, the last four as its ranking member, where she helped to shape Congress's policy response to the 9/11 attacks, and played a leading role in the creation and passage of the Intelligence Reform Act of 1994.

Jane is in her eighth term as a Congresswoman, and now serves as the Chair of the Homeland Security Subcommittee on Intelligence and Terrorism Risk Assessment. As I said, she's an authoritative commentator, and a very welcome participant in the public policy debate on this issue.

So thank you very much for joining us today, Jane.

To my left is Paul Pillar. Paul, like Bruce, has had a long and distinguished career in the intelligence community, where his last position was the NIO -- the National Intelligence Officer -- for the Near East and South Asia. He subsequently became professor at Georgetown University, where he is now the Director of Studies in the Security Studies Program at the Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University.

Paul, I'm very proud to say, is the author of a book that was published by the Brookings Institution Press while he was here at Brookings after he left government. It's a book called *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy*. It was first published in 2001 -- right before 9/11 -- and became the primary source for people who wanted to understand the role of U.S. foreign policy in combating terrorism. It's an essential guide, also, for the more effective coordination between conventional foreign policy efforts and the need to fight terrorism.

And therefore, Paul's work in this area, both in and out of the government, is particularly relevant to the discussion we're going to have today.

Finally, Mike O'Hanlon -- probably known to you all for his voluminous works on all aspects of national security and defense -- in this particular context, Mike has been doing some very innovative work, first of all overseeing the Afghanistan Index Project, which the Foreign Policy Program at Brookings has launched, but also for a book that is about to be published, that he's been working on, called *Toughing It Out in Afghanistan*.

Mike, as well as being a Senior Fellow at Brookings, is the Director of Research in the Foreign Policy Program.

So -- with these experts, we're going to have initially a discussion in which I would like to take you all into the Situation Room, and have you and them imagine that they're sitting around the table with the President of the United States. And, as is President Obama's wont, he goes around the table and asks everybody to express their opinions.

Essentially to frame the question, the issue, I think, is best put this way: That the objective is to defeat and possibly destroy Al Qaeda. That is the declared objective that the President has set. That is a counterterrorism objective. But, in terms of assessing the options, we are essentially caught between two choices: One, to pursue a counterterrorism strategy to achieve this counterterrorism objective. And those of you who have followed the debate are aware that that kind of counterterrorism strategy would not require an increase of troops and, in fact, might result in a decrease in troops and a focus on more remote and offshore approach to defeating Al Qaeda. And the second approach, which is to pursue a counterinsurgency strategy in order to achieve a counterterrorism objective. And a counterinsurgency strategy would require at least some more troops, and perhaps a lot more troops, depending on what option is developed.

So, essentially, the question is: Do we pursue a counterterrorism strategy, or do we pursue a counterinsurgency strategy? Or is there some other option or some middle way that our experts would like to recommend?

So, Bruce Riedel, what's your advice to the President?

MR. RIEDEL: Thank you, Martin. Thank you for the kind introduction. And thank you, Congresswoman, for coming today.

Well, since I've had this conversation with the President, and with his National Security Team, on and off now since April of 2007, I think I'm going to remain consistent with what I've said to them before. And that is that we need a properly resourced war in Afghanistan against the enemy we face there, which is the Taliban and Al Qaeda, working together in a union against us.

And that means both a counterterrorism effort and a counterinsurgency effort. It also means a robust diplomatic effort. It also means putting the money into development that we need both in Afghanistan and in Pakistan.

The President, I think, properly has identified that the most dangerous place in the world is the borderlands between Afghanistan and Pakistan, where Al Qaeda and its allies, in a syndicate of terrorism, have been operating for the last 15 years or so. It's from there that the attack of 9/11 was planned. It's from there that other mass-casualty attacks against the United States and its allies have been planned -- like the bombings in London, like the 2006 plot to blow up 10 jetliners on their way to the United States. And it's there where we have just discovered Al Qaeda was reaching out to an Afghan-American to try to carry out a new mass-casualty attack.

The President promised in his campaign, and he has promised in his speech on the 27th of March, and in speeches in Cairo and other places, to make this a priority and properly resource it. And I think that's the way to go.

So I'm a CT-plus-CO-IN advocate here. I think we need to do both.

Exactly how many troops that means? -- well, I've sat in the Situation Room enough to know that the devil's in the details. Exactly what kind of troops, for what mission. And those details really are absolutely critical to understand. The media will, of course, banner-headline the total number. But the details are very, very important to understand.

Let me make just a couple observations, in addition, about the situation we're in today.

First of all, the status quo in Afghanistan right now is not sustainable. We are losing this war. It is not yet lost, but we are losing this war. Bob Woodward and Stan McChrystal have done us all a great favor in giving us their insights -- Stan's and Bob's being the mechanism by which we got it. I think that assessment is absolutely on the mark.

Now why is it on the mark? Because for seven-and-a-half years we under-resourced this war. We took our eye off the ball, and we've allowed the Taliban -- with help from Al Qaeda -- to stage a remarkable military comeback. And it's not because Mullah Omar is the greatest military genius of our time. It's because we failed to properly resource the effort. We didn't put the intelligence assets, the diplomatic assets and the military assets in.

The Taliban has been able to snatch something close to victory from the jaws of defeat. We don't have a time machine. We can't go back and fix it. It's Obama's war now. And Obama is going to have to come up with the right answer.

We now face an enemy in the Taliban whom some of us would prefer we wouldn't have to fight. But the problem is the Taliban is determined to fight us, as long as we're in Afghanistan.

I find there's a little bit of an air of unreality about the debate these days. People are quite properly

saying we shouldn't get into a quagmire.

Of course we shouldn't get into a quagmire. But, in fact, we're in a quagmire now, and the quagmire is getting worse. Unless we change what we're doing, we're only going to have two outcomes: a stalemate of indefinite period, or a steadily deteriorating situation, which could get even worse than the situation we have today.

The President has rightly ruled out the option of leaving Afghanistan. That means we now have to figure out the strategy that takes us to something bordering on success. That, I think, means a smart COIN strategy with a political dimension to divide the Taliban, to see if we can separate foot soldiers from Mullah Omar. It means a mix of trainers, intelligence assets -- and it probably means some more combat troops.

The second observation I would make is this. The drone operations we carry out over Pakistan and Afghanistan are incredibly effective -- but they're not the solution to this problem. They're not a cure-all. They're a tactic, not a strategy.

Let me be clear. I support these operations. I think they're the right thing to do. But I think we have to be careful not to come to the conclusion that this is the answer. And I think we need to be careful not to become addicted to this as the answer. And I think we need to be very careful in our own councils not to over-hype how effective they are.

Plus, I think we have to recognize that they have a very significant downside. I talked to a very senior Pakistani last night, and he said, "You have to understand, every single one of these drone attacks is a humiliation to the Army of Pakistan and the people of Pakistan. And it has a huge backlash effect."

Since Pakistan's cooperation is absolutely essential to us, we have to carefully modulate the number of drone strikes against his negative background. More than that, we also have to realize that they're not always as effective as we wish they were. There are more than one occasion in which a terrorist we thought was gone to heaven has come back from the grave to carry out additional operations.

I just want to talk about one case in point for another moment or two. It's a man named Mohammad Ilyas Kashmiri. We thought we had killed him in a drone strike in mid-September. But he just gave an interview to the *Asian Times*. Now, this interview may or may not be for real. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, nothing should be taken at face value. But it's a striking interview.

But what I want to do for just a minute is talk about this individual, because I think he helps us address one of the big questions in the current debate -- the nature of the enemy. His life story tells you a lot about it.

He's a Kashmiri, obviously -- born in Pakistan Kashmir. He joined the struggle against India in Kashmir in 1994, where he began by taking American, British and Israeli hostages, some of which were killed. He went on to have a spectacular career in supporting the struggle against the Indian Army in

Kashmir. He was trained by the Pakistani Army, by the Special Security Forces -- the SSG, the equivalent of the Green Berets. He was captured by the Indians and escaped. He became one of the most famous commanders.

Then he was toasted by the Pakistani Army and the Pakistani international services as a hero. In 2005, though, he joined Al Qaeda. He became a convert to the global Islamic Jihad, and Al Qaeda sent him to Afghanistan, where he was critical in teaching the Taliban the tactics of small-unit warfare, ambushes and patrols, which they have been so successful in using in the last several years.

He's also been active in Pakistan. He was responsible for the murder of a former commander in the Special Security Group in 2008, and he's plotted attacks on Chief of Army Staff Kayani. He's number four on the Pakistani most-wanted list today. If he's still alive, he's almost certainly involved in the attacks that are going on in Pakistan today.

My point here is that he is a classic demonstration of how the terrorists refuse to stay in lane. We want to keep them in little boxes. They don't stay in their boxes. They interact with each other. It's the syndicate of terrorism that we're facing in Afghanistan and Pakistan that is so difficult to deal with.

Al Qaeda is clearly our number one priority, and the President is right to have made it his number one priority. The drones are a useful tool against this, but they're not a cure-all. Counterterrorism by itself won't succeed.

It must be linked to a much larger strategy. And I think that's the operational plan that General McChrystal has put on the table.

One last very brief point. The most immediate requirement we need is to fix the Afghan election fiasco. We have got to come up with a better solution than the one we have right now. It's clear from what Peter Galbraith has told us that the U.N. knew this problem was coming. And that means if we have a second round -- which increasingly looks likely -- we've got to make sure that this second round is not marred by fraud and corruption like the first round.

MR. INDYK: Thank you, Bruce.

Jane.

CONGRESSWOMAN HARMAN: Well, thank you, Martin. As President Obama said, when he received the Nobel Peace Prize, I'm both surprised and deeply humbled to be included in this group.

My field in Congress, as Martin said, is intelligence -- which most of you probably think is an oxymoron. One of the things I do know, however, is that Brookings is extremely lucky to have Martin Indyk -- and others -- here. Mike is another one, and a lot of used-toers (?) who are sitting up here. It's a great institution. Martin is now in charge of foreign policy at Brookings, and I think that's a very good step. So, congratulations, my friend.

I agree with much of Bruce's analysis, but I don't think I agree with his conclusions. First of all, let me say something positive, which is that the news

in today's newspapers -- which is where I read it, although I had had some inklings before -- that there may be a recount, that ballots have been printed —

MR. INDYK: (Off mike)

CONGRESSWOMAN HARMAN: -- a runoff -- and that ballots have been printed, is good news.

I don't know whether that means we actually have a runoff, which will have to be held in the next few weeks because winter is coming, as everyone understands -- or whether, miraculously, in the next 24 or 48 hours some unity government emerges with Abdullah Abdullah and perhaps other of the major opponents in the last election round in some of the ministries.

I'm not sure which way is better. Obviously, the solution should be an Afghan solution, not a U.S.-imposed solution. But I would surely hope that what comes out the other end is a smaller national government that is focused on fewer tasks, which has ministries headed by capable people. Start with capability first. If they reflect different ethnicities, that would even be better. But they need to be capable, and they need not to be corrupt.

Some of you may have seen my writings. One of them was with the prolific Michael O'Hanlon, on "It's the Corruption, Stupid." I have felt for years -- before, during and after this election -- that the massive, rampant, pay-to-play system in Afghanistan was making it impossible for a CT strategy or a COIN strategy or a banana strategy to succeed in Afghanistan. And I still feel that.

I've said repeatedly that at least the question that should be put to Congress is not about troop levels. And I don't think Congress, right now, would be very receptive -- Congress, the majority of Congress -- to a request for more troops. The question that should be put to Congress is: How can we partner with this Administration to reduce the rampant levels of corruption in Afghanistan?

I was there in April. I met with the opposition candidates, and also with President Karzai, to talk about the election. The opposition candidates were absolutely clear that the election would be corrupt, that the result would be fraudulent, that their security and the security of their voters would be compromised -- and they were right. And we had months to work on this problem, and we didn't. And I think that was a huge mistake.

I then was in Kandahar at a meeting of tribal elders, talking to them about their situation, and they literally said that unless President Karzai's half-brother, Wali Karzai, goes, they're going to join the Taliban. And that was the comment. These were the Mujahedeen, the heroes of the Soviet war, who were very impressive, and very active elders in their community. And they had concluded that the Karzai government, as constituted in April, could not deliver them safety, security and basic services, and they were going somewhere else.

So when you use that as a backdrop -- at least when I use that as a backdrop -- I conclude that it's the corruption, stupid. And maybe the steps that will be taken in the next week or so will lead us in a better direction.

Having said that, what should U.S. policy be?

As we speak -- and everyone understands this -- there are fewer than a hundred Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. The number's gone down since 2003. The number in Pakistan is large. And as Bruce says -- and I agree -- the Taliban is affiliating with other unattractive terror groups, including -- Al Qaeda is affiliating with other unsavory groups like the Taliban and other groups in Pakistan. And the threat to the Pakistani government, and Pakistani civilians is growing as we sit here. And the attacks are surgical and effective.

Al Qaeda is also growing in Yemen, Somalia, the Maghreb and the United States of America. And so if your policy has to be -- and I agree with Martin -- that providing for U.S. security requires going after Al Qaeda, then it seems to me our policy has to be focused on Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, the growing threat in the north of Africa and the growing threat in our country. And I hope that it will be.

That leads me to say that at a time of scarce resources -- and no one has missed this -- both economic and human -- we have lost a people in Afghanistan, we've lost a lot of people in Iraq. Our Army and our military are worn out -- we have to be very careful about what commitments we make in Afghanistan.

So -- I would hope that after a constructive re-do of the election, and/or the national government in Afghanistan, we would proceed to do the three things that were in General McChrystal's excellent report. That report was not

about troop levels, it was about a counterinsurgency strategy, and it made three points.

The first one was we need to move our troops out of the hinterlands in Afghanistan to the population centers. We're in the process of doing that. And we saw the sad consequences, last weekend, of our failure to have done that more quickly, when eight of our troops were ambushed in the Hindu Kush and we couldn't protect them. It was a Blackhawk-down type situation. That was the first recommendation.

Second recommendation was make sure the government can deliver effective services. I've just covered that.

And the third recommendation is train the Afghans to fight for their own country. I think that becomes much easier once the corruption problem has been addressed, and the tribal elders in Kandahar revisit this situation and make a different choice because they no longer feel that the Taliban will protect them more than their own local and tribal government will.

I just want to conclude by mentioning that -- as some have -- that one of the real current tragedies in Afghanistan is that rights for women are being rolled back. Sharia law has been reimposed in parts of the country, perhaps not as severely as was once thought, but it is for certain that women are having fewer and fewer rights in Afghanistan. There are 328 parliamentary delegates, or 28 percent of the parliament, is female. And it would be an enormous tragedy if their voices were silenced.

You should know -- and I didn't. My staff pointed this out to me -- that women have traditionally been very well respected figures in ancient Afghanistan. There is a famous heroine from the second Anglo-Afghan War, named Malalai, who drove her men into battle by removing her veil and waving it as a flag, demanding that Afghans fight for their country.

I don't wear a veil, but let me wave my flag and demand that Afghans fight for their country.

MR. INDYK: Thank you, Jane.

Paul.

MR. PILLAR: Thank you, Martin, and good morning.

The ultimate objective of everything we do in South Asia is to enhance the safety and security of the American people. Unfortunately, a lot of the debate about this Afghanistan issue has confused and conflated that ultimate objective -- particular missions, that may or may not enhance that objective, and particular strategies designed to accomplish specified missions.

I really don't like, to be quite frank, the dichotomy of counterinsurgency strategy versus counterterrorism strategy because -- Martin, as you very correctly put in the earlier part of your remarks -- it's counterterrorism at the end of all this.

So when you look at what our theater commander has been focusing on, he has quite properly focused on strategies for accomplishing his assigned mission as he currently understands it. Which, to put it quite simply, is

to stabilize Afghanistan, or at least to prevent the current Afghan government from falling.

But President Obama needs to focus on a broader question, which is whether counterinsurgency in Afghanistan would enhance the safety and security of the American people enough to justify the costs and risks entailed. Or, to refine the question even more with a counterterrorist focus, would the terrorist threat that the American people and American interests fact, without counterinsurgency in Afghanistan, be enough different from what we would face with it -- and that the difference is in the right direction, of course -- to justify the cost and risks of a properly resourced counterinsurgency?

In my judgment, that difference is, at best, slight, and it may not even be in the right direction. And the main reason for that is the terrorist threat from Al Qaeda or any other group or movement is not to be equated with control over a particular piece of real estate by the group itself, or by the friends or patrons of that group.

Just about anything of importance that terrorist groups do that go into their operations can be done -- not only can, but have been and are being done -- elsewhere. Bruce specifically mentioned the planning of operations. Planning is something that can take place just about anywhere, including you and I in our studies. The fact that many things have taken place in the past in South Asia, or even currently in South Asia, does not mean that a terrorist group

-- Al Qaeda or anyone else -- would be significantly handicapped if they were forced to do it elsewhere.

But beyond that, let's assume just for a moment that a physical safe haven is important in certain ways. The group we're most concerned about, Al Qaeda, already has one. It's on the other side of the Durand Line in Pakistan -- successful enough to keep Bin Laden and his number two, Zawahiri, at large for the last eight years, even though they're two of the most wanted men on the planet.

I have a hard time distinguishing between the terrorist threat that that particular haven poses to us, and any haven that they might establish on the other side of the Durand Line. If the threat from Nuristan is going to be serious to us, then the threat from Waziristan presumably is also serious to us.

And then there's the whole dimension of whether they need South Asia at all. I mean, Congresswoman Harman has already addressed this. There are the Somalias, there are the Yemens, and thus there is the question of how far we chase these people to the ends of the earth.

Bruce is quite right in saying that they're changeable. They move. They don't stay in their lane. And that's exactly why an undue and disproportionate concentration on the one lane of Afghanistan is a mistaken strategy.

And then finally, let's assume, even despite all of that, that there was something special about Afghanistan. A properly resourced

counterinsurgency strategy -- to use the term in General McChrystal's report, and Bruce also used the same term -- would still not prevent a haven from being established there.

The General made it quite clear that such a strategy would involve protecting the Afghan population in the areas that were deemed most important to the survival of the Afghan government, but leaving many other parts of that country -- and it's a big country, over 600,000 square kilometers -- outside the control of the government or of us. So if a group -- Al Qaeda, or anyone else -- still somehow, for some reason, felt it necessary to establish more of a haven in Afghanistan, there would be plenty of place to do it.

Meanwhile, what other effects does our military effort have inside Afghanistan? And some of the things that Bruce referred to with regard to the drone strikes -- and I agree absolutely with regard to the unfortunate collateral effects, and also the fact that they do not constitute a death knell, or a death blow against Al Qaeda -- unfortunately the same thing is true with operations on the ground in Afghanistan.

One of the effects is an erosion -- not just an erosion, almost a plummeting -- of support and sympathy by the Afghan people for what we're doing. Now, there was a poll earlier this year published by ABC and some other news organizations that tracked the precipitous drop in all our numbers, America's numbers.

Why is this happening? I think it's, number one, the perception that we have become occupiers, like the Soviets were, rather than liberators or protectors of Afghanistan. And, number two, because of the inevitable collateral damage that occurs from even the most carefully planned and skillfully executed military operations.

One of the more specific effects of this, besides what shows up in the polls, is a swelling of the ranks of insurgents, whom we put under the general label of "Taliban," but many of whom -- and, I daresay, most of whom -- have little or no sympathy for the extremist ideologies of the Quaedasheer or Mullah Omar, but rather they are opposing what they have come to see as an occupation. In fact, I noted in the news coverage of one of those recent engagements in which our forces suffered high casualties -- I believe it was the one at Wanat -- our military command did not even think it was appropriate to describe the enemy in that engagement as "Taliban," but rather as -- quote—"tribal militias" -- unquote.

The struggle against international terrorism in general, and Al Qaeda in particular, is not to be equated with any one military effort, here in Afghanistan or anywhere else. The military instrument is but one of numerous instruments and tools to be used to try to reduce the threat from international terrorism. And South Asia is only one of the possible places to use it.

I accept and respect the President's decision to take off the table any withdrawal from where we are now. That does not mean the only other option, if we're not going down, is to go up. There are useful things to be done in

the meantime with our presence in Afghanistan, including our military presence -- including the training mission as part of the Afghanization of what's going on there, including the targeting and containment of what few transnational terrorists do show up in Afghanistan, and including the administration of the buying-off of those insurgent elements who can be bought off, very much in the guise of, or in the mold of what we did in Anbar province in Iraq.

This is not a prescription for gloom and doom with regard to what we face in the form of the Al Qaeda threat. There are all the other ways of combating it. But in my judgment, stabilizing Afghanistan is not essential to that struggle.

MR. INDYK: Thank you, Paul.

Mike.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you, Martin. Thank you, everyone, for being here. It's a great opportunity. I also want to thank my colleagues Jeremy Shapiro and Jason Campbell who really do more of the Afghanistan Index than I do, and Hassina Sherjan, who's an Afghan-American woman that I'm writing this book with, who has a remarkable story, and it's an honor to be working with her.

Martin has couched this as a debate, and it's obviously somewhere between a friendly a discussion and a debate. But I am going to make it a little bit more towards a debate now at this point since I'm fourth, and responding to Paul Pillar. And it's a formidable task to try to respond to Paul, who has been not

only a great servant of the United States for so long but also, I believe, one of the top two or three best-selling authors in the history of Brookings.

(Laughter.)

And I hope someday that my combined purchases of all my books together will rival what he has sold with Terrorism and American Foreign Policy. We greatly enjoyed having him here that year.

I think many of his points are very sound and solid, but let me just try to sharpen, maybe, a little bit of disagreement on a couple, and just tee-up for further conversation a couple of the key points he makes.

First of all, I'm glad that Paul has, I think, implicitly conceded that going to a counterterrorism strategy with a more minimal force would essentially concede Afghanistan to the Taliban. Now he didn't quite say that, and he did point out that that's not really an option President Obama is considering now. But a lot of the conversation was about what happens if a safe-haven does get established in Afghanistan. He may want to clarify that, my reading of his assumption:

But let me be clear about my own -- I agree with Bruce Riedel and Stanley McChrystal: We're headed for defeat right now -- certainly with a smaller force and more minimal mission, I think we would be headed for defeat. And so a counterterrorism mission, narrowly construed and minimally implemented -- akin to what Secretary Rumsfeld adopted as his strategy for five or six years --

will lead, I believe, to the likelihood of Al Qaeda havens inside of Afghanistan again.

This has huge propaganda value for Al Qaeda, but let's not even dwell on that. Let me make a couple of other points.

First of all, this would be a much better place for Al Qaeda to be than Somalia or Yemen. In Somalia or Yemen, Al Qaeda will struggle simply to stay alive inside of a tribal structure that, despite the fact the Bin Laden family has some ties to Yemen, they have not been operating within for a long time. They're going to have to worry, if they move over there, in either of these two places, about just how to stay alive in very anarchic and difficult environments where not everyone is going to want to see them establish a big Headquarters or sanctuary. To have Al Qaeda have to re-situate from South Asia to Somalia or Yemen to me would be a wonderful development.

Now, admittedly, it's not going to happen in the short term because Al Qaeda does, indeed, have a sanctuary in Pakistan. However, for the first time in a long time, we have some hope that the Pakistanis are taking that situation on with true focus.

And so instead of thinking in a sort of defensive mode, let me think offensively for a moment. For the first time ever we have the chance to put Al Qaeda and related groups between a hammer and an anvil. We have a chance to go after them in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. I want to do that, if we have that opportunity. I don't want to just think in semi-defeatist terms about where

they're going to be able to sustain a sanctuary. I want to think about whether we can deprive them of many of the sanctuaries they've had until now.

The Pakistanis are obviously very nervous -- as are we -- about developments in their country. And we've seen a lot of improvement, as we show in our Pakistan Index, new at Brookings now, but also as my colleagues like Bruce and Paul have shown in their other work -- we have seen a real awareness by the Pakistani state that they're in trouble, and that some of these groups they tried to cultivate have not stayed in their lane, and this is now a concept that is well understood and established in much of the Pakistani security culture. I'm not saying that it's a given that they will do a big, effective offensive in South Waziristan, but they seem to be interested in giving it a shot. And that's a pretty good development.

So I'd like to think about how we can potentially take Al Qaeda's broad set of best sanctuaries away all at once. The notion that somehow Al Qaeda could re-situate into a remote part of Afghanistan where Stanley McChrystal does not intend to send forces I believe is the weakest part of Paul's argument because, for one thing, the only place where Al Qaeda would be at all welcomed in Afghanistan is in the Pashtun areas. Most of those are in the south and east, where Stanley McChrystal wants to put additional forces. There are a couple of pockets of opportunity for Al Qaeda in Pashtun pockets in the north and west of the country, but if they try to go up there, they're giving us a nice

opportunity to surround them, and also to develop human intelligence networks, because most of the populations in those areas will not want them there.

Speaking of human intelligence networks, let me just emphasize that these are the sorts of things you do not sustain or protect if you go to a narrow counterterrorism mission. You lose them because the enemy kills your friends. The enemy kills the informants that you need to find out where the enemy is. We learned this in Iraq for the first four years. We learned it in Afghanistan for the first six. If you want to do counterterrorism, you've got to protect the people who want to work with you, which means you have to be in their communities, you have to do counterinsurgency.

To me, that's the simplest way to explain why a counterterrorism mission, narrowly defined, does not tend to work very well in these sorts of environments.

And just a couple of other points -- and I guess I'll -- because there are a lot of other issues that I'm sure we'll get to in conversation, but to focus on the sentiments of the Afghan people towards us, towards NATO, towards the outside world, Paul is certainly right that the trends have been bad over the five or six year period that we're talking about.

However, there is a bit more data in the course of 2009 than was alluded to just a moment ago. For example, an International Republic Institute poll done this summer would show that NATO's popularity was back up to about 62, 64 percent. Now, in fairness, I doubt that it's that high any longer. I think the

election fiasco has hurt us all -- has hurt the Afghan government, has hurt NATO, has hurt the United States. But Afghans don't hate Americans the way that, frankly, a lot of Iraqis did for much of that war.

Afghans actually want this mission to succeed. It may not, but they want it to. And they don't fundamentally view us as occupiers. Or let me put it a little bit more specifically, and maybe accurately. If they accept us as occupiers for the moment, they're willing to do so on the grounds and on the condition that we be successful occupiers, that we be competent occupiers, who do this under an international framework and get out as fast as we can. And that has been our stated goal.

And the fact that we have 42 nations working with us, that we have a Norwegian diplomat running the U.N. presence, that we have a number of powerful international civil servants in this mission, takes away a little bit of the imperialistic edge off this mission. We are not just the latest incarnation of the 19th Century British, or the 20th Century Soviets in what we're trying to do in this war. And the polls prove that the Afghans don't think that way, either.

They know that we are trying to do a good job. They're frustrated that we're failing. And the polls that we saw this summer suggested they're willing to give us one more chance. So we have to find a way to use that one more chance.

Now, having said all of that, I would concede many of the points that my co-author -- and I was delighted to write with her -- Congresswoman

Harman has made about how do you possibly use American resources, and NATO resources, to win a war, when the Afghans themselves are falling short? I think that's the crux of the issue right now.

I think General McChrystal is certainly right about where we have to move, what direction we have to go in if we're going to be more effective. The problem is, if we do it and our Afghan partners don't do it, I think the mission will ultimately still fail.

And so, to me, that is really the crux of what the debate should be about right now. I think we've been spending a little too much time on some other issues, like should we go to a counterterrorism strategy? Can we negotiate more effectively with moderate Taliban? Can we train up the Afghans faster? On those last two points -- and in conclusion -- let me just say if you read General McChrystal's report, if you watch what General Petraeus has done in CENTCOM for the last few years, the strategy already has a big emphasis on trying to reconcile with anybody who wants to reconcile. And it has an enormous emphasis on training the Afghans in a much more vigorous way than has ever been done before in any military mission in history, in terms of the kind of partnering that General McChrystal wants to do with every Afghan unit having a NATO counterpart, and they do everything together from this point onward.

So I think the idea that we're not training fast enough, we're not trying to reconcile fast enough, that may be true based on previous efforts.

General McChrystal already wants to do all of those things, but he still says he needs more forces to do it right.

And I think we've got to find a way to get the Afghans to do their part so we can resource General McChrystal's request ourselves.

Thanks.

MR. INDYK: Thank you, Mike.

I'm going to give Paul a chance to respond again, but, first of all, let me just go back to Jane and Bruce and see if you have any responses to what Paul presented, in terms of a pure counterterrorism strategy.

MR. RIEDEL: I'll frame the question a little bit differently.

I think one of the questions we're asked —

MR. INDYK: You always do.

MR. RIEDEL: -- right -- is why is stability in Afghanistan important?

I think there's two obvious reasons for that. First of all, we're there. We have almost 70,000 Americans and 30,000 other NATO and non-NATO forces there. The notion that we should just simply say, well, we're going to live with a situation which is getting worse and worse is a very dangerous thing to do. This situation is not static. It's going downhill, and it's going downhill rapidly.

If I was to say what's the single biggest difference between the situation in March and the situation in October, it's the acceleration of the deterioration.

A big part of that is the Afghan election. And Congresswoman Harman is absolutely right, we have got to fix this if we're going to do it the second time around. A second fiasco, and all the king's men, and all the king's horses are not going to be able to put Humpty-Dumpty back together again.

But there's a second reason why Afghanistan is so important. Because instability in Afghanistan seeps across the Durand line and creates instability in Pakistan. That's been going on for 30 years. That's the problem that has developed. That's why we see such a degree of instability in Pakistan today. Talk to Pakistani leaders and they will tell you: "We need a stable Afghanistan if we're going to stabilize our country."

And why does a stable Pakistan matter? I don't think that's hard to figure out. This is the country with the fastest growing nuclear arsenal in the world. There are more terrorists per square mile in Pakistan than there are in any other country in the world. The future of democracy and Islam comes together in Pakistan in a remarkable way.

Now, it may be unfortunate that to get what we want in Pakistan we have to devote resources to Afghanistan, but I think there's a linkage there. The President rightly, in his speech of March 27th, began by talking about Pakistan. He correctly focused on it as the strategic prize in this region. But I don't think there's a way to get there doing it on the cheap next door. Or to put it this way -- we tried doing it on the cheap for eight years, and that's how we got where we are.

MR. INDYK: Jane?

CONGRESSWOMAN HARMAN: Well, I want to thank Michael O'Hanlon for endorsing my position.

He may have some additional views, but my view is that he has endorsed my position, and I accept that and thank him.

MR. INDYK: As Paul Pillar did.

CONGRESSWOMAN HARMAN: Second comment is that, as Bruce well knows -- he played a big role in it -- when the Obama policy was announced in March, we added troops. We added 21,000 troops, 4,000 of whom were trainers. The NATO mission now has 100,000-plus troops, 13,000 that had been redeployed by the Bush Administration are arriving. That's a lot of non-Afghan boots on the ground.

And I don't think -- and I don't think our generals think, and I don't think our Secretary of Defense thinks -- that we can win this -- well, I don't like "winning" and "losing," we can succeed militarily.

So I'm looking for other options. And I think they have a better chance to work. I don't want to under-resource our commitment to Afghanistan. I am not talking about it, and I know President Obama is not talking about walking out the door. I think, among other things, we have a moral commitment. We left in the early '90s and we saw how that worked out, and we promised to stay.

So would I like to stay long term and have a diplomatic and economic relationship with a prosperous Afghanistan? You bet. But our military engagement especially one that is an offensive, kinetic engagement, I think is not one that we should enlarge.

The Afghans should enlarge that engagement. We should not. And we should set up the circumstances so they want to do that. And that is why I continue to say, "It's the corruption, stupid."

MR. INDYK: Paul? Do you want to respond to what you've heard? And when you do, let me give you the opportunity to expand a little bit on your alternative approach. Because you said it required a variety of different pieces of a counterterrorism strategy. But I wonder whether you would also elaborate a little bit on what that would involve.

MR. PILLAR: Well, to respond first to that, Martin, I don't know if you want to take the time to do it, but the outcome of what's perceived as our contest against international terrorism in general, and Al Qaeda in particular, will depend above all on the non-visible, day-to-day work by intelligence, police, and internal security services -- our own, and those of our allies around the world. That's the way it's always been. It's not something where we can record progress on a map. If we've stabilized this territory, or we haven't had that. But, in the end, that is what it is going to depend on.

If I could turn to several of Mike's points and then one of Bruce's points -- and I might say, responding to Mike's very clear and forceful and

articulate presentation is indeed a challenge. But let me just pick out about three of his points.

Mike alluded just briefly to a propaganda victory. And his allusion was brief, but I know he's developed the point more fully elsewhere.

The adversaries, including Al Qaeda, will depict whatever happens as a win on their part, regardless of how long we are in Afghanistan, and with little reference to exactly the turn of events there. We are inherently disadvantaged compared to a terrorist group like that in putting a spin on victory versus defeat. They're still going to be out there -- in Pakistan or someplace else. Zawahiri will still be putting out his audio tapes. And all it takes is just one attack against U.S. interests -- not necessarily a highly lethal one -- to punctuate their point that, "Aha, you've put in all this big effort, all the troops and all the resources, and we're still out there. You have not defeated us." That's going to happen, counterinsurgency or no counterinsurgency.

Now, the question of Al Qaeda, how easy or difficult it would be to stay alive in one of these other places, I think we're using some wrong imagery here, like it's chess. Like once we capture the king, the game is over. That's not the way this game works.

The threat out there -- international terrorism in general, Islamist terrorism in particular, or even Al Qaeda in particular -- does not depend on any one headquarters. It is far more decentralized. We here again and again about the "links" back to South Asia, or the "links" back to Pakistan and Afghanistan.

"Links" can mean just about anything, and often they do mean just about anything in terms of the most casual contact. They don't necessarily mean direction or instigation or command. And in most cases, they don't.

What would take place in Afghanistan? Could they have the haven if General McChrystal's strategy works? What about -- is it just the Pashtun areas? I would just point out that the people we're most worried about aren't Pashtuns at all or Afghans at all, they're Arabs.

And, by the way -- this is something none of us has really touched on, and that is this sort of assumption that automatically, if the Taliban succeeds in reestablishing some kind of proto-state in Afghanistan that it would be a no-brainer that Al Qaeda is going to rush back in.

This forgets a number of things, including the events of 2001, in which the biggest, most calamitous setback that the Afghan Taliban ever suffered -- that is to say, a loss of what had been power over most of Afghanistan -- was a direct result of Al Qaeda's terrorist activity, to which we responded with Operation Enduring Freedom. Now, I find it hard to believe that that has somehow just been erased from the memories of Mullah Omar and all the others.

But the last point I want to make, which Bruce raised in his last interjection is, well, it's really all about Pakistan. And Bruce used the term, you know, "seeps across the line."

We tend to think of these things in spatial terms, of sort of things "seeping across lines." It's sort of the analogy to the Cold War imagery of red paint. Then it was usually oozing rather than seeping.

But I'm going to ask you to consider exactly what does this mean, in terms of the mechanism for stability or instability in Afghanistan affecting the course of events in Pakistan? And let me just make a couple of points about that.

One is, the course of events in Pakistan is going to depend overwhelmingly on events inside Pakistan itself, and forces inside Pakistan itself -- including not least of all, the Pakistan military, which still is by far the strongest, politically as will as militarily, and most respected institution in Pakistan. It depends on the sentiments of the Pakistani people, including the substantial middle-class, to whom everything the Taliban

stands for is anathema. And it depends on a lot of other things, as well.

Then there's the issue -- okay, to the extent that even if there's a marginal influence of what happens in Afghanistan on what happens in Pakistan, well, usually when we think about instability "seeping across lines," it's either because there are more resources being brought to bear in a struggle in the second country, or there's a base of operations that is created that wasn't there before.

Well, number one, as far as resources are concerned, any state or proto-state that the Taliban -- Afghan Taliban -- might establish is not going to bring any big influx of resources. A Taliban state will be just as penurious as Karzai's government is. And as far as a base of operations is concerned, the Pakistan Taliban already has it in the FATA -- which, although it appears on the maps as part of Pakistan has, as we all know, been essentially outside the Pakistani government's control.

And finally, think of the motivations of the Afghan Taliban. If they were to establish a state or proto-state in Afghanistan, they would have their hands full trying to reestablish their power, especially given the fact that they're welcome wouldn't be anything like it was in 1994. The Afghan people know what it was like to live under the Taliban.

Why would they want to divert their attention to trying to stir up an Islamist fire in Pakistan, particularly -- and here's another elephant

in the room that we haven't pointed out -- particularly given the fact that the Afghan Taliban has been a client and a beneficiary of the Pakistani government rather than an enemy of it? And that I find one of the most anomalous things about this whole war.

MR. INDYK: Bruce?

MR. RIEDEL: I would caution everyone to be very careful about saying where Al Qaeda is. Throwing around statements like I've seen by some Administration officials, "there's less than a hundred Al Qaeda in Afghanistan."

When you can tell me where Osama bin Laden and Ayman Zawahiri is, or the as-Sahab production facilities, then I'll have a lot more confidence in people saying, oh, they're here, they're there, they're somewhere else.

There's no question that the locus of their activity is in Pakistan today.

Paul makes a lot of very good points about how the interaction between Afghanistan and Pakistan is very complicated. And I'm not going to go through all of them. But I think the bottom line is this. We have seen, over the course of the last 30 years -- and especially the last 10 years -- the development of a Jihadist state within the state in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, and particularly in the Waziristans.

And that is, in large part, an outgrowth of the instability that puts on both sides of the border. That's certainly how Pakistani leaders increasingly see the situation.

And this gets to the importance of the moment today. I think everyone up here has noted that the Pakistanis now look like they're finally going to take some hard decisions. "Looks like." As I said earlier, in South Asia, never be certain of everything, even after you think you're certain of it.

But more than ever before, Pakistan -- and particularly, the Pakistani army -- seems to be ready to take on these insurgents. And it's very critical at that moment that the United States be fully behind them and support it. The passage of the Kerry-Lugar legislation -- despite the uproar that it's created -- is a good step in that direction.

How we act in Afghanistan is also going to send a powerful message to the Pakistani establishment. Pakistanis believe we are going to cut and run. Why? Because that's what we've done in Afghanistan over and over again.

If they come to the conclusion that we're getting ready to cut and run again, under the rubric of redefining mission or whatever it is, they're going to start to change their attitudes and make their own accommodations with the Jihadists they face.

Paul's last point was absolutely on the mark. The fact that the Taliban, Afghan style, has had such a relationship with Pakistan for so long is one of the great anomalies of this situation -- and, frankly, something we should not tolerate. We need very tough love with the Pakistanis. We should embrace them. We should support them. But we should call them -- and call them in public -- when they do things that we have a problem with. And supporting, either passively or worse, the Quetta Shura is one that we should continue to call them on.

Last point. Will the Taliban break with Al Qaeda? We have 13 years of experience. They haven't done it.

I don't know what the bond is between Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar. I'd love to be a fly on the wall when they ever have a conversation -- if they ever do have conversations anymore. But so fare, the Taliban has not been ready to throw out Al Qaeda or to break with them.

I don't want to depend upon the good instincts or the self-interest of the Taliban. And I certainly don't want to depend upon the good intentions of Mullah Omar.

If the Taliban wants to break with Al Qaeda, prove it. Give us Osama bin Laden. Give us Ayman Zawahiri. That should be the bar

for establishing whether or not the Taliban are going to break with Al Qaeda.

MR. INDYK: Jane?

CONGRESSWOMAN HARMAN: Well, I certainly respond to the tough-love point. As a mother of four and a grandmother of three -- yeah.

But tough love also requires, Bruce, being pretty clear-eyed about what U.S. power can and cannot achieve. And I think you're talking about some things that we cannot achieve, and in a context where, again, the U.S. is under threat in other parts of the world, our economy has tanked, there are serious homeland challenges beyond security, such as health care reform and energy security and so forth.

And I just think if I were President Obama, I would have a bigger context in mind. And worrying about what the relationship will be over time between Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden is not on my personal list of things I'm going to think about over time.

So where are we? Yes, there was a flap in Pakistan in recent weeks about what I thought were benign, hortatory words in our aid package for Pakistan. Our aid package -- to remind -- is $1.5 billion times five. We spend just about that much per month in Afghanistan. And yet, as you point out -- and everyone agrees -- Pakistan is far more

dangerous, and has a hundred nukes, and A.Q. Khan roaming around, and a lot of things that are truly scary.

So, again, I think that the definition of insanity is doing what you're doing and expecting a different outcome. We're not going to get a different outcome in Afghanistan if we keep doing what we're doing.

We're going to get a different outcome if we find the way to get Afghans interested in supporting their own government and fighting for their country. We change our mission, not leave Afghanistan. I am not for leaving Afghanistan. We change our mission to be supportive of that, and then we focus on the problem next door, and the problem in Yemen, Somalia, North Africa and the United States of America.

And I think that that is a better and more effective and, long term, more sustainable deployment of U.S. power and resources.

MR. INDYK: Good.

We're going to go to the audience now. And I would ask you, please, to wait for the microphone, to ask a question of our panelists and, before you do that, to identify yourself.

So -- please, who would like -- up here.

MS. SONNENFELDT: Marjorie Sonnenfeldt, guest.

What is the role of Benazir's widower, the head of the civilian government in Pakistan? What is the role, if any, in his relationship with the Pakistani military?

And on the other side of the geography, what is the role that Iran is playing now?

MR. INDYK: Anybody want to -- Bruce, you want to —

MR. RIEDEL: I'd be happy to.

MR. INDYK: -- talk about Prime Minister -- President Zardari.

MR. RIEDEL: We don't get to pick the leaders of Afghanistan and Pakistan. I suspect if we did, we'd do even worse than we've got -- although we've got some pretty weak reeds to work with.

In the case of President Zardari, we all know his reputation: Mr. 10 Percent. Many Pakistanis you talk to will say he never took less than 20. But that's not the point.

In this conflict right now, President Zardari understands that there is an existential battle within his country between his side and a Jihadist Frankenstein that's grown out of control. Why does he understand that? Because his wife was murdered by them, and because he's now number one on the hit-list that they're going after.

We don't have perfect partners. I agree with everything the Congresswoman said about the Afghan political process and the need to fix that, and the corruption. She's absolutely right -- corruption is number one. But we got what we got, and we have to work with what we got.

On the Iranian side, by and large, Iran, up until now, has been a generally positive player in terms of they supported the Karzai government and stability. But like the Iranians always are, they have kept open their options. And they've developed contacts with the Taliban -- limited amounts of military assistance, as well -- just in case they need them down the road.

MR. INDYK: Do you want to comment on Iran?

MR. PILLAR: Yes, just to thank you for raising the issue of Iran, because it's part of a larger topic that we failed to address on the panel, and that is the role of other states in the region.

I think there is major potential for enlisting the parallel interests that we have -- not just with Pakistan or with India, but with Iran, with Russia, with China, with some of the -stans -- and what was accomplished in 2001 with the Bonn process is just a little taste of what could take place.

The Chinese and the Russians both have -- share interests with us with regard to Islamic extremism. The Russians as well as the

Iranians both have a strong interest in the narcotics issue, because of addiction problems that involve Afghan heroin. So there is a lot of multilateral diplomacy that we could use to good effect, including the Iranians.

MR. INDYK: Okay, down the back, there, please -- in the brown sweater.

SPEAKER: (Off mike) What role are they playing (inaudible).

CONGRESSWOMAN HARMAN: Well —

MR. INDYK: Do you want to take that one, Bruce? Go ahead.

CONGRESSWOMAN HARMAN: -- I think you're right. In case no one heard that question, because I think the mike was off, the question is what role is India playing in all of this.

We all should have mentioned more than we did, in my view, that the Pakistanis continue to be preoccupied with their perceived threat from India. I think that in recent years they've had an exaggerated idea of this, and they still continue to deploy resources along the border with India that should be spent, in my view -- and others may know more about this than I do -- against the growing threat that they really face, which is the Taliban moving east and affiliating with other unsavory characters and attacking them in all their major population centers.

It has been suggested that our government could be productive by focusing more on resolving the Kashmir dispute. If we could do that, perhaps that would assist the Pakistanis in getting more comfortable focusing on real threats. If we really want to help Pakistan, maybe that's a thing we could do.

The Indians are mindful of this situation and I think have moved, to some degree, to try to reduce the threats. But the Pakistanis think that they have to hedge their bets in Afghanistan by protecting the Taliban in Afghanistan, because if they don't, somehow India will take over Afghanistan. I think that that is not true, and I wish that we could be more adroit in helping them understand that.

MR. INDYK: Okay, over here -- yes, the woman in black.

MS. LAKSHIMANAN: Thank you. Indira Lakshmanan, I'm from Bloomberg News.

I'd like to ask the whole —

MR. INDYK: Stand up?

MS. LAKSHIMANAN: Okay. Thanks.

I'd like to ask the whole panel -- some of you have taken positions pretty strongly on either adding more troops and having a full counterinsurgency, or not doing so. And there has been mention of President Obama possibly taking a middle course.

And I'd like to get the panel's views on whether that would be a wise thing, to do a moderate course? Or whether it would be a half-measure, as some opponents of that have suggested? And why?

MR. INDYK: Okay. I think Jane is probably the strongest advocate of the middle course, so we'll come to you at the end.

Paul, do you want to start?

MR. PILLAR: I think those who have made the point that a halfway counterinsurgency can be worse than all-the-way or none-at-all have a valid point. I would just add to that, however, that "halfway" does not necessarily mean just counterinsurgent operations.

I'm in basic agreement with a piece that Richard Haas had that you may have seen over the weekend in the *Post*, in which he makes the point that halfway can be a good thing, but that doesn't mean doing counterinsurgency operations halfway, it means doing all those other things -- the training, the diplomacy, the buying-off of the opposition and so on. And there I think there's a lot that can be done, even if it comes under the "halfway" label.

MR. INDYK: Mike?

MR. O'HANLON: A couple of things -- thank you for the question.

First of all, I do have some sympathy, as I said, with the idea that we have to leverage our own potential increase in resources to get the Afghans to do more. So, in that sense, there's a virtue in a middle path that gets us to the fuller McChrystal strategy more gradually, if it can bring the Afghans along at least partially in that process.

Having said that, let me underscore one big problem with a halfway strategy. And, again, mentioning as footnotes, those who say we should do more training, or more reconciliation forget that that's central to McChrystal's concept, too. Both those concepts are in the McChrystal plan as full-throatedly, as enthusiastically as anybody else. He knows this, Petraeus knows this, from their experience in Iraq and Afghanistan until now. And so they're trying to do as much reconciliation and as much training as they possibly can. These are not alternatives to the McChrystal proposal, they are elements of it.

But here's the danger of the halfway measure.

Right now, in southern and eastern Afghanistan, we have troops here and troops there, but not in between. We have -- to use the metaphor of counterinsurgency -- we have an oil spot here, an oil spot -- or an ink spot, an ink spot here and an ink spot there, and then there are big areas in between where we have not established any control, and the Afghanistan government has not established any control.

These are local sanctuaries for the Taliban, from which they can plant IEDs on the roads that we use, from which they can assassinate key Afghan officials and NATO troops by moving over to those towns where we're present at night, doing their ambush and retreating back to their sanctuary. These are also places from which they can interdict proper commercial traffic.

And so as long as you have isolated ink spots, but you have big areas that are largely dominated by the enemy in between, you are not able to solidify your zone of safety for the population -- or for our troops.

And let me put it very starkly as I finish this point.

President Obama, a few weeks ago, said he had an obligation to American soldiers and Marines to make sure that before he sent any more of them into harm's way, that he thought through their safety, and what would be best for their safety. He also has an obligation to the soldiers and Marines who are already there. And their danger goes up to the extent that the Taliban and other insurgent groups have pockets of quasi-sanctuary within the very zones that we're operating in today.

And that's a big downside to the middle ground, because it allows the enemy to have essentially a hodgepodge, patchwork network of areas where it's still very powerful, and it uses those to conduct ambushes and other attacks.

MR. INDYK: Bruce?

MR. RIEDEL: Let me just talk about halfway houses [sic] in one area, and that's training.

I think there's a consensus here that training the Afghans as quickly as possible needs to be done. We want to Afghanize this war. That's our ticket to bring our troops home.

But resources are very important in that. Let me give you an example.

In eight years, we have built an Afghan air force that is one-tenth the size of the Afghan Communist air force that the Soviets built in five years in the 1980s. Why? Because we didn't think it was a priority. We didn't think air support for the Afghans mattered. They didn't need air mobility. Well, they do need air mobility. They do need air support. They can get some of that from us.

But what I'm talking about is an effort that's going to mean a very significant push on training. That means troops, that means resources, that means proper equipment. If you want to go that route, don't do it on the cheap. That's what George Bush did, and that's how we ended up where we are today.

So, certainly on the training side, let's not take any halfway measures.

CONGRESSWOMAN HARMAN: I would say that putting labels on this -- 100 percent COIN, 100 percent CT, modified CT-COIN, COIN-light -- is not particularly helpful. And all of the presentations up here have been pretty nuanced, and this is a sophisticated audience.

This is a hard problem. As Martin said, if we knew -- if there were an easy answer, we would have answered this problem.

So if we could forget about the labels and just focus on what are the best ideas, I think we would be better off. And surely -- maybe my offering isn't the right one, but that's what I'm trying to focus on, not on how to compromise this, and how to make the military half happy, and Congress half happy, and Bruce Riedel half happy and so forth. I just don't think that that's a productive way to approach this. That's one point.

Second point is -- to take Michael's metaphor about the ink spots -- there's an ink spot in Yemen, there's an ink spot in Somalia, there are ink spots in North Africa, there are ink spots in Minneapolis and Aurora, Colorado, and New York City, and Dallas, and so forth.

So I don't think we're ever going to sew all that up. I think coming at that a somewhat different way is important.

And let me just make one other point. Playing Whack-a-Mole -- no one is arguing this -- is never going to be the recipe for success against these threats. Winning the argument with the next generation has

a much better chance. And that's why some of the other things we're doing -- which we haven't even brought up -- like trying the difficult task of closing Guantanamo, trying to bring our policies under the rule of law, actually having consultations with Congress -- imagine! -- and the public, on what is a better way forward, are projecting an image of America that is different.

The content of President's Obama's speeches -- to me -- is a very big deal. And if he won the Nobel Peace Prize because of what he said in Cairo, I'm for it. I think that that was a sea-change in understanding where other people in the world are coming from. So I just want to add that as one of the weapons that we really have in our arsenal.

MR. INDYK: Just to take advantage of your perspective from the Hill -- you said in your opening remarks that a majority in Congress wouldn't be responsive to more troops.

What exactly does that mean?

CONGRESSWOMAN HARMAN: Ahh, well, it matters how -- whether and how the request comes to Congress. Nothing is pending in Congress right now. But it might be that we would be asked to provide supplemental appropriations, or we would be asked to approve in some fashion an escalation of forces.

I think either of those things, right now, in Congress would not be well received. That's what I was saying.

And I would hope that our strategy -- you know, I'm urging that our strategy be different, and that we get the Afghans more involved in fighting for their own country so that we don't need to ask for a surge in troops. I think a surge in U.S. troops, right now, is a mistake. And I would not personally support it, and a lot of the leaders of Congress are saying the same thing. I'm certainly not the only one -- you know, Senator Levin, Senator Kerry's urging caution. He's there right now. And I think a number of people in the House are saying similar things -- not everybody.

I just wanted to make one other point, Martin, and that is let's not forget we have a NATO mission in Afghanistan. This isn't the U.S. only. We do have other folks we can call upon to add resources. I gather the French have just said they're not going to add more military troops, but a lot of European countries are very good at training a constabulary force.

The additional forces needed in Afghanistan -- the 400,000-person force -- is not all going to be warriors. A lot of that is supposed to be police. Let's call on our friends in Europe -- who should be doing more as part of the NATO commitment in Afghanistan -- to understand that they're under threat, too.

If Al Qaeda attacks the West, it could easily attack, as they have, Paris, London, Madrid, not just New York City and Washington, D.C. So they have as much at risk as we do. And truly internationalizing this, I think gets us to a much better place.

MR. INDYK: Let me just ask a question that's bothering me, and it focuses on something that has been mentioned by most of you, but I'd like to just drill-down a little bit on it.

I think whatever strategy you recommend, it includes -- from listening to you all -- an effort to split the Taliban, or split away from the Taliban those tribal chiefs, warlords, militia chiefs who are not necessarily part-and-parcel of the Quetta Shura under Mullah Omar.

And I've heard the argument by somebody you know well who's an expert in Afghanistan, who says that if you send more troops and try to take away control of the territory from those people, that will drive them more into the arms of the Taliban because they are, in effect, protecting their turf. And that it's counterproductive, if you want to actually split them from the Taliban, to send more troops in for that purpose.

Does somebody want to respond to that argument? Mike?

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you, Martin. I'll start with one quick anecdote. I would recommend that anyone who wants to think about this

question read a recent report by our Dutch allies -- in the spirit of Congresswoman Harman's point about this being NATO.

The Dutch are involved in Urōzgān Province, which -- for those of you who don't know all 34 provinces of Afghanistan, and I'm still learning a couple of them myself -- it's a little bit north of Kandahar, but it's not really along any major thoroughfare. It's a little bit inland. And the Dutch and the Australians have been doing a pretty good job there.

And there's a quote in this recent report, they asked the tribal leader, "What are you telling your people to do by way of supporting the government, and the Dutch, or not?" And he said, "Oh, I got half my guys on each side." And they said, "Why?" And he said, "Because I don't know who's going to win yet."

And I think this is, to me, the fundamental point. We're not seeing people with an innate, visceral reaction against the NATO or American presence. We're seeing people who don't really know who's going to win.

Now, in some cases they are mad -- in many cases they're mad about Karzai, and the fact that he is favoring certain tribes and not others, and there is that dynamic, as well. But my basic contention is that, frankly, local people are not making the calculation about whose side to join based on whether we have 68,000 or 58,000 or 38,000 total U.S.

troops in country. They're looking at what's happening locally, and trying to calculate who's winning and who they think they want to be on the side of.

MR. INDYK: Paul?

MR. PILLAR: In addition to the considerations Mike mentioned, a couple of other major ones are the anti-occupation sentiment, and the anger over the collateral damage of our own military operations. And those are the two things that I think underlie the validity of the logic that you described, Martin.

MR. INDYK: Okay.

Down here -- with the pencil. No -- gentleman behind you. We'll come to you next. Sorry.

MR. RICHTER: Paul Richter, with The LA Times.

I'd like to ask the Congresswoman, what do you think the U.S. did wrong before the last election? What should they have done differently to bring about a better outcome? And what do you think they should do if there is a runoff in the next couple of weeks, what should they start doing now to make sure that one works out?

MR. INDYK: Just hang on one second, Jane -- sorry.

Let's take this question, too.

SPEAKER: (Inaudible), student at Stanford University.

There's one important word that hasn't been mentioned yet, and that's opium. And I was wondering if you guys could discuss that.

MR. INDYK: The narcotics (inaudible).

And the last question from the inimitable Gary Mitchell.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you. Gary Mitchell from the Mitchell Report.

I want to begin by stating the obvious, which is I haven't heard anything here this morning that I disagree with.

And it really does highlight the fact that we're in the realm of dueling truths. So the question is, what do you do when you're in the realm of dueling truths.

And there are three phrases that I've been struck by today -- two that Bruce mentioned, and one from Paul—"syndicate of terror," "they don't stay in their lane," and I think I got Paul essentially right, "international terrorism doesn't have a global headquarters."

If all of those are true -- let me put my question in the form of a hypothetical, which is: Lo and behold, we achieve the best-case scenario in Afghanistan. We get a re-election, we get good government. We drive out the Taliban, we eliminate Al Qaeda. Sounds great -- until we find out that Al Qaeda has moved to Yemen or Somalia or elsewhere.

And it seems to me that the two questions that we need to deal with are, A, are we then, in making this decision, saying that the supposed locus of Al Qaeda's leadership drives American foreign policy for the foreseeable future? And, second, do we have an answer to Paul's question, which is if we had the best-case scenario in Afghanistan, have we appreciably improve the national security of the country by doing that?

MR. INDYK: Jane, do you want to start?

CONGRESSWOMAN HARMAN: Well, let me start with the election. I'll leave the drugs to others. And as for the last question, I think it's a probing question for which there is no absolute answer.

On the election -- at least from the perspective of a CO-DEL with Senator John Kyle and others meeting with opposition candidates in Kabul in April, and meeting with tribal elders in Kandahar -- I was told, and I saw, voter cards, which is the way that you vote. It's something like a registration card in our polling places -- voter cards that were purchased on the black market with other people's names on them. A friend of mine who's an American living in Afghanistan was easily able to do this. Hundreds of thousands of those were purchased on the black market. There was massive ghost-voting. Everybody knows this. I'm just looking at The Washington Post story about the U.N. report that was published on October 7th, which talked about in Kandahar 252,000 votes, including

221,000 for Karzai, but actually only 100,000 people really voted. Try that as a politician. Hmmm. Or there was another one here -- in Helmand 134,000 votes were recorded, 112,000 for Karzai, but the U.N. estimated that just 38,000 people actually voted, and it might have even been as low as 5,000.

So massive ghost-voting, voter cards available on the black market. All these predictions in April were made.

What should we -- I don't mean just "we the U.S.," but international observer groups who were aware of this, too -- have done much earlier than they did, if they did anything?

There should have been an effort to crack down immediately on the black market on voter cards. I don't think anything happened about that.

There should have been an effort to monitor polling stations. And if they couldn't be monitored, to figure out a vote-by-mail system -- if there is mail in Afghanistan -- or some other system to record accurate voting from people.

And there should have been an effort to crack down on intimidation. In April the candidates were trying to move around the country to campaign, and they were saying that they had no personal security. They said that president Karzai flew around in his government

planes, with his security guards. And -- and this was true, as well -- his government ministers, who are supposed to deliver services to everyone in the country, were campaigning for him at the same time as they were doing whatever else they did as part of their ministries.

That's unacceptable here. It surely -- I mean, this gives Chicago a really good name. There was much more that should have been over a six-month period.

And one final point -- the election was delayed two months. It was supposed to be, under their constitution, in May. Let's remember the inconvenient truth that for two months Karzai was in a kind of neverland while the election was postponed, so that there could be more protection for the election. Well, I don't think that objective was achieved, either.

So I would call it a total fiasco. And I don't think that history will view our role particularly kindly.

And I hope that over this weekend some way forward will be found, with an Afghan imprint, that will get us to a government that has some legitimacy. Otherwise, I don't think anything we do -- as I've been saying over and over and over again -- will be able to succeed.

MR. INDYK: We're out of time, but I want to get a quick answer on the question that was raised about the role of narcotics.

Somebody want to take that on?

MR. PILLAR: It's a quandary, in that the anti-narcotic objective, at least in the short term, may tend to work against the counterinsurgency objective.

I think Ambassador Holbrooke has the right approach in noting that the eradication program has, you know, won us more enemies than friends.

It will be only after, and only if, the infrastructure of Afghanistan has developed so that pomegranates and melons can be brought to market with the same ease as the higher value, lower volume crop of opium that that's not going to be a problem.

But I don't have a short-term fix for that.

MR. INDYK: Okay.

Normally I ask the panel a close-out question, but I'm going to ask the audience the close-out question.

Can we have a little show of hands, please. You've heard the "dueling truths" as Gary Mitchell describes them -- so, who's in favor of a counterinsurgency strategy that would involve more troops?

And who's in favor of the "Pillar Plan" of counterterrorism and just sticking with what we have there?

Who's in favor of the first -- essentially, more troops?

And who's in favor of the second?

It's about even.

Please join me in thanking the panel.

(Applause)

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