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Obama's Afghanistan and Pakistan Strategy

— Where Now for Europe?

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Speakers:

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Chair:

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FABRICE POTHIER: Welcome, everybody. My name is Fabrice Pothier. I am the Director of Carnegie Europe. It's a pleasure to have you here this afternoon for a public discussion about Europe in response to Obama's strategy towards Afghanistan and Pakistan. I think I won't be overstating by saying that we probably have the best panel in town, and beyond, to talk about what Europe can do on Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is indeed an interesting question, because there has been a lot of discussion about how Obama has done in his first 100 days, but there has been very little discussion about how Europe did during this period.

Afghanistan and Pakistan are probably the top item on the foreign policy agenda between the transatlantic partners. Looking at it quickly, the record is not very good. Europe has not really put anything on the table that looks serious and sustainable enough to be considered as a reliable partner in the new Obama-strategy. So we have three, as I said, of the best experts in town and beyond to talk about that, and I will start straight away with my colleague, Gilles Dorransoro, who is a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Gilles is one of the few experts who has more than 20 years of expertise on and in Afghanistan. There are not many experts who have such a depth of understanding of the local dynamics in Afghanistan and who can connect that with the bigger picture. So Gilles, I will turn to you. Each speaker will have five minutes for comments, and then we will open the floor for questions, and then discussion. So, Gilles, I wanted to start with asking you one question. You are just coming back from more than five weeks in and around Afghanistan in the field. What are your impressions concerning the situation on the ground, and maybe more interestingly also for the crowd, how was the Obama-strategy, if we can call it like this, perceived on the ground?

GILLES DORRANSORO: Thanks for this generous introduction. Well, actually, I'm not very sure there is a new strategy. I think there is nothing on the ground that makes me think that there is a new strategy. There are more resources, more troops in the south, but there is no, as far as I see, coherent strategy in Afghanistan on the side of NATO or the United States. It is more or less the same as last year, but with more troops, so it is not going to be a very good year for the international coalition in Afghanistan. While the international coalition has no real strategy, the Taliban have a strategy, a real one, and what is very worrying is that they are going north; they are making serious progress in the north, and I am a little bit surprised that there isn't any reactivity from the international coalition, and especially from the Europeans in the north, notably the Germans in Kunduz and in Mazar-e-Sharif.

So that would be my first point: no new strategy, a lack of activity, and a lot of Taliban progress in Pakistan and in Afghanistan. The second point I would like to make very quickly is that I don't think we can speak about Europeans as such. We can speak about European countries in Afghanistan, that are more or less closely connected to the United States, but there is no European point of view in Afghanistan, which is regrettable, but a reality. As far as I see, there is no indication that the Europeans are ready to work together to accomplish something in Afghanistan. Everybody is looking at Washington and no country seems interested in European cooperation. What we could do now is probably stopping the Taliban from going north. That would be feasible, because there are mostly European troops in the north. That is one thing we could do. The second thing we can focus on is trying to make the reform program on justice and police finally work. The European countries have so far failed in sufficiently training the police and the judges in Afghanistan. We could at least try to do something in this area. I think it would be very important, and it's not only about the north, it's about the whole country. So I think that to pursue these two spearheads would be a good new start for Europe in Afghanistan. Thank you.

FABRICE POTHIER: I just wanted to press you on a point which was the result of your five-week field trip. You said something earlier this afternoon about the void between the Afghan people and the international community. If you could just elaborate a bit on that.

GILLES DORRONSORO: What seems very clear is that there is not really an Afghan administration on district level. The police is corrupt or inefficient; most of the judges are corrupt or they are just not there. And especially in the south, the Taliban has been very clever in the way they are manipulating the social system. There is nothing between the Taliban on one side, and the international coalition on the other side. There is this big vacuum that the Taliban is increasingly filling up. There is no Afghan state and there are no functioning tribes, because the tribal system is very weak in Afghanistan. This idea that manipulating tribes is the key to winning something in Afghanistan is a total idiocy. Obviously this is not going to work, because the tribes have been broken, beaten or manipulated by the Taliban. This game is over, and what's happening in Khowst in the eastern part of Afghanistan illustrates this very clearly. The tribal system is working in favour of the Taliban now, and not in favour of the international coalition. So in the east and the south the game is over now, in a way. We have lost mainly because we have not been able to work with social forces or with an Afghan administration. And, of course, we are more and more perceived as an occupying force and less and less as people being there to help the Afghan people, so I think the two spearheads I mentioned could be an answer to this trend.

FABRICE POTHIER: Thank you, Gilles. So now I'm going to turn to Daniel Korski, who is a Senior Research Fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations. Daniel, you may not have 20 years of experience on and in Afghanistan, but you do have your own experience of conflict zones from Bosnia and Iraq to Afghanistan. So, I wanted to press you on a point that Gilles just raised about the Europeans not working together. And I know that you have been working on improving cooperation among the Europeans, so I would be happy if you could elaborate on that. What do you think would be a reasonable but clear response to the new call of the Obama Administration for Afghanistan and Pakistan?

DANIEL KORSKI: Look, I think the time has passed for discussions about whether there is a strategy or not. I have been coming to this town for years saying the international community's strategy isn't working and we need to change it in this and this respect. The truth is that what we have is the best thing we are going to get, and it may not be as good as we would like it, but I have come to the conclusion that there is no point anymore in discussing whether we need a strategy or not. And I think it will be very important for Europe to think very carefully about how to engage with the existing approach, if you don't want to call it a strategy, for reasons to do with the common threat that we face in Afghanistan and Pakistan, for reasons to do with the relationship with the U.S., and for reasons to do with the EU's pretensions to be a strategic actor.

So we have to take this seriously, and we have to think very carefully about what to do. But as Gilles said, it is absolutely true that there is not a European response, and I think this is even something Shada and Eva, who is amongst the audience, have mentioned in their paper. There are many different kinds of European responses, and we haven't had a joint EU response. And in many ways, the conversation about EU responses quickly bogs down into the idea that member states aren't really that interested in investing in something common. They want to have an EUPOL mission, they are happy for the Commission to run a large, and in many parts, a very successful programme, but they actually don't want to step up to the plate and somehow join up their different elements. I think this is in part because they look at the last couple of years of record and think probably: is this a useful receptacle, is this a good place, is this a good instrument for our efforts?

Secondly, they worry about the loss of autonomy. And thirdly, of course, anything that has to do with military deployments touches a very raw national nerve. But just to get to your question, I think

there are a lot of things that could still be done for which the EU is probably a more effective and long-term instrument to be used in Afghanistan, but also in Pakistan. There is an election coming up, and it will be very important for the Commission's election monitoring mission to be as robust and effective as possible. We already know that various attempts have been made to corrupt this electoral process. Probably the Commission's Elections mission should have been launched already a year ago. I think this is going to be a very important area. I also think we have to focus a lot more, as Gilles said, on the police, and I think we could take a look at the border area, because a lot of European troops are stationed along a large area of the border. We normally focus on the south when talking about the border, but, of course, there are the north and the west, and I think it would be very clever for the EU to think more carefully about how it can assist in deploying an integrated border mission. We see the development of some concepts for how to do border management, but we haven't actually seen anything on the ground, and I think this is an opportunity for the EU.

And I think the EU should step up and Kabul. This is something I have said in interviews and in papers. I mean, the fact is that, so many years into this international intervention, Kabul is as quiet as it is, is a miracle, frankly, but it's not something that's necessarily going to stay the case, especially if, as Gilles said, various different anti-government forces seek to expose the instability in Kabul. And I think the Europeans, given the experience that we have in rebuilding cities like Mostar, probably should take this much more seriously than we have. I think about deploying some kind of city administrative support unit, some kind of capital PRT. And certainly, from my recent experience travelling around with the French soldiers in RC central just a couple of weeks ago, it was abundantly clear to me that they had absolutely no civilian component to what was meant to be a comprehensive approach in their regional command which covers Kabul. So I think this is an area where the EU could do more, and indeed assist troops.

I have probably spent more than five minutes, but I do want to touch on one other thing, which is Pakistan. I mean, this conversation is about Afghanistan, but there is no conversation about Afghanistan without a conversation about Pakistan. And although the EU has perhaps not done as well as it should have done on its Afghan portfolio, there is at least stuff in the Afghan portfolio. There isn't really a lot of stuff in the EU's Pakistan portfolio. And in the run-up to an EU-Pakistan summit which will take place on, I think, the 17th of June, there's a great opportunity to think a little more carefully about what it is that the EU could do. But there is a tendency to think that Pakistan is far too big an issue. The U.S. monopolises the relationship, and those European countries that engage with the U.S. on Pakistan are perfectly happy not to open the ball for other European countries to engage. But there probably is still scope for some European engagement, perhaps on police training, perhaps on giving a genuine prospect for some kind of FTA in the future, and perhaps on expanding some of the Commission's educational programmes. I'm making a nod down to the Commission representative amongst the audience. So I think, Fabrice, you're absolutely right; Gilles, you're absolutely right. There is no EU response, and an EU response shouldn't be thought of as replacing European responses, but there's a lot more that I think European governments could do by using the EU as an instrument for delivery in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

FABRICE POTHIER:

Thanks a lot, Daniel. I know that the Commission would want to raise some points, but if you can just be patient for five more minutes, I will now turn to our third speaker, Shada Islam, who is Senior Programme Executive at the European Policy Centre. And before joining the EPC in Brussels, Shada was correspondent for the Far Eastern Economic Review based in Pakistan, if I'm correct. So you have a very interesting perspective, especially on this second part of the AfPak equation, which is Pakistan. And as Daniel just said earlier, there is no real deep and concrete Pakistan thinking in Europe, so I will be very interested to hear what you think could be a reasonable but good European strategy towards Pakistan. Shada, thank you.

SHADA ISLAM:

Thank you very much, Fabrice. I was partially based in Pakistan when I was working for the Review, but I was also the correspondent in Europe covering Pakistan. It is absolutely right that there is a big Pakistan deficit when it comes to the European Union; an enormous, gaping hole in Europe's policy towards South Asia, is the Pakistan deficit. And I think increasingly that, if you read the newspapers and if you follow events closely, what's happening in Pakistan is very damaging to Pakistan, but also damaging for the security of Europe, because we know about the links to terrorism. And we also know, I think this is something that perhaps we need to focus on a little bit more, that what is happening in Pakistan is actually what is happening in Islam itself. It is the confrontation between Wahabism and Sufism, between conservatism and modernisation. So what we need to do when we follow Pakistan, is to see that there is a battle going on for the soul of Islam, and that is also very, very important.

The U.S. is muddling through in Afghanistan, and I think a great deal also in Pakistan, because the U.S. policy was, as we all know, very much focused on General Musharraf. And now, they are shifting gear rapidly because they have to deal with a civilian government. And my advice to everyone here is not to do anything to undermine the civilian government, because it is weak and fragile. My advice to the European Union is also that we have to talk with the people that are in the government at the summit. The government is weak and fragile, it is squabbling among itself, but that is what we have to deal with. We have to deal with the civilian government, and no encouragement at all should be given, either by India or by anyone else, to any idea of a military coup to bring the army back, because it is easier to deal with the army. It is no easier. And that is my recommendation number one for the summit coming up.

I think the most important thing really is to get the EU to change its very, I would say, technical approach towards Pakistan. We have to look at Pakistan in a more political, strategic manner. That is very, very important. This summit is good, but it's not enough. It is really the first qualitative step, or leap, forward in EU-Pakistan relations, but it has been a long time coming, and deliverables at the summit, as far as I can tell, Daniel, are not going to be that large. So there is a great deal of expectation, and we have to work very hard on this. I think that what's important now is that the European Commission, the Council of Ministers, and governments like Britain, France, and Germany, are beginning to realise that Pakistan is not a sideshow. It is a standalone problem, which is very, very important for, as I said, international security, but also for the future of Islam.

The good news is that the European Union has built up a great deal of credibility in Pakistan. It conducted a very efficient and very good monitoring of the elections in 2008, and it has built up political capital because of that. And its recommendations on improving political structures, on improving elections, election organisation, on modernising political parties, are being studied by the National Assembly of Pakistan. So that's good news. The second part of good news is also that Europe's experience in regional cooperation and integration can be useful, can be inspirational if you like, when trying to tackle what is, of course, a seemingly intractable problem, India-Pakistan. But Europe can, in a way, be the honest broker that the U.S. cannot be.

But we obviously need to increase aid. I was looking at the figures, and the aid of the EU to Pakistan is €50 million. I mean, that is peanuts, frankly, for a country that large, if compared to the €150 million annually for Afghanistan. And, of course, it dwarfs in comparison to what the U.S. is doing there. I would recommend also, and I have been saying this for about a year, to move away from the traditional development aid that the EU is currently doing in Pakistan. The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank do it better, and with more money. Let's move away from these traditional wells and rural development programmes, and let Europeans focus on something they have the expertise on and the experience in, and that is political reform, economic reform, helping transition countries in their modernisation. And that is something that is very, very important, I think.

Daniel mentioned police. I would say that police reform is essential in Pakistan. Once again, like in Afghanistan, the army receives the equipment, receives the training, receives all the political sort of help as well, but the importance of the police is underestimated. But it is very important, as we have seen with recent terror attacks, the police forces are not capable of responding efficiently and effectively. Police salaries, I have been told, are very, very low, and that is one of the things that we really need to work on. Counter-terrorism and de-radicalisation are areas where I think the European Union has expertise, and I know that Gilles de Kerchove and the Commission have been to Pakistan recently on an exploratory mission, to try and see whether such cooperation is possible, and they have had a very favourable response from the Pakistanis.

And I won't go on much further, but there are two other things I want to talk about, and that's trade, and Daniel mentioned that. Once again, the EU has taken a very technical approach to trade with Pakistan. I know that free trade agreements and access to markets are a technical thing, and we cannot absolutely breach international rules on this, but I think we also have to realise that in some cases, emergency cases, exceptions have to be made, and we have to look at this as a political tool as well. I think that is something the Commission has been very, very reluctant to do, but I read that the Italians at the G8 summit, but also the French, and the British, are increasingly pushing for a more political strategic vision when it comes to dealing with trade. And finally, I think the one good news that has been coming out of Pakistan is the very dynamic, vibrant, civil society, and I think that needs to be encouraged. When the lawyers, for instance, were on strike for two years, do you know that they were not earning money? There was no income coming into the lawyers' families. So there were foundations and NGO's that were providing help. That is the force of Pakistan. If Pakistan is to overcome this insurgency, it's going to be so because civil society is strong. And within that civil society, and I'll end there, there are the Sufi traditions of Pakistan that have to be encouraged and inspired, and perhaps promoted in a way that they are not being promoted now. Pakistan has a Sufi culture which was the essence of Islam in South Asia basically, including in Afghanistan. It has been overcome by Wahabism. It's being destroyed step by step. One of the things that we don't realise in Europe, is that the real trouble comes, when the Taliban attack shrines of Sufis in Swat and in other areas in the FATA, because the tribals have real respect for the Sufi shrines, and those are the essence of Pakistan. Thank you.

FABRICE POTHIER:

Thank you, Shada, for these very inspired comments. If I may add my own comments, then do another round of questions to our speakers, and then we will obviously open the floor. I think that, with regards to Europe's strategy, or lack of strategy as a whole towards Afghanistan and Pakistan, there is really room for setting an ambitious, but realistic agenda. I have noticed that you actually have two sides. You have a very hawkish side when you talk to people in capital cities saying that we need to do more and send more troops out of solidarity with the U.S., because we are also facing a real security threat. And then you have another side which is more the kind of soft European side, more defeatist, saying it is doomed to failure, that there is no need to carry on. That we should just do basic civilian work, but not hope for improvements.

I think it is now time to really try to define a third way, something more balanced that will say: 'indeed Europe can do something'. Obviously, Europe cannot do the same at the same level and with the same intensity as the U.S., especially in terms of military deployment, but we do have some competence. And what you need in fact to find this third way I think is to reconcile the capital cities with Brussels. I think Brussels can fill some important gaps in the coming years when the national aid development budgets are going to shrink because of the economic crisis.

And I just wanted to mention four areas where I think we can make a concrete difference in the long term. One is border management. Daniel mentioned it earlier, and there are lots of initiatives on border management, from the EU, NATO and bilateral initiatives, but I think there is a need to set

up a kind of border management centre in the region that could be financed and led by the EU. The EU's border management program has worked well. It should be consolidated and it should connect the different programs, so you can share information between what the Germans are doing, what the EU is doing, and what NATO is doing. That would be a first area.

A second one is Kabul, which Daniel and Gilles mentioned. I think Kabul is an obvious opportunity that has been neglected for too long. Kabul and the surrounding area are absolutely strategic, and Gilles was saying that in a very eloquent way earlier at lunch; it will send a very strong positive message to the Afghan people that we are serious about being there, and that we are serious about building Afghan institutions. So far, Kabul has more or less been neglected. It is a compound city. If you go there, you will see it is not a real city; it is more or less controlled and organised by the different military and security compounds, so you need to let Kabul become a real city and merge it with its surrounding region, because the Kabuli and the Afghans who are living in this city will be your best hope against the Taliban. So that is a second area.

A third one is the institution building. Here again, Europe has a lot that it can do, both in terms of justice development and in terms of police training. Clearly, it's not enough, 400 or 200, depending on who you talk to, police trainers sent to Afghanistan. We need more and we need better. And finally, a fourth area is the problem of the opium cultivation, which comes up all the time on the news and political agenda, and there is a lot of high rhetoric about opium. And now the new rhetoric is 'oh, drugs and Taliban, it's the same problem': therefore it is going to be the same solution, or the same mission to destroy both of them. This is obviously a very dangerous rhetoric that has never worked, and that could lead to creating more collateral damage and more insecurity in the very local communities where your counter-insurgency strategy tells you you want to create security. On drugs, for example, the EU could support the UN agency, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, to consolidate its Paris-backed initiative, which is, in a nutshell, a regional initiative on the roots of drug trafficking, and also the problem of drug conception, because conception of production has to be addressed simultaneously. And that's a very interesting perspective, but it's a paper initiative. You need money, you need operational people on the ground as well. And I think that the EU, which has shown its interest and commitment to trying to address the drug problem in a more progressive way, could help found a regional centre, and why not in Tehran? Iran is actually one of the first big victims of the heroin problem, of the trafficking problem, as well as of the conception problem. So Iran has a huge stake in finding, I would say, more workable solutions to the drug issue. So these were just four areas I wanted to highlight in terms of European contribution.

Now let me turn again to our speakers, and I just wanted to ask a kind of question that comes up all the time in the press and that is now part of those kind of silver bullets that you hear regularly. It is about talking to the Taliban, because Obama has clearly taken an open position on that. The Europeans claim that they had thought about it for years, and it seems that it's going to resolve everything, or at least a part of our problem. But I think our analysts have rather different views, so I want to start with Gilles, and then Daniel, and then Shada. Thank you.

GILLES DORRONSORO:

Thanks. Well, talking to Taliban doesn't really make sense in Afghanistan right now, for a number of reasons. First, it is not very clear who wants to speak to which Taliban. If they are moderate Taliban, it is over, because they do not exist. The Taliban are a coherent organisation, a centralised organisation, contrary to what is said from time to time in newspapers. So, if you want to speak to the Taliban, you have to speak to Mullah Omar, and then there is one question he is going to ask you: 'when are you leaving Afghanistan?' So that's it. I think it is the end of the dialogue with the Taliban. What worries me actually is that we are spending a lot of time discussing about this totally out of touch hypothesis of speaking to the Taliban. When you don't have a name, you don't have an idea about what to discuss with the Taliban. So I think it is more a symptom of the lack of strategy in Afghanistan than something else. And we don't have a lot

of time in Afghanistan. Time is running out, you know, so we should better focus on the real issues than on so-called speaking with the Taliban.

FABRICE POTHIER:

Thanks, Gilles. Daniel?

DANIEL KORSKI:

Well, as Fabrice knows, I have a slightly different take on this issue. I mean, I take issue with the idea that the Taliban is a monolithic organisation, and if we could just find the number to Mullah Omar's Quetta house, we can somehow reach him. I mean, we know that there is the Quetta Shura, there's the Haqqani network, there's Hekmatyar, and I think it is probably wrong to somehow believe that we can understand how structured or unstructured they are. But I don't argue that we need to have a direct engagement with, inverted commas, the Taliban. I mean, we have to understand that what has made the insurgency so incredibly successful is its ability to mix an outside network with a series of what I would call valley struggles. And in each valley, they have been incredibly successful at co-opting a series of disenfranchised individuals, disenfranchised for different reasons, whether it is because they are upset with how they have been treated by the government, or because a pact with the various insurgency groups assists the meeting of their objectives. And I think we have to assist the Afghan government in being much more effective in trying to engage some of these disaffected bodies. And what we have seen in Afghanistan is a complete failure to have a strategic approach to this reconciliation question.

The Commission established by President Karzai hasn't really achieved much at all. It has largely been used for President Karzai's electoral purposes, and so it has in many ways lost the kind of credibility that any kind of reconciliation would have. I think there are two final things to say. I mean, I know of no counter-insurgency effort that has been successful without a political element, so there has to be some kind of political element. Now I think like you, Gilles, that saying that is not the same thing as saying, let's have a deal with Mullah Omar over some fictitious conference table in Geneva where we can sort of hash out what we want and we can somehow agree, but I think there's a wider point to understand that there has to be some kind of political element, not instead of military activity, not instead of building the Afghan state, not instead of delivering services, but there has to be an integrated political element, and I don't think we have seen it.

FABRICE POTHIER:

Gilles, go ahead.

GILLES DORRONSORO:

I think there is a misunderstanding. We are speaking about two different things. If you want to split the Taliban locally, working with a Taliban commander, that's one thing. Why not? It is the counter-insurgency, that is not working at all. That's the problem in Afghanistan: it is not working at all. But you can try. Well, why not? It's part of the game. But that's not speaking with the Taliban. That's just trying like in all counter-insurgency strategies, just trying to get a guy working with you to pay him eventually in some cases, whatever. I mean, it's not speaking with the Taliban. And it is not very clear what the political component of this strategy is. If you are dealing locally, it is not political. If you are dealing with a Taliban giving him a few million dollars just to keep him quiet, I wouldn't call that speaking to the Taliban. So I think this is the misunderstanding, because people are putting a lot of things under the banner of this so-called speaking with the Taliban. So let's be clear about that. And if it is about speaking with the Taliban, the Taliban are a coherent organisation. I'm coming back to that because it is important. When the Taliban has some local failures, or just a tactical problem somewhere, they are responding in the same way all the time, by appointing a new district or province commander. Actually, it is working and it is more centralised than the Kabul government, to be honest. And there have never been any guys coming from the Taliban giving themselves in. There is no in-fighting in the Taliban, or just very local. It is a centralised organisation. And that is why splitting the Taliban did not work; it never

worked seriously. I always say, okay, in this valley we may have made a deal. Okay, but it is not going to change the situation. So I think we should be much more analytical in what are we speaking about.

FABRICE POTHIER: Daniel, if you could just hold on your response, and now we turn to Shada and her take on this question.

SHADA ISLAM: Well, I think Pakistan's experience in sleeping with the enemy, if you like, has been really dismal. I mean, we have seen that all these deals that the government has been doing with local Taliban leaders, Pakistani Taliban as they're called, have actually been very, very unsuccessful, and actually have worked against the government. They have failed, to be quite blunt about it. And I think that's really because the Pakistani authorities are weak and are doing it from a position of weakness and fragility. There is a sentiment throughout Pakistan that the West and the Pakistani authorities are losing this battle, so the Taliban are gaining, as Gilles has said, a great deal of, let's say, capital from that. They are making capital from that. So doing it from a position of weakness is really not working for Pakistan.

One thing I would like to point out is that there have been reports recently that the U.S. authorities are extending a hand to Nawaz Sharif, who is the opposition leader in Pakistan, and is seen as more conservative and having links with Islamist organisations. I think that's not a bad idea because the Islamist organisations are of a very murky and, of course, complicated kind. Islamist organisations are not necessarily linked to Taliban, but may in some indirect way have some influence over Taliban. So I think that's not a bad strategy. But to actually do the deals that the Pakistani authorities have been doing in Swat and elsewhere is really not working, and as I said, they are based on this impression that Pakistan is abdicating control of its territory to these people, and it's not working.

And one thing that is perhaps different from Afghanistan, is that the Taliban in these areas in Pakistan are there through intimidation and terror. They are not, and often they do not have support of, the local people. Local people are leaving these regions. There is an internal displaced population in Pakistan of hundreds of thousands of people. One doesn't really know that very well here. The Taliban are running a regime of terror in these areas.

FABRICE POTHIER: Thank you, Shada. We are going to let the controversy settle a bit and take some questions from the floor, so if you can just introduce yourself. First the gentleman with the red tie, then Bettina at the back, and there I saw a hand; yes, in the middle, the gentleman with the hand.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Thank you. I am Emal from NATO. The conversation on negotiating with the Taliban, since we have just left it, is quite interesting I think. I understand, Daniel, that you are saying that there needs to be a reconciliation process, but President Karzai has just chosen a very controversial figure to run with him in the presidential elections. That's, well, for your information, General Fahim, who is probably a very notorious warlord, a current warlord still. So we have got to be very careful about how we go about negotiating with the Taliban. I agree that there needs to be a political process, but they will want something substantial now because they are in the driving force, and there is a Taliban leadership, and they are very aware about what they are doing. So if we start negotiating with them, they see themselves as the legitimate power, as the legitimate opposition. This will make negotiating with the leadership extremely difficult. So I don't know what you propose to do regarding that.

FABRICE POTHIER: Bettina, yes, at the back, and then the gentleman in the middle.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: One of the things you mentioned was Europe: here in Brussels we should do much more. I think I have heard that often before but, of course, the European Commission on behalf of the EU's budget can only act within the constraints of the member states. Notably, in the context of these current financial perspectives heading four, which covers all of external relations funding, I mean, all and sundry in the world, and not only Afghanistan and Pakistan, was cut at the time quite substantively. That's something that needs to be borne in mind, because you read this very often in newspapers. Well, why doesn't Brussels just give more money? Well, basically, because Brussels has its hands tied when it comes to this. Having said this, we have nevertheless, in the context of renewed efforts on Afghanistan and Pakistan, just put aside and found extra additional resources from reserves of €35 million, both for the elections, and the Afghan police, so I think the Commission certainly has made an effort. But I cannot see where miraculously more money would come from unless we discover some new resources, or perhaps gamble in the lottery.

The second point: you spoke about efforts in police and justice. Now I can tell you that perhaps, because EUPOL takes usually much more of the headlines, the Commission has a long side, and indeed, that was conceived in parallel a programme to reform Afghanistan's justice institutions, because quite clearly, unless you do something very complete about security sector reform, you will always end up having a policeman finding a man who is suspicious of having done something, but then there is no justice system where you can actually deliver justice too. And one of the key issues of popular dissatisfaction now in Afghanistan is that neither the old justice nor the new justice seem to do justice. So the Commission's programme has been developed, and the experts worked for a year embedded in the institutions to do something that would be truly fitting to what Afghanistan really needs, and building on the traditional system. But of course, the next step, and that's something that I'd like to emphasise right now, the next step is, of course, also that the Afghan authorities, actually, the Afghan government fully embraces a reform programme that has been developed together with them. You can literally only take that horse to the water, if then, despite money is being put in, and so more money does not automatically achieve results unless there is an effort to actually professionalise the Afghan judiciary, the Ministry, the Supreme Court, the Attorney General's office. And we have gotten a mixed response. There were positive aspects, and there were more reluctant parts of the justice system. And I think it's very, very important that nobody walks away here and thinks that money can do the job, the trick alone. I think it needs political will on the side of the recipients. Where I think political actors know what is needed to give more legitimacy to the state, that needs to be seen by the population as being equitable, and I know there is a question mark.

Thirdly, opium agriculture: the Commission has been around for a very long time. And again, there is no quick fix. And, therefore, rightly, I think the White Paper and something that has already been mentioned in the Paris Conference last year, 12th June, agriculture has been severely underfunded. Everybody has said it. All we can do is to continue doing what we're doing. Agricultural development takes an awfully long time to bear fruit. I think what is nice coming back from Kabul, and even my colleague who is there on the ground now tells me it's raining again, so the fact that this year I had a very wet mission and certainly had taken the wrong clothes along, but that is actually good for developing alternative crops to poppy.

On ECO, and on supporting the jobs and local cooperation: We have actually an instrument in place of some close to €10 million that embraces all of the eco countries, and enables them to all cooperate. And it was signed in Teheran this year. It basically targets close cooperation of all the eco countries in curbing trafficking of precursors and of drugs. Okay? Thank you.

FABRICE POTHIER:

Thank you very much. The gentleman in the middle.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Oh, excuse me. My name is Frederik Schumann, and I'm coming from a German think tank called Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik. So I have one first for the first speaker. You said in your first presentation that basically what the EU could do in the north was just to stop the Taliban moving in this region, so I would like to know: do you have any ideas how to do that, or do you have a concept for that, or something like that?

Then my second question would actually go to Pakistan, or rather to you, Mrs. Islam. As far as I remember, Pakistan is a huge country. It has a huge population. It's like 113 million, or something? 180? So it's huge. What do you think is the percentage of really active fighters who are actually challenging the government? Is it just a small minority, or is it a huge movement that actually can threaten the foundations of the country?

My final question would actually be to the three of you, but I'm gladly giving it to Daniel. The question is: we were talking about border police, and what do you think about border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, is that recognised by all the local actors? Officially, as far as I remember, the Durand line agreement ran out in '96 and hasn't been renewed. So there is no official border. Do you see that the locals on the ground actually recognise that there is a border, or do you think they see it more as Pashtunistan, or whatever that is? Just if you could elaborate on that. Thank you very much.

FABRICE POTHIER: Thank you very much. Okay, so let's start with maybe Gilles, and then Daniel, and then Shada. I'll just go through the question quickly, just to remind everybody. There is a question about the negotiations with the Taliban; The question was, can we give them what they want? And in fact, is it what they want? In fact, the whole of Afghanistan, in which case, it's a non-solution. Then there was more some kind of statement from the Commission, so I have tried to formulate them in question. It's about whether the European Commission does enough? I come back to that, and especially on institutions building and on the drugs issue. And then there were three questions from the last gentleman, one about how to stop the Taliban moving up north in Afghanistan, one to Shada about the percentage of the insurgents or the extremist groups in Pakistan versus the general population? And one general question, but especially to Daniel, about the border issue between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Thank you.

GILLES DORRONSORO: Okay, there is one question about how to stop the Taliban in the north, and I think it's an interesting question because it's also a way to speak about the idea of more resources. What I have understood about the situation in the north is that more German troops are not providing more security. They just provide more targets to the Taliban. So basically, bringing in 1,000 German troops more won't change the life of the people there. It means more patrols, so potentially more targets for the insurgents. So what's the use of the German troops in the north of Afghanistan? That's a real question. And I think right now that it's use is very, very marginal in terms of security.

So to answer your question, yes, it's possible to stop the Taliban. It's not very difficult, because in a province like Kunduz, you don't have more than 100, 300, 400 Taliban; certainly no more than 400 Taliban fighting really. But for this province, and remember it has a population of 1 million people, you have 1,000 policemen, underpaid, under-equipped, and I think it's not very difficult to elaborate on that and say that, if the police or the police had 2,000 or 3,000 men, and they had enough money, it were quite easy to stop the Taliban there, because they don't have much social support. The situation is a bit different in Fariab because they are coming from Badris, Baramuhab and Gormuz district, but even there with more local resources, Afghan resources, it would be much, much easier to stop the Taliban than what people think. So first: there is no need to send more German troops. I think to reduce the number of German troops would be useful. And secondly, to give more money to the local police force. That's it, basically.

Very quickly now, the Durand line, yes, of course, people like the Durand line because you can have contraband if you have no border, and they make a lot of money with contraband. So they love the border actually, and the border is very useful for them. Think about the French/Spanish border before Spanish EU accession. Now this border is totally useless, but before it was useful. The Taliban are totally free to cross the border. There is no control, and it's not going to work. It's impossible, just impossible to seal the border. So what we are seeing more and more, and because the United States is striking more and more often in Pakistan, is that this border is disappearing, politically speaking. This border is disappearing and it's very, very worrying, of course, because a lot of Taliban leaders are in Waziristan because you can cross wherever you want. That's one of the major reasons why you are not going to beat the Taliban militarily.

The last thing is about the EU programme. There may be plenty of programmes, but what I'm seeing is that it doesn't work. Take for example the program of the Germans and the police. Why is there such a failure of such a magnitude? So before commenting on the next programme and maybe the result in two years, we should ask ourselves the question why it's not working. What's wrong with the way we are conceiving the programmes, the resources we give to the programmes, the way we are doing things. That might be a good first step.

FABRICE POTHIER:

Thank you, Gilles. Daniel?

DANIEL KORSKI:

Well, I think first of all, we need a corrective to the conversation about political outreach, because I think we began the conversation akin to asking me the question 'when did you stop beating your wife, or have you now begun paying taxes, or since when did you do that'? No, I think it's very important, as Gilles said, not to delude ourselves into thinking that we can meet with the Taliban across a conference table and somehow cut a deal, like: 'you will have these three ministries, we will have these five, and let's just get on with it'. I don't think that's an opportunity. But I do think that localised strategies for political engagement, counter-insurgency, are going to be required, and they should be Afghan-led, and that requires some kind of strategic approach, a re-launch after the election of how the government wants to deal with this question, which until now, has been incredibly fraught and in many cases created more enemies than less.

But I think we need an additional corrective which started with how you phrased the question, Fabrice, which is that we are now discussing this, and the U.S. seems to be doing this, I would say we discussed it a lot a year ago, and though Obama, in one interview to the New York Times, suggested that perhaps a political element was going to be required, nothing that I have seen suggested the U.S. is now revisiting this question. So I think we have to be really honest when we sit here in Brussels and talk about what a potential strategy would be. I don't think this is a strategy that's coming down the pipe and we therefore have to think about it.

To your point about Fahim, Marshall, not General Fahim to you, and his inclusion on the presidential ticket, I think there's a bigger point. Any kind of political strategy obviously has to take into account the very many different political forces that make up the post-Bond polity, and there is no doubt that a lot of northern front forces would be particularly displeased about too much talk about outreach, so there is a sort of balancing question to be handled. I mean, I'm on the record saying that I have been deeply concerned about a lot of things that are happening in this electoral process, just on the registration, on the misuse of government funding in the support of one particular candidate, who happens to be the incumbent, and so forth and so on. So the fact that we are now latching on to his vice-presidential candidate and saying somehow that that is the violation, I think there is a whole series of violations that have taken place, and I think we are at a real risk that

the election in August is not going to be the kind of clean break that we in the international community like to see these things as. So that would kind of be my comeback on that.

Bettina, on Brussels, more money, I don't think you have ever heard me say that this is just the Commission's fault. I have been quite vocal in saying member states are not taking seriously the need to invest more intelligently, but in certain cases just more in the Afghan/Pakistan context. So it's not to say that the Commission isn't doing what it needs to do, in some cases you are not, but the member states in my view bear most of the responsibility for this, so I completely agree with you on that. Perhaps even more importantly, the notion of Afghanisation bearing also responsibility on the Afghans rather than just a sort of nice thing we say in order indicate that somehow our strong role is coming to an end is very important. The Afghans also have to step up to the plate and deliver in the areas they are keen to see delivering in. And quite interestingly, the Afghan government has now issued a civilian surge plan, a sort of response to the U.S. strategy, there is a sort of sense that they're trying to take charge. But responding to the U.S. strategy must be more than just issuing a document where it says we would like technical assistance in these 6,000 areas. It's actually taking charge of that technical assistance and ensuring that it delivers; getting rid of the corruption that exists, delivering its complex programmes, and so forth.

I just want to do one thing on the Germans, because I spent some time in Mazar-e-Sharif travelling around, and I think we have to acknowledge that there are 5,000 German troops, 1,500 of which are deployed outside of the base covering an area half the size of Germany, so I think it gives a sense of how few there are. And I think at heart, we are dealing with a doctrinal problem that these troops, the kind of patrols that you are talking about, Gilles, have very little interface with the local population, very little civilian support to engage in any kind of politically led development effort, and so it's not surprising to me that they have very little impact, and indeed, are in many cases, very unaware of the political developments that take place, including in Kunduz. And the fact that many of them, if not most, are on three to four month rotations, means that they arrive and leave with just about the same kind of knowledge about the local environment.

FABRICE POTHIER:

Thanks, Daniel. Shada?

SHADA ISLAM:

Yes, I would just like to take up the point Daniel has made about coordination of member state efforts, and then I'll come back to your question. I think that's very important. I don't think anyone here is finger-pointing at the European Commission. We all know you. You have your hands tied as regards financial assistance to Asia especially, or Pakistan also, but I think there can be more coordination, and I would be interested to learn from you, Thomas, what actually happened in Tokyo. Was there an idea that you would work on areas of the kind that I have mentioned? I would be very, very happy to hear what you have to say.

Just to come back to the colleague's question about the strength of the Taliban movement: look, when Pakistanis are allowed to vote, it happens once in a while, they vote for secular parties. This is what happened last year. That was quite an amazing phenomenon. Though Musharraf was still in power and manipulating like mad behind the scenes for the King's party, his party, which had very strong Islamist links enacted, but no, the people voted for the Peoples Party and the Muslim League-Nawaz. So I think that the strength of Pakistan at the moment, still very much so, is that there is a vast majority of people who believe in a secular Pakistan. That does not mean it won't be a conservative Muslim Pakistan, but they do not want the Taliban in power. The Taliban, as I can't stop insisting, are intimidating. They are a terrorist organisation. They might be a bit different from their appeal, or whatever the sentiments are against foreign occupation, in Afghanistan. That's not the case in Pakistan. I mean, in the regions where they are, there's a regime of terror and I would say that over and over again. Now what I have seen, and this is really troubling, is that the Taliban are

linking up with local extremist groups, which have been nurtured and equipped and funded at least in the past by the ISI, the security services of Pakistan. These are groups like the Lashkar-e-Taiba, responsible for the attacks in Mumbai, for instance. So that link-up that is taking place now is I think extremely dangerous and has to be monitored very closely. And I think the ISI and the Pakistani army and the authorities generally have to be pressed to make sure that that link, which is the real threat to Pakistan at the moment, will be cut.

The other thing that I'm very concerned about is the fact that the Pakistani authorities have played a double game as regards the Madrasas. They have received quite a bit of aid from the West, including the European countries, on closing down, modernising, all that as regards the Madrasas, which really hasn't happened. And I think they are a kind of a breeding ground, if you like, for conservatism, and that ultimately can also be a threat to Pakistan. And the last thing I'll say is the following: you hear a lot about these drone attacks on Taliban targets, al-Qaida targets, that they become a recruiting drive for the Taliban. I would beg to disagree. What I am getting from Pakistan is that a number of people, including very well informed people on the ground, are saying that's not the case. In many cases, these people are identified by local authorities, and then there is this intelligence communicated to the U.S. authorities, to the U.S. army, by the Pakistani army. So there is a double game going on there which I think is a bit of smokescreen when it comes to what is relayed to the West.

FABRICE POTHIER:

Thank you, Shada. I'm going to take some questions. There are lots. Gilles wanted to add something about the elections, and I just wanted to add two points. First, I wanted to join my friends and colleagues on the question of the European involvement in Afghanistan. The point I'm making is that we can generally do better and more. That doesn't mean the Commission is to be blamed. It needs to find, and I was specific, a better balance between how the national capitals, how the member states work with Brussels and actually support Brussels' involvement in Afghanistan, because what you hear is that you have national Afghanistan/Pakistan Special Envoys going to Washington and putting some blame on the other capitals or on Brussels. And I think there has to be a better and a clearer coordination, because Brussels has some skills, has some money, despite a shrinking budget, and can fill some important gaps for the member states, even though the member states will obviously keep their involvement, especially on the military side. That's extremely clear. But I think we can learn from past practices and mistakes, because there is a learning process, and the member states need to give more political capital to Brussels on working in Afghanistan.

And the second point was about Obama's talking to the Taliban. I may be wrong, but I think there was a mention of engaging with the insurgents whenever it makes sense, and whenever there is a kind of agreement on the rules of engagement, in his presentation of the new U.S. strategy. And I think the Secretary of State Clinton renewed the same line. So it's not to say it is a key component of the U.S. strategy, but it's clearly something that people are contemplating, and I think it's one of those strategic fallacies that one has to be extremely careful with, because talking about how to operationalise your talks with the Taliban, evokes a lot of questions, and will actually deliver you more problems than solutions, because it's essentially about who to talk to and what to negotiate about. So I think we should not be too enthusiastic about this notion. But now let me turn to Gilles on the elections, and then we are going to take the next round of overwhelming questions. Thanks.

GILLES DORRONSORO:

Yes, just some quick words on the elections. The first thing is that there is a very high level of scepticism in Afghanistan about the elections right now, due to the numerous problems of the 2005 elections, like corruption. The second point is that people are asking the question 'who is going to be appointed by the Americans?' right now. So they have this feeling that the Americans, or the army, are making the decision, not the Afghans. Right or wrong, but the perception seems to be very much there. And the third element is that you have more and more some kind of, alienation of the Pashtun in Afghanistan. The Pashtun are the most

numerous ethnic group in Afghanistan, and now they don't recognise themselves in the Karzai/Fahim/Khalili team, to say the least, and I think it's going to be really a problem in the next few years. A large part of the Afghan population thinks that the government is in foreign hands. And why is the international coalition so unpopular in the south and east where the Pashtun are dominating? It's because they think that the state is not their state, and I think the election is not going to solve this problem at all.

FABRICE POTHIER: Thank you very much, Gilles. Okay. I think we had the Commission, the second chapter of the Commission. The Council has just joined, so they can share the blame. We will manage the other questions. Let's take the Commission first.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: We have heard a lot of very interesting things. I will try to be short. I have some comments and a few questions. First of all, we have to understand what European Union, what Europe is about. Europe is, brutally speaking, a compilation of member states. It means that talking about the European Union, we have to remember that...

FABRICE POTHIER: You need to hold the microphone close to your mouth, sorry.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: We have to remember that the European Union is the Commission and member states all together. And while talking about the European contribution to Afghanistan and Pakistan, we have to take into account the general value of this contribution. I agree that there probably are some problems with coordination, and maybe we are not the most efficient or effective, but nevertheless, we have to take the overall figures into account. The second point is that we have to make a difference between Afghanistan and Pakistan. We are trying to establish a functioning state in Afghanistan, which doesn't exist at this stage. And Pakistan is not a failed state. Pakistan is an extremely fragmented state, politically, territorially, from any point of view it's very fragmented. The government is fragile. There is a very hard political fight for power, that we have to take into account as well. Usually, I agree with Shada, almost on everything. First of all, the Pakistan deficit in the European policy supposedly was true a few years back, but since the end of 2006, beginning of 2007, Pakistan started to become more and more important politically, and now we can clearly recognise that Pakistan is perceived by the European Union and its member states as an important political partner, and as an important political issue.

FABRICE POTHIER: I'm really sorry to interrupt, but if you could just keep your comments as short as possible, because there are lots of questions and we have 15 minutes left. Thank you.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Okay. Only few comments. First of all, we are going to tackle with people who are in power in Pakistan. We are going to talk to the government which is in place, which has been elected through a democratic process. Next point is development aid. The European Commission pledged in Tokyo \$640 million. It's €485 million until 2013. And we have limited resources. We have tried to extend this aid, and we are going to do that. The main spheres of our aid will be education, health, rural development, but one of the most important fields, institution building, capacity building, are becoming very important. Counter-terrorism is again one of the fields where we are going to be more active. Concerning trade, what does it mean to approach trade politically? I mean, according to our estimations, the FTA with Pakistan will be very profitable to the European Union, not to Pakistan, unfortunately. It means we are looking for instruments which are maybe not so tangible like FTA, to help Pakistan, and we have some WTO rules we have to follow. It means that overall, we are going to contribute to Pakistan in all fields listed by Shada.

Concerning my questions, first, sleeping with enemy... I fully agree with you Shada, but I used to raise this point while talking to my Pakistani friends in 2001, 2003 when I was in Islamabad, and my feeling that time was that the Pakistani elites didn't realise this issue at all. My question is whether the mood has changed in Islamabad, and whether the Pakistani elites realise that sleeping with enemy is really very dangerous. The second question: what is the role of the army? What is the role of the army in border regions? What is the coordination between the civilian government and the army, and to what extent the army follows instructions given by the civilian government? And the third question is; everybody repeated more resources, military instruments, economic instruments. I don't believe that it is possible to solve the Afghanistan issue without an internal Afghan political strategy, and whether a new president, a new government, will be able to provide a new political strategy to the east and to the south. Thank you.

FABRICE POTHIER: Okay, I promise we will invite the European Commission for a talk another time. The lady first, the blonde lady, then the gentleman with the blue jacket, then the lady with the finger. If you could be quick. I'm really sorry about that. Thank you.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: I'm going to be very quick. My name is Sally Coe. I'm with the ICTJ, and I have two comments and no questions, so that will also make it quick. First, after the parliamentary elections in 2005, the term democracy seemed to slip off the agenda in Afghanistan. My impression is that the same is now happening to the term Afghan government; that the focus on engagement now is very much on the region, on the counter-insurgency, but not on engaging with the Afghan government. There are very good reasons for the distrust between the international community and the Afghan government, that's for sure, but not being very closely engaged also politically with the government has direct consequences on internal Afghan politics. The thing that was mentioned about President Karzai and his running mates, for example.

This leads on to the second point, which is that the international community and the Afghan government should not only be engaging with the Taliban, they should actually be engaging with the Afghan people. This is something that is not happening right now. The international community and the Afghan government is not actively engaging and consulting with the population. This has a link to institution building, both in the area of security sector reform and justice reform, because I think that the technical assistance given by Europeans and others to police reform and to justice reform would look quite different if it was designed from the perspective of how these Afghan institutions look from the perspective of Afghan citizens. Thank you.

FABRICE POTHIER: If you could just keep it to one really tight question; so like this, our speakers can address everybody's question. The gentleman here, and then the lady, and then the other gentleman. And then we do the last one at the back. Thank you.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: My name is Wolfgang Rudishauser. I'm at the Permanent Representation of Germany. I have one question and one comment to Daniel. First question is, we have heard a lot about President Karzai and his running mates. We seem to have no serious contender apparently. You said we need a re-launch after the election. A re-launch with whom? With whom would we deal with corruption, with whom we will engage with the Afghans, as was said? And second, on the German troops in the north, you said they are not really cooperating or talking to the local population. Our understanding is that these troops are there to provide security for the provincial reconstruction teams, and that's their work. The reconstruction, the talk to the locals, is done by the Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

FABRICE POTHIER: Thank you. Yes, then the gentleman.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Elje Gazette-Rusheimer, I'm a journalist correspondent here. My question is about the mistakes of the past. Do you think that under the Obama presidency, there is a real chance to investigate the CIA-prison case in Europe? And don't you think that this black spot on the reputation of our troops staying there casted such a shadow that there is a strong desire of European population to distance themselves from illicit processes taking place in Afghanistan?

FABRICE POTHIER: Thank you. Yes, the gentleman.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: François Delençon for the French Daily La Croix. My question to Daniel and Gilles is about the elections. First of all, there are two elections. There are the presidential and the provincial elections. It seems that, as you have said already, the international community, the European Commission, everybody, the U.S., will fund an election to re-elect a corrupt administration. So how is it possible? What do you think the international community should do about this election? Should we keep pouring money and pouring observers into a corrupted process, or is it an important thing to do? Second, what will be the result if we have Karzai re-elected? What should be the attitude of the international community about Karzai and his future new government? And third, what about the provincial elections? Do you think there is a chance that those elections will produce some positive outcome, especially in the east and the south where the security situation is bad?

FABRICE POTHIER: Thank you. If you could pass the microphone to the gentleman. The green jacket first, and then the gentleman with the grey tie. Thank you.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Thank you very much. Omet Gris is my name. I'm a student of political science in Germany. I have just one statement to make, because I think in the whole discussion this point has not been made. From my point of view, I think it's quite interesting to see also that it is important that the European Union and the international community should communicate with the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan and also the protagonists which are responsible for insurgencies in both the countries. But at the same time, the more important thing is to see that what has happened in the last decade and is still happening in Afghanistan. The European Union, as a soft power, is working very hard to build up the structure, the infrastructure and also the institutions in Afghanistan, but the dealing of the United States with the situation in Afghanistan, that they keep bombing the civilians too, makes it quite difficult for the European Union to end up positively with the efforts they are bringing in Afghanistan.

FABRICE POTHIER: The gentleman at the back.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Thank you. Johan Eliason, East Strasburg, Pennsylvania. Just one quick question to Miss Davis, excuse me, Miss Islam. Pardon me. You mentioned earlier about the miscommunication by the drones; that there are on the ground official Pakistan assistants provided to the U.S. military. What's the ultimate aim that the government has in mind by allowing this and officially condemning it, because isn't that a sign that not only are they unable to maintain their own security in their own territories, but is it worthwhile for us investing that much trust in a government that is not standing up, neither to its own population, nor to securing its own borders? Thank you.

FABRICE POTHIER: The blonde lady, yes, and then we'll finish with the gentleman here.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Renee Earl from the U.S. mission to the European Union. I would like to bring the question back to Europe. We hear often that member states don't participate in greater amounts, either bilaterally or through the European Union, because public opinion is not strong in favour of support to Afghanistan. I want to know, if you agree with that proposition, what's to be done.

FABRICE POTHIER: Thank you very much. And we will finish with the gentleman at the second front row with one very quick question.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Viho Strom, the Flemish monthly Mo. We might not have a new strategy as has been said in the beginning, we do have a new strategic concept, AfPak, which has been repeated over and over again. And I was just wondering to have the reaction of the panel about how damaging it could be to use that as a password for everything. And people talk about the Taliban as if it is the same in Pakistan and in Afghanistan. We now talk about AfPak as if the problems are the same. I'm not saying they are not connected, but I just wanted to know if you think there is some damage in that concept, and where is it leading us.

FABRICE POTHIER: Thank you very much. So now we will have to be super organised, because we have five minutes left. So I will start with Shada, and I will just summarise the questions that were most directed at you. There was one question about the drones and what it meant from a US/Pakistan cooperation point of view. And then there was a series of questions from the Commission about the kind of general political dynamic, especially vis-à-vis the Islamic groups, the role of the army, and, if I understood the question well, what an Afghan leader could mean in terms of Afghan/Pakistan relationship. And then there was the last question from the gentleman about AfPak: is it going to be one of those catch-all concepts that does not mean much on the ground?

SHADA ISLAM: Yeah, I'll take the last question first, as one does often. I think the AfPak concept was good in terms of public relations. It put Pakistan on the agenda as firmly as Afghanistan has been so far, but I think there is a growing realisation in Europe and in the U.S. that you really have to separate the two when developing strategies. So as you said yourself, there are interconnections. As Thomas pointed out, the challenges facing Afghanistan and Pakistan are very different, and I repeat again that the state of Pakistan is under attack from the Taliban. They are targeting the state institutions and they really, as far as I can tell, are determined to dominate Pakistan. Of course, we have a million strong army. That's not going to happen. I don't believe that Talibanisation of Pakistan is on the cards, but they are targeting institutions, creating instability, and creating terror, as I said before. So the dimension of the problem is very, very different. And I think people are increasingly beginning to realise that. On the drones, I take your point, and I think this point is being made very publicly now.

In Pakistan, as I said, we have a very strong civil society. Our media are bringing up this issue of, let's say, the disconnect between what the army and the politicians are saying in public to their public, and what's really happening behind the scenes. That is because our political elite in Pakistan, as Thomas has pointed out, is in a state of denial. In public, they do not confirm the threat of the challenge that I said to you, and this cooperation has been going on for several years now; I mean, since the drone attacks started.

And I think the Pakistani army is really benefiting from the fact that they are actually often targeting the leaders. I mean, I don't have the figures with me, but if you read up, you'll see that several leading al-Qaida figures and Taliban figures have been decimated. That is something that the army itself could not do, I think. The Pakistani army is under-trained, badly equipped, and counter-insurgency is

not their strong force. I mean, they were trained to counter the Indian army, and obviously, that is a big issue at the moment; lack of training on counter-terrorism.

Very, very quickly; I totally agree with you that, as you know, the political lead in Pakistan has been very, very, I would say, negligent about the threat, and that remains so. It's only now that people are beginning to realise what a challenge Pakistan faces. And that has changed in the last few months. The political leadership is weak. I think that, when I said you have to talk to them, I wasn't saying we should talk to them. I said we must consolidate them and provide them with the means to deliver on things like electricity, sanitation, water facilities. I mean, we talk about Kabul being in dire straits. I can tell you, a number of Pakistani cities suffer constantly from electricity breakdowns, and we are talking about a modern state. So that is something that the Europeans should be focusing on.

And finally, and you know better than I do, Thomas, the relationship between the army and the civilians: who leads who, who instructs who. I think that dilemma remains. And as regards the FTA, look, if we won't get a FTA, creative thinking is needed. Think outside the box. Think of something that you could come up with which is WTO-compatible and still meets Pakistan's requirements for better access to European markets.

FABRICE POTHIER:

Okay, now we are going to turn to Daniel and Gilles. So I'm just trying to encapsulate the different questions into three themes. One was mostly about the elections. Are the elections going to change the game? If we have more of the same after the elections, what does it mean from a cooperation point of view, and what does it mean for the Afghan people? Then there was a question about European public opinion. Is it true that, because of the weak support in the public opinion, member states in Europe can't do that much? Or is it more complicated than that? And then there was a more specific question about the German troops, what their role should be in the north of Afghanistan, and I think you could maybe both of you finish with this AfPak concept, which is a good concluding question. Daniel, we'll start with you. Thanks.

DANIEL KORSKI:

Thank you. On the elections, I think there was an opportunity, probably about six months ago, where the international community wanted to make clear that the job wasn't being handed to Karzai. I think there was an opportunity to put in a much more rigorous process for registering voters, a much more rigorous process for ensuring that Karzai wasn't using the various instruments of state, including the directorate for local government, self government, and so forth and so on. I think that opportunity has passed. I'm quite cynical about this, and I cannot at this state imagine a scenario by which Hamid Karzai, despite being as unpopular as he is, wouldn't win. And the fact that what we thought were going to be opposing candidates haven't come forward and instead have spent the last two months in various different kinds of clandestine negotiations with Karzai or his team is a pretty strong indication. And finally, the fact that the whole constitutional debacle, the argument he was having with the speaker of the parliament, Qanuni, effectively fell out into Karzai's favour, you know, is another illustration. So I don't think we have another choice. And the question, therefore, for policymakers is how to ensure that once that happens, we can have a different kind of relationship with Karzai.

And I think that takes us back to some of the issues of our strategy. What is it that the international community wants? What are the five things that we want to focus on? How do we want to tackle corruption? I mean, I think back to my days in the Balkans when we often saw Lord Robertson writing to newly elected leaders trying to lay out for the international community a very few priorities they wanted to see happen. I think in many ways, the international community will have to think very carefully about what they would like to see a new government do, not strategically in the next five years, but in the first 100 days, and so forth.

Provincial elections: I think there's a much bigger problem about what the roles of the various different elements of the Afghan state are, and I don't think it has been clarified what provincial councils are, even though, of course, we have had this omnibus legislation and this huge report written by parts of the Afghan government. I just don't think it is clear what the provincial councils are for, compared to the community development councils that were set up by the administrator for rural administration, compared to some of the local tribal shuras etc., etc., etc. So I don't hold out much promise for this.

Just quickly on the German troops. I mean, this is a fascinating question, because I was speaking to the chief of your joint staff in the Ministry of Defence just last week, and his view was: no, we are there to assist. We don't provide security. We just assist the provision of security. Now you're saying that the job is that you provide security to the PRT. The idea somehow that you can deploy troops somewhere as part of an intervention, peace-keeping or peace-making, and they would not have a nimble and effective relationship with their local counterparts, is clearly problematic, and I think German forces are suffering from a doctrinal deficit here, both as it concerns force protection, their engagement with the local population, their ability to deploy with the Afghan army which they are supposedly meant to be training, etc., etc. I think there's a serious problem. And I think the problem is going to stare us all in the face when, as Gilles says, the situation turns. And it has happened in a couple of places, but if it happens in many others, what's going to happen? Are the Germans going to hunker down further for fear of any attacks, especially in an electoral period?

And the final thing, AfPak. I'm reminded of this article that was once written, I think it was by Friedman, about the Middle East, that there is no longer a requirement for a two state solution but a 12 state solution, or something like that he said. And that's what the Obama team has tried to do, to say this is not just about Afghanistan or indeed Pakistan, but Shada mentioned India. That means we have to speak about the role that China potentially plays, whether to resolve Kashmir or indeed the Chinese relationship with the Pakistani military. You hinted at this, but it's worth bringing out. The role of Saudi Arabia, and the struggle that Iran and Saudi Arabia are effectively having on the territory of Afghanistan and Pakistan. I don't think you should overdo this, but it's still nonetheless something that's there. So I think it's important that the new U.S. administration has begun appreciating these linkages, because I think the Bush administration saw Afghanistan as a separate problem in the past and was focused on de-linking India from Pakistan. And just because you are de-linking India from Pakistan, because you want India to counterbalance China, doesn't mean that the India/Pakistani problems go away, so it's a welcome development, but we shouldn't just think that a regional solution will immediately appear before us, because we have said it's a regional problem. So I think we have taken the first step down a long, long road.

FABRICE POTHIER:

Now, Gilles with the concluding answers.

GILLES DORRONSORO:

Yes, the first thing is about the public opinion. I will quickly tell one anecdote about the Germans in the north: three weeks ago the northern gate of Kunduz was attacked by Taliban. It was a well planned attack with 40 to 60 men, and the only security force to go there was the police, while the Germans actually were just a few kilometres from there. They did not go out of their base. And here we have a serious problem of credibility. So again, we are asking the same question: what are the Germans doing in the north? Just waiting for the Taliban to arrive there? I think that NATO is okay here. NATO is a political organisation, but we need nevertheless to have some kind of minimal perimeter efficiency. If not, we are lacking all credibility. And that is exactly what's happening in the north.

The second thing is about the elections. I think Karzai is going to win. It's over. The real question is much more about the logistics of the elections next year; how to do it. It's going to be terribly corrupted, this one and the next one, so do we have a choice? Not really. We are obliged to fund, we

are obliged to be there. But if you compare it to 2005, there were a lot of complaints, but what happened in 2005? The complaints stayed in boxes, and the boxes are somewhere in New York. So one useful thing to do would be not to hide the complaints, to speak about it, so to do exactly the contrary of what we have done in 2005.

So the last thing is about AfPak. AfPak is complicated. On the one hand, it is a good thing to have somebody who is in charge of both countries, just to avoid that Islamabad and Kabul are completely different things. Obviously, they are primarily linked. So that's the good part. The bad part is that it's part of a larger trend where we are diluting the question. Actually, yes, Afghanistan is a regional problem. It doesn't mean that the solution is regional. When I am hearing people, and good specialists by the way, explaining that we have to engage India to solve the Kashmir problem so Pakistan will be more relaxed on this eastern front, then we can hope... I mean, come on. It's going to be lost in two years if we don't do something quick. So that's the problem with the AfPak.

And the last point is that there is nothing new. There is nothing new to give money to the Pakistani and to hope they are doing something against the Taliban is not exactly a very new idea. It is not very original. And we have discussed sending more resources to Afghanistan before. It is being done since 2002. Every year we are sending more resources. So the last point is that I am still looking for a strategy in there.

FABRICE POTHIER:

Many thanks to our speakers and to the audience for your patience and your many questions. Carnegie Europe will carry on doing some debates and initiatives on Afghanistan, because this is an important matter here and across Europe. Thank you very much.