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

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY
AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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CONTENTS

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

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2009

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2 p.m., in room 2247, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. John Tierney (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Tierney, Flake, Van Hollen, Welch, Driehaus, and Lynch.

Also present: Representative Doggett.

Staff present: Catherine Ribeiro, communications director; Mariana Osorio, Ken Cummings, Matt and Ploszek, Robyn Russell, legislative assistants; Andy Wright, staff director; Elliot Gillerman, clerk; Scott Lindsay, counsel; Steven Gale, fellow; Adam Fromm, minority chief clerk and Member liaison; Christopher Hixon, minority general counsel; and Christopher Bright, minority senior professional staff member.

Mr. TIERNEY. A quorum being present, the hearing entitled, "Afghan Elections: What Happened and Where Do We Go From Here," will come to order. I ask unanimous consent that only the chairman and ranking member of the subcommittee be allowed to make opening statements. Without objection, that is so ordered.

I ask unanimous consent that the gentleman from Texas, Representative Lloyd Doggett, be allowed to participate in this hearing. In accordance with the committee rules, he will only be allowed to question the witnesses after all official members of the subcommittee have had their turn. Without objection, so ordered.

And I ask unanimous consent that the hearing record be kept open for 5 business days so that all members of the subcommittee will be allowed to submit a written statement for the record. Without objection, it is so ordered.

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

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

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

Since 2002, a key component of the U.S. strategy in Afghanistan has been to extend the authority of the Afghan government, to encourage governmentwide reforms, to support the government's provision of basic services like electricity and water, and to nurture the growth of Afghan civic institutions. A weak, corrupt, and unjust Afghan government that does not have the support of the Afghan people can't survive for long against the strain of a sustained Taliban insurgency campaign. Hence, the long-term U.S. strategy in Afghanistan is largely predicated on having a legitimate and capable government in Kabul.

Both Pakistan's and Afghanistan's partnership with the United States and the international community are vital to achieving many U.S. objectives, including disrupting, displacing, and defeating Al Qaeda. Unfortunately, despite sizable United States and international community aid efforts, the Afghan government has proven deficient in providing Afghan citizens with basic government services and legal protections. Further, the Afghan government has been wracked by a failure to adequately address extraordinary levels of corruption within its ranks.

Mounting United States and international frustration with incompetence and corruption in Afghanistan came to a head with the August 20, 2009 Presidential election. The widespread and massive voting irregularities, as reported by the United Nations and others, have by all accounts undermined the Afghan government's legitimacy in the eyes of its own people and those of the international community. What should have been another milestone in the long road toward democratic legitimacy and stronger governance was instead a missed opportunity for all Afghans, and for the international community.

Widespread government corruption is a critical hindrance to Afghan development. According to the Congressional Research Service, "[b]ecause of corruption, only about 10 percent of United States aid is channeled through the Afghan Government."

In short, the ability of the Afghan government to reestablish some semblance of democratic legitimacy and to effectively provide basic government services is undoubtedly weighing heavily on President Obama's ongoing review of the U.S. strategy in the region. The failure of the Afghan election and the inability of the government to provide effective governance are not for lack of U.S. funds. The United States spent approximately $200 million in support of the August 20th election, and, in total, all donors contributed over $300 million.

Further, since 2002, the United States has spent almost $2.7 billion for democracy, governance, rule of law, human rights, and election support in Afghanistan. As an oversight committee, we are charged with determining whether the U.S. taxpayer funds have

been well invested, wasted, the subject of abuse, or the victim of fraud. It is fair to inquire how it is that such an investment could have been made only to foster such unsatisfactory results. Moreover, we must know who is responsible, and how such a travesty can be avoided in the future.

Shortly, we are going to hear from witnesses who can inform us what, in their view, went wrong in the Afghan Presidential elections in order to draw and apply lessons from that difficult experience. The ultimate question, however, for today's hearing is how do we move forward? What can the United States and international community do on the question of legitimacy of and performance of the Afghan government given the long track record of failure over the past 8 years?

[The prepared statement of Hon. John F. Tierney follows:]

Statement of John F. Tierney

Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

Hearing on "Afghan Elections: What Happened and Where Do We Go From Here?"
November 19, 2009

Good afternoon. Today's hearing asks the question: what happened with the Afghan presidential election held on August 20th, and what can the United States and the donor community do about Afghan government legitimacy and governance going forward?

Since 2002, a key component of U.S. strategy in Afghanistan has been to extend the authority of the Afghan government, encourage government-wide reforms, support the government's provision of basic services like electricity and water, and nurture the growth of Afghan civic institutions. A weak, corrupt, and unjust Afghan government that does not have the support of the Afghan people cannot survive for long against the strain of a sustained Taliban insurgency campaign. Hence, the long-term U.S. strategy in Afghanistan is largely predicated on having a legitimate and capable government in Kabul.

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million in support of the August 20th election, and, in total, all donors contributed over $300 million. Further, since 2002, the United States has spent almost $2.7 billion for democracy, governance, rule of law, human rights, and election support in Afghanistan. As an oversight committee, we are charged with determining whether U.S. taxpayer funds have been well invested, wasted, the subject of abuse, or the victim of fraud. It is fair to inquire how it is that such an investment could have been made only to foster such an unsatisfactory result. Moreover, we must know who is responsible, and how such travesty can be avoided in the future.

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-30-

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

Mr. FLAKE. I thank the chairman for calling the hearing and look forward to it. I won't take much time here echoing the chairman's statement. We spent nearly $3 billion in efforts in Afghanistan, ranging from democracy to support ruled law, election support, and then to see this kind of event at the last election, these kind of irregularities, it makes us all wonder whether or not our money has been well spent. So I am anxious to hear testimony and yield back.

Mr. TIERNEY. Thank you.

With that, the subcommittee will now receive testimony from the panel that is with us today.

Allow me to first introduce the entire panel, then we will go back for their comments.

Ambassador Peter Galbraith served as the United Nations Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan from March to September 2009. Prior to this assignment, he served as a senior diplomatic fellow with the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation. From 2000 to 2001 he served as director for Political, Constitutional, and Electoral Affairs for the United Nations Transitional Administration, East Timor. Ambassador Galbraith holds an B.A. from Harvard College, an M.A. from Oxford University, and a J.D. from Georgetown University.

Mr. J. Alexander Thier is the director for Afghanistan and Pakistan at the U.S. Institute for Peace. Before joining the Institute in 2005, Mr. Thier was the director of the Project on Failed States at the Stanford University Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law. From 2002 to 2004, he was a legal advisor to Afghanistan's Constitutional and Judicial Reform Commissions in Kabul. He holds a B.A. from Brown University, an M.A. from the Fletcher School at Tufts University, and a J.D. from Stanford Law School.

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

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

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

[Witnesses sworn.]

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

I inform all of you that your full written statement will be put into the record by unanimous consent, and also ask that you try to keep your opening remarks as close to 5 minutes as you can. In reading them, I can't imagine that you could possibly put your full written remarks in anywhere close to 5 minutes, so because you are so familiar with the subject matter, we are going to trust that you are able to accordion that in a little bit and give us your wisdom in 5 minutes so that we can get some questions and answers in as well.

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

STATEMENTS OF AMBASSADOR PETER W. GALBRAITH, FORMER U.S. DIPLOMAT AND FORMER DEPUTY U.N. SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR AFGHANISTAN; J. ALEXANDER THIER, DIRECTOR, AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN CENTER FOR POST-CONFLICT PEACE AND STABILITY OPERATIONS, U.S. INSTITUTE OF PEACE; ASHLEY TELLIS, SENIOR ASSOCIATE, SOUTH ASIA PROGRAM, CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE; AND GILLES DORRONSORO, VISITING SCHOLAR, SOUTH ASIA PROGRAM, CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR PETER W. GALBRAITH

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

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

The $200 million from the United States, was put forward in support of elections which Afghanistan itself could not have paid for, and those elections were blatently fraudulent.

But that underestimates the total cost of what happened on August 20th, because it has also set back dramatically the prospects for success in the military campaign that now engages 65,000 American service men and women, as well as 35,000 troops from our allied countries. So this is not just about the misspending of $200 million in American taxpayer money on elections. That, frankly, is small change as compared to what these elections have done to prospects for success in the military operations.

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

President Obama's strategy on Afghanistan that started with such promise at the beginning of this year.

I think we need to be clear as to who is responsible for the fraud. The fraud is the responsibility of those who committed it. I don't know the degree of President Karzai's personal involvement, but it is clear that he sought to benefit from the fraud, particularly in his effort to try to avoid a second round of the runoff, a second round of the Presidential elections, by accepting a result that he knew was fraudulent, and it only required intense diplomacy to get him there.

But he also is the person who appointed all the members of the Independent Election Commission who consulted regularly with the chairman. It is the Independent Election Commission which—the only thing independent about it is its name—that in every way operated as an agent of the Karzai campaign, and in every instance of fraud—and I think this is a critical point—in every instance of fraud, either the staff that was appointed by the Commission committed the fraud, collaborated with those who committed the fraud, or knew about the fraud and failed to report it.

So the best that can be said about President Karzai is that he put his own personal interest ahead of his country's interest at a critical time. So clearly the responsibility of the fraud is with those who committed it.

But there is a secondary responsibility that, frankly, falls on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan or, to be more precise, on its head, the Norwegian diplomat, Kai Eide.

Let me say I worked for 4 months in UNAMA. The staff there consists of the best people that I have ever worked with in my life; they are professionals who care deeply about Afghanistan; some of them have decades of experience. And the views that I represent from the very short time that I was there do not reflect the fact that I have learned everything about the country, but, as a leader of the organization, I listened to the people who worked for me, and what I present is a synthesis of what they had to say.

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

Now, I have detailed in my statement, as I have in a number of things I have written about since I was recalled—that is a polite word for being fired—how it was that the United Nations failed to carry out its mandate, and I would be happy to respond to that in the question and answer period. But I would like to just—well, I would like to touch on two points.

It is not just the U.N. Mission, but, frankly, the U.N. Headquarters, because when this issue arose, the United Nations Headquarters made no effort to investigate, they did not talk to me after the public controversy surfaced, incidentally, which became public through no fault of my own or the fault of the head of the Mission,

Kai Eide, they simply took a decision that one of us had to go, and being suitably hierarchical, they decided it should be the No. 2.

I don't quarrel with their right to choose staff as they want, but I do quarrel with the fact that they chose not to look at the substance of the issue. And I also quarrel with the explanation that was given, which is that private disagreement should become a reason for removing an official, because no organization can survive or can function well if it cannot tolerate private dissent; and it is no excuse to say that the private dissent might some day become public, because that is almost inevitable when you have a very controversial issue.

Now, what is the implication of this? Well, frankly, for President Obama's counterinsurgency strategy to work, it needs a credible local partner. United States and NATO troops can clear the Taliban from an area, but eventually the foreign troops must be followed by Afghan troops to provide security; Afghan police to keep order; and an Afghan government presence to provide honest administration, public services, and to assist in economic development.

It is clear that a fraud-tainted Karzai government, considered illegitimate by a large part of the country, cannot fulfill the role of a reliable partner. Thus, we are in the situation where although the security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated in 2009, as it has every year since 2004, in my view, sending additional troops is no answer. Without a credible Afghan partner, they cannot accomplish their mission; and sending them is, therefore, a poor use of a valuable resource. And that judgment, frankly, is one I make without regard to whether one is supportive of the war or opposing the war. If the troops can't accomplish the mission they are being given, then they shouldn't be used for that mission.

That then leaves two other alternatives. One is simply to withdraw, or a variant of that is a pure counterterrorism strategy, and the other option is the status quo. I am also against withdrawal because, over the last 8 years, we have accomplished a lot in Afghanistan. I think we have a moral debt to the Afghan people. And if we withdrew, there would be certainly a rapid deterioration in the security situation in the Pashtun parts of the country, which would be unwelcome.

That then leaves the alternative of the status quo. It is also unsatisfactory because the situation is getting worse year by year. But of the three options, that is, sending additional troops to circumstances where they cannot accomplish a mission, withdrawal, and the status quo, the least unattractive is the status quo.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Galbraith follows:]

Ambassador Peter W. Galbraith
Testimony for the Sub-Committee on National Security and Foreign Affairs
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
US House of Representatives
November 19, 2009

Afghanistan's fraudulent presidential elections have dimmed the prospects for success in that country. I thank Chairman Tierney and the subcommittee for their decision to explore what went wrong and the consequences for future US policy, including the critical decision as to whether to send additional troops.

President Karzai's administration has long been characterized by ineffectiveness and tolerance for corruption. Now, however, he is also irretrievably tainted by the massive fraud committed on his behalf in the August 20 elections. Many Afghans—particularly ethnic Tajiks—do not see him as Afghanistan's legitimate leader. The electoral fraud has undercut support for the international military mission in the country and has stopped the momentum behind President Obama's new Afghanistan strategy. In short, it is not too much to argue that Afghanistan's election fraud has provided the Taliban their greatest strategic gains in eight years of war.

Those who committed the fraud are responsible for it. I do not know the degree of President Karzai's personal involvement, but he clearly sought to benefit from it, strongly resisting the Electoral Complaints process that eventually brought his vote total below the 50% threshold needed to avoid a run off. Karzai put his personal interest above his country's interest with near catastrophic consequences for Afghanistan.

The United States and its allies entrusted the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) with supporting the Afghanistan elections. The UN helped mobilize more that $300 million to pay for the elections—most from the United States—but did not exercise any oversight over the electoral process. This was, in my view, an omission with stunning repercussions that is worthy of your subcommittee's close scrutiny.

The Security Council tasked UNAMA with supporting Afghan Independent Election Commission (IEC) with the holding of "free, fair, inclusive and transparent" elections. The problem was that the IEC was not independent. Karzai appointed all seven of its members and they acted as agents of his campaign not as a non-partisan election body. Wittingly or not, the IEC facilitated the fraud. In every instance of fraud, staff hired by the IEC either committed the fraud, collaborated with those who did, or knew about the fraud and failed to report it. The IEC declined to take measures that could have reduced the risk of fraud before the elections and included more than one million obviously fraudulent votes in the preliminary election tally.

Given all that was at stake for Afghanistan and for the prospects for the international military mission, UNAMA should have used its considerable influence to insist on fair elections, but it did not.

Kai Eide, the Norwegian diplomat who heads the UN Mission, took the view that UNAMA should support the IEC, but not interfere even when its actions were blatantly partisan. There were multiple opportunities when the UNAMA could have acted but did not.

In July, I came to the realization that the greatest risk to the Afghan elections was from "ghost" polling stations, that is polling centers sited in areas so insecure that the centers would never open. In coordination with the Ambassadors from the US, UK, EU and NATO, I pressed the Afghan Ministers of Defense and Interior either to secure these polling centers or to close them. The Afghan Ministers, whose continued tenure in office was to depend on the fraud, complained about my intervention and Kai Eide ordered me to drop the matter. As it turned out, most of the electoral fraud occurred in these ghost polling centers.

During the election campaign, Mr. Eide stated that UNAMA's role was to ensure a level playing field. Yet, he opposed any step that might be seen as critical of President Karzai. For example, he ordered the deletion of a section critical of state media bias from the political rights report prepared jointly by UNAMA's human rights unit and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. The deleted section pointed out that state television, RTA TV, gave Karzai six times the news coverage that it gave Dr. Abdullah, his principal opponent, and that RTA Radio devoted a staggering 91% of its coverage to Karzai and less than one per cent to Dr. Abdullah. Although Mr Eide insisted he would make an issue of illegal electioneering by state officials (almost all on Karzai's behalf), Kai never did so, nor did he allow others to do so.

With Mr. Eide's blessing, UNAMA established and manned an election center that ran around the clock through the balloting and counting period. At considerable personal risk, UNAMA field staff collected data on turnout and fraud. Our data showed a miniscule turnout in key Southern Provinces, but these provinces were to report a large number of votes for Karzai. Once it became clear to Mr Eide that the output from our election center would be deeply disturbing to President Karzai, he ordered the staff not to share the data with anyone, including the Afghan institutions charged with preserving the integrity of the electoral process.

On September 2, I learned that the Independent Election Commission (IEC) was about to abandon its published safeguards so as to include in the final tally a large number of Karzai votes that it knew to be fraudulent (including those from polling centers that never opened). As Office-in-Charge, I spoke with the chief electoral officer to urge that the IEC stick with its established procedures. President Karzai had the Foreign Minister protest my supposed interference in the electoral process and, as you know, the Afghanistan Permanent Representative threatened to have me expelled from the country. Mr. Eide

sided with Karzai in this matter, seemingly indifferent to fact that these fraudulent ballots were the ones that put Karzai over 50%.

Kai Eide's approach compromised UNAMA's reputation for neutrality, at least with the Afghan opposition. Both Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani, Karzai's two main challengers, told me that they had no confidence in Mr. Eide because they felt he was indifferent to the fraud and biased toward Karzai. This is the nearly universal view among the UNAMA staff and is shared by many diplomats in Kabul. Unfortunately, it also has a basis in reality.

Because UNAMA failed to act, the IEC included fraudulent ballots in the preliminary tally thus putting Karzai over 50% and plunging Afghanistan into a seven-week political crisis. A separate body, the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) with a majority of international commissioners, had to sort through the fraud ultimately excluding enough fraudulent ballots to bring Karzai just below 50%. (The ECC did not do a full recount but instead sampled just 10% of the suspect ballots; had they done a full recount, Karzai would likely have been closer to 40% of the vote.) After the ECC determined there would have to be a second round, the IEC announced rules that virtually ensured it would not be fair. It rehired the staff responsible for the fraud and announced it would increase the number of polling centers, effectively ensuring even greater opportunities for fraud. Understandably Abdullah Abdullah, Karzai's main rival, chose not to go to he second round, not wishing to put Afghan lives at risk for participating in an election where their votes would not be honestly counted.

UNAMA's failure to address the evident problems with the Afghan elections has severely damaged the prospects for success in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the response of the United Nations headquarters was no better. When Secretary-General Ban ki-Moon and Undersecretary-General Alain Le Roy learned of the disagreement between Mr Eide and myself, they did not investigate. No one spoke to me about the issue of electoral fraud at all. Instead, I was recalled, a polite word for saying I was fired.

When I asked Mr. Le Roy how I could explain my recall to the very dedidcated professional staff at UNAMA, he said to tell them it was because my private disagreement with Mr Eide became publicly known, although he readily agreed it was through no fault of my own or Mr. Eide's. Diplomatic missions are not democracies and I accepted Mr. Eide's decisions even though I thought he was very wrong. An inability to tolerate private disagreement is a sign of weakness, which in this case had adverse consequences for the UN Mission and the overall effort in Afghanistan.

President Obama's counter-insurgency strategy depends on a credible local partner. US and NATO troops can clear the Taliban from an area but eventually the foreign troops must be followed by Afghan troops to provide security, Afghan police to keep order, and an Afghan government presence to provide honest administration, public services, and to assist in economic development. A fraud tainted Karzai Administration is not such a partner.

Although the security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated in 2009, as it has every year since 2004, sending additional troops is no answer. Without a credible Afghan partner, they cannot accomplish their mission and sending them is therefore a poor use of a valuable resource.

Mr. TIERNEY. Thank you, sir.
Mr. Thier.

STATEMENT OF J. ALEXANDER THIER

Mr. THIER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee. My name is Alex Thier, and I am the director for Afghanistan and Pakistan at the U.S. Institute of Peace. Thank you for giving me the opportunity today to present my personal views on the way forward for the United States and Afghanistan.

We face, as you said in your opening remarks, a fundamental dilemma in Afghanistan. On one hand we have a partner who was inaugurated for a 5-year term that we find, to put it mildly, less than satisfactory; not a strategic partner. On the other hand, the United States has very serious long-term national security interests not only in Afghanistan and the region, and a withdrawal, precipitous destabilization of those two countries and the region would be a grave problem for us.

I just returned from Afghanistan and Pakistan on Saturday, and the thing that most struck me on this trip is that we really are facing a crisis of confidence in both of those countries at the moment. Four years of rapid decline of security in both countries—but we will focus on Afghanistan—was capped by this election debacle that came really at the worst possible time. There is a lack of confidence in President Karzai, in his will to change and, indeed, in his ability to change.

At the same time, there is a growing lack of confidence in the United States and the international community. Questions about whether we will be there for long make actors choose things, make decisions based on what they think we are or are not going to do. There is also a lack of confidence because we, together with President Karzai, hand-in-hand have stood up for the last 8 years repeatedly and promised people security, justice in the rule of law, and economic development; and we fundamentally failed to deliver on those things. There is also a crisis of confidence in the United States, I think, for the same reasons.

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

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

I don't think that the United States or the United Nations, perhaps to echo some of Ambassador Galbraith's comments, are also without fault in this regard. We have known precisely since 2004 exactly when this election was going to take place, but we did virtually nothing to prepare for it until it was too late and the election had to be delayed, causing a constitutional crisis in the spring.

There was a distinct lack of principle that was pursued with these elections, not only in terms of how the fraud was dealt with, but also in terms of how candidates were vetted or potentially eliminated from the elections for past criminal acts.

Fundamentally, I think this election has shaken the legitimacy and credibility of the Afghan government at the most crucial moment in the last 8 years. So the question I want to answer, then, is what now? I think that the fundamental premise that we have to start with is that no government that is unable to provide security to its population, which is seen as corrupt and unjust, will be legitimate in the eyes of the population; and it is in fact this very illegitimacy that has driven Afghans away from the government and emboldened the insurgency.

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

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

To come to that second point, addressing a culture of impunity and improving governance, this really has two components. The first is leadership. We are all waiting now to see who President Karzai will appoint to his cabinet, who the key Governors will be. We have dealt for the last 8 years with both a good Karzai and a bad Karzai. The good Karzai has put some terrific ministers in place and we have managed to have some terrific successes: the National Solidarity Program, which has delivered aid to 22,000 Afghan villages using local Afghan governance; the National Health Program, which has changed access to health care for Afghans from something like 10 percent to 80 percent. There have been real successes and those have been achieved when we have had real partners in the Afghan government; not just Karzai, but the people who run the ministries.

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

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

The fourth is reconciliation and reintegration. We need to take very seriously the idea that there are many people out there today, on the battlefield, who are not implacable foes of the United States or of the Afghan government. If you look at the spread of insecurity across Afghanistan over the last 5 years, there are many areas that were very pro-government just a few years ago, but now seem to be falling into the hands of the Taliban.

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

Finally, international coordination and effectiveness. Every lessons learned study, every speech that you read about post-conflict reconstruction and stabilization always has this listed—civilian coordination, civilian coordination, civilian coordination. And yet we continually fail to get it right. I believe that the time has come for us to examine creating a much more empowered civilian aide coordinator on the ground in Afghanistan to match the power of our military coordinator and the commander of the ISAF—and that is something that we can talk about in more detail.

I just want to close with saying that I think that these steps taken together can help to reverse the tide of insecurity and lack of confidence that has swept Afghanistan. I spent 4 years in Afghanistan during the civil war in the 1990's and I watched the Taliban sweep across the country and close schools off to girls and prevent female colleagues that I had been working with from coming into the office.

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

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Thier follows:]

UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

An independent institution established by Congress to strengthen the nation's capacity to promote peaceful resolution to international conflicts

Testimony of

J Alexander Thier
Director for Afghanistan and Pakistan
United States Institute of Peace*

before the

US House of Representatives
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs

"The Afghan Elections: What Happened and Where Do We Go From Here?"

November 19, 2009

*The views expressed here are my own and not those of the United States Institute of Peace.

"The Afghan Elections: What Happened and Where Do We Go From Here?"
Testimony of J Alexander Thier, U.S. Institute of Peace

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee,

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

The United States face a fundamental dilemma in Afghanistan today: do we continue and increase our support to the deeply compromised Afghan government in the hopes we can improve it, or do we reduce support, and risk the collapse of that government, the success of the Taliban insurgency, and wider regional instability?

I have just returned from travel to Afghanistan and Pakistan and the situation is alarming. Pakistan is undergoing a spasm of violence so widespread and unpredictable that the whole country feels under a state of siege. To its credit, the Pakistani military is undertaking a serious military campaign in South Waziristan, but is simultaneously making deals with other militants and displacing hundreds of thousands of its own citizens. Meanwhile, political infighting threatens the tenure of the current civilian government. The future of Pakistan and its uneasy relationship with India seems more precarious than ever.

In Afghanistan, the political equilibrium remains unbalanced following the elections fiasco. President Hamid Karzai's main challenger, Dr. Abdullah, told me personally that he wants to focus on the future, not the past, and that he would become the "loyal opposition" to the Karzai government. But he also continues to maintain that Karzai's assumption of a second term is illegal based on the failed elections. Tensions between President Karzai and the international community are high - as they publicly trade allegations over corruption, external interference, and who is protecting or paying-off which warlord. And the top two U.S. officials in Kabul, Ambassador Eikenberry and COMISAF McCrystal, have become unintentionally embroiled in a public disagreement over the wisdom of sending more U.S. forces to the theater. Meanwhile, violence continues to rise, the United Nations is reducing its presence in response to the recent terror attack on its staff

in Kabul, and on Monday, Transparency International ranked Afghanistan as the second most corrupt country on earth, after Somalia.

Altogether, these events have spurred a crisis of confidence in the region and here at home that threatens to further imperil our mutual objectives to limit the spread of extremism and ensure stability. The collective approach over the last eight years is clearly not working. Even as we have steadily invested more troops and more money, security has declined, and violence and corruption have increased.

Even if you believe, as I do, that our interests in the stability Afghanistan and the wider region demand that we continue our robust engagement, it is imperative to ask at this juncture if we can turn the current situation around, and if can we do it in partnership with the Karzai government?

The Elections

Creating a reasonably democratic government in Afghanistan that can provide security, govern justly, and deliver basic services has been the U.S. goal since 2001. Yet eight years later, the government in which we have invested billions of dollars is badly faltering.

Thus far, the Afghan government and its international partners have failed to deliver on many of these key issues. Most importantly, many Afghans do not feel secure. The Taliban use brutal tactics and intimidation to demonstrate to the population that the government and its international backers are unable to protect them. At the same time, private militias, drug mafias, and criminal gangs act with impunity throughout the country. At best, the government seems powerless or unwilling to stop them. At worst, many of these bad actors are government officials or closely associated with the government. On the positive side, the lives of many Afghans have appreciably improved: access to education and health care, as well as incomes, have risen significantly. But many of these advances are undone by the government's failings of security and governance.

Progress on developing the framework to support a reasonably democratic government has been unaccountably weak. Elections do not a democracy make.

"The Afghan Elections: What Happened and Where Do We Go From Here?"
Testimony of J Alexander Thier, U.S. Institute of Peace

Indeed, elections that are not embedded in a democratic framework can be downright undemocratic. Afghanistan's August 2009 elections were a case in point. Managed by an "Independent" Election Commission that was clearly biased in favor of the President, the elections became an exercise in pre-, mid-, and post-election fraud. At all stages greed, lust for power, and the lack of any effective system of accountability transformed what should have been a critical step in Afghanistan's gradual transformation towards stability into a farce.

The work of the mixed Afghan and international Elections Complaint Commission (ECC) was the only institutional bulwark against the bold-faced attempt by the President's supporters to steal the election. The permanent institutions required to hold a fair and accountable process - political parties, the IEC, an independent and apolitical judiciary and prosecutorial service - were all dormant at best or complicit at worst.

In many respects, the United States and the international community bear equal responsibility with the Afghans for the failure of the elections and the political process. Many in Karzai's camp associated with the worst abuses of power were - or remain - protected by international patrons. President Karzai's brother, long-rumored to be a drug kingpin in southern Afghanistan, is reportedly also on the CIA payroll. Rashid Dostum, the infamously brutal warlord from northern Afghanistan has been consistently protected by NATO allies with interests in the North. At the operational level, the date for these elections has been known since early 2004, but little was done to support the development of elections institutions until it was too late.

Ultimately, this botched election process has shaken the legitimacy of the Afghan government at a crucial moment. It is not principally that the Afghan people (or indeed the international community) see elections as the path to legitimacy, but rather that this election crisis has reinforced all the worst perceptions of the Karzai government as a corrupt and unreliable partner. Therefore, while the elections process can no longer be redeemed, it may still be possible, through concerted and intensive effort, to rehabilitate the reputation and performance of the Afghan government itself.

"The Afghan Elections: What Happened and Where Do We Go From Here?"
Testimony of J Alexander Thier, U.S. Institute of Peace

What Next?

No government that is unable to provide security to its population, and which is seen as corrupt and unjust, will be legitimate in the eyes of the population. It is this illegitimacy that has driven Afghans away from the government, and emboldened the insurgency.

Therefore, while we may require additional forces to train the Afghans and secure the population, the focus of international efforts to stabilize Afghanistan should not be exclusively, or even primarily, military. Instead, the real key to success in Afghanistan will be to reinvigorate critical efforts to promote Afghan leadership and capacity at all levels of society while combating the culture of impunity that is undermining the entire effort.

After eight years, even a fully resourced strategy is not guaranteed to succeed. Illicit power structures, including warlords, narco-mafias and other criminal networks have become entrenched and intertwined with corrupt government officials. Political patronage, at the heart of the recent election fraud, is more powerful than those promoting reform. And our own record of delivering effective assistance programs does not always inspire confidence. A fraction of each dollar allocated actually makes it to the end user, and sometimes even then fails to have the desired impact.

To overcome these challenges, and our own limitations, we must do five things with our Afghan partners to rebalance our efforts: 1) radically prioritize what we want to accomplish; 2) address the culture of impunity and improve governance; 3) decentralize our efforts to reach the Afghan people; 4) support a serious program of reconciliation and reintegration to get insurgents off the battlefield; and 5) improve international coordination and effectiveness.

Prioritize: For too long we have been doing many things poorly instead of a few things well. In this critical year, it is essential to simultaneously scale back our objectives and intensify our resources. The U.S. and its partners should focus on security, governance and the rule of law, and delivery of basic economic development with a strong emphasis on agriculture. This focus will allow the

international community to develop key partners, and improve Afghan leadership and accountability.

Address Impunity and Improve Governance: Without a credible and legitimate Afghan partner, we cannot succeed no matter how significant the investment. The U.S. must act aggressively with its Afghan partners in the lead to break the cycle of impunity and corruption that is dragging all sides down and providing a hospitable environment for the insurgency.

Earlier today, President Karzai was inaugurated for a second five-year term, promising to the Afghan people and the world to fight corruption and build a stronger, safer Afghanistan. A few key steps must be taken immediately to set a clear tone for the next Afghan government. First, Karzai must put forth a strong and "clean" slate of top officials in cabinet ministries and key provinces to demonstrate his commitment to reform. Second, the government must truly empower its anti-corruption and serious crimes task force, independent of the government agencies it may be investigating. For its part, the international community must devote intelligence and investigative support, as well as the manpower to support dangerous raids. Third, in the first few months, several high profile cases including the removal and/or prosecution of officials engaged in criminality, including government officials, should be pursued aggressively and highly publicized. Finally, the U.S. must put real effort into strengthening Afghan institutions that will be responsible for these matters over the long haul, giving them the capacity and tools they need to lead. The U.S. should approach this mission with the same vigor as other key elements of the counter-insurgency campaign.

Decentralize: A top-down, Kabul-centric strategy to address governance and economic development is mismatched for Afghanistan, one of the most highly decentralized societies in the world. The international community and the Afghan government must engage the capacity of the broader Afghan society, making them the engine of progress rather than unwilling subjects of rapid change. The new formula is one where the central government continues to ensure security and justice on the national level and uses its position to channel international assistance to promote good governance and development at the community level.

Reconciliation and Reintegration: The Afghan government has yet to undertake a serious effort to attract the non-ideological foot-soldiers of the insurgency from the battlefield. By offering economic opportunity, improved governance, and protection - alongside a vision of a better future - the government and the international community may be able to reverse some of the insurgent territorial gains over the last few years. Such an effort will require leadership, resources, and a concerted effort to coordinate and communicate between Afghan national and local government and international and national security forces.

At the same time, the anti-Taliban political elite (government and opposition figures) must achieve consensus about possible political negotiations with Taliban leadership, and the redlines for such engagement. Public offers of negotiations with the insurgents by the government should be accompanied by strong support for the Afghan and international security forces and civilians who continue to sacrifice in the fight against extremism.

Improve Aid Effectiveness and Harmonization: The U.S. must use its aid to leverage positive change, and must closely coordinate these efforts with international allies. This should include not just information sharing, but serious operational planning with Afghan government and allied officials. To that end, it is time to consider creating a civilian lead in the international community with the power to harmonize both policy and process. A new office and approach with unified leadership that carries the commitment from at least the top five international donors would focus and leverage the vast majority of assistance to the country.

Another critical point of leverage is to channel more aid through Afghan government institutions with stringent accountability mechanisms such as "dual key" trust funds that enable Afghan initiative while retaining oversight of spending. It is also essential to move spending to the provincial and local level, to build capacity of sub-national institutions and put more control over development resources into the hands of the recipients.

"The Afghan Elections: What Happened and Where Do We Go From Here?"
Testimony of J Alexander Thier, U.S. Institute of Peace

The Way Forward

Can these steps reverse the tide of insecurity and lack of confidence that has swept Afghanistan and America and provide the international community and the Afghan people a credible partner?

I believe the answer is yes. But this cannot be accomplished through half measures, mixed messages, and lack of long-term vision. A unified international presence on the civilian and military sides must simultaneously work with President Karzai and his government and around them, to boost leadership and accountability in Kabul and across the country.

The Afghan people, and those who have lived and worked among the Afghans, including our soldiers and civilians in Afghanistan, have not given up hope for a peaceful Afghanistan. In every part of the country there are Afghans risking their lives to educate and vaccinate children, to monitor elections and investigate war crimes, and to grow food for their communities. They are not helpless without us, but they rely on us for the promise of a better future - a promise we have made repeatedly over the last eight years.

I understand that remaining committed to the stabilization of Afghanistan is not easy. It will be costly, in lives and taxpayer dollars. It is a challenging mission, in every way. Yet the alternatives, when examined honestly, are unbearably bleak. Through four years on the ground in Afghanistan during the Afghan civil war in the 1990s, I witnessed the impact of war, warlordism, Talibanism, and abandonment by the West on Afghanistan and its neighbors. Afghanistan, its fabric of governance and society rent by war, became a breeding ground of Islamist extremism and global jihadists.

Afghanistan has come quite far since those dark days. We are not as far along as we should have been by now, but our accomplishments are not minor. Our efforts since 2001 have demonstrated, if quixotically, that with determination and leadership, positive change is possible.

Mr. TIERNEY. Thank you, sir.
Dr. Tellis.

STATEMENT OF ASHLEY TELLIS

Mr. TELLIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Ranking Member, for inviting me this afternoon.

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

I am going to summarize my comments in terms of three big propositions.

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

Understanding that his power base in the south would not be able to exercise their suffrage because of Taliban intimidation, he did what a rational politician and the state of nature would do, he cooked the books to win the elections. This is a fact.

However, there are two things that still give me reason for hope. First, no one has been able to demonstrate that even if we had a completely successful election, the outcome of the Presidential election would have been different from what it was. Second, we ought not to forget that beyond the Presidential election, there were provincial council elections, and those provincial council elections, which are very important because they represent local politics, illustrate a very important point which I think we ought to keep in mind when we think about the future of Afghanistan: they confirmed the proposition that changes of power can take place in a peaceful manner and responsive to local aspirations. It is something we ought not to forget.

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

The second proposition is that although these elections will increase our burdens—and everything that Alex Thier said I completely endorse on this question—I would argue that they do not make the necessity for our success here any less pressing, nor do they render the efforts we have already made in this country futile. We have to stay committed to supporting the Afghan people in their struggle to create a viable state. If we fail in this undertaking, I think the entire enterprise will be vitiated and it will mean a return to those days between 1996 and 2001, with all the consequences that we had to confront.

The third proposition that I want to advance is that we will have to do many things to help President Karzai make the critical domestic changes that are necessary for success over the long term.

To be sure, President Karzai will have to do many things toward that end as well, but I do not believe he is capable of making those difficult choices without the continued support and reassurance of the United States.

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

Level of process. I think the first thing we have to do is simply recognize that he is going to be president of Afghanistan for a second term. We have to deal with him. We have to deal with him because that is a fact, but we also have to deal with him because it is fundamentally in our interest to do so. I think there are serious issues of legitimacy, but the issues of legitimacy are actually more abstract.

What is going to be important in the years to come is his performance, and we have to make certain that his performance is going to deliver in two critical areas: being able to provide population security, human security, and being able to confront the issues of corruption. It is performance in these two areas more than any abstract problems with legitimacy that will determine Karzai's success as a president and the success of our efforts in Afghanistan.

The second element at the level of process, the United States, President Obama in particular, and the administration, have to commit clearly and resolutely to winning this war and staying involved in this country over the long term. Vacillation and wavering really reinforces the temptations of various players in Afghanistan to hedge their bets, to avoid supporting the coalition, and including Mr. Karzai himself, who will simply not make the hard political choices he has to if he is not assured that the United States will stay engaged.

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

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

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

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

[The prepared statement of Mr. Tellis follows:]

Congressional Testimony

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

Ashley J. Tellis
Senior Associate, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Written Testimony
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs
November 19, 2009

CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT
FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE
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Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for your invitation to testify on the recent elections in Afghanistan and their consequences for U.S. policy. I respectfully request that my statement be entered into the record.

ASSESSING THE AFGHAN ELECTIONS

Although international attention was dominated mainly by the presidential race in Afghanistan, it is important to remember that the 2009 Afghan elections involved polling for both the presidency—which was contested by some 40 candidates—and 420 councilors across 34 provincial councils throughout the country. This event has now become infamous for the limited participation, violence, and fraud that characterized the process. Probably less than 50 percent of the eligible electorate actually cast their ballots, and the turnout was especially low in the Taliban-dominated Pashtun southern provinces of Helmand and Kandahar, where fewer than 5 percent actually voted; 26 people were killed in election-day violence across Afghanistan, with voters and security forces being deliberately targeted by rocket attacks and suicide bombers; and the widespread stuffing of ballot boxes by President Hamid Karzai's campaign, complemented by the manifest partiality of the Afghan government's Independent Elections Commission (IEC), completed what has been the least satisfactory election since the new Afghan political dispensation was inaugurated after the Bonn Conference.

On balance, therefore, the 2009 Afghan elections were undoubtedly flawed, but they were still not an unmitigated disaster. Could they have been managed better? Certainly. But would even a better managed process have produced a fundamentally different outcome? Probably not. Although many in the United States are tempted to judge the Afghan elections by the customary standards of success in the West, that temptation ought to be resisted because of the immaturity of Afghan political institutions, the pressures imposed by a violent insurgency, and the failures of U.S. policy in Afghanistan thus far.

Two facts ought to be kept in mind in this regard: First, however extensive the fraud in the Afghan presidential elections may have been this time around, very few individuals—in Afghanistan or outside—truly believe that any of President Karzai's competitors could have legitimately earned more votes than he did to produce a fundamentally different result than that which finally emerged. To that degree, Karzai's reelection, despite all the shenanigans associated with that effort, broadly reflects Afghan preferences. This conclusion is, no doubt, limited by the lower participation witnessed in this election and the sharp disparities in regional turnout, but to the extent that these factors were affected by the Taliban insurgency, the broader judgment still holds.

Second, the provincial council elections, which often reflect both local concerns and local struggles over power, were successful in the sense most important to Afghanistan. As Noah Coburn and Anna Larson put it, "at least at the local level, these elections have been used to change the balance of power in a relatively peaceful manner," thus reflecting "the highly localized cultural and social context … that is often patronage-based and in which power is gained through constant struggle and dialogue between political groups and leaders" (Noah Coburn and Anna Larson, "Voting Together: Why Afghanistan's 2009 Elections were (and were not) a Disaster," *Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*, Briefing Paper, Kabul,

November 2009). The fact that the provincial council elections have permitted peaceful transfers of power locally in a country where such a concept is unheard of suggests the successful—though slow—germination of the democratic idea, which bodes well for the future if the international community and the Afghan people are able to better prepare for the Wolesi Jirga elections scheduled for 2010.

When these two facts are considered, the 2009 Afghan elections, in my opinion, were certainly not failures, even though they would not be considered paragons of success either. Their limitations, however, do not derive simply from the malfeasance of the Karzai campaign, although this has attracted the most international attention. Rather, the weaknesses of the electoral process in Afghanistan derive more fundamentally from structural factors such as the presence of a single non-transferable vote (SNTV) system, the absence of genuine political parties, the inability to complete a national census, the fragility of electoral institutions, and the pervasive presence of corruption in all walks of life and at every level in Afghanistan. These constraints in their totality, however, are not unique to Afghanistan and, therefore, must be appreciated for what they are: limitations that are common in most developing countries.

In fact, it is a tribute to the Afghan people that their electoral experiences are not more debased than they have been, given that the country is struggling to build new national institutions and inculcate new democratic mores amid significant ethnic, tribal, economic and ideational divisions, while confronting a violent and unremitting insurgency. In such circumstances, American expectations about democratic performance in Afghanistan ought to be more realistic, taking into account its troubled history, its current predicaments, its cultural circumstances, and its early stage of economic and political reconstruction. None of this is meant to suggest that the recent electoral failures in Afghan performance should be absolved on the basis of an insidious tyranny of lowered expectations, only that these failures ought to be considered in perspective, relative to the comparable performance of other states similarly situated and Afghanistan's own unique effort at building a new democratic dispensation in the midst of the challenges of suppressing a vicious insurgency. In fact, if the primary purpose of an election is to ensure the peaceful transfer of power between individuals and groups who accept a certain political regime, then, the 2009 Afghan elections may be judged to have served that purpose, even if the process by which this objective was achieved admittedly left much to be desired. In Afghanistan's current circumstances, however, this is no mean achievement.

WHAT DO THE AFGHAN ELECTIONS IMPLY FOR THE UNITED STATES?

What do the 2009 Afghan elections imply for the United States and, in particular, for the prospects of the current American-led coalition effort in Afghanistan? These imperfect elections undoubtedly increase the burdens facing the United States in Afghanistan, but they do not make the necessity for success here less pressing nor do they render the efforts in Afghanistan, either already underway or contemplated prospectively, particularly futile.

To my mind, the objectives that President Barack Obama defined for the Afghanistan-Pakistan region in March 2009 still remain the most sensible goals for U.S. policy. These goals, as the president laid them out first on March 27, 2009 and again on August 17, 2009, consist of:

- Eviscerating al-Qaeda in Pakistan and in the Afghanistan-Pakistan borderlands.

- Marginalizing the Taliban as an armed opposition in Afghanistan to prevent both their return to power in Kabul and their control of Afghan territory, which would "mean an even larger safe haven from which al-Qaeda would plot to kill more Americans."

- Preventing regional security competition over Afghanistan that would undermine the security and reconstruction efforts underway.

- Stabilizing Pakistan as a state because its fragile political system, nuclear weapons capabilities, and internal weaknesses could make it a potentially dangerous threat to American security and interests.

The importance of securing these objectives has not diminished since the president first articulated them. If anything, the imperatives for obtaining them expeditiously have only increased—for several reasons:

- First, al-Qaeda, although weakened, has not yet been destroyed and remains a serious threat to American and allied security;

- Second, although the Taliban do not by any means either physically control the majority of Afghan territory or its population, their insurgency continues to grow in strength at a time when their linkages with al-Qaeda and other dangerous affiliates such as the Haqqani network, the Hezb-i-Islami Gulbuddin, Lashkar-e-Taiba, and Jaish-e-Mohammed have only deepened;

- Third, the threats to Pakistan from groups such as the Tehrik-i-Taliban – which share close links with al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban – have only become more virulent; and

- Fourth, the prospects of regional competition over Afghanistan—involving Iran, Pakistan, India, and the Central Asian republics (not to mention Russia and Saudi Arabia)—remain undiminished and could flare up again in the face of coalition failures, thus giving extremist groups like al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and their murderous affiliates a new lease on life.

The only way to conclusively defeat these multiple changes is to aid the Afghan people in erecting a minimally effective state that can control its national territory and deliver the personal security, responsive governance, and economic development necessary to ensure internal stability. No other alternative, including an exclusive focus on counterterrorism, or returning to acephalous tribalism, or accommodating fundamentalists within the governing regime, or accepting an authoritarian dispensation, can actually produce an Afghanistan that does not generate threats to itself, its neighbors, and the United States and its allies. An extensive elaboration of this conclusion can be found in my report, *Reconciling with the*

Taliban? Towards an Alternative Grand Strategy in Afghanistan (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2009), 21-34.

Given this judgment, the only question to my mind is how best the United States and its allies can attain the goal of creating, what the former U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, Ronald E. Neumann, once labeled, "a somewhat cohesive state in Afghanistan." Since the ability of the U.S.-led coalition to defeat al-Qaeda and its affiliates, including the Taliban, hinges *fundamentally* on its success here, the best instrument for achieving this goal today remains a comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy focused on protecting the Afghan population—exactly the strategy articulated by General Stanley McChrystal. The success of this strategy, in turn, hinges on how well we can effect a variety of strategic, operational, domestic, and external changes. These alterations have been detailed at length in *Reconciling with the Taliban?* and, hence, I will restrict my remarks here mainly to what is the central subject of this hearing: How can the United States work with Hamid Karzai to effect the critical domestic changes necessary for success in the aftermath of the flawed August 2009 elections in Afghanistan?

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? OR, HOW CAN THE UNITED STATES STILL WORK WITH HAMID KARZAI?

It is by now widely recognized that effective Afghan government performance will be the essential complement to U.S. troop reinforcement if the momentum of the Taliban insurgency is to be first arrested and eventually defeated. In fact, there is almost universal agreement within Afghanistan and abroad that Karzai's failures of governance have contributed immensely to the resurgence of the insurgency. This troubling fact was well understood by the Obama administration prior to the August elections and, unfortunately, its fraught relationship with the Afghan president may have inadvertently contributed to the problems associated with his reelection. Clearly, the decision by the Karzai campaign to engage in illegalities like ballot stuffing, voter intimidation, and other forms of electoral fraud was conditioned largely by the expectation that his support base, which consists primarily of Pashtuns, would be unable to exercise their suffrage because of successful Taliban intimidation. Accordingly, he attempted to compensate for this loss by making deals with various allied warlords to deliver the necessary votes that would increase the prospects of his reelection.

But his fraying ties with the United States also reinforced his determination to win at any cost. When Karzai arrived in Washington in May this year, there were many within the Obama administration who believed that Afghan and coalition interests would be better served if he were to either relinquish the idea of running for reelection or accept titular status if reelected by appointing another more competent administrator to oversee day-to-day governance. The speculation about these alternatives, however, appeared to have strengthened his suspicions that the United States was determined to force his removal from power and, consequently, increased his incentives to produce a guaranteed electoral victory by any means.

With Dr. Abdullah Abdullah's decision not to contest the runoff, Hamid Karzai has now secured a second term by default. The real question at this juncture, therefore, is how should

the United States move forward in the aftermath of this flawed outcome? Five distinct elements, *at the level of process*, should be considered as part of an integrated policy.

First, the administration should simply accept the fact that Hamid Karzai will enjoy a second term as president of Afghanistan. To be sure, his credibility has been damaged and his political capacity weakened, among other things, because of his potential obligations to the warlords who supported him during the campaign. But, with Dr. Abdullah's decision to refrain from challenging Karzai, the United States has no choice but to accept him as Afghanistan's principal representative—and to work with him for a better second term because that is fundamentally in American interests. His diminished legitimacy should not be treated as an insurmountable obstacle to cooperation because while political legitimacy no doubt matters, most Afghans care more about Karzai's performance in regards to governance than any abstract concerns about legitimacy. A successful counterinsurgency campaign too requires only the most minimalist form of legitimacy: all it requires is that the population supports the regime more than it supports the insurgents and such backing invariably derives more from the gains received than any judgment about leadership rectitude. In this context, helping Karzai deal with the pervasive corruption in Afghanistan will make a larger difference to his success as a coalition partner than any doubts about his legitimacy. Where defeating the insurgency is concerned, addressing petty corruption is probably more important to most Afghans than combating grand larceny—and this effort requires more than simply admonishing Karzai to do a better job. It requires the coalition to address the difficult issues of Afghan state resources, the strength of the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund, and the pay scales of public servants, rather than merely exhorting the Afghan government to fight dishonesty and sleaze within the country.

Second, President Obama and his administration must commit clearly and resolutely to winning the war in Afghanistan and staying involved in the country over the long term. Both components of this commitment are essential. An unmistakable communication of the U.S. intention to seek victory—corroborated by committing the necessary resources to the task—is fundamentally necessary to undermine the hedging strategies currently pursued by various critical actors inside Afghanistan. The recent statement made by the White House spokesman, Robert Gibbs, that "an exit strategy is as important as ramping up troops" for success in Afghanistan, is singularly unhelpful. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's assertion that that United States has "no long-term stake" in Afghanistan, although not intended to mean what it apparently says, could prove similarly problematic. The simple fact of the matter is that any evidence of American vacillation or a longing desire for a quick exit makes the task of procuring success in Afghanistan all the harder. Entertaining the notion of exit strategy is particularly dangerous because: it spurs the insurgents to simply wait out the international coalition; it encourages important Afghan bystanders such as the village elders and tribal chiefs, whose cooperation is necessary to defeat the Taliban, to persist in their prevailing ambivalence because the coalition's presence is assessed as transient and hence unworthy of backing; it induces Islamabad to continue supporting the Afghan Taliban leadership because of its expectation that the insurgents may once again be required to protect Pakistan's interests in the regional security competition that will ensue after the United States departs Afghanistan; and, above all else in the present context, it reduces Karzai's incentives to make the difficult political decisions he must with respect to improving governance—some of which would reduce his own power—if he is not assured of consistent American support for his regime and for him personally. Encouraging Karzai

to confront various national problems with alacrity, therefore, will be impossible in the absence of a genuine and lasting U.S. commitment to Afghanistan.

Third, the Obama administration must rebuild the partnership with Hamid Karzai. Karzai's flaws are legion: he is a poor manager; he lacks attention to detail; he is terrible at policy implementation. But he has a vision for Afghanistan as a successful and moderate state, which is identical to that sought by the international community. Although Karzai can often be erratic in his decision making and uncomfortable with managing dilemmas, the historical record suggests that he has in fact implemented many difficult decisions when he has been shown their necessity or their advantage. In most cases, what appears to have made the difference has been the presence of American interlocutors he had come to trust. In the first term of the Bush administration, then U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad, turned out to be one such confidant. A more recent example of an individual who played such a role has been Senator John Kerry whose patient and sympathetic diplomacy was critical to convincing Karzai to accept a runoff and thereby resolve the crisis caused by the disputed election of August 2009. It is indeed unfortunate that Karzai today appears to lack the trusted interlocutor of the kind exemplified by Khalilzad and Kerry. But finding someone within the administration who can play a similar role will be critical if the Afghan president is to be nudged into "doing the right thing" in the years ahead—something that will be essential for American success as well. In this context, the Obama administration should restrain its propensity to relentlessly blame Karzai for all of Afghanistan's present ills. While he undoubtedly shares blame, Afghanistan's problems derive fundamentally from deeper factors, including the effects of over thirty years of savage war, the destruction of its political institutions and its social fabric thanks to conflict, and the meager and disjointed assistance offered by the international community. The unyielding administration criticism of Karzai, at the very least therefore, ought to be moderated by a recognition of the terrible circumstances facing his government.

Fourth, working with Karzai and in Afghanistan more generally will require a strong American civil-military partnership in Kabul. The counterinsurgency campaign that will be waged in some form in the months and years ahead will require a close partnership between uniformed military officers overseeing the business of war, diplomats charged with strengthening relations with the host country as well as with other coalition partners, and officials involved in reconstruction and development. Success in Afghanistan will materialize only to the degree that all three sets of activities are integrated at all levels in a unified political-military campaign. In the early years in Afghanistan, such a robust and coherent civil-military partnership was personified by the close collaboration between Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad and the commander of the Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan (CFC-A), Lieutenant General David W. Barno. A more recent example where a similar partnership was indispensible for success can be found in Iraq between Ambassador Ryan Crocker and General David Petraeus. Without such close affinity between the civilian and military arms of the U.S.-led coalition effort in Afghanistan, success will prove to be elusive.

Fifth, a "whole of government" effort within the United States will be vital for the success of the campaign in Afghanistan. Although the appointment of Ambassador Richard Holbrooke as the President's Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan appears to have brought much more coherence to the U.S. government's political and diplomatic efforts, it is still not clear whether the coordination between the White House staff and the Special

Representative's office in the State Department is particularly effective. Even more consequentially, it does not appear as if the President himself has been able to devote the requisite time and attention to the war in Afghanistan. By all accounts, President Obama seems to have permitted his administration's handling of the Afghan mission to proceed on autopilot—until the point when General Stanley McChrystal's request for more troops jolted his attention. In retrospect, it is not at all clear, for example, how involved President Obama was in assessing the strategic alternatives facing the United States before promulgating the national strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan announced in March 2009. A deeper presidential understanding of the consequences of the strategy then would have spared the country, its military commanders, American allies, and the regional states in South Asia (including Afghanistan), the uncertainty now associated with committing the required resources in Afghanistan. As the administration moves forward to implement its preferred course of action in the months ahead, another lapse in leadership attention in Washington could prove exceedingly costly.

CONCLUSION

The minimal improvements in process suggested above remain necessary but not sufficient for effecting the domestic changes in Afghanistan that will be required for American success in that country. These improvements must therefore be complemented, obviously, by equally important shifts at the level of policy, which have been detailed at length in *Reconciling with the Taliban?* Suffice it to say that the most important reforms necessary at the domestic level may turn out to be relatively small things that could make all the difference. For example, the United States ought to increase its investment in mentoring the Government of Afghanistan's ministerial offices because, for the foreseeable future, these institutions will remain the principal instruments for delivering services nationwide. Similarly, working with Karzai to identify and appoint effective district governors could make all the difference to increasing popular support for the state during the ongoing insurgency—in fact, the possibilities of success here may hinge largely on the presence of "a few good men" in Afghanistan. Finally, a general reorientation in attention from central bodies to the sub-national institutions of political and social order and economic development is long overdue.

Above all else, however, securing productive domestic change in Afghanistan will require a sturdy American recommitment to the Afghan cause—a dedication that has been called into question because of the involved nature of recent administration debates about future U.S. strategy. The flawed presidential election in Afghanistan should not become a reason for wavering American investment in this war torn country because, whatever its flaws, the electoral outcome broadly comports with Afghan preferences. Accordingly, the administration should use the opportunity offered by its review of General McChrystal's recommendations to demonstrate strong support for the general's strategy because it remains the best instrument available for securing American interests in Afghanistan during Karzai's second term as president.

Mr. TIERNEY. Thank you very much, doctor.
Dr. Dorronsoro.

STATEMENT OF GILLES DORRONSORO

Mr. DORRONSORO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

The second point is that in places in the south, especially, in places where the Taliban was strong, despite the huge offensive of the coalition in Helmand, for example, the turnout was around 5 percent, in Helmand and Kandahar. So basically nobody, no woman, at least, nobody or very few people went to vote.

This was not only because there was intimidation from the Taliban; this was also because people are very cynical about politics in Afghanistan right now.

I was there for the election in Mazar-e-Sharif, a place where the security is quite good, and very few people went to the polling station.

So it is not only about Taliban, it is also about the crisis of legitimacy in Afghanistan. And I think the right comparison is with 2004, when a lot of people went to vote and the election was not perfect, but reasonable. So the main point is that in 2004 you had something very close to a democracy in Afghanistan. It is totally over now.

What is worrying is we are not in the payback time. Karzai made a lot of deals, alliances with warlords, drug dealers, local pollers to win this election, and now he has to pay back. That is why we will have a very, very, very large amount of corruption in the next few months and even the next few years.

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

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

From that we have, I think, to make sure of a few things when we are speaking about reconstruction and state building in Afghanistan, because whatever the strategy we like, we need an Afghan state to exit Afghanistan. The first thing is the matter of time. There is no quick fix. Actually, what we are seeing in Afghanistan is not a process of state building, it is the reverse; the state is

shrinking. You have less and less functioning state institutions in Afghanistan.

So right now, in all the provinces in the south and east, there is no functioning state; the justice is just not there. The Afghan national army is controlling absolutely nothing. So we have a major problem. It is not that the state building is going to be quick or not quick; it is that there is no state building working.

So what can we do about that? We need time. For example, the Afghan national army is officially 90,000 soldiers; probably the useful amount is around 60,000. To double this number, we need at least 5 years. The idea that we can push the Afghan army to 250,000 men in 2 or 3 years is a fantasy; it is not going to happen. That is why you need time. And the consequence is that we need less casualties in Afghanistan because the level of 500 casualties for the coalition we have seen this year is just not sustainable. So we need a strategy that allows us to build a state in the long run with a low level of casualties.

The second point is about resources. There is actually enough resources in Afghanistan. We are giving enough money to Afghanistan. The problem is that the money is disappearing. Disappearing because half of the money is going to foreign companies, foreign experts; and then we have this very vicious system of subcontractors that make sure that, when you are building a school in Afghanistan, it is going to cost you double of a school in the United States, or almost.

So the money is not going to the right place. The money should go in places where there is enough security to check what we are doing with the money. For example, right now we are giving a lot of money to Helmand. It is the case since at least 2005. A lot of money, absolutely no result. Nobody can show anything in Helmand for all the money we gave there. So we have to reverse the perspective. We have to give money in cities, in town, in the north where the situation is quiet, especially not in the south, because part of this money is going to the Taliban. We are giving much more money to the Taliban than drug trafficking.

So how to do it now. We are, since a few months, in the perspective of public humiliation of Karzai. One day The New York Times has an article about how Karzai's bills are being paid by the CIA; the other day it is about—and so on and so on. I, of course, a journalist, do what they want to do, but I don't think, as a program of policy, that we should put public pressure like that on Karzai. Humiliation is a terrible thing in Afghan culture. We are pushing too far.

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

The second thing is that we should not try to do everything ourselves; we should not try to replace the Afghan state. The main objective is to build confidence. In concrete terms, the PRTs are a very dangerous thing in Afghanistan because they are taking the

space of the Afghan state. Right now, if you are living near Gardez or Khost, the real administration is the PRT, it is not the Afghan state. Everybody knows that the Governor has no money, he has no competence. Everybody knows that the U.S. commander is in charge; he has money, he is doing things.

Short term it is good because you can have a road, irrigation project, but long term it is very dangerous, because how do you want to get out of that? I think we should be clear that we need an exit strategy. We need to give power to Afghans, to empower Afghan authorities, and not do the reverse in the name of short-term efficiency.

And, very quickly, the last point is about the security and the way we should use our resources in this domain. We should be very careful with local powers like Dostum, for example, who is back in the game now, with militia that are being established now, and have been established in the last few months. We have a major problem here if they are not under the control of the Afghan national army.

These militia, as we have seen in the 1990's, can be autonomous, they can discredit a little bit more the Karzai regime, and at the end it could be a [indiscernible] Afghanistan. So let's be very careful. There is no short fix. The militia is not a good thing, except if they are very local and very small. And we are going in the other direction right now in Afghanistan, and I think it is probably dangerous.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Dorronsoro follows:]

Congressional Testimony

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

Gilles Dorronsoro
Visiting Scholar, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Written Testimony
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs
November 19, 2009

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WHY STATE BUILDING IS FAILING

Chosen by the United States in 2001 largely because of his closeness to the Bush administration, President Hamid Karzai lacked a political base in Afghanistan and relied instead on a narrow coterie to fill the important positions of his administration. Karzai tried to eliminate local powers who had the potential to threaten his control of the periphery of the country, mostly by nominating his political allies as regional governors. Due to poor choices, based more on personal relations than competence, this strategy backfired and only produced more political fragmentation. It is important to understand how that fragmentation occurred.

One of the keys to the success of the insurgency in Afghanistan is the complete lack of functioning government institutions at the district level (*uluswali*). Some district administrators are corrupt, while others are simply incompetent. But even the incompetents are often posted to other districts due to their personal connections in the government.

The main problem is the absence of security and state structures, notably police and judges. Relatively little money has been directed toward institution building, and in the case of the police and the judiciary, programs have been a total failure. In most cases, people refer their cases to local *jirga* (tribal councils) or to *shariat* justice given by local *ulema* (Islamic legal scholars). In practice, there are no judges in Afghanistan, and the police force is very weak. The police are not adequately paid and have a reputation for corruption. Most provinces employ no more than 1,000 policemen – and often this many only in theory. (This holds true even in Kunduz, where the population is close to one million.) Finally, the Afghan National Army (ANA) is unable to operate autonomously in large units due to a lack of sufficient command and control. The ANA's training is better than that of the police forces, and some anecdotal evidence indicates that it has a better fighting spirit, but it still cannot operate on its own. Observers in direct contact with the ANA are not confident that it can conduct operations with more than 100 troops.

Into this administrative and security void the Taliban are pouring an alternative administration, discrediting the central government, and extending their influence in places where they have no initial support among the population. A significant number of districts in the South and East are outside the reach of Afghan officials. The government could send troops, but it cannot administer the population in any meaningful sense, and most of the military presence is that of the IC.

Amid this lack of security, local leaders are (re)arming quickly. The main effect of the disarmament program in 2003-4 – which paid local militias to surrender their weapons – was to allow militias to buy new, more expensive ones. After 2006, the dominant perception among Afghans has been that the state is not going to stop the insurgency. As a result, local groups began buying up arms. What regulations exist are not enforced and, even in Kabul, it is extremely easy to buy weapons in significant numbers.[1]

[1] A Dragunov sniper rifle costs $1,500-2,000; an AK-47, $500-800, depending on the quality; a 600-round box of ammunition for an AK-47, $250; and an RPG, $400. Due to the fighting, there is more demand for weapons in the South, so the prices are higher than in the North. The idea that

REDEFINE INSTITUTION BUILDING

The Afghan state was built with external help: British support, development aid from the 1950s to the 1970s, Soviet support to the communist regime, and, today, assistance from Western countries. Afghanistan is thus a shining example of what international relations theorists refer to as a "rentier state," with foreign help playing the role that natural resources might in other countries. The country's need for allied financial and technical support will probably be open-ended, but it is reasonable for the International Coalition to set a goal of leaving an Afghan government that can survive on its own after Western armies withdraw. This is why the IC should concentrate power in limited areas and a few critical institutions.

One of the major problems we now face is that the institutions built in the last seven years are ineffective in delivering services, but sometimes strong enough to oppose foreign interference. (Case in point: the Afghan Supreme Court's refusal to reform its practices). Since security should be NATO's primary objective and the only basis on which it can eventually withdraw, the ANA, the police, and the judicial system must be the priorities for institution building. The IC should further concentrate its resources by geographically limiting its efforts to strategic areas.

ABANDON FAILED POLICIES, FOCUS ON REALISTIC GOALS

Given the International Coalition's limited resources, there are several otherwise important aims that should not be priorities, given their costs and their consequences as distractions from the central objectives.

We do not have the resources to fight drug production. The social and political costs are simply too high. Opium crop eradication in Afghanistan has never worked, except when the Taliban undertook it, and even then, while production was stopped in 2000, trafficking continued and the Taliban derived important revenues from it. When they held power, the Taliban were relatively successful in fighting drug production for a time because they had reasonable control over the rural areas and were sufficiently organized to carry out their policy, but it ended up proving very costly for them. Tribes with economic interests in drugs jumped at the opportunity to betray the Taliban and join U.S. forces in 2001 and they planted poppies even before the fighting had ended. Local programs can only change the organization of the production, not eradicate it.

Second, the drug economy is probably the single most important source of personal income in Afghanistan today. Farmers depend on the revenues. The Taliban benefit as well, but so do Afghan government officials at the highest levels. Other than fighting on a small scale against trafficking and laboratories, it would be immensely difficult and politically costly to put a serious dent in drug production in Afghanistan. Eradication undermines the International Coalition's main objective, diverts critical resources, could weaken or alienate

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better control of the border by US troops explains the price increase (made by Bing West in the WSJ, May 2009) is totally unfounded.

Kabul's local allies, and is not an effective strategy against the Taliban.

Development is not the key in Afghanistan. The Afghans do not choose their political allegiances based on the level of aid. Economic aid is not a practical way to gain control of a territory, and it plays a marginal role in the war. Rather, whoever controls the territory is the most important factor in Afghans' political allegiances. In other words, development must come after military control in the strategic areas, as a consolidating process. Aid is also not instrumental in addressing the central issues of an exit strategy. Development should be territorially concentrated in the strategic areas, where it can reinforce the institutions.

If this analysis is correct, the Coalition should reconsider the role of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). What is their supposed strategic impact? I would argue that the PRTs are ineffective in state building and also of limited utility in preparing for withdrawal; hence, they should not be a priority. The PRT concept is technically useful in some cases, but it is a long-term liability for Western forces because it takes the place of the Afghan state, marginalizing Afghan players. If Western troops are in charge, there is no reason not to give civil operations to real NGOs or Afghan institutions. Moreover, the PRTs are unable to significantly change the perceptions of the Afghan population. Local populations are essentially dependent on whoever controls the territories in which they live. Nor do the PRTs make up for civilian casualties caused by allied bombings, the humiliation of door-to-door searches – which are exceptionally odious to the Pashtuns – and other actions.

HOW CENTRALIZED SHOULD THE AFGHAN STATE BE?

It has been argued that the multi-ethnic composition of Afghan society calls for more decentralized institutions, perhaps a federal system. Some political forces, notably the Hezb-i Wahdat and the Jumbesh, both ethnically-based, have been arguing for a weak central government and some reorganization of the existing provincial framework since the 1990s.

This strategy is potentially dangerous. The multi-ethnic nature of Afghan society does not mean that ethnic groups are settled in distinct territories. On the contrary, northern Afghanistan is a complex mix of ethnic groups. To redefine the boundaries of Afghan provinces would provoke a widespread feeling of insecurity among groups that are local minorities. Pashtun groups in the North and the West in particular would be at risk.

On a strategic level, this trend would run contrary to the state-building strategy that is central to the withdrawal of Western troops. The Coalition must do everything in its power to avoid the perception that it is ethnicizing the war. I argue instead for a limited and strongly centralized state. Limited, at least in the short term, in the sense that it would not have enough resources to implement complex policies or carry out functions throughout the country. Centralized, in the sense that the center (Kabul) must be in control of some specific policies and build support in the strategic areas.

Another key question that has been insufficiently addressed is the lack of political institutions that can represent the different interests in Afghan society. The electoral system used in the 2004 and 2005 elections was so badly designed that it not only failed to

encourage the formation of political parties, it actually discouraged their formation. As a result, the parliament never created a national political elite and political leaders never emerged. The government must take its diminished standing in the wake of its dubious victory in the August 2009 elections as an opportunity to change the electoral system. If Afghan officials wish to build a strong and enduring state, they must make political parties the central elements of political representation, instead of focusing on the individual personalities of the candidates.

THE AFGHAN SECURITY APPARATUS

The focus on external military resources is misleading, in the sense that the real test of a counterinsurgency strategy is the ability to build an indigenous force that eventually operates alone. The pertinent question is not the U.S. Army's adaptation or lack thereof to counterinsurgency, but the use of its resources to build an Afghan partner. Observers have focused excessively on the number of International Coalition troops, rather than on how they are used, and paid too little attention to the Afghan National Army. It would be more efficient to cap the overall costs of the war and progressively redirect resources to an Afghan partner. More money would certainly help, as well, at least to ensure that Afghan soldiers are not paid less than the Taliban, as they now are.

The Coalition must redirect resources toward the Afghan security apparatus, because both the police and the army are deeply dysfunctional institutions. The ANA is weak and simply increasing its numbers will not address the central questions of its efficiency and its resolve. After seven years of building the Afghan military, the ANA is still unable to fight the Taliban alone and its desertion rate is still extremely high. More to the point, the ANA will progress only when it has more responsibilities in the field. In addition, the failure of the German forces charged with establishing a police force has had far-reaching consequences. In the cities, where rebuilding institutions is most critical, the police sometimes threaten citizens' basic security more than the Taliban does. The formation of the Afghan police force is now in the hands of the European Union and the United States, but it will take years to see results on this front.

The ANA should not be sent to fight in the far Pashtun countryside, as it lacks the necessary level of professionalism and coordination to take on tough offensive operations. The army should instead be designed initially as a defensive force, able to secure strategic areas. ANA operations should be limited to the strategic zones and, to a certain extent, to the buffer zones around them. Air power can be used to maintain the general balance of power, and notably to prevent concentrations of Taliban forces from massing to attack strategic or buffer areas.

An important dimension of this strategy is to build an army that is under the control of the national government. In this sense, the integration of militia forces into the Afghan army has been a failure and needs to be rethought. In the North, militias are theoretically part of the Afghan army, but remain under the de facto control of local leaders like Rashid Dostum. In the long term, the central government must address this challenge directly, and take control of at least the military infrastructure in the North. Cities, too, are key to state building and must be put under central control, including areas where there is no immediate Taliban

threat. In this respect, the major failure at present is the government's inability to take control of the security apparatus in places like Kunduz, Mazar-i Sharif, and Maimana. If the state is going to survive in Afghanistan, it must secure a solid base in the North.

DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

Contrary to popular belief, the war in Afghanistan suffers not from a lack of resources, but from a strikingly bad allocation of them. First, aid flows mostly to areas where the government presence is generally nonexistent and where integrity is largely recognized to be lacking. Second, troops are not efficiently distributed: 20,000 troops are mobilized in Helmand province to no effect, when they are needed elsewhere (in Kunduz, for example) to fight or to protect cities. The troops currently deployed in the North are neither trained nor motivated to fight a counterinsurgency war, a priority now, since some governments are implicitly demanding zero-casualty tactics.

Before the Coalition allocates any more resources for reconstruction and development, it must fix the current system, which is plagued by a serious lack of accountability and an incorrect geographical focus. In addition to the military costs, the Coalition has contributed billions for development in Afghanistan. According to the Afghan Ministry of Finance, over 60 multilateral donors have spent about $36 billion on development, reconstruction, and humanitarian projects in the country since 2002, and it would be all but impossible to determine where most of that money went.

Similarly, since 2001, Coalition countries have spent some $25 billion on security-related assistance to Afghanistan, such as building up the Afghan security forces. These countries have promised the same amount of aid for reconstruction and development, but some leading donors have delivered little more than half of their aid commitments. So far, the Coalition has only spent $15 billion in aid, of which it is estimated that a staggering 40 percent has returned to donor countries in the form of consultant salaries and corporate profits.

Clearly, there are limitations on the amount of money that can be spent in Afghanistan, especially while the territory under government control is rapidly shrinking. Second, any investment made in the countryside, where the Taliban are in control, will simply help fund the insurgency. Third, the relationship between development and violence is not simple. As in other cases, such as the Kurdish insurgency, improved economic conditions and greater development do not necessarily portend an improved political situation. Finally, a civilian surge would not address the heart of the problem: huge corruption and inefficiency in Kabul, enabled by a war economy.

Nor does the current allocation of resources help. If it were a state, Helmand alone would be the world's fifth largest recipient of funds from the U.S. Agency for International Development. These disparities are also reflected in the pattern of combined government and donor spending. For 2007–2008, the most insecure provinces -- Nimroz, Helmand, Zabul, Kandahar and Uruzgan -- have been allocated more than $200 per person, while many other provinces are due to receive less than half this amount and some, such as Sari Pul or Takhar, are allocated less than one-third.

This irrational distribution of resources is due partially to the fact that aid comes in part from the 26 NATO-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams. Each PRT is headed by the largest troop-contributing nation in a given province, according to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force. Thus, the U.S. and UK PRTs are investing heavily in the most contested areas, with few significant results. The aid becomes part of the war economy, especially in the rural areas of the South, where insurgents take a cut of almost every project implemented.

The Coalition must stop rewarding the most dangerous areas and focus on those where success is actually attainable. In addition, whatever the official line, the current policy is resulting in the transfer of increasing levels of responsibility from the Afghans to the Coalition, resulting in Afghan officials appearing powerless vis-à-vis the local PRT, especially in places where the Taliban dominate. Increasing levels of aid could backfire and accelerate the ongoing disintegration of local institutions.

The Coalition must then shift the focus of its investment from war-torn areas to more peaceful localities where there is greater accountability. Aid must go where there is control on the ground: To cities, towns, and districts with local support for the Coalition.

And the Coalition must see to it that the Afghan state takes more, not less, responsibility for providing security and services within its territory. Those are the makings of victory in Afghanistan, and the beginning of an exit strategy.

Mr. TIERNEY. Thank you.

I want to thank all of you for giving us such a rosy picture of how wonderful things are, from Mr. Galbraith explaining very clearly how Mr. Karzai at least benefited from what happened at the elections, in the fraud elections, and taking advantage of them, to other witnesses, including Mr. Dorronsoro just recently telling us that he has faults for sure.

But I think, Mr. Dorronsoro, you think that we should overlook those faults. Mr. Thier says that we have to break the cycle of impunity and corruption. Mr. Thier says that without credible and legitimate Afghan partners, we cannot succeed, no matter how significant the investment; and I think that is pretty clear.

But, Mr. Tellis, you tell us that we have to rebuild the relationship with Mr. Karzai. His flaws are legion; he is a poor manager, he lacks attention to detail, he is terrible at policy implementation. Other than that, how is he doing? But supposedly he has a vision of Afghanistan as a successful and moderate state, so I guess, by implication, there is no other Afghan over there who has a good vision but who might be at least marginally competent.

I question each of you. What is the indication that you think that Afghanistan is going to deal with corruption, that they are going to purge the allies that he has invited in, Dostum and others like that, that he is going to go after those in corruption, do a serious anti-corruption effort, when it involves, very likely, his own family in some respects, that there is some way that we can strengthen institutions that are intricately involved in this corruption aspect and probably don't stand to gain much if the corruption is cleared up?

Let me give you one example. A recent article by Aram Roston in The Nation claims that the Afghan Host Nation Trucking contractors have $2.16 billion in contracts to deliver critical supplies to U.S. forces within Afghanistan, and they frequently use those funds to pay off the Taliban and other militants for protection along the major supply lines. The articles describes payoffs as high as $1,500 per truck for security between Bagram Air Base and Kandahar. Several of the six principle security companies protecting the convoys are owned by the close relatives of leading Afghan government officials, including the cousins of President Karzai and the son of Defense Minister Abdul Rahim Wardak.

So do any of you have any personal or experiential information about that, or reaction to the allegations contained in the article? Is it symptomatic of a widespread corruption in Afghanistan? How do you think it is we are going to convince Karzai to dump off the people that he just invited in to get elected and clean up his own family? And how are we going to deal with changing those institutions in any reasonable fashion?

We can go left to right or we can start with hands raised, or do anything you want to do. Mr. Thier, then Mr. Dorronsoro, then Mr. Galbraith, then Mr. Tellis.

Mr. THIER. Thank you. When I was in Kabul, a lot of people were talking about the brothers network. President Karzai and his two first Vice Presidents, Fahim and Khalili. Each have a brother who is part of the enormous contracting business that is benefiting Afghanistan. But we have to look at our own complicity in this.

Fahim's brother, for instance, at one point—I am not sure if it is still the case—had the contract to supply fuel to the Bagram Air Base, which was something around $100 million.

The case of Ahmed Wali Karzai is, of course, important because even though there have been complaints about him for several years being involved in all sorts of things, including the drug trade in the south, if it is the CIA that we are asking for evidence of his corruption that is also paying him off, then it is unlikely that we are going to take seriously removing period; and that has certainly been the case, unfortunately, for the last 8 years.

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

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

And the final thing is actually to put pressure on Karzai. I know it sounds absurd, but I can tell you that for the last 8 years we have not been the ones putting pressure on Karzai to demand accountability. And if there is a clear change of tone that is tied both to carrots and sticks that I have outlined, then I do think that there can be some progress. It is not going to be a silver bullet, but we can certainly do a hell of a lot better than we have been doing.

Mr. TIERNEY. So I know this is probably not what you intended, but what I am hearing is it is all our fault that he is corrupt.

Mr. Dorronsoro.

Mr. THIER. No.

Mr. TIERNEY. I know. I am just telling you how it sounds over here.

Dr. Dorronsoro.

Mr. DORRONSORO. With due respect, I tend to agree with Alex on that. I think there was no kind of huge systemic corruption in Afghanistan even in the 1990's, in a way. It was going on, but not that corrupt. But when you are putting billions of dollars in a society without due procedures, without any kind of control on what is implemented or not, you have what you have seen in Kabul the last few years, a few hundred or thousand people taking a large part of the money, building 1 or 10 million dollar houses in Kabul; and, trust me, all the population of Kabul knows about that because they are all in the same place.

So, yes, it is a major problem and everybody knows. It is not a point of information, everybody knows.

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

Mr. DORRONSORO. No, they will not, but can we do something about it? So, first, we can try to simplify and to centralize the way we are giving money. Very concretely, instead of giving a huge amount of money to one company who is going to give it to subcontractors, we should give less amount of money directly to Afghan companies; and if the work is a little less good, I mean, it is not a problem.

But we have to neutral in the way we are giving the contracts. For example, in Kandahar, we are giving all the contracts to Wali Karzai or his tribe the Barakzai. We should be much more neutral in the way we are giving the money to different tribes. So that is one thing.

Second thing, drugs are a real problem because most of [indiscernible] in the south are drug dealers. So if we launch a big antinarcotics operation in the south, it is going to be extremely difficult militarily speaking, and we could see IEDs appearing in places where there are no Taliban. So we should be very, very careful about all that is about drugs. We can do things, but carefully.

And the last thing I would say is instead of paying for the security of the trucks, use the money to secure the roads. For example, right now there is still no security between Gardez and Khost. It is not a very long road and it is doable. So instead of paying the Taliban, just pay some guards, some Afghan national army to do the job. And I think—it has always been the case, you need probably $10,000 to send a truck from Garasheet to Peshawar just for security. And then it is money again and again and again.

So let's focus on the security of the cities and the major communication ways. That would be the first thing to do.

Mr. TIERNEY. I will come back, if we have a chance, to the others on that. I want to let Mr. Flake have an opportunity to do questions. It just gets very frustrating from this end to think that people haven't thought of this before. It doesn't sound like rocket science to most of us.

Mr. FLAKE. Well, this is extremely disconcerting in terms of where we are.

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

Mr. TELLIS. No, not particularly. I was just thinking of a historical moment in the past, when we had someone like Zalmay Khalilzad in Kabul, who could literally sit on Karzai's shoulders and appeal to the better angels of his nature. I think we need something like that again, and it doesn't have to be a person, it can be an institution. But unless we have that kind of a relationship with him, we are not going to be able to get where we are going to.

Mr. FLAKE. Right. I mention that because there is a noted frosty relationship between the two and maybe we need that. I don't know. That is what I am asking.

But just following on that theme, you mentioned that he can't be humiliated—that is not right in Afghan culture—but then we need to put more pressure on him and we need to provide security and he has to know that there is security for him to be effective.

But it seems to me that if we provide or help provide the security, then he has less motivation to change. How do you thread that needle with the man to encourage him? And to say nothing of the deals that you have mentioned that he has cut with the warlords, which may limit his flexibility? It is very difficult to see a scenario in which we get it all right and for him to be seen as credible and legitimate. Can that needle be threaded, Mr. Thier?

Mr. THIER. I mean, I think that our experience is quite mixed. Of course we can't get it all right, but we can do a lot better than we have done previously. I was very struck, in particular, on this trip by noticing the dependency cycle that we have created with the Afghans. When you look at our operations in Helmand this summer, we have been building the Afghan national army for 6, 7 years now, and by all accounts done a fairly good job; created some independent units.

But when we made our most important mission this summer into Helmand to try and clear parts of that province from the Taliban, there were very little Afghan national security forces in there with us. There were a variety of reasons for it, but ultimately I think that as our presence has grown—I mean, you look at the graph of our presence; we had 10,000 troops in Afghanistan in 2002, 100,000 today.

In many ways, I think, because of our presence, we have a tendency to stamp out Afghan initiative and leadership. And that is not a call for pulling our troops out, but it is a call for forcing Afghans into more of a leadership position, because I think, ultimately, when they are taking more of the risk and bearing more of the burden, they will ultimately perform better. And that is true on the development side as well as on the military side.

Mr. FLAKE. Dr. Dorronsoro, you want to speak?

Let me frame this a little better, something you said. You mentioned that in 2004 that there seemed to be the closest we had to democratic leadership or the things that we want to see in there. Since then we have had a resurgence of the Taliban, obviously. What is the cause and effect? Was the Taliban able to come and get the foothold that they didn't have in 2004 because of the corruption of the Karzai regime or was that just incidental, or did the resurgence of the Taliban create conditions that made Karzai have to cut deals and become corrupt?

Mr. DORRONSORO. May I just say one word about what was said before? I think if we want to empower the Afghan army, we have to give them things they can do; so it is defensive, it is not offensive. On what we have seen, the videos of the Afghan army when there is an ambush somewhere in the mountain, they run. They run fast, it is good, but they run the wrong direction.

So we have to be clear about that, and it is not going to change for different reasons. So let's give them the road, the stone, that kind of thing we can do. So do we need to integrate Afghan-U.S. troops? Maybe yes, but for defensive objectives.

So the second thing is, yes, we have a surge every year since 2002. Never worked. We have had a major problem since summer 2002, and it is a way to answer your question. Clearly, people from the Taliban, from Quetta, where they were obviously supported by the Pakistanis, the Taliban leadership send people inside Afghani-

stan the summer 2002 to get back support from the people, to talk to the people. So it is starting there.

So they were there, they had an organization. In 2003 they were preaching in the mosques in the Logar province that is just south of Kabul, and what happened in the north after was not a spontaneous thing, it was partially organized by the Taliban leadership in Quetta. That is the first answer.

The second answer is, yes, if everything had been fine in Afghanistan, the Taliban would have lost. But if you take a few places like Ghazni and around Daykundi, the south of Ghazni, these places, Karzai appointed Governors who were so bad they started a local civil war, and that helped the Taliban a lot. And it is again and again the same thing. And in a few places in the east, special operations from the United States have been a crucial element to alienate one or two tribes. So basically you see first the Taliban, then the local situation.

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Welch, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELCH. Thank you.

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

Mr. GALBRAITH. I think that is the right question. As I said in my testimony, I don't think we actually have any good alternatives. And to come to the chairman's question as to whether any things got changed with Karzai, well, he has been in power for more than 7 years and nothing has changed. He is now there, in addition to being ineffective, tolerant of corruption, if not corrupt, he is there by fraud.

So there is no reason to think that there is going to be changed. There are a number of strategies that we might try, and I don't dispute anything that my colleagues on the panel have said, but I think we have to face up to that reality.

The reason I am against additional troops is because I don't think they will be effective because there is no credible partner. And I am against a withdrawal because we will lose what has been achieved. So that really leaves, by default, this option that you are discussing, which is keeping the current force level, reconfiguring them. It is not a happy solution, but among the available choices, I think, frankly, it is the least bad.

Mr. THIER. I am not a military strategist; I don't know exactly what the right number of troops are. What I do believe that I agree fundamentally with the premise that General McChrystal has set forth that the protection of the Afghan population, providing security to the Afghan population, which is not what we have done previously, is of paramount importance, and that improvements in

government and improvements in the delivery of assistance will come with security.

So I don't know whether that means the status quo, 15,000 more troops or 40,000 more troops, but clearly I do believe that is the most important mission. It does need to start in key urban centers, but even when you look at that, if you look at Kandahar, for instance, Kandahar is probably the most important place at the moment to try and stabilize.

Mr. WELCH. Is that the most important mission, because that will provide the best protection to the liberties of the Afghan people or the best protection to the American people against another Al Qaeda-launched attack?

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

Mr. TELLIS. I think the interim objective has to be securing what we already have, which are the population centers, and primarily protecting the new areas where the insurgency has made an appearance in the west and the north. To do that, I think McChrystal will need the troop requests that he has made. I just don't see how the arithmetic of being able to protect the central areas of Afghanistan, and the west and the north, can be done with the troops that we have.

But whether that becomes the ultimate objective is really an issue of some controversy; that is, do we simply focus on the central part, the north and the west, and leave the south as it is, or do we treat those as interim objectives, wait until the Afghan national army is raised and then move out? I think that is really going to be the next big issue.

Mr. DORRONSORO. I think we cannot win against the Taliban; we can contain the Taliban. You cannot win against an insurgency that has protection in Pakistan. If the Pakistan army decides to attack the Afghan Taliban, then, OK, we can discuss again, but right now they are not doing that; they are just focusing on the Pakistani Taliban. So to win against the Taliban is not on the table; we cannot do it, we don't have the resources. You need 200,000, 300,000 men just to seal the border. It is out of the question.

McChrystal's strategy, we tried it the last few months in Helmand. It is a disaster. One hundred fifty men have died in Helmand, and I would like to know why. What do we have to show for that? People cannot go out Sangin, a few hundred meters outside Sangin we have been ambushed, killed by IEDs. So it has already done, you know? It is not working. And if we do McChrystal on a larger scale next year with 400,000 men, we are losing the war, and I mean it. We are losing the war.

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

Mr. WELCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Van Hollen, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have some questions for Ambassador Galbraith with respect to the role of the U.N. Mission in Afghanistan. First of all, what size is the U.N. Mission, how big a presence does the U.N. have there?

Mr. GALBRAITH. About 4,000 people, most of them being Afghans.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Four thousand people under the jurisdiction. And would you agree that it is important that the U.N. Mission be seen in Afghanistan as working to uphold the rule of law, making sure that there is, to the extent possible, democratic process, and not be seen as siding with the government against other groups within Afghanistan?

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

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Right. Well, I want to get to that because I am troubled about the message that was sent with your firing in Afghanistan, because, as I understand the facts—and correct me if I am wrong or please elaborate—essentially you were calling the shots as you saw them; you saw that there was fraud in the election, you brought it up internally within the U.N. Mission, you expressed your concerns privately to the appropriate people within the Afghan government, and you were vindicated in the end.

But, as a result of telling the truth and giving the facts, you were fired, and that would seem to me to send a very chilling message to other people involved in this effort who are trying to do their best to speak the truth and call the shots. Sometimes they are right, sometimes they are wrong; but to be fired for essentially providing your opinion, it seems to me, sends a very bad message.

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

Mr. GALBRAITH. Well, obviously, I agree with what you are saying, but let me start with one basic proposition, which is that diplomatic missions are not democracies. So there is a head of mission and that person does get to decide, but that person has to be open to frank talk from his or her subordinates, and that is what went on here.

I mean, there was the additional problem that he was often away on vacation or a mission in this period, so I was in charge, and I was proceeding basically with doing my job, which, as I saw it, was to support the Afghan institutions and the conduct of free, fair, inclusive, and transparent elections. And the level of intervention was hardly extreme.

I asked the chief electoral officer in Afghanistan merely to stick with the published guidelines of the Independent Election Commission, which was to exclude obviously fraudulent ballots. I tried to get the Independent Election Commission to remove from the rolls polling centers that were in locations where they were never going to open.

Later, Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary General, has said I was fired because I wanted to disenfranchise Afghan voters. But that wasn't

true; these were removing from the rolls places where nobody got to vote. But, of course, the real disenfranchisement was when more than a million phoney votes were cast, basically canceling out the honest votes that were cast.

But, in the end,—and this was what was explained to me by Alain Le Roy, who was the Under Secretary General for Peacekeeping; he said you had the misfortune that your private disagreement became known public through no fault of your own, and that was the reason you were removed; and I do think that sends a terrible signal.

You asked about the impact on the mission. Well, the head of mission, by his own admission, was a terrible manager. This whole event, series of events have been deeply demoralizing. Many of the American and British staff working there, and Scandinavians, have now left. I think 7 out of the 10 people in the Political Affairs Division, which is the heart of the Mission, have left or are in the process of leaving, so it has all had a very adverse effect on morale, of course, accompanied with what has now happened with the attack on U.N. personnel.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. All right.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. TIERNEY. Thank you, Mr. Van Hollen.

Mr. Doggett, welcome to the committee.

Mr. DOGGETT. Thank you for the invitation to come over today and thank you, Chairman Tierney, for organizing this important hearing at such an important time in the development of our policy in Afghanistan.

I also particularly appreciate all the witnesses. I was on the floor in debate, or I would have been here. But I have seen your statements and I particularly appreciate, Ambassador Galbraith, your participation and will direct my questions to you.

First, I want to say, in the strongest terms, how much I admire the integrity that you have brought to your work in Afghanistan and to express my appreciation that you have had the courage of your convictions in your service there, and in your comments since departing Afghanistan. It appears to me that we have invested tens of millions of American tax dollars in order to ensure that we had a Presidential election that would provide us a strong democratic partner with whom to work in Afghanistan, and that investment was wasted, not to mention the literally thousands of lives, American and otherwise, that were there trying to ensure the integrity of this election. All of that put at risk and our attempt to get a full, free, fair election failed miserably.

Mr. GALBRAITH. I agree with you entirely. Obviously, the responsibility in the first instance rests on those who committed the fraud, the Afghans, of course. But the United Nations had a responsibility, and the head of the mission took the view that his mandate did not go beyond providing the money; that we had no right to be involved, no right to interfere, to tell the Independent Election Commission that we expected them to behave in a nonpartisan and fair way. That was the nub of the disagreement.

And, of course, the fundamental problem was that the Independent Election Commission was not independent; the head, Kai Eide, the head of the Commission, knew it wasn't independent; nonethe-

less, he chose not to act and, as a result, more than 200 million of American taxpayer dollars were wasted, and, of course, it has cost lives because the military mission has become much more complicated.

Mr. DOGGETT. And the amount of fraud that the Karzai folks were involved in here, it was not just a little ballot stuffing there or a little jimmying of the numbers here; it was massive, blatant, and obvious fraud.

Mr. GALBRAITH. At least a third of the Karzai ballots were fraudulent, well over a million. In fact, the final results of the first round were announced that 49 percent for Karzai, but that is because they just did a statistical sample. If there had been a full count, it probably would 41 to 35 percent. And it is not 100 percent clear to me that in fact Karzai would have won an honest second round, had there been one, but then the Election Commission basically took decisions that made it impossible to have an honest second round.

Mr. DOGGETT. We are, as all of our witnesses in the committee recognized, at the conclusion of the bloodiest month for our American military personnel in a deteriorating 8-year struggle in Afghanistan. I read with interest—and it parallels your comments here today, Ambassador—your recent writing in The Guardian, that "Under these circumstances"—referring to the Karzai fraud—"sending more troops to Afghanistan to implement a counterinsurgency strategy is a waste of precious military resources." Is that still your view today?

Mr. GALBRAITH. It is. And if I may explain the difference that I have with my colleague here, whose view is otherwise, I think I agree with that fully. I do not believe that having additional troops provide security will lead to improvements in government. That was the position he was putting forward. But I think that is wrong because the government is itself, the Karzai administration, is hopelessly tainted with fraud and, anyhow, it has been ineffective and corrupt for the last 7 years. So it is impossible to see how it could get better.

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

Mr. GALBRAITH. No, I don't.

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

Mr. GALBRAITH. I can tell you I have been in a number of conflict and post-conflict situations.

Mr. DOGGETT. Indeed.

Mr. GALBRAITH. And in every other circumstance where I have been I have had in my mind a roadmap. Haven't always known that you could get on the road, but at least I have known there was a roadmap. Here, I don't see one. That said, I can think of a couple of things that could help improve the situation, and probably the most important is structural change in Afghanistan. It has a highly

centralized system of government for one of the most diverse countries ethnically and geographically, and it doesn't work.

It isn't as if the central government really runs things; it doesn't. It is also centralized in the sense of all powers rest in Kabul. It is centralized also in the sense that there is a powerful president and a weak parliament.

So Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, President Karzai's main challenger, proposed constitutional change that would have had power sharing at the center, a weaker president, but with a prime minister and cabinet chosen by parliament, so all the different ethnic groups and factions are genuinely represented, and elected local government.

I would go further and give the elected local government some legislative budget and tax authority. So I think that would be a step in the right way. Then we would also be stepping away from having Karzai as our partner; we would have other partners. Obviously, this is something we can't impose this, but we have a lot of clout, so it is something we can encourage. But I don't think it is going to provide a solution.

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

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

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

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

Mr. TIERNEY. Thank you, Mr. Doggett. You have added great contribution to the committee's work.

We have checked also with the Appropriations Committee and indicated what would it cost for 40,000 additional troops, because that was the number being bandied around. General Petraeus's own counterinsurgency book, if you were to read it, would ask for a lot more troops than just for this type of territory—the size, the geography, the topography—and it would be for 14 years, on average.

But just 10 years with just the 40,000 troops would be some $800 billion. So I think one thing we have to add into the equation of our consideration here is what is the tolerance for the U.S. population, in its own economic turmoil here, to move forward if they

don't see it is a prime national security interest of our country, which brings me a couple of points as we wind up here.

One, first of all, having just also, Dr. Thier, come back on Saturday—actually, on Sunday—from Pakistan, being there last week, one gets the feeling that both Pakistan and Afghanistan feel that the United States has no options; that no matter what they do or don't do, that the United States sort of put itself in a position that you have to keep feeding money to these folks and hope for the best.

The Pakistanis focusing, as Dr. Dorronsoro says, on who they think are their biggest problem and neglecting those mutual problems that we might have—the Haqqani, the Taliban, and others—and doing it pretty blatantly, and Afghanis continuing their corruption and their impunity because they can, because there is no incentive for them to stop it, certainly, because this is how they are all making money. So that is one problem that I think we have.

The other is the stability interest in that region doesn't all reside with Europe and the United States and Japan. India, Iran, Russia, China, the other-stans, why haven't we invited them into the game and basically they have a lot more, in many instances, at risk here than we do; yet we tend to sort of keep them at arm's length and not let them get involved. There could be an argument for handing it over and letting them worry about it to a large extent and see what they come up with on this, because they certainly don't want it to unravel.

But because of time constraints, let me just lay out one last proposition for general comments on this. Concern, apparently, underlying all this is that if some Taliban were to be allowed back into Afghanistan, that they might accede to allowing Al Qaeda, which numbers less than 100 in Afghanistan right now and around 500 or less in all of Pakistan, that group of people might come back in and get a foothold in Afghanistan.

But Al Qaeda is already—five to one, at least, probably six to one numbers—in Pakistan, not Afghanistan. There are essentially no Al Qaeda in Afghanistan; they are in Sudan, they are in Yemen, they are in Somalia. The Madrid and London bombings were not planned or perpetrated out of Afghanistan; they were essentially out of Pakistan, if anywhere. Given that, how do we reconcile the prospect that we are keeping hundreds of thousands of troops from the international community in a place where there are no Al Qaeda and no troops in the many places where there are Al Qaeda?

Unless you say it is not really about Al Qaeda when it comes to Afghanistan, it is about nation building. And if that is the point, just when do we change our goals for what the President set out, of wanting to destabilize and defeat Al Qaeda, and move it over to try to build a nation in a place where that has been an unlikely prospect for a long, long time?

Mr. Thier.

Mr. THIER. If I can just for 1 second, I just want to correct, I think, a slight mischaracterization of my remarks by Ambassador Galbraith. I in no way advocated for additional troops; I very explicitly said I didn't know if the current level may be sufficient or 40,000. It is the way the troops are used and the Mission should change.

Mr. TIERNEY. I think the record clearly reflects your recollection as correct.

Mr. THIER. I think that we have a series of intertwined interests that keep us needing to remain in Afghanistan through this difficult period. The reason Al Qaeda is in Pakistan at the moment is because we chased them out of Afghanistan in 2001, and I have no reason to believe, nor have I seen any evidence, that if the Taliban were to come over back into Afghanistan and take over significant parts of the territory, that they wouldn't bring them with them. I think we have to look at——

Mr. TIERNEY. Well, wait a minute. Do you have any evidence that they would?

Mr. THIER. Well, yes. I think we have significant evidence that they are likely to welcome Al Qaeda back in based on what we experienced until 2001.

Mr. TIERNEY. If the Mullah Omar faction of Taliban were again to take over.

Mr. THIER. Yes.

Mr. TIERNEY. Which is by no means certain.

Mr. THIER. Well, Haqqani as well. I mean, Haqqani is the one who initially brought Mullah Omar to Afghanistan from Sudan.

I think it is really the contiguous area. They don't recognize the border; we do. There is no place like home, I believe, for Al Qaeda; they are genetically linked, they have been training and recruiting in that part of the world, on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, for a long time. They have a much better place to work and survive and recruit there, I believe, than in Yemen and Somalia. So I think it continues to pose a threat, but it is not exclusively that.

I also think that the stability of the region, the chance of the spread of extremism—obviously, we have seen what has happened to Pakistan over the last few years, which is quite scary. The potential spread of that into central Asia as well. There are a lot of Uzbeks in Pakistan, as you know, in the tribal areas, and the reason that they are there is because they are trying to foment a revolution in Uzbekistan. I think that the unpredictability and potential for conflict between India and Pakistan, if we don't deal with the militancy crisis in Pakistan, also exists.

So I think it is problematic to try and narrow it down to one interest. I think, collectively, the United States has a lot of interests in the stability of the region, and I agree fundamentally with the way Ambassador Galbraith formulated it, that, as difficult as it is to stay at the moment, leaving, I think, is a far worse option. I do think we have the potential to improve our performance there significantly and to change the momentum, and I think that we have the next year or two to prove that we can do that.

Mr. TIERNEY. Doctor, tell us what about India and the-stans who, according to Dr. Thier, have an interest in this also? Where are they?

Mr. TELLIS. Well, let me answer both those questions. I think the reason why we have restrained ourselves from having a more active regional approach, that is, the regional players actually providing troops on the ground and doing some of the nation-building effort, is because there are very serious forms of security differences between these players themselves; and our concern is that if you

brought the Indians, the Iranians, and the Central Asian states into Afghanistan in a substantial way, Afghanistan would become a new battleground for the play of these own interests, and the consequences of that would be each one would support their own proxies, and the struggles between these proxies would then create the environment that would allow for the import of various terrorist groups.

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

Mr. TIERNEY. Interestingly, Mr. Doggett asked the question about what proportion of the country was really solidly held by the Karzai government, and the answer was very little. So wouldn't you think, if they were so fond of home, as was said earlier, that they would already bee back there?

Mr. TELLIS. Well, my basic sense is that if the Taliban were to come back to power in Afghanistan—and we are only talking the Mullah Omar Taliban right now, because I am not sure there is another Taliban; and the other Taliban really doesn't matter from our——

Mr. TIERNEY. Do they need to come back to power or do they just need to have control over certain land areas? And that is already available to them.

Mr. TELLIS. Yes. And the reason why we have not had magnification of our problems is because in those areas coalition troops are still operating. We are still pressing Al Qaeda into the frontier. If there was open access between the FATA and Afghanistan, in a way that would be the case. If the Taliban had greater authority, I think you would begin to see not only Al Qaeda, but also the other groups like the Haqqani network and the HIG, which are of concern to us. So I think we have to keep pressing them because the alternatives are too dangerous.

Mr. TIERNEY. Any other Members have any questions?

[No response.]

Mr. TIERNEY. Any member of the panel wish to clarify any final point or add some information that we ought to hear? Dr. Dorronsoro.

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

Mr. GALBRAITH. If I can add. The Taliban is not going to take over all of Afghanistan. It has no support among the Tajiks or the Hazaras. So the worst case scenario is we are talking about a situation where they control the Pashtun areas and basically take over Kandahar; and, frankly, at this stage, we are not that far from that worst case scenario.

There is another point I would make about Pakistan, which is a major part of this issue. There is a civilian government in Pakistan which has a different approach from the view of the military, which, of course, remains very powerful and which, in my view, operates in an alternate universe, seeing India as the kinder threat; whereas, India really—if you talk to Pakistanis, military, India comes up in a minute.

You talk in India, you can go all day and nobody mentions Pakistan. But the civilian government does want better relations with India; it has resisted viewing Afghanistan as a place to fight a proxy war with the Indians, it has resisted viewing it as an area in depth. Pakistan's interference in these recent elections was much less than in the past, and that was the influence of President Zardari and the Foreign Minister Qureshi.

So I think that as we look at our Pakistan policy, we do have a strong interest in supporting the civilian government, that it should complete its term, and that there is a gradual process that leads to true civilian control over the military, because that, I think, will make a difference to India; relations with India, stability in the region and in Afghanistan.

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Thier.

Mr. THIER. I just wanted to say one final thing, and I am sure Ambassador Galbraith would agree with this. I think we would be remiss in not mentioning for the record that there was one institution in this Afghan election process that stood head and shoulders above the rest, and that was the Electoral Complaints Commission, which was a mixed body, Afghan and international, that really, against all odds, all political pressure, acted with great technical expertise and, in some ways, rescued part of the legitimacy of this election by demonstrating that even Karzai could be held to a legal standard in the end. I think that they did an amazing job and should be commended for it.

Mr. TIERNEY. Last shot, Ambassador Galbraith.

Mr. GALBRAITH. Thank you.

Mr. TIERNEY. What, if anything, could the United States have done to protect its investment to the United Nations, UNAMA, that was supposed to go to free and fair elections?

Mr. GALBRAITH. Well, let me just have a comment about the Electoral Complaints Commission. I, of course, agree it did a very good job, but that is now the current line by the head of the U.N. Mission, the system worked. It didn't work. The massive fraud discredited the elections in the eyes of the Afghan people; it plunged the country into a 7-week crisis; the crisis ended in circumstances where you could not have had a fair runoff. So even though, technically, this Commission did its job—incidentally, where there was only one Afghan member because the pro-Karzai one resigned—it didn't really rescue the day.

Now, as to what the United Nations——

Mr. TIERNEY. What the United States could have done?

Mr. GALBRAITH. What the United States could have done, the United States, I think, rightly left it to the United Nations because it was responsible. I guess I have to say, although I am credited with having been spoken out and stood up, perhaps I really didn't do enough, because I took seriously my role as an international

civil servant and I didn't go and raise the flag as strongly as I might during this period in the lead-up to the elections and the immediate part of it.

I was a part of a system and, as a diplomat, I stayed within that system. But clearly all the countries ought to have done more, ought to have ganged up, if you will, on the head of the U.N. Mission and said we had a huge investment here and we expect you to do something to make sure the elections are free and fair.

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

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

Mr. GALBRAITH. There were some red flags, and, frankly, the administration did raise them. It is well known that Ambassador Holbrooke had, shall we say, a difficult meeting with President Karzai the day after the election, and the reason was he understood fully what had happened and he wanted Karzai's commitment that he would run in a second round if that is how the ballots turned out, and Karzai didn't want to hear that.

So there was toughness from President Obama's team. And I think it is terribly important that we insist that Karzai doesn't choose the interlocutors with the United States. There is one U.S. Government view, that has been the position of the administration; that must stay the position of the administration, and they don't get to choose who it is that they talk to; we choose.

Mr. TIERNEY. Well, thank you, once again, all of you very, very much. You have been very helpful and very informative.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:38 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

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