

**HEARING OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OVERSIGHT AND  
GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE**

**"AFGHAN ELECTIONS: WHAT  
HAPPENED AND WHERE DO WE  
GO FROM HERE?"**

**CHAired BY:**

**REP. JOHN TIERNEY (D-MA)**

**WITNESSES:**

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**2154 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING, WASHINGTON, D.C.  
2:00 P.M. EST, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2009**

**REP. TIERNEY:** The hearing entitled "Afghan Elections: What Happened and Where Do We Go From Here" will come to order.

I ask unanimous consent that only the chairman and ranking member of the subcommittee be allowed to make opening statements, and without objection, that's so ordered. I ask unanimous consent that the gentleman from Texas, Representative Lloyd Doggett be allowed to participate in this hearing. In accordance with the committee rules, he will only be allowed to question the witnesses after all official members of the subcommittee have had their turn; and without objection, so ordered.

And I ask unanimous consent that the hearing record be kept open for five business days so that all members of the subcommittee will be allowed to submit a written statement for the record; without objection, it is so ordered.

Good afternoon and thank all of our witnesses for being here today. I know the venue has been changed because the full committee continues to complete its hearing from this morning and I'm told that we can anticipate votes on the floor within the hour, so we're trying to get as much done as we can. We'd like not to have to hold the witnesses for that 45 minutes or so that the votes would take, but I'm not sure how that'll work out.

I just want to welcome all of you and understand that your expertise will help us as we sort of look forward to with this complex and puzzling issue.

Today's hearing asks a question: What happened with the Afghan presidential election that was held on August 20th of 2009? And what can the United States and donor community members do about the Afghan government's legitimacy and governance as we go forward.

Since 2002, a key component of United States strategy in Afghanistan has been to extend the authority of the Afghan government, to encourage government-wide reforms, to support the government's provision of basic services like electricity and water, and to nurture the growth of Afghan's civic institutions.

A weak, corrupt and unjust Afghan government that does not have the support of the Afghan people can't survive for long against the strain of a sustained Taliban insurgency campaign. Hence, the long-term U.S. strategy in Afghanistan is largely predicated on having a legitimate and capable government in Kabul. Both Pakistan's and Afghanistan's partnership with the United States and the international community are vital to achieving many U.S. objectives, including disrupting, displacing and defeating al Qaeda.

Unfortunately, despite sizable United States and international community aid efforts, the Afghan government has proven deficient in providing Afghan citizens with basic government services and legal protections. Further, the Afghan government has been racked by a failure to adequately address extraordinary levels of corruption within its ranks. Mounting United States and international frustration with incompetence and corruption in Afghanistan came to a head with the August 20, 2009 presidential election.

Widespread and massive voting irregularities as reported by the United Nations and others have by all accounts undermined the Afghan government's legitimacy in the eyes of its own people and those of the international community. What should have been another milestone in a long road toward democratic legitimacy and stronger governance, was instead a missed opportunity for all Afghans and for the international community.

Widespread government corruption is a critical hindrance to Afghan development. According the Congressional Research Service, and I quote, "because of corruption only about 10 percent of United States aid is channeled through the Afghan government," closed quote.

In short, the ability of the Afghan government to reestablish some semblance of democratic legitimacy, and to effectively provide basic government services, is undoubtedly weighing heavily on President Obama's ongoing review of the United States strategy in the region. The failure of the Afghan election and the inability of the government to provide effective governance are not for lack of United States funds.

The United States spent approximately \$200 million in support of the August 20th election and in total, all donors contributed over \$300 million. Further, since 2002, the United States has spent almost \$2.7 billion for democracy, governance, rule of law, human rights and election support in Afghanistan.

As an oversight committee, we are charged with determining whether the United States taxpayer funds have been well invested, wasted, the subject of abuse or the victim of fraud. It is fair to inquire how it is that such an investment could have been made only to foster such unsatisfactory results. Moreover, we must know who is responsible and how such a travesty can be avoided in the future.

Shortly we will hear from witnesses who can inform us what, in their view, went wrong in the Afghan presidential elections in order to draw and apply lessons from that difficult experience. The ultimate question, however, for today's hearing is how do we move forward? What can the United States and the international community do on the question of legitimacy of and performance of the Afghan government given the long track record of failure over the past eight years?

With that, I concede to my colleague, Mr. Flake, for his opening remarks.

**REPRESENTATIVE JEFF FLAKE (R-AZ):** I thank the Chairman for calling the hearing and I look forward to it; I won't take much time here.

Echoing the Chairman's statement, we've spent nearly \$3 billion in efforts in Afghanistan, ranging from democracy support, rule of law, election support and then to see this kind of event with the last election, these kind of irregularities, it makes us all wonder whether or not our money's been well spent.

-- (Inaudible) -- interested in your testimony, and I yield back.

**REP. TIERNEY:** Thank you.

With that, the subcommittee will now receive testimony from the panel that is with us here today. Allow me to first introduce the entire panel, and then we'll go back for their comments.

Ambassador Peter Galbraith has served as the United Nations Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan from March to September of 2009. Prior to this assignment, he served as the Senior Diplomatic Fellow with the Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation. From 2000 to 2001, he served as Director for Political, Constitutional and Electoral Affairs for the United Nations Transitional Administration East Timor. Ambassador Galbraith holds an A.B. from Harvard College, an M.A. from Oxford University and a J.D. from Georgetown University.

Mr. J. Alexander Thier is the Director for Afghanistan and Pakistan at the United States Institute for Peace. Before joining the Institute in 2005, Mr. Thier was the Director of the project on failed states at Stanford University Center on Democracy Development and the Rule of Law. From 2002 to 2004, he was a legal advisor to Afghanistan's constitutional and judicial reform commissions in Kabul. He holds a B.A. from Brown University, an M.A. from the Fletcher School at Tufts University and a J.D. from Stanford Law School.

Dr. Ashley Tellis is a Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace where he specializes in international security, defense and Asian strategic issues. Prior to assuming this post, Dr. Tellis served at the United States State Department as Senior Advisor to the Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, as well as on the staff of the National Security Council as Special Assistant to the President. Dr. Tellis holds a B.A. and an M.A. from the University of Bombay, as well as a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago.

Dr. Gils Dorransoro is a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, where he specializes on security and political developments in Afghanistan. Prior to this post, Dr. Dorransoro was a professor of political science at the Sorbonne and the Institute of Politic Studies in Rennes, France. He holds a Ph.D. from the School for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences in Paris.

I want to thank all of you witnesses for making yourselves available today and for sharing your substantial expertise. It is the policy of this committee to swear you in before you testify, so I ask that you please stand and raise your right hands.

Do you solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

Thank you very much. If the record will please reflect that all of the witnesses answered in the affirmative.

I inform all of you that your full written statement will be put into the record by unanimous consent and also ask that you try to keep your opening remarks as close to five minutes as you can. In reading them, I can't imagine that you could possibly put your full written remarks in anywhere close to five minutes, so because you're so familiar with the subject

matter, we're going to trust that you're able to accordion that in a little bit and give us your wisdom in five minutes so that we can get some questions and answers in as well.

With that, Ambassador Galbraith, would you care to please begin?

**MR. GALBRAITH:** Mr. Chairman, Congressman Flake, I want to thank you for the opportunity to appear before this subcommittee to discuss the Afghan elections and their consequences for the United States.

Let me say that in your opening statements, I think both of you posed exactly the right question: What did the United States taxpayers get for their money? And the answer is, they basically got ripped off.

The \$300 million -- \$200 million from the United States was put forward in support of elections, which the government -- which Afghanistan itself could not have paid for and those elections were blatantly fraudulent. But that underestimates the total cost of what happened on August 20th, because it has also set back dramatically the prospects for success in the military campaign that now engages 65,000 American service men and women, as well as 35,000 troops from our allied countries.

So, this is not just about the misspending of \$200 million in American taxpayer money on elections; that frankly is small change as compared to what these elections have done to the military operate to prospects to success in the military success in the military operations.

We have a situation now where today in Kabul, President Karzai has been inaugurated for a new term in circumstances where a large part of the Afghan people do not see him as a legitimate leader and that's particularly true among the Tajik population that is Afghanistan's second largest ethnic community, and where the electoral fraud has undercut public support for the war in Afghanistan -- I think its clear that that's the case in the United States, its certainly in the case in European countries that are troop contributors and it has, in effect, halted the momentum behind President Obama's strategy on Afghanistan that started with such promise at the beginning of this year.

I think we need to be clear as to who is responsible for the fraud. The fraud is the responsibility of those who committed it. I don't know the degree of President Karzai's personal involvement, but it is clear that he sought to benefit from the fraud; particularly in his effort to try to avoid a second round of the presidential elections by accepting a result that he knew was fraudulent and it only required intense diplomacy to get him there, but he also is the person who appointed all the members of the Independent Election Commission, who consulted regularly with the Chairman. It is the Independent Election Commission, which the only thing independent about it is its name, that in every way operated as an agent of the Karzai campaign and in every instance of fraud and I think this is a critical point, in every instance of fraud, either the staff that was appointed by the commission committed the fraud, collaborated with those who committed the fraud or knew about the fraud and failed to report it.

The best that can be said about President Karzai is that he put his own personal interests ahead of his country's interests at a critical time. So, clearly, the responsibility of the fraud is with those who committed it. But there is a secondary responsibility that, frankly, falls on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, or to be more precise, on its head, the Norwegian diplomat, Kai Eide.

Let me say, I worked for four months in UNAMA, that the staff there, it consists of the best people that I've ever worked with in my life. They are professionals who care deeply about Afghanistan. Some of them have decades of experience and the views that I represent from the very short time that I was there, do not reflect the fact that I have learned everything about the country, but that is a leader of the organization, I listened to the people who worked for me and what I present, is a synthesis of what they had to say.

Three hundred million dollars was paid for the election and the United Nations, which had a mandate to support the Afghan Electoral Institutions, chose not to exercise oversight over how that \$300 million was spent. In short, there was a mandate that said that the U.N. should support the Afghan institutions, particularly the Independent Elections Commission, but it also said and this was the part that the head of the mission left out, it said support them in the conduct of elections that are free, fair, inclusive and transparent; not just any old election.

Now, I have detailed in my statement as I have in a number of things I've written about that since I was recalled -- that's a polite word for being fired -- how it was that the United Nations failed to carry out its mandate and I'd be happy to respond to that in the question and answer period.

I'd like to touch on two points; it's not just the U.N. mission, but frankly, the U.N. headquarters because when this issue arose the United Nations headquarters made no effort to investigate. They did not talk to me after the public controversy surfaced and incidentally became public through no fault of my own or the fault of the head of the mission, Kai Eide. They simply took a decision that one of us had to go and being suitably hierarchal, they decided the number two should go.

I don't quarrel with their right to chose staff as they want, but I do quarrel with the fact that they chose not to look at the substance of the issue.

And I also quarrel with the explanation that was given, which is that private disagreement should become a reason for removing an official because no organization can survive or can function well, if it cannot tolerate private descent. It's no excuse to say that the private descent might someday become public because that's almost inevitable when you have a very controversial issue.

Now, what is the implication of this? Well, frankly, for President Obama's counter insurgency strategy to work, it needs a credible local partner. U.S. and NATO troops can clear the Taliban from an area, but eventually, the foreign troops must be followed by Afghan troops to provide security, Afghan police to keep order and an Afghan government

presence to provide honest administration, public services and to assist in economic development.

It's clear that a fraud-tainted Karzai government, considered illegitimate by a large part of the country, cannot fulfill the role of a reliable partner. And thus, we're in the situation that although the security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated in 2009, as it has every year since 2004, in my view sending additional troops is no answer. Without a credible Afghan partner, they cannot accomplish their mission and sending them is, therefore, a poor use of a valuable resource.

And that judgment, frankly, is one I make without regard to whether one is supportive of the war or opposing the war, if the troops can't accomplish the mission they're being given, then they shouldn't be used for that mission. That then leaves two other alternatives. One is simply to withdraw, or a variant to that is truer counter terrorism strategy and the other option is the status quo.

I'm also against withdrawal because over the last eight years we have accomplished a lot in Afghanistan. I think we have a moral debt to the Afghan people and if we withdrew, there would be certainly a rapid deterioration in the security situation in the Pashtun parts of the country, which would be unwelcome. That then, leaves the alternative of the status quo; it is also unsatisfactory because of the situation is getting worse year by year.

But of the three options -- that is, sending additional troops to circumstances where they cannot accomplish a mission -- withdrawal and the status quo, the least unattractive is the status quo.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**REP. TIERNEY:** Thank you, sir.

Mr. Thier.

**MR. THIER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee.

I am Alex Thier, Director for Afghanistan and Pakistan at the U.S. Institute of Peace. And thank you for the opportunity to present my personal views on the way forward for the United States and Afghanistan.

We face, as you said in your opening remarks, a fundamental dilemma in Afghanistan. On one hand, we have a partner who was inaugurated for a five year term that we find, to put it mildly, less than satisfactory -- not a strategic partner. On the other hand, the United States has very serious, long-term national security interests, not only in Afghanistan and the region and withdrawal precipitous destabilization of those two countries and the region would be a grave problem for us.

I just returned from Afghanistan and Pakistan on Saturday and the thing that most struck me on this trip, is that we really are facing a crisis of confidence in both of those countries at the

moment. Four years of rapid decline of insecurity in both countries -- but we'll focus on Afghanistan was capped by this election debacle that came really at the worst possible time.

There is a lack of confidence in President Karzai and his will to change and indeed, in his ability to change. At the same time, there is a growing lack of confidence in the U.S. in the international community. Questions about whether we will be there for long, make actors, choose things, make decisions based on what they think we are or are not going to do. There's also a lack of confidence because we, together with President Karzai, hand in hand, have stood up for the last eight years repeatedly and promised people security, justice in the rule of law and economic development and we fundamentally failed to deliver on those things.

There's also a crisis of confidence in the United States, I think for the same reasons.

Let me touch briefly on the elections before moving to the second part of the question, which I think is the more fundamental about how we move forward with the Karzai government.

I think that the most important thing about these elections is not the outcome. The most important thing about this election is that it reinforces a dynamic and a perception of impunity and corruption in Afghanistan. It's not the fact of Hamid Karzai being inaugurated today; it's the fact that the way that he came to this position was through massive fraud, was through bringing in old warlords who we had worked for years to sideline back into his administration and essentially, reinforcing the notion among the Afghan people that his government is corrupt and that it shelters actors who engage in impunity.

I don't think that the United States or the United Nations -- perhaps to echo some of Ambassador Galbraith's comments are also without fault in this regard. We have known precisely since 2004 exactly when this election was going to take place, but we did virtually nothing to prepare for it until it was too late and the election had to be delayed, causing a constitutional crisis in the spring. There was a distinct lack of principle that was pursued with these elections; not only in terms of how the fraud was dealt with, but also in terms of how candidates were vetted or potentially eliminated from the elections for past criminal acts.

Fundamentally, I think this election has shaken the legitimacy and credibility of the Afghan government at the most crucial moment in the last eight years. So, the question I want to answer then is what now.

I think that the fundamental premise that we have to start with is that no government that is unable to provide security to its population, which is seen as corrupt and unjust, will be legitimate in the eyes of the population. And it is, in fact, this very illegitimacy that has driven Afghans away from the government and emboldened the insurgency.

So I want to lay out briefly, five steps I think that we need to take urgently and firmly in order to correct some of these problems to improve our chances of changing the momentum in Afghanistan.



The first is radical prioritization. We really have to focus very intensely on what we want to accomplish in the next few years. For too long, we have been doing too many things poorly instead of doing a few things well and in this sort of crisis environment, we really need to focus; that would be a focus on security, particularly focusing on the building up of the Afghan National Security forces, focusing on the rule of law and focusing on economic opportunity with very strong emphasis on agriculture.

To come to that second point, addressing a culture of impunity and improving governance, this really has two components. The first is leadership. We are all waiting now to see who President Karzai will appoint to his cabinet, who the key governors will be. We have dealt for the last eight years with both the good Karzai and a bad Karzai.

The good Karzai has put some terrific ministers in place and we've managed to have some terrific successes. The National Solidarity Program, which has delivered aid to 22,000 Afghan villages using local Afghan governance; the National Health Program, which has changed access to health care for Afghans from something like 10 percent to 80 percent. There have been real successes and those have been achieved when we've had real partners in the Afghan government; not just Karzai, but the people who run the ministries.

The bad Karzai is the one who appoints warlords, brings in people, allows his brother to run around in the south potentially involved in the drugs trade and so on. And so what we have to do is we have to rebalance this; we have to put a lot of pressure to ensure that we have a multiplicity of good partners in the Afghan government while getting rid of some of the worst actors that are undermining the credibility of that government.

The third is that we really need to decentralize our efforts. On paper, Afghanistan is one of the most highly centralized governments on earth and this is laid upon one of the most highly decentralized societies -- economically, socially and politically -- on earth. When you look at what has succeeded in Afghanistan, it's almost always when we rely on local governance and local capacity in order to build our partnership successfully.

The fourth is reconciliation and reintegration. We need to take very seriously the idea that there are many people out there today on the battlefield, who are not implacable foes of the United States or of the Afghan government. If you look at the spread of insecurity across Afghanistan over the last five years, there are many areas that were very pro-government just a few years ago that now seem to be falling into the hands of the Taliban.

One of the reasons for that is not that the Taliban are so effective, but that governance has been so weak and the economic opportunity for young men has been so lacking. If we can improve both of those things, we can help to bring, I think, many soldiers off the battlefield. It's quite different from the question of negotiating with Mullah Omar, which I think is quite a bit more difficult and not something that's probably appropriate for this moment.

Finally, international coordination and effectiveness. Every lessons learned study, every speech that you read about post-conflict reconstruction and stabilization always has this listed; civilian coordination, civilian coordination, civilian coordination. And yet we continually fail to get it right. I believe that the time has come for us to examine creating a

much more empowered civilian aid coordinator on the ground in Afghanistan to match the power of our military coordinator and the commander of ISAF, and that's something that we can talk about in more detail.

I just want to close with saying that I think that the steps taken together can help to reverse the tide of insecurity and lack of confidence that has swept Afghanistan. I spent four years in Afghanistan during the civil war during the 1990's and I watched the Taliban sweep across the country and close schools off to girls and prevent female colleagues that I had been working with from coming into the office. Those were very dark days.

And we need to remember that as difficult as things have gotten today, in 2009, Afghanistan has come a long, long way since those dark days, just a decade ago. And I think that it's not yet time to give up hope and I can tell you that the Afghan people have not given up hope, nor their desire to have us stay and build a stronger partnership with the Afghan government.

Thank you.

**REP. TIERNEY:** Thank you, sir.

Dr. Tellis.

**MR. TELLIS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman; thank you, Mr. Ranking Member for inviting me this afternoon.

Let me start by saying that I share very broadly the judgments that Ambassador Galbraith made about the facts relating to the recent elections in Afghanistan. And I endorse completely what my colleague, Alex Thier, just said in terms of the substantive things that we need to do if we are to salvage the enterprise that we are currently engaged in. I'm going to summarize my comments in terms of three big propositions.

The first proposition is that the 2009 Afghan elections were clearly flawed. But to my mind, they still are not an unredeemable disaster. I think we need to look at these elections in the context of where Afghanistan is as a country; struggling to cope with the pressures of a very violent insurgency and the failures of both U.S. policy and the international community's involvement in this country.

What we saw in this election was essentially Karzai behaving as a rational politician, understanding that his power base in the south would not be able to exercise their suffrage because of Taliban intimidation. He did what a rational politician in the state of nature would do; he cooked the books to win the elections. This is a fact.

However, there are two things that still give me reason for hope. First, no one has been able to demonstrate that even if we had a completely successful election the outcome of the presidential election would have been different from what it was.

Second, we ought not to forget that beyond the presidential elections, there were provincial council elections and those provincial council elections, which are very important because

they represent local politics, illustrate a very important point, which I think we ought to keep in mind when we think about the future of Afghanistan. They confirmed the proposition that changes of power can take place in a peaceful manner and responsive to local aspirations. It's something we ought not to forget.

So my first proposition is this was a disaster in many ways; it was certainly not the perfect paragon of the democratic experience, but there is still reason for hope.

The second proposition is that although these elections will increase our burdens -- and everything that Alex Thier said I completely endorse on this question, I would argue that they do not make the necessity for our success here any less pressing. Nor do they render the efforts we've already made in this country futile. We have to stay recommitted to supporting the Afghan people in their struggle to create a viable state.

If we fail in this undertaking, I think the entire enterprise will be eviscerated and it will mean a return to those days between 1996 and 2001, with all the consequences that we had to confront.

The third proposition that I want to advance is that we will have to do many things to help President Karzai make the critical domestic changes that are necessary for success over the long term. To be sure, President Karzai will have to do many things, to work that in as well. But I do not believe he is capable of making those difficult choices without the continued support and reassurance of the United States.

And I want to just flag five things that we ought to do at the level of process -- I'm not going to say much about level of substance because I've written about this elsewhere and Alex has covered this quite adequately, the level of process.

I think the first thing we have to do is simply recognize that he is going to be president of Afghanistan for a second term. We have to deal with him. We have to deal with him because that's a fact, but we also have to deal with him because it is fundamentally in our interests to do so.

I think there are serious issues of legitimacy, but the issues of legitimacy are actually more abstract. What is going to be important in the years to come is his performance and we have to make certain that his performance is going to deliver in two critical areas; being able to provide population security, human security and being able to confront the issues of corruption.

It is performance in these two areas more than any abstract problems with legitimacy that will determine Karzai's success as a president and the success of our efforts in Afghanistan.

The second element of the level of process -- the United States, President Obama in particular, and the administration have to commit clearly and resolutely to winning this war and staying involved in this country over the long term. Vacillation and wavering really reinforces the temptations of various players in Afghanistan to hedge their bets to avoid

supporting the coalition and including Mr. Karzai himself, who will simply not make the hard political choices he has to, if he is not assured that the United States will stay engaged.

The third proposition is that we have to rebuild our personal partnership with Mr. Karzai. There is, in fact, a good Karzai and a bad Karzai and historical records show that he has gone out and done the right things when he has enjoyed a relationship with a trusted American interlocutor. We have to go back to finding such an interlocutor and developing such a trusted relationship.

The fourth element that I would flag is that our success in working with him and in Afghanistan more generally is going to require a strong civil military partnership in our embassy in Kabul.

The fifth and the last element that I would flag is the need for a consistent whole of government effort within the United States with respect to Afghanistan, including consistent presidential attention.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for your attention.

**REP. TIERNEY:** Thank you very much, Dr. --

Dr. Dorronsoro.

**MR. DORRONSORO:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We all know in the first democratic Afghanistan, I think that most important results of these elections. The turnout was officially 38 percent, but my feeling is that it was probably around 20, 25 percent. That is to say, that Karzai was probably elected by 10 or 15 percent of the population.

The second point is that in place, he is -- in the South especially in places where the Taliban was strong, despite the usual -- (inaudible) -- the coalition in Helmand for example, the turnout was around five percent, Helmand, Kandahar.

So basically, nobody or very few people went to vote. This was not only because there was intimidation from the Taliban. This was also because people are very cynical about politics in Afghanistan right now.

I watched the election in Mazar-e-Sharif, a place where the security is quite good and very few people went to the voting station there. So it's not only about Taliban, it's also about the crisis of legitimacy in Afghanistan. And I think the right comparison is with 2004 when a lot of people went to vote, and the election was not perfect, but reasonable.

The main point is that in 2004, you had something very close to democracy in Afghanistan; it's totally over now.

What is worrying is we are not in the payback time. Karzai made a lot of deals, alliances with warlords, drug dealers, local powers, to win this election. And now, he has to payback. That's why we'll have a very, very, very large problem of corruption in the next few months and even the next few years.

The next point is about what we have learned from the Taliban perspective. We have learned that the Taliban are well coordinated, there were able to launch attacks against the government in all Afghanistan the day of election and it was for them a very good day after all because they showed that they were able to disrupt the election and everything.

The other problem we have with this election is the question of the narrative. We don't know what to say to the population in the Western countries. We cannot say that we're fighting for democracy in Afghanistan because there is no democracy in Afghanistan. We can speak about al Qaeda, but al Qaeda is not in Afghanistan and at least for European people, European population, it is not -- there is no feeling of fight coming from Afghanistan and right now, over 70 percent of the British population is for a quick withdrawal from Afghanistan.

From that we have, I think, to make sure if you think when we are speaking about reconstruction, state-building in Afghanistan because whatever the strategy we like we need an Afghan state to exist in Afghanistan.

First thing is the matter of the prime of the time. There is no quick fix. Actually, what we are seeing in Afghanistan is not a process of state building, it's the reverse. The state is shrinking; we have less and less function in state institutions in Afghanistan.

So, right now in all the provinces in the south and east, there is no functioning state structure. The jurisdiction is not just there -- not there. The Afghan National Army is controlling the -- (inaudible) --

So, we have a major problem here. It's not that the state building is going to be quick, is that there is no state building working. So, what can we do about that? We need time.

For example, the Afghan National Army is officially 90,000 soldiers, probably -- useful is around 60 (thousand). To double this number, we need at least five years. The idea that we can push the Afghan Army to 250,000 men in two or three years is totally -- it's a fantasy; it's not going to happen.

That's why you need time, and the consequence is that we need less casualties in Afghanistan because the level of 500 casualties for the coalition -- (inaudible) -- is not sustainable. So we need a strategy that allows us to build a state in the long run with a low level of casualties.

The second point is about resources. There is actually enough resources in Afghanistan. We are giving enough money to Afghanistan. The problem is that the money is disappearing. It is disappearing because half of the money is going to foreign companies -- (inaudible) -- and then we have this very vicious system of subcontractors that make sure that when you're

building a school in Afghanistan, it is going to cost you double of the school in United States, or almost.

So, the money is not going to the right place. The money should go in places where there is enough security to check what we are doing with the money. For example, right now we are giving a lot of money to Helmand. It's the case since at least 2005. And then we have absolutely no result; nobody can show anything in Helmand for all the money we gave there.

So you have -- we have to reverse the prospective. We have to give money -- in cities, in towns in the north where the situation is quiet, especially not in the south because part of the money is going to the Taliban. We are giving much more money to the Taliban than drug trafficking.

How to do it now. We are since a few months in this prospective of public humiliation of Karzai. One day, The New York Times has a title about Karzai was being paid by the CIA, and so on and so on; I -- (inaudible) -- do what they want to do but I don't think as a problem policy that we should put public pressure like that on Karzai. Humiliation is terrible thing in Afghan culture. We are pushing too far.

And the result could be counterproductive. Why? Because the only moment where Karzai is popular in Afghanistan is when he is criticizing the United States. Every time there is a bombing and civilians are killed, Karzai is the first one to speak. Why? Because he understands that is the only way to look legitimate for his own people. Especially in the south where Karzai has lost most of his support now.

The second thing is that we should not try to do everything ourselves; we should not try to replace the Afghan state. The main objective is to build confidence. In concrete terms, the -- (inaudible) -- dangerous thing in Afghanistan because they are taking the space of the Afghan state. Right now, if you are living near Gardez or Khost, the real administration is the PRT; it's not the Afghan state.

Everybody knows that the governor has no money, he is not competent, everybody know that the U.S. commander in charge. He has money, he is doing things. Short-term it's good because you can have a road, a bridge, an irrigation projection -- (inaudible) -- long term it's very dangerous because how do you want to get out of that.

I think we should be clear that we need an exit strategy. We need to give power to Afghan -- (inaudible) -- to Afghan -- (inaudible) -- and not doing the reverse in the name of short-term efficiency.

And very quickly, the last point is about the security and the way we should use resources in this domain. We should be very careful with local power like -- (inaudible) -- for example, who is back in the game now, a militia that has been established now; have been established in the last few months.

We have a major problem here if they are not under the control of the Afghan National Army. This militia as we have seen in the 90's can be autonomous. They can discredit a little bit more the Karzai regime and in the end, it could be a -- (inaudible) -- Afghanistan.

Let's be very careful. There is no short fix. The militia is not a good thing, except if they are very local and very small and we are going in the other direction right now in Afghanistan. I think it's probably dangerous.

Thank you.

**REP. TIERNEY:** Thank you.

I thank all of you for giving us such a rosy picture of how wonderful things are. Mr. Galbraith explaining very clearly how Mr. Karzai at least benefited from what happened at the elections -- in the flawed elections -- and taking advantage of them. Two other witnesses, including Mr. Dorrnsoro just recently telling us that he has faults for sure, but I think Mr. Dorrnsoro you think that we should overlook those faults. Mr. Thier says that we have to break the cycle of impunity and corruption. Mr. Thier says that without credible and legitimate Afghan partners, we cannot succeed no matter how significant the investment and I think that's pretty clear.

But then Mr. Tellis, you tell us that we have rebuild a relationship with Mr. Karzai; his flaws are legion. He's a poor manager. He lacks attention to detail. He's terrible at policy implementation. Other than that, how is he doing?

But supposedly, he has a vision of Afghanistan as successful and moderate states. I guess by implication, there is no other Afghan over there who has a good vision, but who might be at least marginally competent. I question each of you -- what is the indication that you think that Afghan is going to deal with corruption -- that they're going to purge the allies that he's invited in, Dostam's and others like that -- that he's going to go after those into corruption, into a serious anti-corruption effort when it involves very likely his own family in some respects, that there's some way that we can strengthen institutions that are intricately involved in this corruption aspect and probably don't stand to gain much if the corruption is cleared up.

Let me give you one example -- a recent article by Aaron Rosthum (sp) in The Nation, claims that Afghan host nation trucking contractors have \$2.16 billion in contracts to deliver critical supplies to U.S. forces within Afghanistan and they frequently use those funds to pay off the Taliban and other militants for protection along the major supply lines.

The article describes payoffs as high as \$1,500 per truck for security between Bagram Airbase and Kandahar. Several of the six principle trucking companies are owned by the close relatives of leading Afghan government officials, including the cousins of President Karzai and the son of Defense Minister, Abdul Rahim Wardak.

So, do any of you have any personal experience information about that or reaction to the allegations contained in the article? Is it symptomatic of a widespread corruption in

Afghanistan? How do you think it is we're going to convince Karzai to dump off the people that he just invited in to get elected and clean up his own family and how are we going to deal with changing those institutions in any reasonable fashion?

We can go left to right or we can start with hands raised or do anything you want to do.

Mr. Thier and then Mr. Dorronsoro then Mr. Galbraith and Mr. Tellis.

**MR. THIER:** Thank you.

When I was in Kabul, a lot of people were talking about the Brothers Network. President Karzai and his two First Vice Presidents, Fahim and Khalili, each have a brother who is part of the enormous contracting business that is benefiting Afghanistan. But we have to look at our own complicity in this. Fahim's brother, for instance, at one point, I'm not sure if it's still the case had the contract to supply fuel to the Bagram Airbase, which was something around \$100 million.

The case of Ahmed Wali Karzai is, of course, important because even though there have been complaints about him for several years being involved in all sorts of things, including the drug trade in the south, if it's the CIA that we're asking for evidence of his corruption, that is also paying him off, then it's unlikely that we are going to take seriously removing people. And that has certainly been the case, unfortunately, for the last eight years.

**Q**uestions of accountability; questions of people who committed war crimes; these problems we have known about and we have not taken action. And so I think that we have, first of all, ourselves, to be committed to the idea that this issue -- corruption and combating corruption in the Afghan government -- is more important than any single particular client or individual like Karzai's brother to the overall mission and we send that message clearly to President Karzai and to other people and to the government.

The second thing we do is we use our resources. We use our intelligence resources; we use our access to understanding where the money's going, to foreign bank accounts. We can put a lot more pressure on people within the Karzai government, or people associated with the Karzai government, who are engaged in corruption by using the tools that we have developed over time and either demanding that Karzai address them or that we address them.

And the final thing is actually to put pressure on Karzai. I know it sounds absurd, but I can tell you that for the last eight years, we have not been the ones putting pressure on Karzai to demand accountability. And if there is a clear change of tone that is tied both to carrots and sticks that I've outlined, then I do think that there can be some progress. It's not going to be a silver bullet, but we can certainly do a hell of a lot better than we've been doing.

**REP. TIERNEY:** I know this is probably not what you intended, but what I'm hearing is it's all our fault that he is corrupt.

I don't -- I know. I'm just telling you how it sounds over here.



Dr. Dorrnsoro.

**MR. DORRONSORO:** With due respect, I tend to agree with Alex on that.

I think it's -- there was no -- this kind of huge system of corruption in Afghanistan, even in the 90's. It was going on, but not that corrupt.

But when you are putting billions of dollars in the society without due process, without any kind of control on what it implemented or not, you have what you've seen in Kabul in the last few years; a few hundred thousand people taking a large part of the money, building \$1 or \$10 million houses in Kabul and trust me, all the population of Kabul knows about that, because they are all at the same place.

So, yes, it's a major problem and everybody knows. It not a prime of information, everybody knows.

**REP. TIERNEY:** -- (inaudible) --

We all know that everybody knows because is happening. What makes you think that Karzai and his cohorts are going to do anything about it?

**MR. DORRONSORO:** No; they will not, but can we do something about it?

So, first we can try to simplify and to centralize the way we are giving money. Very concretely, instead of giving a huge amount of money to one company, who is going to give it to subcontractors. We should give less amount of money directly to Afghan companies. And if the work is a little less good, it's not a problem.

But we have to be neutral in the way we are giving the contracts. For example, in Kandahar, we are giving all the contracts to Wali Karzai or his tribe or the -- (inaudible) --. We should be much more neutral in the way we are giving the money to defend tribes. So, that's one thing.

Second thing -- drug is a real problem because most of -- (inaudible) -- in the south are drug dealers. So if we launch a big anti-narcotics operation in the south, it's going to be extremely difficult -- (inaudible) -- and we could see IED's appearing in places where there are Taliban.

So we should be very, very careful about all -- (inaudible) -- trucks. We can do things, but careful.

And the last thing I would say is instead of paying for the security of the truck, use the money to secure the road. For example, right now, there is still no security between Gardez and Khost.

It's not a very long road you know and it's doable. So instead of paying the Taliban, just pay some guard, some Afghan National Army to do the job. And I think it has always been the

case, you need probably \$10,000 to send a truck from -- (inaudible) to Peshawar just for security. And then its money again and again and again.

So, lets focus on the security of the cities and the major communication way. That would be the first thing to do.

**REP. TIERNEY:** I'll come back if we have a chance for the others on that; I want to let Mr. Flake have an opportunity to question.

It just gets very frustrating from this end to think that people haven't thought of this before; it doesn't sound like rocket science to most of us.

**REP. FLAKE:** All right, well this is extremely disconcerting.

I mean, in terms of where we are -- Mr. Tellis, just one comment that you made; you said that in order to deal effectively with Karzai, we have to have the right interlocutor and that assumes that we don't have the right interlocutor now. Are you referring to Mr. Holbrooke?

**MR. TELLIS:** No, not particularly, but I was just thinking of a historical moment in the past when we had someone like Zalmay Khalilzad in Kabul who could literally sit on Karzai's shoulders and appeal to the better angels of his nature.

I think we need something like that again and it doesn't have to be a person, it can be an institution, but unless we have that kind of a relationship with him, we're not going to be able to get where we're going to.

**REP. FLAKE:** Right.

I mention that because there is a noted frosty relationship between the two and maybe we need that, I don't know. That's what I'm asking.

Just following on that theme, you mentioned that he can't be humiliated; that's not right in Afghan culture, but then we need to put more pressure on him, and we need to provide security and he has to know that there's security for him to be effective but it seems to me that if we provide or help provide the security, then he has less motivation to change.

How do you thread that needle with the man to encourage him? And to say nothing of the deals that you've mentioned that he's cut with the warlords, which may limit his flexibility? It's very difficult to see a scenario in which we get it all right and for him to be seen as credible and legitimate.

Can that needle be threaded, Mr. Thier?

**MR. THIER:** I mean, I think that our experience is quite mixed. Of course, we can't get it all right, but we can do a lot better than we have done previously.

I was very struck in particular on this trip by noticing the dependency cycle that we have created with the Afghans. When you look at our operations in Helmand this summer, we have been building the Afghan National Army for six, seven years now, and by all accounts, done a fairly good job, created some independent units. But when we made our most important mission this summer into Helmand to try and clear parts of that province from the Taliban, there were very little Afghan National Security forces in there with us.

There were a variety of reasons for it, but ultimately, I think that as our presence has grown, I mean, you look at the graph of our presence; we had 10,000 troops in Afghanistan in 2002, 100,000 today. We are, in many ways, I think because of our presence, have a tendency to stamp out Afghan initiative and leadership and that's not a call for pulling our troops out. But it is a call for forcing Afghans into more of a leadership position because I think, ultimately, when they're taking more of the risk and bearing more of the burden, they will, ultimately, perform better. And that's true on the development side, as well as on the military side.

**REP. FLAKE:** Dr. Dorrnsoro, do you want to speak? Let me frame this a little better from something you said. You mentioned that in 2004 that there seemed to be as close as we had to democratic leadership or the things that we want to see in there. Since then, we've had a resurgence of the Taliban, obviously.

What's the cause and effect? Was the Taliban able to come and get the foothold that they didn't have in 2004 because of the corruption of the Karzai regime or was that just incidental? Or did the resurgence of the Taliban create conditions that made Karzai have to cut deals and become corrupt?

**MR. DORRNSORO:** May I just say one word about what was said before. I think if we went toward -- (inaudible) -- the Afghan army we have to give them things they can do. So it's defensive. It's not offensive. Of what we are seeing the videos of the Afghan army when there is an ambush somewhere in the mountain, they run. They run fast. It's good but they run the wrong direction. So we have to be clear about that and it's not going to change for defense reasons. So let's give them the road, the stone, that kind of thing we can do. So do we need 20 great Afghan U.S. troops? Maybe, yes but for defensive objectives. So the second thing is, yes we have a surge every year since 2002, it never worked. We have a major problem since summer 2002 and it's a way to answer your question. Clearly, people from the Taliban from Quetta where they were, obviously, supported by the Pakistanis.

The Taliban leadership sent people inside Afghanistan, summer of 2002 to get back support from the people, to talk to the people. So it's something there you know so they were there. They had an organization and in 2003 they were preaching in the mosque in the Logar Province and that is just south of Kabul and what happened in the -- (inaudible) -- what not a spontaneous thing. It was partially organized by the Taliban leadership in Quetta. That's the first answer.

The second answer is, yes, if everything had been fine in Afghanistan, the Taliban would have lost but if you take a few places like Hazni and around -- (inaudible) -- the south Hazni, these places, Karzai appointed governors who were so bad they started a local civil war. And

that helped the Taliban a lot, you know. And it's again and again the same thing and in a few places in the East a special operation have been from the United States have been a crucial element to alienate one or two tribes.

So basically you see -- (inaudible) -- the Taliban then the local situation.

**REP. TIERNEY:** Mr. Welch, you're recognized for five --

**REPRESENTATIVE PETER WELCH (D-VT):** Thank you.

The big decision the president is going to make is about the troops and there's two models, one is to put more troops in and hope that that will be a stabilizing influence and I take it from the testimony that you've offered that you've questioned that. But if the other alternative is taken, that is the U.S. withdraws militarily to urban areas, doesn't add troops, maintains perhaps the current troop count that minimizes its military presence by withdrawing to urban areas with the goal essentially being stopping the Taliban from taking over Kabul and cities, what are the implications for that? What happens? I'd just appreciate quick points of view from each of you starting with Ambassador Galbraith.

**MR. GALBRAITH:** I think that's the right question. As I said in my testimony, I don't think we actually have any good alternatives and to come to the Chairman's question is to whether anything is going to change with Karzai. Well, he's been in power for more than seven years and nothing has changed. He's now there, in addition to being an ineffective, tolerantive corruption, if not corrupt, he's there by fraud so there's no reason to think that there's going to be change and there are a number of strategies that we might try and I don't dispute anything that my colleagues on the panel have said. But I think we have to face up to that reality.

The reason I'm against additional troops is because I don't think they will be effective because there is no credible partner.

And I'm against a withdrawal because we'll lose what has been achieved so that really leaves, by default, this option that you're discussing which is keeping the current force level, reconfiguring them. It's not a happy solution, but among the available choices I think frankly it's the least bad.

**REP. WELCH:** I'm not a military strategist. I don't know exactly what the right amount of troops are. What I do believe that I agree fundamentally with the premise that General McChrystal has set forth that the protection of the Afghan population, providing security to the Afghan population, which is not what we've done previously, is of paramount importance and that improvements in government and improvements in the delivery of assistance will come with security. So I don't know whether that means the status quo, 15,000 more troops or 40,000 more troops, but clearly I do believe that is the most important mission. It does need to start in key urban centers but even when you look at that if you look at Kandahar for instance. Kandahar is probably the most important place at the moment to try and stabilize.

**MR. GALBRAITH:** Is that the most important mission because that will provide the best protection to the liberties of the Afghan people or the best protection in the American people against another al Qaeda launched attack?

**REP. WELCH:** Both. I believe fundamentally that the stabilization of Afghanistan is the best way to protect the American people because if Afghanistan is destabilized, if the Taliban controls significant territory in Afghanistan then they will also provide a safe haven to al Qaeda.

**MR. TELLIS:** I think the interim objective has to be securing what we already have which are the population centers and primarily protecting the new areas where the insurgency has made an appearance in the West and the North. To do that, I think McChrystal will need the troop requests that he has made. I just don't see how the arithmetic of being able to protect the central areas of Afghanistan and the West and the North can be done with the troops that we have. But whether that becomes the ultimate objective is really an issue of some controversy that is to be simply focused on the central part of the North and the West and leave the South as it is. Or do we treat those as interim objectives? Wait until the national armies raise the Afghan National Army is raised and then move out? I think that's really going to be the next big issue.

**MR. DORRONSORO:** I think we cannot win against the Taliban; we can contain the Taliban. You cannot win against an insurgency that is -- (inaudible) -- in Pakistan. If the Pakistan army decides to attack the Afghan Taliban, then, okay, we can discuss again but right now they are not doing that. They are just focusing on the Pakistani Taliban. So to win against the Taliban is not on the table. We cannot do it. We don't have the resources. You need 200,000, 400,000 men just to seal the border. It's out of question. McChrystal's strategy -- we tried it in the last few months in Helmand. It's a disaster. One hundred fifty men have died in Helmand and I would like to know why. Why do we have to show for that? People cannot go outside -- (inaudible) -- a few hundred meters without being ambushed and killed by IED's. So that's already done, you know. It's not working. And if we do McChrystal on a larger scale next year with 400,000 men; we are losing the war and I mean it. We are losing the war.

So we need a low casualty strategy because it's the only way to give time to ourselves and to the Afghans to build something like an Afghan state an exit. It's absolutely crucial.

**REP. FLAKE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

**REP. TIERNEY:** Mr. Van Hollen, you're recognized for five minutes.

**REPRESENTATIVE CHRIS VAN HOLLEN (D-MD):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have questions for Ambassador Galbraith with respect to the role of the U.N. mission in Afghanistan.

First of all, what size is the U.N. mission? How big of presence does the U.N. have?

**MR. GALBRAITH:** About 4,000 people, most of them being Afghans.

**REP. VAN HOLLEN:** Four thousand people under the jurisdiction?

And would you agree that it's important that the U.N. mission be seen in Afghanistan as working to uphold the rule of law, making sure that there is to the extent possible democratic process, and not be seen as siding with the government against other routes within Afghanistan?

**MR. GALBRAITH:** Absolutely. The United Nations has a role in Afghanistan that is different from what it has in most parts of the world. It is the one institution that has been in Afghanistan through the last 30 years so it has, or had, a level of respect which also was related to the perception that it was neutral and, unfortunately, its conduct in the elections or the conduct of the head of the mission has served to compromise that neutrality.

**REP. VAN HOLLEN:** Right. I want to get to that because I'm troubled about the message that was sent with your firing in Afghanistan because as I understand the facts, correct me if I'm wrong, or please elaborate, essentially you were calling the shots as you saw them. You saw that there was fraud in the election. You brought it up internally within the U.N. mission. You expressed your concerns privately to the appropriate people within the Afghan government and you were vindicated in the end, but as a result of telling the truth and giving the facts you were fired and that would seem to me to send a very chilling message to other people involved in this effort who are trying to do their best to speak the truth and call the shots. And sometimes they're right, sometimes they're wrong, but to be fired for essentially providing your opinion seems to me sends a very bad message.

If you could talk about that and if you know what the consequences have been within the U.N. agency there with respect to the fallout from your firing.

**MR. GALBRAITH:** Well, obviously, I agree with what you're saying but let me start with one basic proposition which is that diplomatic missions are not democracies and so there is a head of mission and that person does get to decide, but that person has to be opened to frank talk from his or her subordinates and that's what went on here. There was the additional problem that he was often away on vacation or mission in this period so I was in charge and I was proceeding basically with doing my job, which as I saw it was to support the Afghan institution through the conduct of brief, fair, inclusive and transparent elections.

And the level of intervention was hardly extreme. I asked the head of the chief electoral officer in Afghanistan merely to stick with the published guidelines of the Independent Election Commission which to exclude obviously fraudulent ballots. I tried to get the Independent Election Commission to remove from the rolls polling centers that were in locations where they were never going to open. Later Ban Ki-Moon, the Secretary-General had said I was fired because I wanted to disenfranchise Afghan voters but that wasn't true.

These were removing from the roles places which where nobody got to vote but of course the real disenfranchisement was when more than a million phony votes were cast basically canceling out the votes, the honest votes that were cast. But in the end, and this was what

was explained to me by Alain Le Roy who is the Undersecretary-General for Peacekeeping. He said you had the misfortune that your private disagreement became known public through no fault of your own and that was the reason you were removed.

I do think that sends a terrible signal. You asked about the impact on the mission. Well, the mission was, the head of mission by his own admission was a terrible manager. This whole series of events had been deeply demoralizing. Many of the American and British staff working there and Scandinavians have now left. I think seven out of the 10 people in the political affairs division which is the heart of the mission have left or are in the process of leaving. So its all had a very adverse effect on morale, of course accompanied with what has now happened with the attack on U.N. personnel.

**REP. VAN HOLLEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**REP. TIERNEY:** Thank you, Mr. Van Hollen. Mr. Doggett, welcome to the committee.

**REPRESENTATIVE LLOYD DOGGETT (D-TX):** Thank you for the invitation to come over today and thank you, Chairman Tierney for organizing this important hearing at such an important time in the development of our policy in Afghanistan and I also particularly appreciate all the witnesses. I was on the floor on debate or I would have been here but I'd seen your statements and I particularly appreciate Ambassador Galbraith your participation would direct my questions to you.

First, I want to say in the strongest terms how much I admire the integrity that you brought to your work in Afghanistan and to express my appreciation that you've had the courage of your convictions in your service there and in your comments since departing Afghanistan.

It appears to me that we have invested tens of millions of American tax dollars in order to ensure that we had a presidential election that would provide us a strong democratic partner with whom to work in Afghanistan and that investment was wasted, not to mention the literally thousands of lives American and otherwise that were there trying to assure the integrity of this election. All of that put at risk and our attempt to get a full, free, fair, election failed miserably.

**MR. GALBRAITH:** I agree with you entirely. Obviously, the responsibility in the first instance rests on those who committed the fraud.

**REP. DOGGETT:** Of course.

**MR. GALBRAITH:** The Afghans did that, but the United Nations had a responsibility and the head of the mission took the view that his mandate did not go beyond providing the money, that we had no right to be involved, no right to interfere to tell the Independent Election Commission that we expected them to behave in a nonpartisan and fair way. That was the nub of the disagreement and of course the fundamental problem was that the Independent Election Commission was not independent. The head, Kai Eide, the head of the mission knew it wasn't independent, nonetheless, he chose not to act and as a result, more

than 200 million of American taxpayer dollars were wasted, and, of course it has cost lives because the military mission has become much more complicated.

**REP. DOGGETT:** And the amount of fraud that the Karzai folks were involved in here. It was not just a little ballot stuffing there or a little jimmying with the numbers here. It was massive, blatant, and obvious fraud.

**MR. GALBRAITH:** At least a third of the Karzai ballots were fraudulent, well over one million, in fact, the final results of the first round were announced at 49 percent for Karzai, but that's because they just did a statistical sample. If they'd done a full count it probably would have been 41 to 35 percent and it's not 100 percent clear to me that, in fact, Karzai would have won an honest second round had there been one, but then the election commission basically took decisions that made it impossible to have an honest second round.

**REP. DOGGETT:** We are as all of our witnesses and the committee recognize at the conclusion of the bloodiest month for our American military personnel in a deteriorating eight-year struggle in Afghanistan, I read with interest and it parallels your comments here today, ambassador, your recent writing in The Guardian that, unquote, "Under these circumstances," referring to the Karzai fraud, "sending more troops to Afghanistan to implement a counterinsurgency strategy is a waste of precious military resources."

Is that still your view today?

**MR. GALBRAITH:** It is, and if I may, explain the difference that I have with my colleague here who's view is otherwise. I think I agree fully. I do not believe that having additional troops provides security will lead to improvements in government. That was the position he was putting forward but I think that's wrong because the government is itself the Karzai administration is hopelessly tainted with fraud and anyhow it has been ineffective and corrupt for the last seven years.

So it's impossible to see how it could get better.

**REP. DOGGETT:** And I gather, it follows then the fact that President Karzai has raised his hand and taken an oath as the victor in a totally corrupt election and the administration has tried to put the best face it could on its corrupt partner that you don't see him changing his colors or his conduct.

**MR. GALBRAITH:** No, I don't.

**REP. DOGGETT:** And is there anything in the way of a policy change that you see we can implement that will get us out of the quagmire we are in there?

**MR. GALBRAITH:** I can tell you I've been in a number of conflict and post-conflict situations.

**REP. DOGGETT:** Indeed.



**MR. GALBRAITH:** And in every other circumstance where I've been I've had it in my mind the road map. I haven't always known that you could get on the road but at least I've known there was a road map. Here I don't see one.

That said, I can think of a couple of things that could help improve the situation, and probably the most important is structural change in Afghanistan. It has a highly centralized system of government for one of the most diverse countries ethnically and geographically and it doesn't work. It isn't as if the central government really runs things. It doesn't and so it also is centralized in the sense of all powers rest in Kabul. It centralized also in the sense that there's a powerful president and a weak parliament.

Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, President Karzai's main challenger, proposed constitutional change that would have had power sharing of the center, a weaker president but with a Prime Minister and Cabinet chosen by parliament so all the different ethnic groups and factions are genuinely represented. And elective local government I would go further and give the elected local government some legislative budget and tax authority. So I think that would be a step in the right way then we would also be stepping away for having Karzai as a partner. We'd have other partners. Obviously, this is something we can't impose this but we have a lot of clout so it's something we can encourage but I don't think it's going to provide a solution.

And the real problem in Afghanistan is that the center of gravity of this conflict is not Kabul. It is the provinces and districts and the way in which most Afghans experience government in those parts of the country, corruption, lack of services, but above all, abuse of power, people operating with impunity and the government has now lost the support of the people. And even if you bring in good government, it cannot regain it because anybody who would now sign up with the government would do so at least in the Pashtun areas where the Taliban are in the risk of their lives and that isn't going to happen.

**REP. DOGGETT:** At this point, about how much of the land area of Afghanistan is under the control of the Karzai government in any meaningful way?

**MR. GALBRAITH:** Well, I think to some degree, the answer to that is very little because a large part of the territory in the Pashtun areas is where the Taliban operate freely including in the second largest city, Kandahar, and in the Tajik and Hazari areas, it's really the local leaders not the Taliban who control it.

**REP. DOGGETT:** Mr. Chairman, thank you. I established over in the budget committee the other day that for every new troop that would be sent from here to Afghanistan, it's \$1 million per year per troop. We need to give very careful consideration to the testimony here and thank you for the work of your committee.

**REP. TIERNEY:** Thank you, Mr. Doggett. You've added great contribution to the committee's work.

We have checked also the Appropriations Committee and indicated what would it cost for 40,000 additional troops because that was the number being bandied around.

General Petraeus's own counterinsurgency book if you were to read it would ask for a lot more troops than just that for this type of territory, the size, the geography, the topography and it would be for 14 years on average. But just 10 years with just the 40,000 troops would be some \$800 billion. So I think one thing we have to add into the equation of our consideration here is what's the tolerance for the United States population in its own economic turmoil here to move forward if they don't see it is a prime national security interest of our country.

Which brings me to a couple of points as we wind up here, one, first of all having just also -- (inaudible) -- on Saturday actually on Sunday from Pakistan being there last week, one gets the feeling that both Pakistan and Afghanistan feel that the United States has no options. That no matter what they do or don't do that the United States has put itself in the position that you've got to keep feeding money to these folks and hope for the best.

Pakistanis focusing as Dr. Dorronsoro says on who they think are their biggest problem in neglecting those mutual problems that we might have, Harkani, the Taliban and others doing it pretty blatantly on that page and Afghans continue they're corruption and their impunity because they can. Because there's no incentive for them to stop it certainly because this is how they're all making money.

So that's one problem that I think we have.

The other is the stability interest in that region doesn't all reside with Europe and the United States and Japan. India, Iran, Russia, China, the other Stans. Why haven't we invited them into the game and basically they've got a lot more many instances at risk here than we do, yet we tend to keep it an arms length and not let them get involved or there could be an argument for handing it over and let them worry about it to a large extent to see what they come up with on this because they certainly don't want to unravel. But because of time constraints let me just lay out one last proposition for general comments on this.

We're concerned apparently underlining all this is that if some Taliban were to be allowed back into Afghanistan they might proceed to allowing al Qaeda, which numbers less than 100 in Afghanistan right now, and around 500 or less in all of Pakistan, that that group of people might come back in a get a foothold in Afghanistan. But al Qaeda is already five to one at least probably six to one numbers in Pakistan, not Afghanistan essentially no al Qaeda in Pakistan. They're in Sudan, they're in Yemen, they're in Somalia. So the Madrid and London bombings were not planned or perpetrated out of Afghanistan; they were essentially out of Pakistan if anywhere.

Given that, how do we reconcile the prospect that we're keeping hundreds or thousands of troops from the international community in a place where there are no al Qaeda and no troops in the many places where there are al Qaeda? Unless you say there were -- (inaudible) -- it's not really about al Qaeda, it's about nation building. And if that's the point, just when do we change our goals for what the president set out of wanting to stabilize and defeat al Qaeda and move it over to try to build the nation in a place where that's not a likely prospect for a long, long time.

Mr. Thier.

**MR. THIER:** If I can for just one second, I just want to correct, I think, a slight mischaracterization of my remarks by Ambassador Galbraith.

(Cross talk)

**MR. THIER:** I in no way advocated for additional troops. I very explicitly said I didn't know if the current level may be sufficient or 40,000 more. It's that the way the troops are used in the mission should change.

**REP. TIERNEY:** I think the record clearly reflects your recollection

(Cross talk)

**MR. THIER:** I think that we have a series of intertwined interests that keep us needing to remain in Afghanistan through this difficult period.

The reason al Qaeda is in Pakistan at the moment is because we chased them out of Afghanistan in 2001, and I have no reason to believe, nor have I seen any evidence that if the Taliban were to come over back into Afghanistan and take over significant parts of the territory, that they wouldn't bring them with them. I think we have to look at --

(Cross talk)

**REP. TIERNEY:** Do you have any evidence that they would?

(Cross talk)

**MR. THIER:** Well, I think we have significant evidence that they're likely to welcome the al Qaeda back in based on what we experienced until 2001.

**REP. TIERNEY:** If the Mullah Omar faction of Taliban were to again take over. By no means certain

**MR. THIER:** Well, Haqqani as well. I mean Haqqani is the one who originally brought Mullah Omar to Afghanistan from Sudan. I think it's really the contiguous area. They don't recognize the border. We do. There is no place like home, I believe for al Qaeda. They are genetically linked, they have been training and recruiting in that part of the world, on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border for a long time. They have a much better place to work and survive and recruit there, I believe, than in Yemen and Somalia.

So I think it continues to pose a threat but it's not exclusively that. I also think that the stability of the region, the chance of the spread of extremism. Obviously, we've seen what's happened to Pakistan over the last few years which is quite scary. The potential spread of that into Central Asia as well. There are a lot of Uzbeks in Pakistan as you know in the tribal

areas and the reason that they're there is because they're trying to foment a revolution in Uzbekistan.

I think that the unpredictability and potential for conflict between India and Pakistan if we don't deal with the militancy crisis in Pakistan also exists. So I think it's problematic to try and narrow it down to one interest. I think collectively the United States has a lot of interests in the stability of the region and I agree fundamentally with the way Ambassador Galbraith formulated it, that as difficult as it is to stay at the moment, leaving, I think, it is a far worse option. I do think we have the potential to improve our performance there significantly and to change the momentum and I think that we have the next year too to prove that we can do that.

**REP. TIERNEY:** Dr. Tellis, what about India and the Stans who according to Dr. Thier have an interest in this also. Where are they?

**MR. TELLIS:** Well, let me answer both those questions. I think the reason why we have restrained ourselves from having a more active regional approach, that is the regional players actually providing troops on the ground and doing some of the nation building effort is because there are very serious forms of security differences between these players themselves and our concern is that if you brought the Indians, the Iranians and the Central Asian states into Afghanistan in a substantial way, Afghanistan would become a new battleground for the play of these own interests and the consequences of that would be each one would support their own proxies and the struggles between these proxies would then create the environment that would allow for the import of --(inaudible) --

If you remember in the years between 1991 and 2001 that is exactly what happened in Afghanistan. There was a rivalry between the Central Asian states, India, Iran, and Pakistan which led to the Pakistanis attempting to protect their equities in Afghanistan to the creation of the Taliban.

**REP. TIERNEY:** Interestingly, Mr. Doggett asked the question about what proportion of the country was really solidly held by the Kabul government or the Karzai government and the answer was very little.

So would you think that they were fond of home as was said earlier that they'd already be back there?

**MR. TELLIS:** Well, my basic sense is that if the Taliban were to come back to power in Afghanistan and we're only talking about the Mullah Omar Taliban right now because I'm not sure there is another Taliban and the other Taliban really doesn't matter from us.

**REP. TIERNEY:** Do they if they come back to power or do they just need to have control over certain land area and that's already available to them.

**MR. TELLIS:** Yes, and our fear, the reason why we've not had a magnification of our problems is because in those areas coalition troops are still operating. They are still pressing al Qaeda into the frontier. If there was open access between the FATA and Afghanistan in a

way that would be the case. If the Taliban had authority I think you would begin to see not only al Qaeda, but also the other groups like the Haqqani Network and the HIG, which are of concern to us.

So I think we have to keep pressing them because the alternatives are too dangerous.

**REP. TIERNEY:** Any of the members have any questions? Any of the members of the panel wish to clarify any final point or add some information that we ought to hear? Dr. Dorronsoro.

**MR. DORRONSORO:** Just about the reason why al Qaeda is not in Afghanistan. I think they don't want to be in Afghanistan if we keep the cities because they cannot work from Afghanistan. They are not interested in fighting Americans directly in Afghanistan. What they want is cities, communication, cell phone, whatever to strike us in Europe, in the United States. They are not interested in the Afghan countryside. That's why the main interest for us in Afghanistan is to keep the cities. If we keep the cities, al Qaeda will not be back.

**MR. GALBRAITH:** If I can add, the Taliban is not going to take over all of Afghanistan. It has no support among the Tajiks or Hazaris and so the worse-case scenarios we're talking about a situation where they control the Pashtun areas and basically take over Kandahar and frankly at this stage we're not that far from that worse- case scenario.

There's another point I could make about Pakistan, which is a major part of this issue. There is a civilian government in Pakistan which has a different approach from the view of the military, which, of course, remains positive, very powerful in which my view, operates in an alternate universe seeing India, al Qaeda threat whereas India really you talk to Pakistan's military, India comes up in a minute. You talk in India and you can go all day and nobody mentions Pakistan. But the civilian government does want better relations with India. It has resisted viewing Afghanistan as a place to fight a proxy war with the Indians to resisted viewing it as a place as an area in depth.

Pakistan's interference in these recent elections was much less than in the past and that was the influence of President Zardari and Foreign Minister Qureshi. So I think as we look at our Pakistan policy, we do have a strong interest in supporting this civilian government that it should complete its term and that there is a gradual process that leads to true civilian control over the military. Because that I think will make a difference to India, relations with India, stability in the region and in Afghanistan.

**REP. TIERNEY:** Mr. Thier?

**MR. THIER:** I just wanted to say one final thing and I'm sure Ambassador Galbraith would agree with this. I think we would be remiss in not mentioning for the record that there was one institution in this Afghan election process that stood head and shoulders above the rest and that was they, after the Electoral Complaints Commission which was a mixed body Afghan international. That really against all odds, all political pressure acted with great technical expertise and, in some ways, rescued part of the legitimacy of this election by

demonstrating that even Karzai could be held to legal standard in the end and I think they did an amazing job and should be commended for it.

**REP. TIERNEY:** Last shot, Ambassador Galbraith.

**MR. GALBRAITH:** Thank you.

**REP. TIERNEY:** What, if anything, could the United States have done to protect this investment to the U.N., UNAMA that was supposed to go to free and fair elections?

**MR. GALBRAITH:** Well, let me just have a comment about the Electoral Complaints Commission. I, of course, agree it did a very good job but that is now the current line by the head of the U.N. mission. How the system worked. It didn't work. The massive fraud discredited the elections in the eyes of the Afghan people. It plunged the country into a seven week crisis. The crisis ended in circumstances where you could not have had a fair runoff so even though technically this commission did its job, incidentally there was only one Afghan member because the pro-Karzai one resigned; it didn't really rescue the day.

Now as to what the United States could have done, The United States, I think rightly left it to the United Nations because it was responsible. I guess I have to say although I'm credited with having been spoken out and stood up, perhaps I really didn't do enough because I took seriously my role as an international civil servant and I didn't go and raise the flag as strongly as I might during this period in the lead up to the elections of the immediate part of it. As a part of a system and as a diplomat that's, I stayed within that system. But clearly, all the countries ought to have done more, ought to ganged up if you will on the head of the U.N. mission, said we had a huge investment here and we expect you to do something to make sure the elections are free and fair.

With that said, that was a secondary shortcoming. The primary shortcoming was with the U.N. mission which, and with the head of it, which by any standard of common sense should have known that just giving money wasn't sufficient. That the Independent Election Commission was partisan and there needed to be oversight for our money.

**REP. TIERNEY:** Was there red flags that the United States and other members of the international community should have seen along the way to know that it wasn't heading in that direction or would that have taken the insight and the perspective of being with the UNAMA group to see that?

**MR. GALBRAITH:** There were some red flags and, frankly, the administration did raise them. It is well known that Ambassador Holbrooke had, shall we say, a difficult meeting with President Karzai the day after the election, and the reason was that (off mike) and the position of the administration that must stay the position of the administration and they don't get to choose who it is that they talk to. We choose.

**REP. TIERNEY:** Well thank you once again all of you very, very much. You've been very helpful and very informative.

With that the meeting is adjourned.

END.