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# EVENT TRANSCRIPT

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## Beyond the Surge: A Political Strategy for Afghanistan? Thursday, January 28, 2010

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**SIMON HUGHES:** Good morning everybody and welcome. My name is Simon Hughes and I'm a Member of Parliament in the House of Commons. I am one of three co-chairs of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Conflict Issues here in the UK Parliament, which is a group set up in the last few years, and which I'm happy to tell you has been very active and engaged on many issues of the moment. There is also a Parliamentary network of people engaged in these issues, which is growing all the time around the world, which is an encouraging sign.

You're very welcome to this very important session and in a second I'm going to hand over to Fabrice, who will chair this morning's sessions.

Can I just do a minute's worth of housekeeping announcements and then it's literally over to Fabrice. Firstly, the usual request, please turn off or turn to silent your mobile phones and if you have done so, or you think you've done so, can you just check? Secondly, if anybody needs the ladies or gents, they're just outside the door in the corridor there and if anybody's suddenly desperately in need of refreshments and can't wait, there's a cafeteria down below and, provided you don't go beyond the barriers with your passes, you can go out and get fresh air if you need to and come back in again.

The plan this morning is that there will be a session from now until half past ten promptly with three short introductory contributions which Fabrice will introduce, and then a possibility obviously of engagement of you all in that. Then there will be a short break for a quarter of an hour, and then there will be a second session. I hope you all have a programme for this morning on your desk, or you've received it beforehand.

Obviously, the first session is on the political strategy for Afghanistan. Just lastly to say it's a great pleasure to work with the Carnegie Endowment on this initiative, to try to bring together people who are here concentrating in London on thinking today about Afghanistan.

It's a hugely important day for that country and for the international community. There is no uniquely important day; politics and conflict resolution is a process, not an event; you will know that as well as I do and it's very encouraging to see so many people with so much relevant experience and interest in commitment here. Particularly we welcome our friends from Afghanistan who are here sharing with us of their most relevant insights. And at the end of the exercise we've got to all remember that it's for them to determine what they want for their country, and for us to support them and to listen very carefully to their voices. So thank you very much indeed and Fabrice, over to you.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you very much, Simon. Good morning to everyone. My name is Fabrice Pothier. I am the Director of Carnegie Europe, the European Foreign Policy Forum of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. It's a real pleasure to be here today and I would like to thank again the All-Party Group on Conflict Issues for agreeing to co-host this discussion, which is happening in fact on a very special day for Afghanistan.

Today we have more than 60 senior officials from all over the world who are meeting to discuss the strategy ahead for the country. But one can't help but have a feeling of *déjà vu*. Four years ago, here in London, in the same house, Lancaster House, almost the same officials were meeting to discuss almost the same issues and at the time it was the launch of the Afghan Compact with many promises of development, of reconstruction and of stabilisation.

Today we are talking about a new compact, more focus on security, on training and on governance, but I think what this tells us is that there are still many big questions to be answered and discussed on Afghanistan and that one should not ever create those questions, rush them, just because they are not convenient, and just a few of them, like how do we engage and integrate the Taliban? How do we rely on the Afghan Government? Is the Afghan Government a reliable partner? How do we work with the region, the regional stakeholders who are not necessarily having a convergence of interest towards stability in Afghanistan? Finally, are the foreign troops more problem than a solution?

These are some of the controversial questions that we would like to discuss today and, for doing that, we have a great series of two panels, starting this morning with a panel that will focus on the question of the political strategy, because it's one thing to talk about more troops and a new counterinsurgency strategy, but it's another to say what is the deeper strategy that is going to help build this Afghan capacity and create something that will stay once the troops start leaving.

So to do that, we have three great speakers. First we have - I am giving by order of their intervention this morning, Nader Nadery, who is the Commissioner of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. Nader represented the Afghan Civil Society at the Bonn Conference in 2001, so it will be particularly interesting, Nader, to hear your view on whether we need the Bonn II to finally make peace.

Then, we will have Justin Holt, who is a former member of the Royal Marines. Justin, I think you went on two tours in Afghanistan, including Helmand, and you have also been working with the State Department on the question of the new counterinsurgency strategy, so you have a good ground as well strategic take on that.

And then finally we will have my colleague, Gilles Dorronsoro, who is a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Gilles was before a professor of political sciences at the Sorbonne University and also at the Institute D'Études Politique, and Gilles is one of those experts who have been interested, writing, travelling, speaking on Afghanistan for the past two decades.

He has been, over the last two years, several times, both to Kabul but also to the field, as we say, and when he started at Carnegie in Washington he published, I think it was the end of 2008, a paper – I'm not sure whether you all have it, called Focus & Exit – and he was actually among the first to talk about the need for refocusing on population centres and the need to have an exit strategy.

I think we will have some good perspective also from Gilles. Let me now turn immediately to Nader. I will be almost dictatorial as a chair and give five minutes to each of our speakers because the aim is to have the group that we have today to also raise questions, bring their comments, so Nader, you have five minutes.

**NADER NADERY:** Thank you, Fabrice. Good morning. Well, Fabrice, the first thing that we need to look at when we look today at Afghanistan is at the month of December. And why I am saying the month of December is because a quick look to the three-times strategies and goals and objectives that were set in part accidentally, they happened to be in the month of December.

The first one was in December 1979, when the then National Security Advisor to Carter's Administration, Brzezinski, set the goal for Afghanistan a week after that invasion of Afghanistan by Soviets. The ultimate goal should be the defeat and withdrawal of the Soviet Union and, after the Soviet withdrawal, when it came to the question of helping Afghans to build an effective state, to say that this job should be done by the Afghan state.

The second December is December 2001 when the Taliban was defeated. At that time also the objectives and the goals were defined very narrowly and it was said the objective and the ultimate goal is to hunt and kill Taliban and Al-Qaeda and it was a war against terror.

When it was asked, the state building and the Marshall Plan, the Secretary of Defence at the time of the United States said, that thing is their responsibility and he was referring to the state building issue. So again, the state building was not a focus of international community and its objective was defined very narrowly.

What was happening in the country, in order to achieve that narrowly defined objective of hunting Taliban and Al-Qaeda, a contract and a commitment was made to empower the war lords in Afghanistan and to embed them within the government institutions, to make them the source of spoilers and a source of problems and difficulties in the country.

The third December, following the March White Paper of Obama's Administration, March 2009 - part one is on Pakistan – in December, the Review Strategy again was defined very narrowly. The ultimate goal again was to defeat Taliban and to prevent them from returning to Afghanistan. It was again a military oriented goal that was set.

Again, the question of good governance, rule of law, and importantly intentionally forgetting democratic development, good governance and Human Rights in that Review Strategy. Keeping with that, now in this state that we are in today, these narrowly defined internationally driven, mostly military oriented objectives have hindered a possibility and an opportunity to build effective state institutions in Afghanistan, and to through that effective state institutions, to establish some level of governance, some level of accountability, and some level of justice, for the people that are longing for a long time for these services to be delivered to them.

Part of what we see today, of those people who were joining with the ranks of Taliban, are those people who are disillusioned with such a process, but the second part that we shall not, make no mistake again, that we always miss to see the Taliban. When we talk about the Taliban and the

reintegration of them, we always miss the link, the close link and tie of the Taliban with Al-Qaeda. That part, I believe would never be possible to bring them into a political process, and to a settlement, but the first part can be achieved.

Those Afghanistsans who are disillusioned and join with the Taliban strength, some for the purpose of taking revenge, because of lack of justice; some because of lack of job opportunities. They could be brought back, and how to bring them back? It's first to define who they are, and which groups and how many of them could we draw? For doing that, you first need to put your own house in order.

The Afghan government needs to be effective and to demonstrate some level of strength. We always talk to our position of weakness. The international community comes. Every senior representative of the international comes to Afghanistan and they say, we are not winning this war, and the translation of that on the ground by people is that we are losing this war, so the Taliban gets more emboldened.

You can bring them to the negotiation table only with a position of strength, and at the same time, identifying and defining a procedure and a process. Where do we start? We haven't had a bad part sorted out yet. President Karzai, Afghan government and the international community, everybody talks about calling for reconciliation and talks with the Taliban, but it hasn't been a clear, defined process and procedure that gives a level of confidence to the public of Afghanistan that they're not going to lose some of the rights and freedom that they have achieved in the last eight years to a compromised process of reconciliation, with some hardcore elements that are renowned for their brutality and for their activities and people are fed up with them. So, they need to first, the majority of the public needs to have that level of confidence.

At the same time, shifting the focus from very much centralized system of decision making and delivering of services to the district level, and how you do that? The first thing is to make the district governors feel a level of accountability both to the populous and at the village level.

Currently troubled throughout the country, most of the district governors are not spending most of their time in those districts, because of insecurity, because they don't feel accountable to those communities. They need to make some elements of the government in Kabul and then they can secure their jobs. A couple of weeks ago, I was in Kandahar. Of the seventeen districts of Kandahar, only five of them are functional, and functional is that they're nominally functional. They only have a governor, a district governor and a chief of police, and 40 other police officers. You don't have judges, you don't have prosecutors, you don't have other government departments; educational departments, and nothing else, and the people there need a source to come and communicate, and to talk to them.

So, unless that gap is not removed. Unless the governance is not brought to the district level, we cannot also cut incentives for people to join the Taliban. I will stop here, otherwise.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you very much, Nader. You raise a very interesting point, which is we can't engage in reintegrating the Taliban without having an Afghan government solid enough to absorb that and to give some guarantees also to the Afghan people.

You mention the need to strengthen the district governor's office to make it more accountable. What are the two other steps that you think should be taken on the governance business, to make this government in a realistic way stronger?

**NADER NADERY:** Well, I think that one of the first issues is to establish the level of justice, and to end the culture of impunity that there is. I would say the state of impunity that's prevailing in

Afghanistan. That directly links with the issue of corruption. There is a high level of tolerance for any kind of a corruption that is permissible, so both at the Afghan government level and also on the part of the international community.

Just as accountability has never been at the highest level of the international community's agenda, so does that at the governance agenda, there is almost not political willingness at the government of Afghanistan to take an accountable, and sum of those very obvious criminals that are not only part of the government, but outside the government. You need to take up some of those, to send a strong message to the populous that the time of impunity and immunity is over.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** I want to push on that, because how do you go after the very people you depend on for your political survival? Meaning, we know that Karzai relies on an informal network of support in Kandahar, for example, made of relatively questionable people that he needs those people for his political support, so how do you square this circle?

**NADER NADERY:** Well, the theme starts from that false perception that those people who are aligned with President Karzai are holding larger and larger constituencies among the population, and they are the source that keeps the government on its feet. That's absolutely a false perception.

What President Karzai, the government of Afghanistan and the rest of the international community should do and can do is a reassessment of the level of power that these individuals hold. They are hated by the community and by the people. Some people still have these big names, these big warlords that are making the coalition with the government, the government feels that in order to regain empowerment or regaining of the power to their support, they don't have enough space among the population. People keep a relation with them, because the governmental institution, the rule of law is now there to help them in a time of need. So, what they know is Mr. X or Y is a powerful figure, every day seen on the screen of television, or important national days, together with the President, so they are seen as the decision makers, as they are. They are appointing governors. They are appointing ministers, so people want to keep a relation with these individuals, in case they are sometime in some trouble, so they can help them.

The first thing is reassessing the constituencies. They are not holding any constituencies. Marginalize them. Start the vigorous process of vetting in all government institutions and establish a mechanism as an example for the next election. For the next election, that those with the bad records, both in terms of human rights records and other crimes, and being drug traffickers, to not be allowed to stand for the offices, and these are doable, but what we lack so far to do this is the political will, at the government of Afghanistan. Also realising the part of the international community.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** You had this second point, the second element?

**NADER NADERY:** The second element is invest more on Afghan National Army, and apply the similar strategy for the making and reforming of the Afghan National Police. In places like in Kandahar. In places like in Herat, in Bamiyan and Jalalabad that I travel in the last few months, people are having a high level of respect to Afghan National Army and this could be considered a success story, but how did that success story come into reality? It came into reality because a very clear strategy and vision was put in place at the first place, and then a rigorous vetting and appointment process was observed.

We need to apply similarly on the Afghan National Police. There is not yet any sight of that, that we see that the Afghan National Police is going through a rigorous vetting process and empowerment, so we need to expand that to the Afghan National Police.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you very much, Nader. Let me now turn to Justin Holt. Justin, you wanted to speak about the tribal path, so I will be interested to hear what you mean by this tribal path, because indeed we talk a lot about Kabul, the Karzai government being the main partner in Afghanistan, but there are also some local actors and stakeholders, and I would like to hear what you think we can do and achieve with working with the tribes, if at all?

**JUSTIN HOLT:** Thank you, Frabrice. If I may just give a short preamble before we start the five minutes, I particularly wanted to thank the Carnegie Foundation, all our parliamentary groups for this invitation to participate in this particular debate and panel discussion. It won't escape your notice, for those of you who have studied from that I'm probably the least qualified person here to talk about strategy.

It is true that I have served twice in two different classes. Once as a military commander, and once as a state organisation advisor, but that didn't really give me any special insight into what goes on on the ground in Afghanistan, other than to say that between 2002 and 2008, it would be an understatement to say that things weren't going particularly well.

The other thing I would like to say is that it would take me, personally I think several years of living in a community, learning the language, studying the history, before I could really, deeply, truly understand what was going on around me in Afghanistan society. So, in truth, today my contribution is really based on sharing with you my experience of last year, which was working in the US State Department, as a UK Liaison Officer.

It was a fascinating period of history, a snapshot to be there to see the change in administration and to observe it from the inside, but what really impressed me was what I call the competition of ideas, which was being played out around them all. Between the left and right, the think tanks, academia, the Washington press core, and most surprisingly for me was a very lively and open debate between the armed services, and particularly being led by serving military officers.

So, standing on the touchline of this debate or frenzy of thinking, I look for the real gems that I thought indicated some original thinking, and I did report back those to my colleagues back in London, Whitehall. I dare say that these were probably greeted with only passing interest, because they were all extremely overworked, but it is for that reason that I wish to join Fabrice or rally for his cry for practical an alternative solutions.

I don't think the debate here has really been long or loud enough, so what I want to present to you is something which I can't claim to be my own, and I wouldn't dare to. However, what I wanted to do is put it out there and ask for your feedback, and I feel that there are other experts, or the greater expertise in the audience and on this panel, that could really pursue and develop these ideas, if you thought there was any merit in them.

So, here goes. What I want to talk about is the fourth option for the tribal solution. It could be argued that the present US campaign in Afghanistan supported by its allies is sinking into familiar ruts that can be tracked back to several wars in avocation. The Anglo Afghan War, the Soviet Afghan War are the most cited examples. The root markers of these conflicts parallel with the US experience so far. Initial success, followed by a grinding descent into a confused and protracted engagement, with increasing casualty rates, which attacks the political will to prosecute this war to its final end.

On this path, in the end, regardless of any masking tactics or smokescreen, extraction becomes ever more the strategic objective. This calls for adjustments to perceived strategic needs, in order to obscure the scale of failure involved. Whatever that adjustment looks like, it searches for something that might just scrape past as a dignified departure, rather than noble defeat or retreat. A political smokescreen that must be served. The PM's initiative to host the London Conference on the next phase of the international intervention is doing just that, seeking to identify what a dignified departure could look like.

General Stanley McChrystal has been bold enough to lay the cards as he sees them cards on the table. According to his view, without change, the US will lose the war in Afghanistan. With that in mind, serious efforts have been made to find a better path, to prevent the campaign becoming bogged down in an endless night of warriors.

When it's all boiled down to basics, the international community confronts one of four choices. Of these options, only one has a chance of working, and only three are currently on the table for debate. The options are, firstly, a continuation - continuing the same strategy. The second option is expansion - continue the same strategy with significantly expanded deployment. The third option is reduction - downscale, deployment and focus on Al-Qaeda, and fourthly the fourth option, which is change - find a new strategy.

Option one, continuation. The fatal flaw in this option is that it focuses on outside political needs, largely in isolation to the internal Afghan dynamics. This is at the cost of the strategy, as mastering internal Afghan dynamics is the required foundation for a better result. As option one isn't working, further support for it is ill advised, as it will ultimately fail.

Option two, expansion. This recognises that option one isn't working, but largely blames failure on the scale of deployment, arguing it is under resourced. The cure is therefore seen as more force, and expansion of kinetic capacity, with some cosmetic refocusing tweaks, to change emphasis within the same strategy. In effect, catching up the old strategy, the one that's been noticeably failing since 2003.

The argument that the present strategy only started to model from 2005 forward is a view that confuses the initial early tactical victory, for a strategic victory, which was never achieved in the wake of the 2001 strategy.

Despite any exotic dressing, option two represents little more than an expansion of a failing strategy. For the most part, the difference between option one and option two is merely an issue of scale and time frame. By expansion of force, the West will win more tactical victories, which only serves to increase the scale of the strategic defeat, as it will mean a negative result for a greater force investment.

With option two, there will be no choice but constant strategy adjustments, each reactive to ground dynamics, and behind the curve of innovation. In turn, each adjustment will be too late to make a strategic difference.

Option three is reduction. Downscale the ISAF deployment, focused on special forces with a strong UAV drone deployment, and simultaneously narrow the targets set to Al-Qaeda. Let the Afghans engage the Taliban.

In recognising the need for change, option three has part of the answer right, and that recognition is itself a positive step forward. In the interests of time, I'm going to skip now to option four, the new strategy or a tribal path.

The fourth option is the only one that actually proposes meaningful change, and yet is the one missing from the choices being presented to politicians, as options one to three all represent variations of the same strategy, with the ultimate emphasis in employment.

The fourth option better recognises the ground dynamics, and immerses itself into that matrix. This enables it to gain advantage not possible in any reliance on the strategy of insertion, which seeks to introduce an outside force as a key part of the cure. Option four represents a mid stream strategy flow. Can it work? Yes. Can it be proved? Yes.

A mid stream strategy has been tried twice in recent Afghan history. On both occasions, it involved a shift towards the same alternative. These shifts work by taking advantage of the local dynamics, and the path conveyed by the Pashtun tribes.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you. You stopped at the very moment where I think it was getting very critical, and that's where I would like to ask you a bit more about this tribal path, especially realistically, you have been on the ground. You say that obviously it's not enough to have a complete understanding, but how can we play tribe politics? Will the Taliban not always be better than us at tribe politics?

**JUSTIN HOLT:** Will they be better? Well, they certainly understand it and they undoubtedly have the advantage. Can we play it? Yes, I think history shows that we can play it. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and for the most part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, we did play tribal politics. We engaged in a team of rivals, in order to counter any emergent threat in that region. So, I believe, yes, it is possible, but I also believe it's the most viable alternative.

If we don't win the battle for perception, and that perception is all that's really important, then we are on a hide into nothing, and so I believe that we have to engage with the tribes. We have to energise something which doesn't lie very far beneath the surface of Afghan society, and by energising it and cultivating it, and using it, going to borrow Paddy Ashdown's phrase, to go with the grain of society, then we possibly have a chance of presenting a buffer, or a tactical and operational and even strategic buffer between government and the Taliban.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** But, is energising the polite military word for arming?

**JUSTIN HOLT:** Well, they already are armed, so I don't think they need to be armed. I think they need to be supported and recognised and listened to, which is quite an important difference.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** So, I think we are getting some more clarity on that, but then there is the final piece of the question, which is you are playing this tribal card, but how do you relate it to what we are all trying to do at this International Committee, which is to build the centre of government? Are you not further accelerating this very disease that has undermined the case for many decades, which is the fragmentation of power, so how do you connect your local tribal strategy with the greater central strategy?

**JUSTIN HOLT:** Well, this is where I will probably part from conventional thinking, that I don't believe that an oblique central government or ever could work. I think that the foot printing in Kabul has to be reduced down to the size and the role which supports the tribal infrastructure. To try and artificially create something and engage in nation building is only going to move us into a world of pain and expense, so I would promote using the tribal structure, reducing the size of government to a supporting role, and then we leave with some dignity.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you, Justin and thank you for taking us on this alternative path, which I'm sure we will have a lot of questions. Let me now turn to our last speaker, Gilles

Dorransoro. Gilles, I think as I mentioned earlier, you laid the concept for this focus and exit strategy a bit more than a year ago. What is now your vision about the political exit strategy for Afghanistan?

**GILLES DORRONSORO:** Thank you, it's a pleasure and an honour to be here. I think that the situation has changed a lot since last year, so what I argue in my paper "Focus and Exit Strategy" is no more doable today. Today, my opinion is that the only viable strategy is to negotiate with the leadership of the Taliban for a broad political agreement, and withdraw from Afghanistan.

So, I will develop the points. First, why there is no other choice. There is no alternative, as we have said, and the second is how to do it. The second point being of course, extremely complex. On the why, the cost is becoming astronomical in Afghanistan. There will be more than 150,000 troops, plus 100,000 contractors next year. We are losing more and more men, an increase of something like more than 60% from 2008 to 2009. We were last year at 520. This year probably will be around 700 maybe 800. It's not sustainable, clearly.

The problem with the resources is that they decided that the more you put your resources in Afghanistan, the better it's going to be, and I'm not sure about that, and Ikenberry, in this leaked telegram put it very clearly: more resources doesn't mean you have better results. More resources means, especially the surge, means that the Afghan government is going to be less able to be independent. Less able to take control of the country.

So, what will be the likely result of the transformation? First, Karzai is losing control of his country and we are losing control of Karzai. The first point is obvious. There is no state structure in the south and east of Afghanistan. State structures are really minimal in the north east. The situation in Badakhshan and Takhar is very worrying, Konduz, of course, as you all know. So, what we are seeing is not the state building process, exactly the reverse trend, and there is less government now than five years ago in Afghanistan.

What we have seen lately is that Karzai has no legitimacy. Of course, no legitimacy after the election. So his political capital, actually in Afghanistan, is zero. Of course, the last polls published by the BBC is certainly wrong it's not acceptable in competence, or just a lie to say that 70% of Afghans are thinking the country is going in the right direction. I mean, just saying it, you see it's ridiculous.

So, we have to see that Karzai is not an Afghan partner. We cannot hope reasonably that Karzai is going to build a new state. We have no time for that. Karzai is more and more difficult to deal with. We don't have a lot of leverage and if you want one proof, it's the return of Rashid Dostum in the political game. Everybody, absolutely everybody was against that. The U.S., all the European countries, the U.N., absolutely everybody. And now, Dostum is back. He's back, he will have political responsibilities and it's going to be a major headache for the coalition in the next few years.

Now, could we try to arm militia or at least to give money to militia? That's what we have done in the last few months. It's a variation of the tribal politics. Of course, it's not going to work. What we are seeing is that more militia is undermining the legitimacy of Afghan institutions, because the militia are actually the real bad guys in Afghanistan. We have seen that in the 90s, and so giving more and more power to these people who are totally out of control, who are linked to the drug trade, is a way to put definitely the Afghan population on the Taliban side.

It's extremely worrying the trend we have seen since last summer. It's going to be like that next year, in 2010 and probably in 2011.

The last point is that Pakistan is not going to help, it's obvious. Gates was in Pakistan a few days ago and the Pakistani story was very clear: The border will stay open. They will not launch any kind of offensive against the Afghan Taliban. It's just impossible to win against an insurgency when you have this kind of sanctuary and support from a neighbouring state.

The situation will be probably worse in 2011. We don't have a way to split the Taliban. All this talk about local deals with the Taliban, reintegrating the Taliban is just talk. It never worked, and I don't see how, with a much stronger Taliban movement right now, it would work better. You cannot pay the Taliban to just [unclear] the government, it's just not doable.

Now, could we achieve a real success with the Afghan National Army in the next two or three years? No. We tend to overstate the ability of the Afghan security forces to take over. I said it before. Most of the U.S. officials said it, formally or informally, it's not realistic to think that in three years the Afghan National Army will be able to take any kind of important, significant responsibility in Afghan security.

So, for all these reasons, we have to negotiate with the Taliban leadership. We have to negotiate, better now than later, because our strength will decline after 2011, because no reinforcements and the Taliban know it. So, better to negotiate now, better to negotiate jointly. It's not an Afghan-Afghan thing, because we have a huge security stake in Afghanistan, especially Al-Qaeda. So, the United States must take the lead in the negotiations, and it must also be a regional agreement. We have to do, in fact, a Bonn II, with the Taliban and Pakistan. There is no other way, even if, as all the Afghans, I think it's a little sad to be back there. And now, what will be negotiated? Of course, the withdrawal, and we should avoid to set a fixed timing for the withdrawal. Better to be condition based withdrawal.

Second point, we need a broad-based coalition government in Kabul, with the Taliban, with the leadership of the Taliban. If we have peace in Afghanistan or a ceasefire, it will be from the top and not from the bottom. Local solutions do not work in Afghanistan, as we have seen the last thirty years now. And last point we need some kind of guarantees for Pakistan about, and Afghan, about our interest in Afghanistan, that is not to see Al-Qaeda or radical networks be back in Afghanistan. Thanks.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you very much, Gilles, and I think that was another very interesting alternative approach. You alluded at the end about what should be negotiated with the Taliban, but I would like to hear from you some more concrete elements. What do you concretely put on the table, because as you said, it's clearly not enough just to pay your way out of the problem, or to offer some few government seats. So, what type of more substantive discussion do you think the Afghan government should have with the Taliban leadership?

**GILLES DORRONSORO:** Well, the first problem is to get the Taliban in the negotiation, and the Taliban do not see right now why they should negotiate with Karzai. They don't take Karzai very seriously, and they are probably right about that. So that's why the United States should engage the Taliban first and then make the participation of Karzai a condition of the negotiations. But it must be led by the United States, not by Karzai. Karzai dealing with the Taliban means that we are not going to have any kind of guarantee, any kind of regional agreement. That's not the point.

Basically Pakistan and the Taliban will be on one side of the table, and the United States and Karzai will be on the other side of the table. That's how it's going to be if it's working. So the point now is what we need is a kind of political agreement with a ceasefire. A ceasefire will be absolutely great. Have a ceasefire during the negotiation, and then some kind of political agreement, where the Taliban are integral. I don't think a regional agreement. For example, you

give the south to the Taliban and the north to the Karzai. No, it's not going to work. It's not good, because it's just setting the condition for the next civil war.

What we need is really to ask the leadership of the Taliban, and to hope that with the ceasefire, with some time, we can do some kind of agreement. I'm thinking about Lebanon, I'm thinking about a situation like that where you still have some kind of army militia, but at the same time you have a legal government, and it's probably the best of what we can hope. And then having Pakistan back legitimizing the interests of Pakistan in Afghanistan is just the only thing we can do right now and the only guarantee we have in the future that maybe, just maybe, we will have results on what is our real interest in Afghanistan, means Al-Qaeda and radical groups.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** We are both French, so we like coherent explanation, and there is a fundamental tension in your argument, because you say on the one hand we need to talk to the Taliban, and at the beginning, you say, well, the Taliban are on the winning momentum, so where are the incentives for the Taliban to engage in this serious process now?

**GILLES DORRONSORO:** The first obvious incentive is Pakistan. Pakistan means the Pakistani army of course, because the civilian government is totally out, so there is no real civilian power in Pakistan, so it's the Pakistani Generals. So, the Pakistani Generals are the only one who can put pressure on the Taliban, because the leadership of the Taliban is in Quetta. It's obvious, but concretely they are in their country and of course Pakistan wants an agreement, because they don't want to be back to the 90s, where the Taliban was a kind of rogue state, with an embargo and Pakistan was always under pressure, they don't want that. They want some kind of official recognition of a new government and they want India basically out of Afghanistan. That's the problem of the Pakistani military. They are obsessed by India, and we're not going to change that.

So, that's one thing. The Pakistan military wants an agreement and they will put a lot of pressure on the Taliban. Doesn't mean it's necessarily going to work, but that's one thing. The second thing is that I think that the Taliban is confident, extremely confident and probably overtly confident, so they will see the negotiation as a shortcut to Kabul. They will probably bet that there is an agreement, so it's the end of the war, so it's good, and they will be in Kabul, and they think that they will win at the end. My bet is that probably we will have a period of time that is very tense, but maybe, maybe we can just keep the game like that and the Taliban will not be able to be the only political force in Kabul. I'm not sure it's going to work, but I don't see another solution right now.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you Gilles. Let me now open the floor to questions and comments. I know that Nader would like to add something, but if we can take, because the audience has been very listening and quiet, so I would like now to take comments and questions. If you could kindly introduce yourself, and make either short questions or very specific comments? I see Christopher and then the gentleman there with the black. Is there a microphone? No. Yes, and I will have to repeat your question for the sake of the recording, so don't be offended if I repeat your question, with my French accent. Christopher?

**CHRISTOPHER LANGTON:** Thank you and thank you for the invitation. It always delights me when you invite me to my own house of commons, so thank you. My question is really to Nader. You made the point which, and this is true, that in Afghanistan today, local power is in the hands of warlords, local militia leaders who do not hold an elected constituency.

Now, whereas I agree entirely at Justin's points, we are where we are on this, and so looking at the political where we are, and with these people holding political constituencies and not being elected, do you believe that the Wolesi Jirga, which is elected and is elected from the locality, so

the villages and the districts, has enough power under the present constitution, which by and large is a presidential democratic constitution?

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you. I will take a round of questions. It was the gentleman with the black jumper and then Rupert?

**JOHN PAUL REBOLLINI:** I wanted to ask a question.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** If you could introduce yourself, thank you.

**JOHN PAUL REBOLLINI:** I'm John Paul from Afghanistan and we've been working in rural communities in Afghanistan for over 20 years. Justin, I really think a lot of what you said. You started your talk by saying that it had taken you decades to understand people, understand what happened and be able to interact with Afghans on a level where you knew what they were thinking, so how can a tribal approach not fall down into the track of supporting one tribal group against another[?] ? My understanding is that that has happened to the United States, they managed to fund a tribe and the tribe used that to gain political ground and for their own activities[?]. So that's a question for you, thanks.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you. I have Rupert at the back, yes, if you can speak loudly, because I think you don't have a mike?

**RUPERT CHETWYND:** I will speak loudly. Rupert Chetwynd, Conflicts Forum. Three ingredients are missing. One is I don't know whether there is a damned historian amongst us, a damned historian would be able to tell us a thing or two. But I think what's missing is the statement everybody knows and repeats that you can hire an Afghan but you can never buy one, and I think we should all remember that. The next thing is no mention has been made whatever of the word faith. I know it's not a very fashionable word these days, but faith is what motivates the Taliban, and faith is very hard to combat. The last thing that I wanted to put into the mix that hasn't been mentioned is cost. I'm told that the cost of the Iraqi war combined with the Afghan war now exceeds the total loss of the derivatives crash and you need to also be aware of that.

I'd also like to say how terribly impressed I was that a soldier should have actually spoke out amongst these very, very talented Frenchmen, who always have logic and Cartesian logic on their side. That the soldier told us how it really is, and that is fascinating to me.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you, Rupert. I will take one more question. Okay, I have a lady at the back, and I will take the next questions in the next round? If you can introduce yourself, please?

**SPEAKER 1:** Sorry, my name is Helen, and I work for a stakeholder involved in [inaudible]. Just a quick question for Mr. Nader. You have talked about a solution and that there's a big lack of justice. Do you see any role for informal justice measures or more traditional justice to kind of take a part before [unclear] [inaudible].

Then just a quick question on the [inaudible]. I may be wrong on this, but if I understand correctly there is a part of the Pashtunwali which suggests that the Pashtuns in particular need to take responsibility for any deaths in their territory and if this would be possible then to negotiate with the Taliban that if Al-Qaeda does enter their territory, they will be held responsible for that?

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you. I will repeat the questions for the sake of the audio recording, and we'll start then with Nader and Justin, and then Gilles. So, we had a first question, actually addressed to Nader about the local power of warlords, or local chiefs, and whether the

parliament is strong enough within the constitution to maybe be a buffer to those local players? Then, we had another question about whether the tribal approach will not end up being a game of one against the other, and will not in fact further accelerate the fragmentation of Afghanistan.

Then, we have three enlightened comments from Rupert. One about the fact that you cannot buy the Afghan, this kind of concept of the Afghan that we can only hire him. Then, the place of faith in this complicated game, and the notion of cost, and that's something that Gilles highlighted at the beginning. We can't go on like this, because there is a cost issue, and then we had two more questions about the connection between formal justice and traditional justice, and whether traditional justice can be given a greater role, and also I think to Gilles, about the notion of the Taliban cutting their ties with Al-Qaeda being against the Pashtunwali, against the traditional code of conduct of the Pashtun tribes. So, Nader, if you want to start, thank you.

**NADER NADERY:** Thank you, Fabrice. If you allow me to first disagree with the points made by listening and quickly with the Professor, and then will cover the questions. I entirely disagree with the fact that the tribal solution would be an effective solution for Afghanistan. We always forget the history, and the history says that the last 30 years in Afghanistan, with attacks of Soviet and other parties [?], the social part of Afghanistan has been torn apart. There have been enormous changes in the elite structures in Afghan society. There are not anymore those same tribal elders that you had in the past, that they would have made a decision and then the decision was bound to be implemented by everybody in that community. Those tribal elders in most part of the country have been replaced by the local warlords, the young, religious speakers that they are challenging the core of that social fabric of tribalist faction, Edsel [?]. And they want a different order for their communities. It's not anymore the similar tribal structure of Afghanistan. Last night we talked about more than 60% of Afghans now of the population are younger generation, the majority of them being not in the communities within their class, but in refugee lives. When they return back in Afghanistan they're looking for a different structure. Tribal solutions would not work; definitely a way of engaging community and people, of consulting with them and including them in the process would be a solution, rather than going back to the old formula, from the Soviets, of creating militia groups by the name of Herbeques [?] or whatever, and somehow guaranteeing a civil war, and chaos, and conflicts for Afghanistan for a long time to come.

But coming to the question of negotiation with the Taliban, I think it's very simplistic to believe that we can bring Taliban on the negotiation table and it's just simple political movement that belongs only in Afghanistan. We simply forget that it's part of a broader international Jihadist network. You simply look to the behaviour patterns of the Taliban in Afghanistan, of the Taliban in Pakistan, go down to Somalia and look at what Al-Shabab is doing, tactics that they are applying, all of them are presenting a common pattern of intimidation, threats and the tactics they use are all similar. And that brings us to a next level. If all of these groups scattered in different parts of the region and Middle East, why are they applying similar behaviours? Why are they having similar tactics? It brings us to a military policy that was decided somewhere else and that is the core what makes the Taliban in Afghanistan, what makes the Taliban in Pakistan, what makes Al-Shabab in Somalia, what makes Yemeni terrorist groups. So, make no mistake, these are not only indigenous local political reactions that we can bring naïvely to different needs, we can bring them on the table. So that is another culture.

But then, coming to the question, I did say that these warlords, they don't have actually bases of support or constituencies of support among the populous itself, but actually they do hold some level of political constituencies and to that, most of them came to the parliament. And how they did that political constituency is to the money that was given by the international community of different ways to make [unclear], and so the power that they were given through inviting them for an excuse of inclusiveness of the government, inviting them to the government, and through

intimidation they have built a level of political constituency. And that's why now they are in the parliament. The parliament have power, theoretically, yes; it has some powers. But in practice what we have seen in the last five years, it was unable to demonstrate and to use its powers of balancing the acts of the government, simply because of the fact that most of those people who were sitting in the parliament, they were individuals. They were not presenting a platform or a political party view and they were fighting among each other and the government, the executive, was very much able to bribe them each individually and to make it a dysfunctional institution.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** And is the parliament strong enough, and if it's not strong enough, can it be strengthened and work as a buffer against those...?

**NADER NADERY:** Definitely. It depends how the next election is going to be conducted, how free the next election will be, how political platforms could be formulated [?] and how new and fresh the younger generation could be supported differently to different needs, at least on international communities' side, to have a level playing field to make or to enable the new actors and players who are reformists, who are living in harmony with international communities' strategies and agendas and looking for a different future for Afghanistan to be in the parliament. Then they can make a change, but not the current parliament. In terms of the informal justice, of course there are spaces where you can include informal justice, but within certain boundaries. The informal justice in Afghanistan has been a place for abuses and more violations of Human Rights and especially of women's rights. Now there are efforts to bring them within certain boundaries, to create some framework for them, and use them as part of the structures for a justice system.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you, Nader. Justin?

**JUSTIN HOLT:** Thank you and thank you for your questions as well. I think it's a really important one. And if I could just ask you for a moment to hold in your mind's eye perhaps an image of a patchwork quilt and in some places it's deeply elaborate and in other places it's particularly threadbare. And I use that analogy because my understanding is that Afghan tribal structure is just that, it is a patchwork quilt and it is held together by stitching which is, in some cases, not always as tight as we would wish. But it does exist; it always has done, it always will do but I can see that demography and time is against us and Nader's point about the 60% of young population probably can't hark back to a time pre-Soviet when that tribal structure was really the social fabric and the tribal elders held sway.

So it is difficult and I don't pretend it's not. However, the expertise doesn't lie in my field, in my world. It actually probably lies in yours; whether you're in the development world or the NGO world, there are people and I know that there are people who truly understand the tribal structure and dynamics in that particular area. So what I'm proposing is that we stop investing in the 100,000 plus allied troops which we are pouring into Afghanistan or to try and build a 400,000 Afghan national army, because if you took that investment and really redirected it towards the 100, 200 tribal or political seamstresses or tailors who are going to hold this patchwork quilt together, I believe it has a greater return on investment with less risk, but I believe the expertise is with the entrepreneurs and the NGOs to make this happen, not the military or politicians.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you, Justin. Gilles, I think there was a question with regards to the tension between negotiating with the Taliban and asking the Taliban to break their ties with Al Qaeda. Are you hearing well, because we have a slight microphone...? Okay, great.

**GILES DORRONSORO:** Okay, so the question was the Pashtunwali and the Al-Qaeda ties. First, the question is not the Pashtunwali; the question is the jihad. So what we have seen in the Autumn 2001 is that in all the eastern part of Pakistan the mullahs were back in the mosque saying "this is a jihad, we have to support the Taliban because this is a jihad". And that's why it was so pessimistic in 2001 because I saw that coming, a lot of people saw that coming, actually. That we're back with transnational solidarity in the name of the jihad. The Pashtunwali can have a role, but actually the Pashtunwali is not this kind of automatic ticket you have to enter the house of somebody with a gun and run an international jihad, you know. The Pashtunwali is not that. So you can perfectly refuse a guest who is not playing the rules and the rules in the Pashtun areas are extremely rigid for a guest. You are under control; you are not supposed to do things that are hurting the tribe. The tribe is supposed to protect you, but you are not supposed to be armed, you're not supposed to do things like war, you know, it's totally different.

No, the real question is who is able to relatively seal the border and, for example, be sure that Al-Qaeda is not back in Afghanistan, only the Afghans can do that and not the current regime, of course. People who can do that it's Haqqani, it's Mullah Omar of course it's people like that, because if they are part of the game they can respect a deal, so now the great question is... I mean the second step of the question is what Nader said. Do you think it's possible to break the links, the military political links, between the Taliban and Al Qaeda? And of course there are two interpretations because the data are very bad. We don't know exactly. One interpretation is the Taliban are a national movement; they have a national agenda; that's my interpretation. Mullah Omar wants to be back in Kabul; he doesn't want to attack New York; he wants to be back in Kabul to have his Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. That's his agenda. And the other interpretation is that the Taliban are part of some kind of international network and from Afghanistan they will attack other countries and so on and so on. I think if Nader is right, there is no negotiation with the Taliban and, at the same time, there is no military solution. And let's not dream; it's not to be a series of local deals that are going to weaken seriously the Taliban. So there is no solution except that in five years we will be obliged to exit Afghanistan anyway, because the cost is just astronomical and I'm quoting the Ikenberry telegram. Astronomical cost. And we are lying to ourselves, because we are using contractors. Because we don't play the game very honestly about the cost of the war; it's a trillion dollars and the long-term effect on the relationship between Muslim and non-Muslim people in Europe, United States, and we don't speak about that.

So if there is no solution, there is no solution, but we are losing the war. So I think it's a reasonable bet right now to play the Taliban as a kind of national force, not to do again the mistake we have done in Vietnam, thinking that the Vietnamese, the Communists, were some part of some kind of international group, no. They were nationalist. Vietcong were nationalists and I think the Taliban are nationalists basically. Because the question really is a key question.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Gilles, we'll take a few questions. So I have the lady at the front, then two questions here and then the gentleman and Tobias, and then the lady at the very back. So if you could introduce yourself, I think there is a microphone. Yes, you just have to press and put the microphone closer to you.

**SABRA BANO:** Good morning. My name's Sabra Bano and I'm the Director General of Concerns International, a Dutch organization that works closely in the region, focused on Afghanistan and that is also, organization also holds the secretariat of regional women's gender and conflict platform. On the 14 January we have a conference in The Hague and we have got some recommendations and especially these two points that have been raised here right now, the negotiations with the Taliban and also the traditional justice system. How does the panel see the inclusion of women in those two dimensions and you must also know that Taliban is not a

separate entity; it has penetrated from the military ranks to the bureaucracy and [unclear] and the institutions of education and politics and civil society. Thank you.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you very much. Yes, I have the lady with the red scarf.

**MARGARET OWEN:** I am really following on from the previous question. My name is Margaret Owen and I'm a Director of an NGO called Widows for Peace and Democracy. And none of you have mentioned anything. I didn't hear the women word. And yesterday we had a meeting of the Associated Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security with some Afghan women who represented NGOs. I have to remark that there wasn't I think a single woman on the actual Afghan delegation for the conference today. Just wanted to ask you, because the concern there was don't let's throw back some gains that we've made, talking to Taliban, what would be the effect of this on women? On the other hand, with war to go on and the troops to stay obviously has huge implications for the conflict on women. And I wanted to know from your very, very distinguished speakers here what actual weight do you put upon the role of women in a future Afghanistan, and also to make the point, which was made very strongly at our meeting yesterday, that no one would think that all Afghan women are weak, illiterate and helpless. There are many, many very, very strong women, amazing women, who need to be able to play their part and it is very frightening for them what is happening right now and the way the woman word is barely mentioned. Thank you.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you very much. Yes, the gentleman?

**SPEAKER 2:** My name is Mark Sibellivo, DFID [?], but not on Afghanistan, so I'm only... a few observations in a personal capacity. I agree with many elements of the panel. I think the issues, by addressing justice, appalling poverty, need to work with growing [?], not reinforced policy failures and to engage in local politics, etc. But the problem, I think what I heard is this point about a strategy for peace, as opposed to a strategy for victory. And I think that slowly it seems to be heading in that direction and the idea that we will achieve peace by the foreigners fighting in Afghanistan seems from a very personal perspective to be losing credibility and actually negotiation is probably the only way forward. But I think part of the challenge of negotiations is what preconditions we go into those negotiations with. There are elements of Taliban which certainly hold views that seems to be entirely incompatible with the values that we seek to espouse in some sort of multi-power democracy, rights of women, Human Rights more broadly. How do we reconcile the need for negotiations with those very difficult challenges that the nature of the Taliban itself?

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you. I have Tobias waiting for a question, yes.

**TOBIAS ELLWOOD:** [Overtalking] a Member of Parliament here and I try and visit the country about every six months and two observations that I take away [unclear] is basically the absence of a local structure, the Bonn accord was mentioned and I think a few of you mentioned Bonn II. And it's very clear that attempts to copy the American system but without a state structure, so that patchwork quilt that Justin mentioned isn't representative of the [unclear] these centralised structures and I don't think Afghanistan, historically speaking, it's never really enjoyed a peaceful democratic centralised process, and I don't understand why we suddenly thought that could work out. The second observation is actually to do with the fragile peace that our troops provide when we do go and clear and hold an area, is the absence of follow-up in the reconstruction and development, to win over hearts and minds of the people who possibly aren't enamoured by the Taliban and do want to see peace. My question is, the suggestions and ideas that have been put forward by the panel seem quite extreme but are necessary today because of where we are. If we were to roll back to 2002, forget the distraction of Iraq, but then to do this all again and looking at these structures that we could have introduced and did proper

follow-up that could have taken place underneath that fragile umbrella of security that our armed forces created, could we have avoided being where we are today?

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you, Tobias. I have the lady at the very back, yes?

**SPEAKER 3:** Thank you. I'm [unclear] and I run a program on transitional justice in Afghanistan for the last four or five years. And this has allowed me and my team to be on talking terms with a large number of young people and students.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** I'm sorry to interrupt, if you could just go to the question because we are running out of time, thank you.

**SPEAKER 3:** [overtalking] If you notice, during these last few days, several attempts were made by good thinking people of Afghanistan to send messages to the conference. These have been done through a series of recommendations by committed Human Rights organisations, specifically talking about transitional justice. They've been done by various groups of women in Afghanistan, very clearly stating that could you also listen to us. Because, as Mr. Nadery so rightly said, the sociology of Afghan society has changed. It has changed in that the old elite no longer responds to the needs of society. It's not only because they are commanders, it's because they have lost touch with the young generation of people who have different modern aspirations they would like to go to good quality universities. And yes, they like democracy and they like [overtalking].

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Could we have the question, please? Thank you.

**SPEAKER 3:** Now, to what extent, seen from inside, could we justify in the face of Afghan people that the return of Taliban, with their ideology, as a national movement, is for the good of peace and democracy and construction in Afghanistan. This will not fall on good ears in Afghanistan. Question one. Question two is, as you said so clearly, if there had been more real development, the young people of the Taliban are soliciting today, they are soliciting, could be studying or working or having leisure. But the new recruitment, comes from our failure to create new spaces.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Question, please.

**SPEAKER 3:** So what Gilles Dorransoro, my old friend, is proposing, I think is more based on our old understanding of Afghanistan without looking at the new internal dynamics of..

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you very much. I'm sorry about that but I'm having an uprising from the speakers who say there are too many questions. So just to summarise, we had two very important questions about where does the women agenda feed into this reconciliation process, because that's a fundamental question. Are we also negotiating away years of women's rights and gender agenda? And that I think was for the three panellists. And then we had a question about how to reconcile... which is a bit linked to the women agenda, the tension between the need for reconciliation but the need also to stick to values and principles we have been trying to build with the Afghans. Then we had a question from Tobias about had we focused more in 2002, would it have worked, would we have done better. And then finally we had a question which I think is quite fundamental, which is about how can we justify bringing the Taliban in the Afghanistan fold to the Afghan people, after having told them for more than eight years that they were to be excluded from modern Afghanistan. So we start with Nader and then go to Justin and Gilles. And if you could try to be brief because Simon Hughes will then close for the last few minutes.

**NADER NADERY:** Thank you, Fabrice. Quickly on Taliban, as a nationalist movement, it's again a bigger perception or a mistake on the part of some pundits that still believe the Taliban are a nationalist movement. What kind of a movement that kills 140 just in the course of four years, 140 of the elders of the Pashtu communities? If they be a nationalist movement, they should have respected them and promoted those, rather than hanging them and executing them. So that's a very wrong perception that most pundits do hold. Their sense of inclusion of women that touches the core and the fundamental part of the Taliban ideology. It's a faith-based group that has certain stands that they value, that they call their so-called values. They stand their latency [?] for their bringing and [unclear] people, they stand for those values. And one of the core ones is don't give women a state. The minute the Taliban say that they're going to respect women's rights and they will include them, then they will challenge their own core principles and they don't want to compromise that principle just for the sake of including women.

There's no side [?], at least I do not see from my time in living under the Taliban until now, engaging in different levels in different parts of Afghanistan, I do not see a single Talib that would have dealings to include the women into the process. So when we talk about negotiating Taliban, bringing them back to the table from a position of weakness, what we sacrifice, well, the first thing is the women's rights. That's very obvious and very clear and that's why the Afghan Government and international community are not speaking about women's rights, about democracy, about Human Rights. Review the entire fifteen minutes speech by President Obama this December on the review of Afghanistan strategy, you would not find a single word of democracy, Human Rights and women's rights. Review the White Paper in March 2009, you will not find a single word about democracy, although intentionally repeatedly he talks, and the paper talks, about democracy and democratisation of Afghanistan. And that's the appropriation [?] to negotiate and compromise on women's rights and certain kinds of freedom that have been achieved in the last few years. So that's on the role of women

In terms of local structures, I think there are some local structures that have not been given enough space. The community development councils and national solidarity program councils, they are good at structures and what we are lacking or in what have failed is not linking them with the some sort of formal structure that told the district governor accountable and engage in some sort of consultative process in issues broader than just development and small grant projects, but on governance and other issues. The Bonn could be done better and several things could be looked at. First, the Bonn was implemented mostly with a focus on quantity achievement of the benchmarks, how many benchmarks we achieved, only focusing on the quantity of that. There has never been a focus on the quality of those benchmarks to be achieved. Second, it was a very unrealistic plan to think that the transition to permanent governance institutions would happen only as a course of two years; giving the colossal task of state building just in two years was simply impossible. So if we had had that lesson that we learnt, a longer term would have been much more better.

And the last, the marginalisation of some of the actors believed to be powerful, strong, if that was happening in 2002, then we would have had a better scenario today.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you, Nader. Justin?

**JUSTIN HOLT:** We've very little time so forgive me for lumping some of these questions together and Sabra, if I have that right, and Margaret, and I didn't catch your name at the end, transitional justice and gender issues, critically important and to roll back the gains over the last few years would be an enormous mistake and folly, I think, of the West. It's not only for that reason, but there are others, that every strand of my DNA finds the idea of negotiating with the Quetta Shura as repellent, and particularly from the position we're in at the moment, which I think I some ways leads onto Mark's question about a strategy for peace. And I don't think it

should be a peace at any price; it would be a false horizon and it would be a mistake to go down that way. To go to Tobias, the absence, what would I do differently if we were turning the clock back to 2001, 2002? Well, I think we made a huge strategic error in forcing AQ and Taliban together where the strategy was to identify, pursue and destroy Al-Qaeda; we also caused the Taliban into position. They were weak anyway, but we've given them a chance since 2002 to regroup, retrain their strategy. There was a window of opportunity there to engage with the local dynamics, but we missed it, so there's nothing but where we are, where we are. And I think I'd better pass on.

**GILLES DORRONSORO:** Well, I think there is a tendency to shoot the messenger of course. So, here it's not a conference about the history of Afghanistan, not a conference about the mistakes we made in Afghanistan. Just one thing, when in 2003, 2004 I was trying to explain we were going to a disaster in Afghanistan, nobody was listening. So I feel slightly uncomfortable now and unjust to listen to people saying, basically, what about the rights of women? Yes, the women are going to pay the price because we have been totally incompetent. Yes, they are going to pay the price, I know that. So the question is, what can we do? And there are two solutions. We go to the military solution; that's Nader wants to do. More resources, we fight, we fight harder. In five years maybe we are going to win. I think it's dangerous. I think that if we can save something for women, it could be in a broad based deal. Here do not make any mistakes. All fundamentalists are not Taliban in Afghanistan, as people know and my old friend has a very, very specific view from Shar-e Naw in Kabul. Afghanistan is not Shar-e Naw in Kabul, do not forget that.

In the north you find people that are exactly the same as the Taliban, Sayyaf not better than the Taliban. Ismail Khan is ideologically speaking very close to the Taliban, so let's stop and I don't even speak about this thing or that, so let's stop that game, all the Taliban are fundamentalist, all the fundamentalists are Taliban; that's not true in Afghanistan. That's the problem basically, because inside the Karzai regime more and more we are going to find people who are extremely fundamentalist and when they want to kill an Afghan because he's so-called something wrong about the Koran, it's not the Taliban, it's the Karzai regime. And it took a lot of effort just to get the guy out of jail, so let's be clear about that. We've lost the war about values in Afghanistan, we've lost that because the West is so bad. Second point, very, very short, but I want to say something.

It's totally unrealistic to say that the next parliament is going to be better. The next parliament is going to be extremely fundamentalist, full of warlords, because in 50% of Afghanistan you cannot have fair elections, and 50 is a very, very conservative estimate. So the idea that you are going to have a new modern generation from the parliament is just a dream; it's not going to happen. So, again, what are we doing? And the last thing is that the Taliban are sociologically speaking modern. They are against the tribes, they are undermining the tribes and they want this war. And they are playing with the new generation; the new sociology of Afghanistan is partially the Taliban. It's a very strong movement. They are building on a new generation; they are building on people even inside the cities more and more, so let's be clear about one thing, the Taliban are not something from the past. They are part of the future of Afghanistan, that's all.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you, Gilles. Let me now turn to Simon Hughes who is going to close this first panel. Just very briefly on housekeeping rules, we'll have coffee served on the right. It's self-service and I'm being told that people have to be quick. So we will resume at quarter to eleven. Simon?

**SIMON HUGHES:** Thank you, Fabrice. On the right means out of the doors and turn into the room just outside. I hope everybody has found this morning as challenging as Afghanistan really is. There are those who have argued from this platform that the way to go forward is to

negotiate with the Taliban, but of course then immediately we get the understandable objections that the Taliban are not entirely friendly to many of the rights and much of the progress that's been achieved, so that has huge difficulties. So then there have been people arguing from this platform that the negotiation, that the new regime, the new structures, should be at a tribal level, rather than at a national level, but then we've understood that of course Afghanistan is not like it was in terms of the dominance of the tribal structures, that the new urbanisation has meant that they have lost their dominance. So that doesn't immediately give an easy fit solution.

And then it is argued that there needs to be the rule of law and that poses the question as to who provides it, given all the self-interests as opposed to general interests, and that there's a parliamentary opportunity. But then of course we know that the parliamentary opportunity may not produce lots of wonderfully democratically accountable people whose first loyalty is to their electorate, even if they've engaged them. And there was the helpful little reminder that in Afghanistan, as in many places in the region, if the political processes don't deliver the sign of progress, then there is a danger that fundamentalists faith issues become dominant, and that becomes much more complex and much more frightening, in many ways, to people whether there is faith or no faith. So you have not, friends, solutions given to you; you have ideas given to you and most of you have engaged. So I hope you have found that fertile and fruitful. The engagement is very helpful because if we all go away from today wiser, then we will go away better equipped to make a contribution.

Please go and enjoy your coffee; please be back at quarter to. If I'm not here at quarter to, it's not because I have lost the will to engage in the process, but it's because I have to go and do some duty in the chamber of the House of Commons. But I will return. Thank you very much.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you very much.

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**FABRICE POTHIER:** We are going to resume the discussion and take it to a higher level, a geographic level, and look at the region as a whole, and what the region means, as far as Afghanistan's stability and development are concerned.

There has been a lot of discussion over the last few years about the need for a regional strategy and that was part of this concept, that just by saying them we are already bringing a solution, but if we take a more, I would say, sharp look at each of the regional stakeholders, I think it comes very quickly that the interests are often divergent, if not clashing between the various stakeholders, like Pakistan, India, Iran, the Central Asian states, Russia and the border region, including players like Turkey and Saudi Arabia. So I think that's why it's good to have also a real discussion about what does the regional strategy mean and is it really something that will help with what we are trying to achieve in Afghanistan.

To discuss that, we have four great speakers, a really good mix of experiences and background, and I will start by introducing them by their order of intervention: we have Jane Corbin, who has made two things in Afghanistan in the past year: one about Britain's Terror Heartland and another about What Are We Fighting For? for the BBC flagship programme, Panorama. Interestingly, Jane has also recently returned from Iran, where she was covering the elections and therefore can bring, also, at least from an external observer perspective, this Iran question to the table.

We will then have Saad Mohseni, who is heading the largest independent media company in Afghanistan, the Moby Group, which, if I'm correct, Saad, owns mobile phones, Tolo TV and publications.

**SAAD MOHSENI:** Not mobile phones [overtalking].

**FABRICE POTHIER:** No mobile phone, okay. Tolo TV, which, by the way, is a great TV I used to watch when I was in Kabul. So Saad will also talk about the region, and I think what will be interesting, is also talk about the region from an economic point of view because that's obviously a key element of the question.

We will then have Ali Jalali, who was the Afghan Interior Minister, and he's now at the National Defence University in Washington as a distinguished professor in the Near East South Asia Centre for Strategic Studies. I think we all know Ali Jalali and I think it will be very interesting to have Mr Jalali's perspective on how to play politics with the regional stakeholders, especially with Pakistan, which is obviously a very key but also complicated question.

Finally, we have Sir Hilary Synnott, who is consulting senior fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies. Sir Hilary was previously the British High Commissioner in Pakistan, from 2000 to 2003, and also the Deputy-High Commissioner in India from '93 to '96. So Sir Hilary has a very interesting South Asia perspective, and I think it would be interesting to see what you think about bringing Pakistan in the solution, basically.

Let me start, we have a bit less than an hour and a half, we will again give five minutes for opening statements per speaker, and then try to open up and take as many questions as possible, and let me apologise for not being able to take all the questions from the floor in the earlier panel, but we have to leave the room at 12 basically, so we have to respect the time.

Let me now turn to Jane, who will speak for five minutes.

**JANE CORBIN:** Fabrice, thank you very much and thanks for inviting me. I think this week has seen some promising moves towards developing a regional strategy with the Istanbul meeting, to which all main players, Afghanistan itself, Pakistan, Iran, China and Russia sent high-ranking officials, and at which they all agreed in principle to support President Karzai's plan to reach out to elements of the Taliban. Our own foreign-secretary said that they were... for once he believed will pay more than lip service to the importance of regional cooperation, and he obviously meant Pakistan when he said that.

But, of course, self-interest and a bloody history runs deep in this region; where Afghanistan has always been in the cockpit of power struggles for many decades, involving the surrounding players. I think it's a problem in that the announcement of the US-led, UK-supported surge by Obama was immediately followed by him with an effort to appease Democratic critics and his own sceptical public opinion by setting an 18-month target for the start of an American drawdown following the surge.

I think, although he's trying to soften that line since he sat with Gordon Brown, it is something that both the Taliban and regional players focus on when deciding where their own interests lie in formulating their strategy over the coming year or so.

If we take them, we go round in a circle and we look at Iran first: now, Iran has close linguistic and cultural ties to North-western Afghanistan, Herat in particular, and Iran has suffered from the instability that the drug trade has brought as it flows across the border. It's made Tehran a major hub for the opiate trade and it has blighted the lives of many Iranians.

This time a year ago, as Obama began his presidency, there were high hopes that Iran could be brought back into the international fold and become a positive force in stabilising Afghanistan. Both Obama and his generals, in particular Petraeus, reached out to Iran, there were tentative contacts in the margins of international meetings, especially on drug control, but that's been put into jeopardy with both the continuing nuclear programme in Iran and the disputed election in June, when President Amadinejad won what many believe was a rigged vote and violence erupted on the streets.

Now everything, and particularly the American reaction, has to be reassessed in terms of whether a weakened Iranian regime's interests now lie in tying down US forces in Afghanistan by meddling, and we've seen instances of that in the recent past. In 2006 and 2007 America claimed there was evidence that the Revolutionary Guard's trademark, the shaped explosive device, was turning up in Afghanistan in the hands of insurgents, and suspicion was that elements in the Revolutionary Guard were supplying those insurgents with that technology.

I think we're at a crossroads now when it comes to Iran and Afghanistan; the regime in Tehran may well lash out as it feels itself more vulnerable, and the coming weeks are very important because February is the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution and there is the expectation for more trouble in Tehran. We just can't say with certainty right now if Iran will grasp this opportunity or if the US's 18-month timetable will make it consider its options and see what happens domestically first.

Pakistan: now Pakistan is, of course, the most important regional player in the equation, and you don't get Pakistan without weighing India in the balance, of course. Now, I've spent time this year in Pakistan in the tribal areas, and I've covered the army's offensive there, and I personally believe that the army, in particular the frontier corps that has responsibility for those areas, has committed to solving the problem of cross-border infiltration and support for the Taliban. I believe that Zardari and his Interior Minister Malik are serious about this, and they've both suffered personally at the hands of militants, of course, for us not to perhaps doubt their motives. The problem is, can a weak civilian government, the Pakistan government, deliver? And, again, with this threat of a US timetable hanging over them.

In the last few years, the Pakistani Intelligence Service, the ISI, has kept its ties, there's no doubt about it, with senior Afghan and Taliban leaders and routes, while pursuing the Pakistan Taliban quite seriously inside their own territories. I find it very difficult to take seriously the Pakistani protestation that they cannot find or apprehend or deal with the Quetta Shura, Mullah Omar and also Hekmatyar.

In recent weeks we've seen again it's been proved how powerful the Haqqani Afghan insurgent network, which is protected by Pakistan, have become with that mass attack on Kabul. They're protégés, not to say proxies, of the ISI and they have enabled, they and groups like them, have enabled the ISI to keep open the option of destabilising Afghanistan, which has been Pakistan's policy now for several decades.

I think that President Zardari understands that his bankrupt, nuclear-armed country has a problem, a real problem, with extreme Islam, which threatens its whole future, but there's a real question mark of whether he can deliver it, with the focus [?] [unclear] always on the army.

India isn't a direct neighbour, but it's a very important regional player in Afghanistan; it's been increasing its influence there in recent years, which is alarming, very alarming, to Pakistan. Their office accord [?] and the army still regard India as the greatest strategic threat to Pakistan;

their whole military doctrine, what they learn in college, is built around strategic debt, which is utilising Afghanistan, having influence in Afghanistan as a buffer against Indian attack.

India's now the biggest provider of aid: it's given 1.5 billion since 2001, and trade and commercial ties are strengthening. Afghanistan's sees India, on the other hand, as a counterweight to its uneasy relationship with Pakistan; but there is a price to pay: India's embassy has been attacked twice now in Kabul, and the trade interests have been threatened, and suspicious falls again on the Hikani network and through them their controllers in the ISI.

For India, a joint regional strategy on Afghanistan is undoubtedly something that would be a benefit, but that will depend on the attitude of Pakistan.

Just briefly, to mention China, Afghanistan's other powerful neighbour, and here relations have always traditionally been good; I think China can be a cause for regional destabilisation, but there are signs that they are playing a waiting game. It is only when and if America and the UK and the Coalition draw down from Afghanistan, that China will be able to feel its able to put in more aid and development; it's already contributed over 5 billion. I think there are hopes that China will provide a long-term lifeline for Afghanistan, in particular in the employment of that 60% of young that the demographic tells us is now the picture there.

I think that, also, China is pragmatic and could live with an assortment of warlords and former Taliban if that is the shape of the future to come. So a regional strategy – yes, of course, it's desirable; there have been and are continuing moves towards it, but there's a long way to go.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you, Jane. I would like to ask you a bit more, since you were recently in Pakistan, how you see the perception of the majority of Pakistani people towards the West, especially the US. This is often presented as a problem, given the high level of negative perceptions, but is it really a problem for the US to be perceived the way it is in Pakistan, or can it overcome that and still implement its strategy?

**JANE CORBIN:** There's a different perception in different sectors of the population: I think in the middle-classes there is a much more of an understanding of what America's trying to do, but certainly in the tribal areas, in the poorer areas, and that, of course, if the majority of the countryside, I find a hardening attitude towards America.

Things that have also tended to prove that the Pakistani government will run its own show not help, in fact, the growing attacks in the tribal areas have really turned opinion against America. I think it's very, very difficult, because Pakistan is bankrupt and the government is depending on America, it's thrown it a lifeline in terms of Congressional aid; the army actually depends on America also for its funding. Yet I do detect a very strong anti-American feeling and it's just not getting any better in Pakistan.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you. Let me now turn to Saad to share your views on the regional question, with, again, this angle on the notion of economic development or economic changes.

**SAAD MOHSENI:** I just want to talk about the two efforts to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table, which involve the regional powers, so with your permission I'm going to talk about that briefly. There are two, when we talk about negotiations with the Taliban, we just have to be very clear as to what has transpired to date.

The first initiative was kickstarted by former mujahidin from North Africa who had been in Afghanistan during the Jihad. Without naming a few people, we've studied today what's happened to date over the last two or three years, you're probably familiar with them, but I'd

rather not mention his name. He first proposed this idea of dialogue with the Taliban with President Karzai in 2007, he secured the president's blessings; he went to Saudi Arabia and after some effort, managed to get the Saudis interested. You have to bear in mind, the Saudis had had their fingers burnt in 2001, and they really had no interest in backing such an endeavour.

In 2008 there was some dialogue between King Abdullah and President Karzai, and of course, they both felt it was important for the Americans to get on board, and I think President Bush gave his go-ahead in Sharm El-Sheik, at least [unclear] President Karzai, and of course, it culminated in that famous Ramadan dinner in Saudi Arabia last year where Muttawakil and a number of other Taliban members, who currently reside in Kabul, went to Saudi Arabia, they had dinner, they met with the King - I think, from the Afghan government's side, the President's brother was present - and they insisted on having more troops and more discussions.

Interestingly enough, the Saudis, to an extent, have taken over the dialogue nowadays. I'm not sure how much it's progressed, but what was interesting to me was, as of a few weeks ago, they still hadn't really connected with the Pakistani government, the ISI and the Pakistani Taliban, or the Afghan Taliban based in Pakistan; that was quite intriguing.

The second effort, you can call it, is an initiative by the ISI, which has proposed, from what we understand, the Americans and others, that they will play the role of interlocutor as long as they were not controlled, and I think that this suggestion has been made to the US military, and General McChrystal was in Pakistan a few weeks back.

It's interesting that both of these have been happening, and of course, at the same, as you mentioned, the meeting in Istanbul; it was very interesting that the Russians for the first time backed this dialogue, and that's allowed these five individuals for their names to be taken off the list. We do have a little bit of a momentum, there is, obviously, a lot more ahead of us, and I think that we have to be very realistic that it's not as simple as we think.

I think that, because if we... realistically, looking for the next step - what will the next steps be? Who will hold the meetings, who will attend, who can veto whom, will the ISI be satisfied with the Taliban negotiating directly with the Afghan government?

Another very good question is: who will the Taliban negotiate with? The Russians and many others insist if the Taliban were to negotiate they would have to negotiate with the Northern Alliance and the other ethnicities in Afghanistan, not the Afghan government itself, because the Taliban want to represent the Pashtun; that's a very important consideration.

The bigger picture, I think, maybe I'm being naïve, but I think that regionally probably the time has not been better in terms of launching such an endeavour. I think that the signals from the Russians is very important, because that would signal that the Central Asians would acquiesce to the Russian demand, and they would obviously accept any sort of a bargain; that's important.

The Pakistanis are sort of mixed; I think the Pakistanis realise that unless the Afghan Taliban were under control that they could never control their own Taliban, so I think that's an important thing. They do have a lot of conditions, and of course, money always comes into the equation. Without being too naïve, I think the signals, from what I understand, from what my sources tell me, they have been moving more positive to date.

I think the Indians and the others, and the Turks were also involved in Afghanistan. I think that they're probably not as important as our immediate neighbours. Even though, it's very interesting that the Iranians of course, have been... there have been allegations that they were involved in helping the Taliban, but from what I understand and discussions with their

diplomat, they are in a little panic mode nowadays. I think that they have realised maybe if the Taliban were to come back, that they would seriously challenge what they've been trying to do in Afghanistan, and they would certainly see the Taliban as a threat.

They may be the least of [unclear]. Of course, the Indians would be the most against such a compromise, but I think the Iranians would be very nervous as well unless they had some major guarantees from the international community.

This is the way things stand; economically there is absolutely no doubt that peace in Afghanistan would benefit the entire region: South Asia would benefit from Central Asia's energy reserves; Iran would benefit because its goods will go through Central Asia, and of course, vice versa; it's port, that it's constructed recently would be used by Afghan businessmen who would want to trade onto Central Asia; Afghan and Central Asian goods would end up in India and vice versa. So it's going to be of huge benefit, of course, and there's a lot of reconstruction going on in Afghanistan, which has a lot of Pakistani, Iranian and Central Asian companies interested in getting more involved in, and of course, the conflict doesn't make it very easy.

This is just a brief synopsis of what's been transpiring to date.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you, Saad. I think you raised a very interesting point: that the Russians have indeed shifted towards a more positive or helpful position. If you could go a bit more deeply on India and Iran, because I think India is obviously an important player, given the economic and political involvement in Afghanistan, but playing the Pakistan card is obviously going to have some consequences with India. Iran, as Jane has highlighted, is in the middle of a major regime crisis, and it is very difficult to work with such, I would say, a confused partner.

If you could just say where you see the silver lining on those two partners.

**SAAD MOHSENI:** I think India, obviously we have said, there is a grand bargain, and that they would not want to get shut out, but the problem with India, and as we've seen over the last seven or eight years, that they're not particularly good at flexing their muscles. I think there's not much they can do about it and they will probably have to accept it.

Nonetheless, this is going to be a very sensitive period for, obviously, the Afghan government as to how they would manage the two or three relationships. The Indians continue to remain very close to the Afghan government, but if the Afghan government was to make a decision that in the minds of Indian policy-makers is too much of a compromise, I don't think there's much they can do about that.

Iran's a bit different: Iran can actively help different groups, and of course, the fear always is that we would see a repeat of the mid-90s when the Russians and the Iranians insisted on non-Pashtuns, as the Taliban would start to, I suppose, become more legitimate in the country.

That's what we have to be very careful of, is that the negotiations, if we're to have any, that it has to be a very inclusive forum, a Bonn II, for example, as people have talked about. Bonn II is mentioned for a number of reasons, firstly, to bring the Taliban onto the negotiating table, but also to press the reset button, to somehow recreate the Afghan government as well because a lot of people now fear that five years of corrupt government "can we actually last, can we make it?" Thank you.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you, Saad. Let me now turn to Ali Jalali; you in the past have been working directly with your regional counterpart, so you obviously have a very interesting

experience of what we can expect and what we should not expect in terms of cooperation and engagement.

**ALI A. JALALI:** Thank you very much. My remarks today reflect my own personal views and not necessarily those of the National Defence University or the US government.

Today we at the Afghanistan conference, one of the issues that the Afghan delegation is going to present is a call for regional cooperation. In this context of regional cooperation, four issues are particularly very prominent: one is cooperation in economic areas, transit trade, cooperation in fighting cross-national terrorism, drug trafficking and arms running, then the cooperation and other areas that are actually of interest to the countries in the region.

This week I was also in Istanbul where our regional meetings took place: one between Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the other between Afghanistan and six neighbours. In all these meetings, there are always nice words uttered and also goodwill towards each other, and all are convinced that regional cooperation can bring stability and peace to the region. However, what underpins real cooperation is something else which is not there in the region yet.

In a recent conference in Kabul, at which I spoke, one of the speakers said that, let's turn this attitude of regional powers [?] in Afghanistan from kind of a cocktail of conflict to a cocktail of cooperation, but this cocktail of cooperation can easily be turned into a Cocktail Molotov, which we have seen in the past. In fact, Afghanistan is located in the confluence of the Middle East, South Asia and Central Asia; as a result, regional powers will significantly focus on Afghanistan.

In the regional geographic context, Afghanistan is situated in both a blessed and cursed location. Its location is blessed because it has been a focal point in the exchange of ideas and cooperation, particularly between South and Central Asia. However, it is a curse because it has become the battlefield of outside powers: today Kabul is another Kashmir, or Kabul is also a battlefield between the United States and Iran. Therefore, it's a very difficult position.

Neighbours and defence has been fact of life in the recent history of Afghanistan, and Afghans have usually both isolation and resistance. Meanwhile, the Afghan situation has exerted immediate influence on the region's political stability and economic potential.

In the recent past, local troubles in Afghanistan have developed into regional problems, which then developed into global issues. Since early 1970s, political upheavals in Afghanistan were expanded into regional troubles due to the neighbours' direct/indirect intervention. Then, regional troubles further expanded in the struggle of global dimension; Afghanistan was the last battlefield of the Cold War, the first battlefield of the so-called Global War on Terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. So the ill-fated lost during history, in the so-called, if you borrow the Fukuyama's statement, it lost their history and the end of history.

Then regional troubles further complicates the situation. Today there are no distinct local, regional and global solutions; they are all intertwined in the quasi-holistic approach. It is not Afghanistan, Pakistan/Afghanistan, Iran/Afghanistan, and other regions; it's Afghanistan also; it's India; it's United States; it's NATO and others – they are all involved. Any solution that can bring... all these powers can contribute to.

However, in the immediate region, only openness and cooperation with regional powers offer this prospect for security and economic progress in Afghanistan. However, no regional approach is fully effective without the influence of major outside powers - that's NATO and the United States - that are involved in the region.

Four points are of key importance: first, the neighbouring and regional states are liable to continue or divide the intervention in Afghanistan if Afghanistan fails to stabilise as a result of failing international commitment to help the country overcome the obstacles hindering its political viability and economic recovery.

Second, there are close links between constructive regional partnership involving Afghanistan and its neighbours in Afghanistan's capacity to overcome its political and economic deficit. This relationship exerts deep bearing on the region's foreign policies, affecting the prospects for progress in Afghanistan.

Third, Afghanistan's bilateral relationship with Iran and Pakistan are closely influenced by their neighbours' attitude towards the third parties involved in the region, that's India, the United States and so on. Therefore, whether the neighbours cooperate or create obstacles for Afghanistan's recovery is greatly influenced by American strategic policies in the region, Iran's problem with the United States, and Pakistan's dispute with India.

Then, fourth, the perception that US interest in Afghanistan in the region is failing drives domestic opposition forces in the neighbouring states to hedge their bets in supporting the Karzai regime.

To conclude, regional contribution is linked to the local Afghan situation on the one hand, and international commitment on the other. Second, all regional powers can be part of the solution only if there's a level of stability in Afghanistan so that it does not serve as a battlefield to others. As long as Afghanistan's unstable and there's weakness of resolve in the international community, its neighbours will hedge their bets.

In the case of Pakistan and Iran, I think that's three issues, very important: first, there is a need for some level of stability in Afghanistan, which I'm not going to go into detail about how you bring the stability in Afghanistan. Second, when that level of stability is achieved, then for the neighbours to decouple their other problems from their relations with Afghanistan. Then, third, for them to work toward what I said before, in the conference today, regional corporation, economic, transit trade, and others, will be possible. Thank you very much.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you very much Ali, a very comprehensive analysis and I have two questions for you. I think what is interesting is you are really setting a sequence, putting local stability in Afghanistan first. How can you achieve that if part of your instability problem comes from the other side of the border?

**ALI A. JALALI:** In order to achieve stability, two sets of measures are needed: first, a set of measures to reduce the level of threat. The second set of measures is to build the capacity to respond to threat. The first thing and then the first set of measures include good governance in Afghanistan. Unless you have a good governance, the trust between government and people of Afghanistan, nothing else is going to work, because the legitimacy of any government, particularly in a country like Afghanistan, is based on two pillars: one is protection of the population, security, and justice. Then, in order for a government to do this it has to control its territory, because without control of territory you cannot protect population, you cannot provide justice. Control of territory is another prerequisite for sovereignty according to international law. So that's what it comes to: good governance. Unfortunately, it's missing in Afghanistan. We are talking about governance, governance, governance, but we are not actually addressing the real issues that my friend, Nader, actually very eloquently put on the table this morning.

The second is reconciliation, or really whatever you call it, to reduce the deliberating. We are talking about Taliban, but we have not defined the Taliban - who are the Taliban? Taliban is an odd assortment of different groups who are fighting for different reasons. There are ideologically motivated Taliban, but some of them are very closely linked to the trans-national or global terrorist networks. We are talking about, okay, sometimes we say, okay, Mullah Omar and his groupies are only interested in ruling in Afghanistan or coming back to power, but when they were in power they were not accepted by people. They're welcome but they did not agree with their... Their policy was very unpopular; so what they did, they resorted to other sources of power - that was Al Qaeda then.

Today again, during the past six, seven, eight years they are more closely linked to the Taliban, those ideological [unclear]. If they come to power in Afghanistan, they cannot rule all of Afghanistan without getting their power from these trans-nationals. They are not reconcilable for Afghanistan.

Then there are other groups who are doing it: aggrieved tribes, unemployed youth, drug traffickers, those who are using an unstable environment for their own interest. Once you stabilise a country, once you've established a rule of law and good governance and secure the area, these people are going to disappear.

If you are talking about reintegration, reintegration cannot come in a vacuum. Today, if the government of Afghanistan offers jobs or money to Taliban, they have the jobs, they have the land already there. Then war in Afghanistan with 40% unemployment, how you can find employment for those people who come to you and where? Therefore, I think you have to meet with Taliban.

Therefore reconciliation comes only through these three things that I have said: good governance, protect the security, justice and control of the territory; third is cooperation with regional actors. Then if you have this, the regional actors will have more incentive to come and help you - without that they will not.

The second set of measures are building that capacity, institutional capacity in Afghanistan will take time. In order to build that you cannot deceive yourself or kid yourself and say that you can get an army in two or three years, that they can take over. It is something five to ten years, you can do that. Then of course, armies are created by legitimate government; legitimate government cannot be created by armies. First, we have to have a government that the people in army and security forces can be convinced that it's worth fighting for that government, we have to do that.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you, Ali. I will now turn to Sir Hilary Synnott who will share his perspective on the region, with a particular highlight on Pakistan.

**SIR HILARY SYNNOTT:** Thanks very much and good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It is still morning, although we've had a phenomenal amount of extremely interesting material in just the few hours we've been talking. I want to, first of all, make a few general observations, then I want to touch on three issues: first of all, President Obama's declared aspirations, particularly in relation to Pakistan; secondly, the recent articulation of detailed US strategy towards Afghanistan and Pakistan; and then thirdly, if Fabrice's notes passed to me allow, I'd like to say a few words about the issue of reintegration with the opponents of what we're trying to do in Pakistan, and those opponents, as Ali has so articulately said, are not just the Taliban.

So general observation, and I come at this absolutely not as an expert, I've been living in the region long enough to know I'm not an expert, but I come at it as a specialist, if you like, but also

as a practitioner. So my perspective is we are where we are, we've made tremendous mistakes on the way, but let's look to see how we can improve matters. I would like to say, before you think I'm going to go off into some optimistic cloud cuckoo land, I don't see an easy solution; I don't see a solution as such. It's an issue of management which will take a very long time and there will no doubt be setbacks.

But I would like to say that now, seen from a perspective of a practitioner, this is a moment of opportunity, for several reasons. One is, last year, I think, the international community woke up to the real dangers that this whole problem was slipping through our fingers and addressing that, you start to look at the consequences of perceived failure, and those consequences next door to a nuclear Pakistan, who's next door to a nuclear India and so on, really don't bear thinking about it. They do need to be thought about, but the possibility of that failure is pretty dreadful.

The second opportunity is that the Americans have looked at this closely and have come up, for better or for worse, with the declared new strategy, based on a higher degree of knowledge than before, which may not be saying much, but it is something, with greater political will. The third opportunity, for better or for worse, is the fact that President Karzai has been re-elected, for better or for worse. There is an opportunity I think and as a practitioner... Practitioners should seize on opportunities and make the most of them.

The detailed comments: President Obama's aspirations towards Afghanistan-Pakistan; his key speech which bears reading in detail of the 1<sup>st</sup> of December at West Point articulating this new strategy - he actually, of course, declared a new strategy the previous March, but it wasn't new, it wasn't comprehensive and it wasn't a strategy. But in relation to Pakistan, some quotes: we too often defined our relationship with Pakistan narrowly - those days are over. Second quote: the Pakistan people must know America will remain a strong supporter of Pakistan security and prosperity. Third quote: our resolve is unwavering.

Now, each of those statements is open to massive questioning in the light of the US relationship with Pakistan in the past. What are the issues? The United States, according to opinion polls - they may be lies, but they're the best thing we've got - is just as unpopular in Pakistan as is the Taliban, and the Taliban is very unpopular in Pakistan, but so is the United States.

When President Obama says that Pakistan people must know that we remain a strong supporter of Pakistan security and prosperity, there is politely a lot of hollow laughter there. They see actually the United States as being a threat to their security, as having been an indirect cause of more deaths of Pakistani soldiers than of ISAF soldiers in Afghanistan. Terrific suspicion of the United States, possibly even darker suspicion of the United Kingdom who are seen as even more devious and whining, whereas the United States just seem wrong.

There's a terrific tension within the Pakistani political community about the United States. On the one hand, when the United States gives them massive economic support, almost exclusively up to now, for military rather than civilian purposes, they take credit with their own people for saying, we've got this money out of the Americans. At the same time, they use the US as a punch bag for the drone attacks in Pakistan, which actually, those attacks are almost certainly conducted with very close cooperation with, deniable cooperation, with Pakistan Military authorities.

The other tension is that the US and Pakistani interests diverge. For everything that the US or others may say about, well, the Pakistani military actions in South Waziristan, in Orakzai, in Sawat, in Mallakan [?] show that the Pakistanis realise that their security is in jeopardy. For all

those remarks, there are still big tensions. Certainly, the Pakistani army have at last taken on the Pakistan Taliban, but the Afghan Taliban is something else.

I've got one minute point already so my second point is that I think that the State Department in the US recognises this document - Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilisation Strategy, it came out last week - it strikes me as pretty sad, a lot of pretty detail, very expensive ways of trying to turn Pakistan opinion around towards US interests. The real difficulty with it is the feasibility of implementing all this in a country whose state institutions are chronically weak, against a background of opposition; in the words of the trade, a very low absorptive capacity in Pakistan, with issues of accountability and transparency.

The fact remains that in Pakistan there's a perception that there are monuments in Pakistan to cooperation from Saudi Arabia, mosques everywhere with Saudi money; monuments to China, the Karakoram Highway, the Gwadar Port and a railway which is being built now. Where are the monuments to cooperation with the United States? Arguably, the rise of the mujahidin; so it's a big challenge.

Quickly, to my final point: reintegration. I've advocated talking with the enemies, this is what diplomats do, advocate talking with the enemies for a long time, but I do think we should get to this in a perspective. If we think that negotiating with the Taliban, i.e. Mullah Omar and his group, Hekmatyar, Hakani networks, people who are ideologically opposed to everything that the United States stand for, if we think that's the solution - I think not.

We've got to put it into a perspective, we've got to, as Ali says, make a distinction about the Taliban. There may be people who can be weaned away, not bought, but possibly hired to use Rupert's term, wean them away from the bad guys who are trying to kill us because we've been killing them. So it should be tried.

I was listening - my final point - the day before yesterday to a very senior retired British foreign minister who said, well, of course, as always, the answer lies in the politics; that's a very British perception. My view is the answer lies in anthropology, history, custom, sociology, language, knowledge, which go way beyond politics, so it's a difficult issue.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you very much, Hilary. You listed a series of tensions that are at the core of the West and Pakistan relationship and there is one I would like to have your comments on, which is basically, we have some short-term needs to work with the de facto leadership in Pakistan, which is the military, Kayani, the Chief of Staff, but we also know that for long-term stability we need to prop up the civilian institutions. As you say, you are a practitioner yourself, so how do you reconcile this tension in the relationship?

**SIR HILARY SYNNOTT:** I think ultimately if you're looking at a solution to Pakistan, as it were, the balance of power within Pakistan, between the military and the elected civilians, has got to change. The military are part of the solution, if you like, but they are really part of the problem too, and they're far, far too powerful. So while we should work with them, we should not try to destroy them, and we should also try to do what some countries have been trying to do, but the United States conspicuously has not until recently, and that's build up civilian institutions.

Since 9/11 and up to last year over \$10 billion of US aid went to Pakistan, all to do with military-related issues; the civilian aid has been tiny. That sends all sorts of signals about the US commitment to democracy. Pakistanis are not stupid. The Kerry Lugar Berman Bill tries to address that, promising \$1.5 billion of aid a year for five years. That's a major positive step in the right direction, and that strategy document I referred to addresses that issue. But, as I've said, and I'll say it again, it's not going to be easy, because spending this well and transparently

in this environment is very difficult, but I do think that policy-shift on part of the Americans is significant and welcome.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you Sir Hilary. So we have a bit more than 45 minutes for questions and comments from the floor. Again, as earlier, if you could introduce your name and function, and I will take the questions by groups of three or four. If you want to raise your hand – the lady, yes, and then the gentleman next.

**SPEAKER 4:** Yes, my name is [unclear], I'm policy and advocacy advisor for organisational support.[?] My question is, we've been talking about the negotiating process and the possible reconciliation, but this is not really something very new because this was raised in the past as well. We've seen Karzai calling for negotiation or reconciliation with the Taliban, and I was wondering if there'd been a response and if there'd been a response, what are the Taliban saying? What kind of a response will we see?

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you. The gentleman, yes.

**SPEAKER 5:** My name's Bruce Meyer [?] from Clear Fund [?] in [unclear] Group, part of the British agency [unclear]. Just a couple of statistics, Afghanistan has slipped down to 181 or 182 in the Human Development Index in the last year, second-lowest in the world, and as the second top in the UN Transparency International's Corruption League, which means a lot of stealing of private money, I think private industry in Afghanistan. I guess what needs to be proved to the Afghan people, first, the huge spend in military aid and militarization needs to be reduced so the amount given to economic development will raise a lot of the Afghan people. It needs to be addressed much more as part of the mix for the solution for this region and its advantage.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Yes, I owe you this question. If you can bring the microphone closer, yes.

**AHLAM AKHRAM:** Ahlam Akhram, human rights campaigner and writer in Arabic papers. As a taxpayer, I'd rather refer to [unclear] and ask some [unclear]. So on the one hand don't you think that it's about time to re-evaluate this? We are definitely [unclear] over there.

I can take a few things: number one is, if we succeed in bringing the Taliban and change them over a period of time, by pouring money and building infrastructure, this way we can change the people's attitude towards the West and towards a different path.

The second part is that, although to an extent I know that you can iron [?] that out then, in Afghan, but you can only bargain, and I know that recently this spark in Jordan, this Jordanian guy who was employed by the CIA just a turnaround. But still there is a way of building people, building infrastructure, by bringing economic stability to the country, and I would negotiate with anybody, not only the Taliban, if I can spare my son's life so it's a question of money or lives. Thank you.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you. The gentleman at the front.

**JIM McCLUSKEY:** My name is Jim McCluskey, I'm with the Ministry for Peace. I would just like to ask the panel, if negotiation, where it started with the Taliban, that proved possible, in order to negotiate the withdrawal with the American and British forces. What does the panel think? What sort of concessions might be possible to get from the Taliban? For example, they might be willing to support the education of women or some such human rights concession that we would want to see. Thank you.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you. We will come back and take one last final round. Let me summarise the questions for the audio recording. We had a point, the fact that reconciliation was not new. Then we had a question about whether there's too many resources towards military and not enough toward civilian aid development. Then we had a question from a taxpayer about the fact that, can't we buy people's support through development rather than through waging war and fighting. Finally, we had a question which was quite covered in the first panel about: what are the concessions that the Taliban might be ready to do as part of the negotiations. So I will start with Ali and then go that way for the answers.

**ALI A. JALALI:** There's no military solution to the situation in Afghanistan but you can use military. It is very nice to develop an area which was destroyed for 30 years, but you have to create a space for it, a time and space for it. There are areas in the south, unless you stabilise it first, nobody goes there. NGOS are not going there; developing agencies are not going there because there's no security. So you have to secure it first. That brings the need for the military operation.

The military operation is a means, it is not the end. Therefore the new strategy that General McChrystal proposed is to use military to create time in space for development and good governance. Otherwise, if there is no security in the South and Helmand, put as much money as you want to – it is not going to happen. Therefore, in fact, military action, military stabilisation, operation, create a space for development and development consolidates security therefore. They are linked with one another, but we have to use it in a way that actually brings sustainable stability in the country.

On the other hand, the concession for negotiation: once again you have to... Who is it you are going to talk to? Who are the other parties in negotiations? If it is Taliban, the proper ideologically motivated Taliban, they will not settle for less than having their own way and that is a reason or a source for other problems. Taliban are not going to come back to Afghanistan as a ruling power. If they come, they will risk paying for civil war in Afghanistan again. Therefore...

Then there are other groups who actually will settle for what I said before: security and justice; these are great tribes. Take the Izakzai [?] tribe in the Helmand province – they were excluded from power; they were mistreated by two other tribes who were in power in Helmand. Take Bhuttarkize [?] in Zabol the same way. If you bring that kind of a rule of law in justice and security threat, the Bhuttars [?] will come back to Zabol. They will join the government. The Izakzais will join the government again. Then you have drug traffickers, you have unemployed youth who are there and they actually are opposed to the government for their own reasons. When you change that environment, then probably that's easier for you.

The cost for negotiation is different with different groups. In fact, there's one important thing with negotiations, that all conflict should be resolved through negotiations doesn't work out, but it must be Afghan-led with a clear vision for the future. There is a need to create an environment that is conducive to peace. If they have the capacity to reintegrate former opposition groups, not to actually create an environment that will be by itself a source or a cause for new conflicts.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you, Ali. Sir Hilary.

**SIR HILARY SYNNOTT:** Four questions, observations, looking at the first three first. I mean, I fundamentally agree with the thrust of most of those observations, that greater attention should be paid to stabilization in the civilian sector and governance; I think it's been a major weakness on the part of the West, that where the military have created what the military calls strategic space, that space has not been filled by civilians, Western civilians, foreign civilians, who could

help the Afghans rebuild their own country. I think there's been this terrific mismatch between the civilian effort and military effort: that should change. The fourth point. I don't wish to be rude – j'en demande pardon – but I fundamentally disagree with Professor Doronsorro's nostrum for negotiating with the Taliban as a way out of all this, for all the reasons that have been discussed already, and just mentioned by Ali Jalali. It follows from that that I think the question, sir, although well-intentioned, is based on a premise which I regard as false.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Jane?

**JANE CORBIN:** The question's split into the military, economic aid, and the Taliban. I think everybody would agree there's just absolutely no question that far too much has been spent on the battlefield and not enough on development and aid. The problem is how do you do it? I spent a long time on all this travelling round Afghanistan, talking to women, talking to local human rights and NGOs. Now, they all made the point that the money that is being poured in at a governmental level, has tended to go to crony projects of Karzai and his ministers often: it hasn't gone to the areas where it's needed. So it's not just about putting more money in: it's how you do it. There are an awful of very, very good local initiatives, many of them run by women: simple projects where they actually use that money on the ground and it has a tangible effect on the population, they made the point that often they don't get the money, because they're not a favoured area. That comes down to politics again, and it comes down to accountability. The West has to make the government, Karzai, the ministers, and the governors – the provincial governors – has to make them accountable for the money that we put in, and has to make sure that it's properly spent. Otherwise it's a waste of time.

On the Taliban, I just fail to see how Mullah Omar and his crew could ever be part of the solution. To start off there, their very nature militates against any group discussion, or democracy in any form. It's just not going to happen, but on the other side, if you exclude them, who are you doing a deal with? It's Ali's point about who is a Taliban. Again, travelling from north to south, I've encountered insurgent groups that are not really Taliban. In places like Herat, where there is no Pashtun presence really, they are insurgent groups with different agendas, different beefs against the coalition. So you've got to bring all these together, and the question comes – and this is the real nub of the problem – if you exclude the real hardliners, can any deal that you ever do be effective, or will they not continue waging war from outside? This is a very serious dilemma. I don't have an answer to it, but I think it's simplistic to think you can bring Mullah Omar and his ilk to the table to talk about everything from women's issues to human rights. They would just not stick with it. They couldn't do a deal on that basis. They don't fit our idea – or indeed, the Afghan's, the modern Afghan's idea – of democracy.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you, Jane. Saad, and then we will have a final round. I have five questions, so we'll have to try to squeeze things.

**SAAD MOHSENI:** What do we have to do in Afghanistan? I think it has to be wholly about it. I think we have to have dialogue with the Taliban leadership in Quetta, it's very important. To exclude them is something we've done over the last seven or eight years, and it hasn't really benefitted Afghanistan. I think you have to talk to them, but at the same time we have to address other issues on the ground. The old adage that opposition's on the governments in loose [?] power is so true in Afghanistan. It's the government's ineptness in the provinces and in Kabul, that has allowed the Taliban to emerge, or groups claiming to be the Taliban. So we have to address issues such as government, and justice is very important in Afghanistan; so is economic development.

Now the problem in Afghanistan is that we were talking about institution building in the country in order to sustain reforms, but we need individuals to build those institutions. So

ultimately we have to look at the very micro level: we have 300-odd districts: we have 30-odd provinces; we have 20-odd ministries. We literally need 500 decent individuals committed to the reconstruction of Afghanistan in order to achieve this, and it is achievable. Afghanistan is salvageable, but we have to start delivering results on the ground. That, coupled with dialogue, with the Taliban leadership,, coupled with military intervention against some groups, I think in 12 months will put us in a much stronger position, but the most important thing is we have to regain the momentum, win back the trust of the Afghan nations.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** As I was saying, we have 20 minutes towards the end, and I just would like to ask the audience and those who have questions – I have five persons on my list – to try to connect to the question of the regional strategy, which I think is important and obviously reconciliation also, but the regional chess game is one that should not be neglected. So I have the gentleman with yes, the pink shirt here to start with, and then over there, and then, yes.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** If you could introduce yourself?

**JOHN PAUL REBOLLINI:** Yes, sorry. John Paul from Afghanistan. I'm thinking from what Jane said, and [unclear] the gentleman on my left, I really echo that what you said, there needs to be more accountability, and I think honestly that this part of the problem, the British Government's policy to what economic aid they are sending there, is going to the government. Could we not use them – I don't know if this is an option – on a sliding scale that the more corruption there is in the government, the more economic aid is given to aid agencies like ourselves to run those very small, successful projects. The more transparent the government becomes, the more aid that can then be re-diverted through government channels. So it's a reward system of character. Thank you.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** I have the gentleman... yes.

**STEPHEN GREY:** My name's Stephen Grey, a journalist who writes about Afghanistan. Just a quick question [unclear]. Do you see any change in the attitude of President Karzai? Everything I see in principle outlined the reconciliation both at retail level if you like [unclear], or the top level talks with the leadership. The principles seem to be exactly the same as before, so with the headlines at the moment, do you see any shift in their present attitude?

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thanks. I have the gentleman with the tie, and then AD, and then we finish with Gilles. Bordeaux tie.

**PETER DIXON:** Peter Dixon with Concordis International, British organization supporting an Afghan-led cooperative process [unclear] peace, and picking up on Sir Hillary's point about this being more than politics, and about anthropology and culture and etc., etc., it seems to me that out of all of this, that the peace process is much, much more than negotiating agreement with anybody. A political settlement with anybody in the Taliban means they ought to negotiate with [unclear], and I just wanted to run back slightly to the earlier panel, where the difference between civil society and tribal structures and a generational difference and the demographic changes that are causing that, and I just wonder if the panel agree that there is a need for a much more comprehensive process within Afghanistan and regionally that takes account of not tribal structures and also modern civil society, modern democratic structures that we'd like to impose around the world?

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you. Eddy, you had a question?

**EDDY CANFOR-DUMAS:** Yes, I'm Eddy Canfor-Dumas from the Secretariat who's responsible for bringing this meetings about together with Carnegie. I wanted to pick up a point that Ruth

had made about a place [?], and also something previously said on the legacy of Saudi. It seems to me that one of the destabilising factors has been the importation of Wahabi ideology into this area, which is now embedded in madrassas in Pakistan who are producing thousands of potential Jihadis. So if this is not about a couple of ideas as a battle for territory and control, what is going to be done to address this very strong destabilising influence?

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you. Gilles, you had a question, and then I have one last final question from the lady at the very back. If you can introduce yourself?

**GILLES DORRONSORO:** [Inaudible]. The thing is that it seems to be contradictory to say that Pakistan is the key to the stabilization of anything. At the same time, speaking about reintegration without including the leadership of the Taliban means that Pakistan is going to wait. It means that Pakistan is going to support the insurgency to make trouble. So how do you resolve this dilemma, and on the same line, do you have any example of a success in reintegration [unclear] the Taliban [unclear] splitting the movement?

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you. Yes? If you can introduce yourself please?

**SPEAKER 6:** [Inaudible].

**FABRICE POTHIER:** A bit louder, please. Sorry.

**SPEAKER 6:** [Inaudible]. We've got different views about the question of whether to negotiate or not.[unclear]. What about the question of individual responsibilities for human rights violations [unclear]. Surely this is one of the most [unclear], but in general [?] about individual responsibility for violations. [Inaudible]. [Inaudible].

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you. I'm going to summarize the questions here. We have one about the carrot and stick, channelling aid in the Afghan government and diverting it to international aid agencies and the question of corruption.

Then we had the question about Karzai, whether there's any sight of Karzai's changing attitude or shifting his approach to both his role and his strategy.

Then there was a question about a more comprehensive approach to this tribal as well as civil society structures in Afghanistan.

We had a question from Eddie on the legacy of the Saudi influence and the role of face in Afghanistan.

One from Gilles about the question of first is there any success story on reconciliation, and second, there's a paradox in saying that a Pakistani scheme, but yet reconciliation should not involve the Quetta Shura, which means that Pakistan might end up being a spoiler in this effort.

And then we had one last question which I would group as... in general we should not only focus on values, but also on basic rights and the question of human rights violations and transitional justice, where does it fit in this future agenda for Afghanistan.

I will start with Saad, and then go that way, and then finish with Ali.

**SAAD MOHSENI:** As far as the present changing, I'm afraid I cannot see the present changing his modus operandi in the way he functions as a leader. One of the reasons why at present Karzai has fast-tracked dialogue with the Taliban, is because that within the palace there's a fear that

the Americans will leave Afghanistan in order for him to be sure that he stays in power. He thinks in the longer term he's going to be better served dealing with the Taliban. So he's not going to do anything staying in the balance, and unfortunately even the cabinet choices we saw recently. Of course some corrupt individuals were removed, or blocked by Parliament, but some other people have been known to be fairly corrupt, and of course, as Gilles mentioned yesterday for example there are so many other warlords, a backing power. So we really haven't seen any change at that level, in spite of the post-election discussions between the President and the various leaders, and in particular, Senator Kerry. Unfortunately, it's business as usual.

In terms of faith, I mean that's a very important question. We have had the opportunity to re-design what it means to be an Afghan or a Pashtun since 2001. Unfortunately, there's been no leadership on defining what it means to be an Afghan. Now, unfortunately there's been a mutation between Pashtun identity with Salafi or Wahabi identity, but there's been nothing really to counter that, and I think it's a very important thing. We in the media of course we were trying to do that, but somehow it separated the two, and to re-define what it means to be an Afghan, I think that has to be an ongoing matter.

Civil society. I mean, you can't have democracy without civil society. Much has been done, but don't also forget that we have been the targets – we, as well as other Saudi organizations over the last few years – and unfortunately it seems to a lot of us that who will be the first, wants to be sacrificed that there is some sort of grand bargain.

As far as Pakistan is concerned, it's very important to involve them, although we should be very careful not to allow them [?] to dictate their terms. I think that involvement's important; they can cause problems as they have in the past, but there's probably enough leverage, particularly the Americans, that they can't force the Pakistanis. They haven't succeeded to date, but I think that they need to use that leverage as much as they can, going forward.

**JANE CORBIN:** I think the question about Karzai's actually linked to the question that the lady asked about individual responsibility for war crimes. I'd agree with you: I see very little prospect of change in Karzai's outlook. A few things have changed on the margins. For example, his relationship with Zardari appears to be better than his relationship with Musharraf, which was very difficult. So there's tinkering around the edges, but I don't see any change, and I also think that the anger that Karzai showed with the criticism of his government and the need for accountability, showed in a way there was not a real basic change there, or a desire to take a different attitude. When you talk about responsibility of human rights and individual crimes, you mentioned the Taliban, but actually there are many people in Karzai's own government who should face accountability: Dostum; Sayyaf, and others. So it isn't just about the Taliban having to answer for its human rights abuses; that has to be done throughout Afghan society, and they have to be doing with their own government when it comes to that.

Faith. Eddy talked about faith and Wahabism and yes, it's true about the madrassas in Pakistan, but I have to say that suddenly in Afghanistan, I find even in traditional tribal areas whether it's in the south or the east and other parts, there is an uncomfortable attitude towards some of the tenets of this Salaffi-Wahabi overlay that has affected Afghanistan: a real horror when the suicide bombers began in Afghanistan for example, people were at great pains to tell you that this kind of thing had absolutely no basis, never had had, and never should have, in Afghanistan. So I'm not sure that Wahabism is the natural way that the Afghan, the Pashtun, will be influenced or taken on board. I think it's something that needs to burn itself out in the region, and I'm certain that the Saudi ability, the need for Saudis to pump money and will of course and if they can be stopped from doing that, that will have an effect.

Gilles' point about re-integration any example for the successful re-integration of the Taliban. I don't think there is, or that people would argue that the five whose names have now been taken off the list, have been a kind of bridge between the government in Kabul and elements in Pakistan, the man who went to Saudi for Ramadan meeting, and things like that. So they were never part if you like of the hard-line outside the country, but they have provided a bridge, but no, I can't offer any successful example, and I take your point about Pakistan being the problem. I think the only answer must lie in continuing pressure: pressure from America; pressure on the economic front, particularly when it comes to funding the Pakistani military who've received enormous amounts in the past few years. America really needs to play that part.

The final point on aid as a sliding scale. It's a nice idea, but I think there's a bigger canvas there, and also you have to take into account, capacity. If you appoint about 500 well-trained individuals with a mission, you've got to get the people on the ground locally for that kind of sliding scale approach to work.

**SIR HILARY SYNNOTT:** Thanks. I'd just like to address two of the points, and they're related really; at least my response is related. First of all, Gilles and then Eddy. I think we should get away from the notion – and I don't think anybody's said it – that Pakistan is the key to this. Pakistan is very important, but it's not the key. Pakistan cannot control the Taliban. It's always had a close relationship, and is trying to influence it - and it's tried to control it – but it's failed when it's tried. The Taliban has a mind, and a Shura, of its own. They tried desperately to control the Taliban before 9/11 when the Taliban destroyed the statues at Bamyán, so there is a limit to the role of Pakistan, but it's nonetheless an important player.

Success in re-integration Gilles, I guess your question was about its success in relation to re-integrating the bad buys, and I can't think of any, but I think it's also only recently that really the Americans, who are such important players here, have accepted the principle of trying, and endorse that principle of trying to break up the bad guys into components, but there are plenty of examples internationally of course where this has worked: Israel, Ireland, East Timor, and most recently Iraq, although I wouldn't want to stretch the parallels. There's no question General Petraeus' approach in early 2007 in Iraq was fundamentally important.

Eddy's point: Wahabi ideology, the madrassas. Absolutely, but again a perspective here. There are thousands, possibly tens of thousands madrassas in Pakistan, funded by all sorts of sources: the Pakistan government, the Saudis, Gulf money; all sorts of funny money. The great majority of them are essentially religious schools, and they are benign and not Wahabi. They actually also provide a terrific social service, because the primary education system in Pakistan is pretty well broken, so they provide food, lodging and a basic education to many people who wouldn't get it at all, but there is an element, a very noxious element, which actually trains Taliban fighters and has very dubious sources of funding. The Pakistan government claim to have made efforts to control these; they haven't tried enough. There needs to be much greater control on funding; there needs to be much greater judicial control on these people. It's possible that the shocks that the army have received has resulted in opposition from the Pakistan neo-Taliban that they'll do more, but so far not too much sign of that. That doesn't need to change.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you. Ali?

**ALI A. JALALI:** Let me talk on two points: one was there any success in integration. I think there was no real success in re-integration. However, there were two missed opportunities for integration. One was in 2001 during the Bonn conference. At that time, 85% of those who were so-called Taliban, they were not very ideologically Taliban, in fact. They just joined that regime because that regime was in power. They were ready to go and join the process, but at that time, they were excluded from that. I think that was one missed opportunity. At that time, I know, I

remember some of them who are now a very active part of our movement, they are more radicalised, at that time they were ready to join the process, but at that time the Northern Alliance was against it and the international community, they wanted to do something big against the global war on terrorism; they were excluded. That was one opportunity.

The second was 2002/2003. At that time the Taliban made that major meeting in Karachi, and they decided we had to go: to fight or to negotiate, and they were contacting us – they contacted me and they contacted other ministers in the cabinet – and we discussed in the national security constantly in Afghanistan, we agreed okay we will talk to them. Some of them came and spoke to me, very prominent many of them, and they said we want two things: one is protection, and you protect us. Leave us alone and let us return to our home, otherwise we have no choice but to fight. Then I said, I will give you protection – I was telling them – they said yes, as a minister of interior you can give protection, partial protection, not whole. In Afghanistan, you're not the only person. There's a minister of defence; he's a different faction. There are Americans. There are ISAF. There are other agencies. If you can find a mechanism, create a mechanism that can guarantee that protection for us, we will do that. Unfortunately, we were unable to do that. Within Afghanistan, we were unable even to draw a list, all international community could not reach an agreement that we could reach. That was another missed opportunity. So yes, there were opportunities, but we missed them. Now I don't think really there's a possibility for a grand deal. Yes, local deal, only when the government can control its territory and provinces.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** What was the second condition? You say one condition.

**ALI A. JALALI:** To return to their country, to return, and then to be protected, not molested by anybody else. Maybe... I said okay, I'll protect you. They said, yes, you protect me, somebody to pick me up from my village in Oruzgan, and by the time you know I'll be somewhere else. Overseas.

And the other one is this issue of tribal and civil society and others. In Afghanistan I've been involved with tribals in the past. In the 70s I was a government envoy to settle problems with several tribes in Paktia province, in [unclear]. At that time, the tribal structures in government institutions were not competing with one another, they were complementing one another. However, in Afghanistan like all other societies like Afghanistan [?], tribes and communities, and the state, are two elements of a unified system. They work together when the system is intact. When the system is broken, tribes and communities go away, in a country like Afghanistan. They are self-sufficient. They go and they make deals with other powers, as they did in the past ten years. So today, as Nader Nadery said this morning, the tribal is totally changed, transformed in Afghanistan. Today, those who are in power in tribal areas, people who've gathered many old relations, but some powerful, state or non-state stayed across the border, or inside the country, so therefore I think as always I argued that, the challenge, or transition of Afghanistan from conflict to peace, is a challenge of state. If you build the state, all these tribes will come to you. If you cannot build the state, that can provide security and justice and control the territory, they will find their own way to do that. Let me conclude. To quote a famous saying of a Third Century Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi Tian [?], who said, those who governed well, did not arm; those who armed well, did not draw battle lines; those who drew battle lines well, did not fight; those who fought well, did not lose; those who lost well, did not perish. Thank you very much.

**FABRICE POTHIER:** Thank you very much, Ali. I think that was a very... a perfect and eloquent way to bring this panel to a close.

I have to say that this morning's panels have really focussed on the core political issues that are on the agenda, like re-integration of the Taliban; the question of the Afghan governance; the question of Pakistan being a partner or more a threat; and I think it is exactly what we wanted

to do: to look at those core questions. Not to focus necessarily on aid coordination, on benchmark, like it has been done in the past, and I think we seem to agree on the questions, but there's still a lot of work on the answers, but the best hope I have is that should we meet again in four or five years here in London on the fringe of an Afghanistan conference, that this conference is on peace in Afghanistan rather than the war. So this is just a small message of hope for an organization that is about international peace.

Before closing, I would like everyone to thank the people who have made this meeting possible; I think this is very important. Obviously Simon Hughes who was with us this morning. Also the team behind the all-party group: Eddy, Yeshim, Irving, Ruth, Wendy and Tom, who is Simon Hughes' assistant. I also would like to thank my own team: Lisa and Malachy, who have put everything together and have welcomed our guest speakers. So thank you to all, and I wish you a good journey back home.