

**CENTER FOR
STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (CSIS)
CSIS-BOB SCHIEFFER SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM DIALOGUE:
U.S. POLICY IN AFGHANISTAN**

**WELCOME:
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CSIS**

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H. ANDREW SCHWARTZ: Good afternoon, and welcome to the Center for Strategic and International Studies. I'm Andrew Schwartz. I'm our vice president for external relations here, standing in for my boss, John Hamre, who wants to send his best out to all of you. Thank you for coming.

I also want to thank United Technologies, who's our sponsor of this series. United Technologies has made this series possible and we're very grateful to them. Of course, I want to thank the Horned Frogs of Texas Christian University, who many of you may know are headed to the bowl championship series.

BOB SCHIEFFER: We are ranked number six right now in the BCS ratings.

MR. SCHWARTZ: Ranked number six in the nation. That's right. Go Horned Frogs.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Number eight in the AP poll! (Laughter.)

MR. SCHWARTZ: I want to thank our distinguished panel. We couldn't have a more timely panel this evening to talk about Afghanistan, and we couldn't have a more distinguished panel.

I think all of you know the players here, but there is someone on our panel who I want to introduce and that's Mariam Nawabi. Mariam is new to CSIS. She's going to be hosting our series in global challenges, which we launch next Monday night. This is a series focused on the Millennium Development Goals, and we'll be partnering with the University of Miami on that. So I hope many of you can attend, and we welcome Mariam to the CSIS fold.

I'd like to turn it over to my friend Bob Schieffer and thank you all so much for coming. Bob, take it away.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Thank you very much, Andrew. And welcome to the Schieffer School of Journalism-CSIS joint project that we're doing now once a month and we appreciate all of you coming here. And I don't think there's any question that the timing is right for a discussion of Afghanistan. And we've got some very qualified people here to talk about it.

And I really don't have to worry too much about the introductions. Is there anybody here who does not know who Bob Woodward is? (Laughter.) I think we all know Bob. Kimberly Dozier is my colleague at CBS News and was in Iraq from, what, 2003 to 2006; was badly wounded, as many of you will remember, when the Humvee she was riding in was hit by a roadside bomb. Spent many, many months recovering. We were not sure Kimberly was going to make it.

KIMBERLY DOZIER: We were actually outside the vehicles, which when you're in the direct path of a 500-pound car bomb, it's a walking miracle of military medicine.

MR. SCHIEFFER: So we're very proud and thankful she's here with us today.

Mariam, let me just tell you a little bit about her. She is an attorney; she is a social entrepreneur; she is general counsel and strategic and business development director for AMDI, Inc., and a founding member of the Afghan Advocacy Group. She grew up in the United States; her mother and father are Afghans. Both your grandfathers were in the Afghan army, right?

MARIAM NAWABI: One of them was, on my father's side.

MR. SCHIEFFER: One of them was, and fought the Russians.

MS. NAWABI: Yes.

MR. SCHIEFFER: And so she has some very interesting perspective and insight to talk to us about.

And then everybody at CSIS, everybody who's interested in international affairs, knows Tony Cordesman and the work that he has done. I would just say that Dr. Cordesman was one of those who advised Gen. McChrystal, and I would say, from what I've read of the report that Gen. McChrystal sent to the president, had great input into the report and the recommendations that Gen. McChrystal made on Afghanistan.

Let me just start with you, Dr. Cordesman. How would you sum up the situation in Afghanistan right now? We know we're reaching what I think is going to be a defining moment in this presidency on what strategy the president finally decides to take. When do you think he's going to make that decision, and do you have any insight, hunches, guesses about what he's going to do?

ANTHONY CORDESMAN: I think when we look at the situation, first Ambassador Neumann, then Gen. Eikenberry warned in 2005 that we had badly under-resourced a war that we were losing. Gen. Jones, in a previous capacity, said a year ago we were losing it.

We were watching U.N. maps that showed that the Taliban, Hekmatyar, Haqqani had gone from essentially zero to a major presence in about a third of the country by 2005. And now they're somewhere in about 40 percent; not in any structured, dominating way, but they're present. They're occupying what essentially often is simply a power vacuum because we didn't create effective Afghan institutions or forces, or have the resources to stop them.

And if you look at the levels of violence this year, they've gone up extremely sharply. If you look at the curve on something like the improvised explosive devices, it looks like that for this year. And their ability to hit at political targets has improved. Now, we've scored some victories in Helmand and so on, but unless you change the strategy and unless you change the resources, are we losing? Yes.

Will the president make a change in strategy that is functional? I think in some ways we already have. We have begun to shift to a population-oriented strategy. We are focusing more on “shape, clear, hold and build,” not kinetics in the field.

We are completing the build-up of troops to 68,000, which is near doubling in the course of a year. So you’re not talking about whether you stay; you’re talking about how to stay. As I understand it, you’ve made significant increases in the civilian aid, which will be critical in getting and reaching out to the Afghan people, at least on the U.S. side, and you’ve begun to work with our allies – not for major troop increases but to try to make what is a horribly inefficient mix of U.N.-theory managed aid, and an alliance of 42 countries – many of which are dysfunctional – more effective.

But how many more troops, how many units will we have and what will they do? That’s up to the president. When will he announce it? I’m going to leave that to people who report on this on a much more current basis than I do.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Let me just ask you the basic question: Is this a war of necessity?

MR. CORDESMAN: Any limited war is a war that does not affect the survival of the United States. The term “necessity” is always a relative one. But have things reached the point where I think the Taliban is no longer a nationalist movement, with significant elements of foreign volunteers, with cadres that are much closer tied to al-Qaida, particularly in the East? Is this linked directly to the stability not only of Afghanistan but Pakistan and the region? Will being defeated in Afghanistan send a message that empowers jihadists and extremists throughout the world? I think all of those make this a very critical war.

But the people who have been working on options are not people who believe there is a certainty of victory. When you ask, is this a war of necessity? It is a war we have to admit that we may not win, and where we have to be prepared for the contingency that we find other ways to contain and limit these movements.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Mariam, do you think we’re going about it in the right way?

MS. NAWABI: I think it’s important first to give some context to the U.S.-Afghan relations. As we all know, the U.S. was involved in Afghanistan as a proxy when the Soviet Union was there, and I think we made the mistake of pulling out our resources at a time when it was critical to put them in there to help create stability.

And it was that unstable political system that led to the cycle of conflict that we’re in. And, really, the Taliban grew out of that instability. They came in saying, “we’re going to bring law and order.” However, we know they were supported mainly by Pakistan because of their concerns about the Duran line and some other issues.

So I think with our assistance, if we look back at history, the U.S. left Afghanistan and focused its attention on Iraq in 1990. And that history repeated itself again after we first entered Afghanistan.

The majority of the Afghan people want the U.S. there, but it's how they're there that they're now concerned about. If it means more military engagement, that they don't see a tangible benefit in their life, and they're seeing more civilian casualties, of course people will not want that presence. But for the most part, they want some basic assistance so they can get back on their feet.

I think last year, Gen. Petraeus was talking about the 80 percent to 20 percent, that we should be putting 80 percent to economic and social assistance, and 20 percent to military. So those numbers have been out there, but from what I'm seeing, it's more – the military takes up a lot more of the resources, and that doesn't really bring a benefit down to the village level.

So I think if we can change some of the way our resources are allocated and we work with the people, and truly look at the Afghan people as a whole, not just at the warlords who we've been working with since 9/11, and also don't focus on personalities – not one person is going to solve all the problems, but systems. I think with this last election we were not focused on the system, and there were irregularities, and now we're rethinking that. And hopefully the next one will go better.

MR. SCHIEFFER: So Karzai agreed to have a runoff. Today we find out that his brother may have been on the CIA payroll. Do you think the run-up election will be any fairer than the election that we just had? Because I think it was generally agreed it was pretty corrupt.

MS. NAWABI: Well, I think if we look at the process, if you have a candidate that's running in an election and that person selects the people on the commission that then manage the process, right there you have a conflict of interest. So it's going to be hard to have a fair process, and I personally think the U.N. should have done more.

And if President Karzai was going to run – he actually picked the people first, I think, then announced his candidacy. And at that point, the U.N. should have stepped in and said, "okay, then we're going to have to have another way of picking these people," because right there the Afghan people lost credibility. They said, how can this election be fair, no matter who that person was.

So if that structural issue is still not addressed in the runoff, I think we may see some of the same problems. I think there's more attention now on what some of those problems were, including these ghost polling stations that were said to have been open but nobody actually went and voted. I believe there's going to still be, you know, monitoring, but if that structural issue that I talked about is not addressed, it's going to be difficult to have a credible election.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Bob Woodward, you've been to Afghanistan. You're back and you're following this story very closely here in the United States, and here in Washington. What is the administration – what are they going through right now? What is this process? I mean,

they clearly, what, a month ago decided we're going to have a new strategy. We thought we had a strategy and now we find that there's another strategy. Where are they right now on strategies?

BOB WOODWARD: Well, first of all, what they're going through is a proctoscopic exam that goes on – (laughter) – through many sessions and many hours. I think what Dr. Cordesman says is right, though I think some of it's actually worse in terms of what's going on in Afghanistan.

You have to start with the question of counterinsurgency. That is the strategy that supposedly is in place, and a re-intensified effort at counterinsurgency, which is protect the population.

Now, the key to protecting the population anywhere, whether it's in Afghanistan or the District of Columbia, is the police. And when you look at the police in Afghanistan, it is not a happy story. In fact, I think if you get into the numbers, you will find that the desertion rate and the attrition rate and so forth doesn't even – actually exceeds the number of new recruits. So the numbers of police in the aggregate in the country are actually going down.

These extravagant numbers that are thrown around about adding police or adding what are the numbers – 240,000 in the Afghan army is kind of the end-state that Gen. McChrystal has spoken about. Getting there would require many times the training effort, the recruitment effort; you have the desertion problem there; you have an attrition rate. So how do you protect the population?

Dr. Cordesman has also raised the question, which I think is central to this, not about strategy but about operations. What do you do if you're a company commander, a couple of hundred troops, a battalion commander of 600 to 800 troops? Exactly what do you do?

When I was out there briefly in the summer, you'd talk to the Marines and they were going into areas and villages where they don't have anyone who knows the language, they are not accompanied by Afghan police or army in any significant numbers. There is a total disconnect here. And how do you fix that operationally? That's something in the strategic analysis they're going to have to be able to define.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Kimberly, I know you've done a lot of reporting the past couple of days. You talked to people on the Joint Staff; you've talked to people in the White House. How is the military holding up here? I mean, how do they feel about all this?

MS. DOZIER: Well, first of all, what I hear from those who've been sitting in on some of the meetings, or sitting in the back chairs in some of the meetings, is that no one can guess really where the president is going to go with this. They say, more troops, absolutely. You might have heard Tony Cordesman and me debating that beforehand. And a form of counterinsurgency remains.

The question is, how many troops to provide to secure areas where the population is. They have fastened on to Gen. McChrystal's saying that the enemy only matters if the population is there. So they will focus on those areas where there is population.

And terrain only matters if the enemy is there. So whereas you've got these outposts that had been put along the border to interdict traffic between Pakistan and Afghanistan, that's why the McChrystal strategy is to give them up, and seems the president is leaning toward that. But those in the meetings say he is a stern taskmaster, as you were saying. He calls every single person in the room to task. If anyone's quiet, he draws them out.

When you speak to troops on the ground in Afghanistan, they're very frustrated. A lot of them feel like they never got an atta-boy from the president on what they see as the success of the surge in Iraq, and now they see – I had one captain write me, saying, what is this guy going on about? I understand he's playing politics and he's playing to the Democrats on Capitol Hill, but they never understood us the first time around. Why aren't they listening to our guy, McChrystal, this time? So that's the frustration I'm getting from some of the rank and file that I'm in contact with.

At the same time, there was at that naval base on Monday, the president was making a point to speak to a crowd of airmen, Marines, soldiers, sailors, and he got to a point in the speech where he said, I'm making this decision and I will not rush this process. And there was a cheer.

Now this was – you know, you play the, you know, read along the speech on the BlackBerry thing, and you usually guess which line's going to get the cheer because you get an advance copy of the speech. I didn't guess that, and as I understand, some of the White House folks didn't guess that. But every military commander and person on the ground I've spoken to since then has said, oh yeah, our lives are on the line. We don't want him to rush this decision.”

MR. WOODWARD: Well, don't you think that shows that they – a lot of people in the military realize that the mission and the required operations to achieve that mission just have not been defined in a way that are clear or doable? I think that's one of the ghosts in the machine in all of this.

MR. SCHIEFFER: What do you think about that?

MR. CORDESMAN: I think we need to accept the fact that the president came to office after 8 years of war without a meaningful strategy or joint campaign plan having been developed at any point under the Bush administration. What you saw was a bunch of PowerPoints. And the civil side was far too often dealing with long and mid-term aid; decoupled from the fact the nation was at war, the people were poor and needed immediate aid.

Bob talked about the police. Well, we didn't even begin to seriously fund Afghan force development until fiscal 2007. The money didn't come until 2008. When we began this year, we had about 30 percent of the police advisors we needed, and 50 percent of the advisors for the Afghan military. That was approximately half the goal you needed to really make this work. So everybody sees this.

They also see that – if they’ve been there on multiple tours – there is no continuity of management from year to year. Every year was the first year; a new set of concepts without order or structure.

And I think people understand this: What is not clear is what is really, I think, intended, which is this idea of “shape, clear, hold, and build,” because the counterinsurgency we fought up until now and through April was basically focused on finding the Taliban and fighting it, so we went in and we smashed things. We often were killing Afghans or destroying property or creating points of friction, and we left. We didn’t hold. We didn’t secure. And the operations really weren’t shaped to serve a purpose.

See, the idea of “shape “ is your operations are organized to go in, clear populated areas. You don’t leave the Afghans to see the Taliban come back; to be terrorized; to have their structure destroyed. You actually put enough people in to hold, and you don’t go in unless you can do it.

And “build” means refocusing the aid because virtually all of the aid has either basically not reached the Afghan people. I think estimates are about 40 percent has gone to overhead, waste, corruption, and things that don’t serve the Afghans. the U.S. estimate for PRT out of our total aid is 4.7 percent.

MR. SCHIEFFER: What is PRT?

MR. CORDESMAN: That’s the Provincial Reconstruction Team. And that’s what most Afghans –

MR. WOODWARD: They’re the civilian military teams that are really designed to help the population. It’s not the military and it’s more the governance and the rebuilding.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Let me just ask Mariam because I thought it was very interesting what you said a while ago, that the Afghans like the Americans, but not particularly the fighting side of it. And you’re talking about they want us there but maybe our profile not as high as it is. Just what are you talking about?

MS. NAWABI: Obviously the Afghan people, when the Americans first came in, wanted their assistance because they were dealing with a lot of regional powers who were trying to overtake their state, which had caused conflict for years prior.

Initially, the U.S. forces were only in Kabul, and for about two or 3 years, the Afghans would say, can we get more security assistance outside of Kabul, even through ISAF, the International Security Assistance Force. That took time to respond to.

And just touching on two brief issues – one is timing and one is perceptions. I believe our system of aid is so slow that by the time we make these decisions, things have happened on the ground that changed so dramatically that now we’re dealing with a new set of problems.

And our military is designed for more conventional warfare. There are offices that deal with more of this counterinsurgency but this is, I think, a new thing, relatively speaking. And so our resources keep going this way, and the needs are still over here. So we have to take a look at ourselves if we want to have the position that we do have in the world, and use our resources and invest them a little more wisely.

Just to give you an example, the Japanese and the Germans, they're quite smart about how they give their assistance to economic programs and they put their name on it, and people say, oh, the Germans helped us with this, and the Japanese did that.

We're spending so much on military assistance, fighting small groups – and, yes, in the South, I believe we still need that – but largely, the economic development programs have been less than, what, 10 or 5 percent of the total assistance package.

The second is perceptions. I have found a lot of times that in Washington decisions are made and we say, we want to reach out to the Afghan people and let them know about this or that, but we continue talking to ourselves. Part of the show that I host through America Abroad Media, PUL, which means bridge, is to give that information directly to the Afghan people.

The feedback that I get from young Afghans is, we want to know more. We want people to let us know what's happening in Washington. And so they still want the American presence there. They're just wondering themselves in what form is that going to be? Is it going to be more troops? Is it going to be more assistance? Is this going to be long term? Because they do need that assistance; not just for a few years.

If we look at context again, the majority of Afghan population is quite young. We're dealing with over 60 percent under the age of 25, and so education programs – these can rapidly change the society, and the insurgency is very small compared to the majority of the population.

So I would say, yes, the Afghans still want the U.S. there, but they want them there as an enabler, to help build back a stable state so that they can do it on their own. And that would be less costly for the U.S. in terms of lives and money.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Are we more popular in Afghanistan or Pakistan?

MR. CORDESMAN: That's easy. (Laughter.) Public opinion polls in a wide range in Pakistan show we are almost uniformly unpopular in Pakistan. The polls in Afghanistan, regardless of how they're taken, show that we are still – although our popularity is declining – relatively popular, and certainly far more popular than the Taliban or extremist elements.

A lot of it really is very much where we have actually had a troop presence that has provided lasting security, really brought Afghans in, that popularity has been sustained. Wherever – and it's a matter of do we have the forces and the presence – we have gone in and left, abandoned the Afghans, not provided a continuing presence or aid, then our popularity just goes down like that, for obvious reasons.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Kimberly, does the military – do they feel that we should be putting more emphasis on Pakistan than we are in Afghanistan? What do you pick up? I mean, you're obviously not going to get them to speak on the record about something like that.

MS. DOZIER: It depends on whether you speak to someone who was part of the counterinsurgency fight and strategy in Iraq and saw it succeed, or someone who leans toward the counterterrorism fight and is part of that community.

A lot of folks in the CT community feel that they've had great success with drones, with signal intelligence. And that sometimes troops on the ground, the local troops – the Pakistani army, for instance, in the frontier provinces – has been a hindrance, not a help. And they say, well, we're getting targets in the FATA; we could use the same strategy in Afghanistan.

And yet, when I look at what's being considered in Afghanistan, I wonder if they aren't morphing towards exactly that. When Gen. McChrystal talks about focusing on the populated areas and basically making those areas inhospitable for extreme elements of the Taliban and the al-Qaida, the idea is to drive them into remote areas, where I know from the CT community it's a lot easier to see their camps operating, to see their training areas, and to pick them off.

MR. CORDESMAN: Bob, if I may just make –

MR. SCHIEFFER: Yes.

MR. CORDESMAN: We need to remember that Afghanistan alone is about 30-percent larger than Iraq, and far more dispersed. If you throw Pakistan in, it's very easy to talk about this, and you can score individual successes.

But the assets required in terms of UCAVs and a whole group of sensitive devices is on an immense scale. And most of those were concentrated in limited areas in Iraq, working with Special Forces people on the ground.

So when people talk about scaling this up, it isn't just a matter of troop numbers. Where on earth we're going to get the coverage to implement this strategy, and all the assets we need to deal with this wide an area, and this many centers – anybody can talk about this conceptually but we have as much a resource problem in implementing that strategy as we do any other.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Is the figure right, and I think it was in your newspaper, it costs us \$250,000 a year to keep one military troop in Afghanistan?

MR. WOODWARD: That may be a little high, but I think –

MR. SCHIEFFER: I read it in the Post.

MR. WOODWARD: The ratio is 10 to 1 – to supply and pay an Afghan – somebody in the Afghan army – is about one-tenth of what it costs to put somebody in the American –

MR. SCHIEFFER: But if you want to use the math there, that's \$10 billion for 40,000 troops. And I'm also told that for every military troop there you're requiring now one civilian contractor. Is that about right?

MR. CORDESMAN: I think the ratios are going to vary depending on what the scale of the military –

MR. WOODWARD: But I don't think the civilians – you know, the talent is there but it's not deployable. Civilians do not want to go there in large numbers, and so the burden shifts to the military. But under the heading of kind of what's going on here, it was your show on October 18th – I guess you were on vacation. You weren't there –

MR. SCHIEFFER: I was on assignment. (Laughter.)

MR. WOODWARD: You were on assignment. In Boca Raton or some place like that. (Laughter.) And Rahm Emanuel was on, and what he said was extraordinary. And he is a heavy participant in all of these meetings and this discussion about strategy – said, “we're starting from scratch after 8 years.”

Now just think about the impact on the military. I mean, here are people – I mean, take the extreme example. You have lost somebody in your family in that war and you have somebody speaking quite clearly for the president of the United States saying, we are starting from scratch.

MR. SCHIEFFER: All right. Let's take some questions from the audience. Yes, right here. And you will identify yourself, please.

Q: Yes. My name is Assem Akram and I am teaching a course on Afghanistan at American University. The question I have is, in all this discussion, is what happens to Afghanistan's sovereignty? Who is respecting it? Whether it's the U.S. side or the al-Qaida side, everybody's using their plan for some kind of operation right now, but how do we connect respecting Afghanistan's sovereignty to the legitimization of the Afghan government and empowering the Afghan government to do its job? Right now it's not happening, and this is why all the burden is on the U.S.

And as Mrs. Nawabi said, it's not an issue of persons – who is the leading person in Afghanistan – but rather of structure. How can the structure in Kabul be empowered to do its job, in terms of security, first of all?

And the Afghan army – just last word – every member of the Afghan army does not have to go West Point or some kind of military academy for years before being able to be deployed in Afghanistan. It's a question of numbers. Is it numbers or quality? That's the other question I have.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Mariam, you want to try that?

MS. NAWABI: Well, I think after 9/11, obviously the issue of sovereignty wasn't the prime one because there was an immediate threat that had to be dealt with. And prior to that under the Clinton administration, you did have the missile strikes that took place.

Unfortunately, the Afghan people have not had a government that served their purposes first, regardless of the question of sovereignty. Right now, my personal opinion is that the Afghan nation and state needs international assistance, and again, it's – in what form is that?

If the international forces just come in and do things the way they want to, obviously, that crosses the line and the local people feel isolated, and then they start feeling that this is an oppressive trend going on.

And that's unfortunately what has happened in the last couple of years, where corruption has gone up, and instead of addressing that, the international community is just looking the other way and saying, well, that's not our problem. On that end, it is their problem because they're there, they have troops there, they have money there, so obviously they have to address that issue.

So we're at an interesting point in Afghanistan's history is that, how do you get back to that point where the Afghan state itself can respect its own sovereignty? I mean, the U.S. and Afghanistan I don't think to this day have a status-of-forces agreement, so I don't know if that was done recently, but again, I think the Afghan state needs help building up its army and police, but I believe for a 10-year period at least, we have to have monitoring. And if the Afghan government agrees to it, then the issue of sovereignty is respected. And I think it can be done now with more diplomacy.

MR. CORDESMAN: I think we need to be much more realistic about this. We don't have a central government that has the capacity or the integrity to govern. You have individual ministries that you can work through, and some of those ministries, like the ministry of finance and the ministry of defense or public health or education are actually doing useful things.

But all of those ministries are extremely shallow. They do not have the basic capacity to really administer, and almost all of their revenue comes from foreign aid. This is not a sovereign government in the most basic sense: It doesn't have the capacity to govern.

You are building those up, but building capacity takes time. And in an economy where often, public servants find it much more profitable to work with contractors or power brokers, that's part of the problem.

You also never really build up a representative structure at the provincial or district level, and in many districts, you really don't have a government. The Taliban is expanding into an area where there is no meaningful government presence to exert sovereignty.

For example, there are, I think, about nine out of 364 districts which have an actual functioning formal justice system that really can be said to meet the needs of the Afghan people. So it's going to take years to build up the provincial and district capability.

The Afghans are going to have to do that, but to do it, they have to be empowered in ways which ensure that corrupt or incapable people do not get vast amounts of money, because if you simply respect sovereignty today, the estimate already is – from either the World Bank or Oxfam – that some 40 percent of the aid isn't being used or somehow disappears.

So it is a real world effort to build up governance at all of these levels which has to take place, and that is part of, I think, the shift in strategy that the U.S. and the Obama administration are considering, because in the past, we tried to do this through the top and only through the top, and it simply didn't work.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Are we trying to build something that in few the times of that country has been there, and that is a central government?

MR. WOODWARD: No, I think you're trying to build all of this. You're trying to build a central government; you're trying to up provincial structures and district structures, and at the same time, you're –

MR. SCHIEFFER: But you think that's doable? A central government?

MR. CORDESMAN: In the Western sense, let me note that most of the countries in the world do not have a functioning central government by the standards of the United States and Europe. So when you postulate this mirror imaging, you can almost always say, you can't get there.

MS. NAWABI: I respectfully disagree. I think Afghanistan did have, for what resources it had, a pretty good central government for its time –

MR. CORDESMAN: When?

MS. NAWABI: In the '60s, in the '70s. I mean it –

MR. CORDESMAN: I was there in the '70s. The central government functioned in about a third of the country.

MS. NAWABI: In the cities, in the urban areas, that's what I was getting to, is in the rural areas, the state never had the resources to provide services. At the end of the day, as citizens of any country, we look at what affects us as individuals, and there just wasn't resources to get it out there. But in Afghan – in the system of governance, there were always provincial councils. Whether they functioned well or not was another issue, but there was some structure there, and that just needs to be built up again, but it's not like we're starting totally from scratch.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Okay. You had a question.

Q: This is for Mariam. You said that the Afghans welcome U.S. presence there. I think there are two kinds of Afghans; one are educated in the cities, but in the villages, the uneducated Afghan who doesn't know what's happening would rather listen to an Afghan brother, even if he is Taliban, or a Star Wars kind of a soldier with all the gear who is very strange, doesn't know his language? How do the villagers in Afghanistan welcome U.S.A.?

MS. NAWABI: I don't think there's a specific rural-urban divide on that perception. I think it comes down to what, practically speaking, that they're experiencing. There are people in the cities who maybe don't agree with the U.S. presence for ideological reasons, but in the rural areas, there are assistance programs that are, for example, helping farmers.

So where we did do things right, the people welcomed it and they took the next step to improve their own lives. And we're not talking about building a utopia here, we're just talking about basic water, food security – there's still a lot of food insecurity in the country.

And the villagers, I think when they see that assistance, they welcome it and they would rather count on the U.S. and NATO. But where they feel that the U.S. and NATO may not be there tomorrow, and they would be the next victims of the Taliban, they obviously have to be careful about how they express their opinions.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Anybody on this side? Yes, Dee (ph)?

Q: Could anybody comment on the resignation of the Marine State Department officer and how that might have a rippling effect on the president as he is making his decision?

(Inaudible, cross talk.)

MR WOODWARD: I mean, I know – I thought he was quite articulate and made his case –

MR. SCHIEFFER: Tell us, because I'm not familiar with this –

MR. WOODWARD: Well, he resigned, he had been in the Marines and then was a civilian working there and essentially said, I can't do my job.

MS. DOZIER: (Inaudible, off mike) – on one of the PRTs; he'd been sent out on a fact-finding mission to ask some questions Adm. Mullen had posed. And he had gone to Zabul Province and was very frustrated at the people's perception of Americans in that area, of foreign aid and said, our mere presence here, just having troops in their face, is causing them to attack us.

I've seen a lot of debate about his letter, so he tendered his letter of resignation and first Ambassador Eikenberry and then Holbrooke both tried to talk him out of it – offered him a job higher up – because they agreed with many of his concerns. But he finally said, you know, I've

seen too many of my buddies lost in Iraq and Afghanistan, and I think this is a losing fight. And so he turned his back on it.

I've seen some amazing editorial debate back and forth since then. The president is aware of the story; don't know if he's read the whole letter. But what some of his staff say is some of the concerns Hoh raised are exactly the questions the president has been asking the people around that table.

MR. WOODWARD: But if I may, the questions the president has to ask at the start are, what's the national interest here? And he has to think, and the people who are working with him on this, very deeply on that issue. And clearly, the first national interest is, as they say, to prevent other attacks on the United States. And that means continuing the drone program in Pakistan, where there has been an escalation of those attacks in the Obama administration in terms of numbers and, I think, effectiveness.

The worry about al-Qaida going back to Afghanistan – I mean, just put yourself in the place – you're Osama bin Laden. Why would you want to go back to Afghanistan, where we have an incredible intelligence capability, have already 68,000 American troops, 30,000 from another country? It would be the last place you would want to attempt to reestablish a sanctuary. So maybe that is already solved, as somebody suggested; we've already won on that issue.

Then the second issue, which is a big one, regional stability, stability in Afghanistan, which obviously the United States and other countries have a big interest in. The question then becomes, what are you willing to pay and expand for that regional stability or stability specifically in Afghanistan? And if you look at it from that end, it tends to take you away from giant troop commitments and so forth, and your question, does this become a war of necessity when you look at it from the perspective of national interest? Now, you could –

MR. CORDESMAN: Bob, I'm – the logic totally escapes me.

MR. WOODWARD: Good.

MR. CORDESMAN: Because if you have a power vacuum in Afghanistan, then you have a Taliban takeover, and you create a structure where –

MR. WOODWARD: No, wait a minute, there's no power vacuum –

MR. CORDESMAN: Can I finish please?

MR. WOODWARD: Sure.

MR. CORDESMAN: All right. Where you have a situation where essentially, you're allowing a very different Taliban and al-Qaida, potentially a sanctuary in Afghanistan, you can't have it both ways.

If you lose the country, you create a power vacuum on the border of a nuclear-armed Pakistan, a state which in many ways has extraordinary internal divisions and weaknesses and problems of its own. You have the similar problems in the Central Asian states. So it's not something where you can say, well, Afghanistan is one – it isn't one. At the beginning of this, you were –

(Cross talk.)

MR. CORDESMAN: – losing about 5 percent of the country every three months –

MR. WOODWARD: (Inaudible, cross talk) – respond to that, because what you're doing there is you're assuming that we want to – that we're going to withdraw. I'm not suggesting – I don't think anybody is suggesting that we withdraw, and with the troop presence and the capacity in the intelligence field that we have, there is hardly a vacuum in Afghanistan. It has been said publicly –

MR. CORDESMAN: Are you saying, then, we're going to maintain all of the capabilities in Afghanistan and add to Pakistan? Is this the idea?

MR. WOODWARD: I'm just saying that this is a logic train that you can follow, and I think you kind of throw it off the cliff when you say, well, there's going to be a vacuum in Afghanistan. There is not a vacuum in Afghanistan.

MR. CORDESMAN: You weren't talking about maintaining forces, I thought, in Afghanistan.

MR. WOODWARD: Sure, yes I am.

MR. CORDESMAN: You are.

MS. DOZIER: You said maintaining at six to 8,000.

MR. WOODWARD: Yeah, and the president has said publicly that he's not thinking withdrawing troops.

MR. CORDESMAN: All right, I'm a little lost here – (inaudible, cross talk).

MS. DOZIER: And everything I hear from inside the meeting is that they are going to plus-up. As we were talking about before beforehand, it's just a matter of how many. 5,000 trainers, everyone I've spoken to, that's a given. Do you add another 10,000 combat troops to support them? That's probably a given, too.

The question beyond that – as it's been put to me – that no one can figure out where the president stands on, is, does he add another 25, 30, et cetera? The one thing that I have been told is that the drop deadline is sometime in December; that he needs to make the decision by December. But if he makes the decision anytime between now and December, it won't affect the

course of getting those guys mobilized because of what's already in the pipeline. December is as early as he can tell up to 40,000, get going. They'll take about six months to spool out; that's how it was explained to me.

MR. CORDESMAN: Well, there's no magic deadline, but obviously, the sooner you do it, the sooner you have an impact. I think the one thing I would add to this that we need to remember is most of the aid people that are actually where Afghans see them are and will remain U.S. military.

You go back to the reporting that the Department of Defense issued the beginning of this year, 90 percent of the PRTs were uniformed. Now, that's an amazing number relative to civilians. We're not meeting this so-called civilian surge goal, and the quality of the civilians we're providing isn't meeting the need.

So one of the things we have to remember when we look at these troop ratios, and you gave some very important figures, is a lot of them are going to have to be the people in the hold-and-build phase.

The other thing to remember is this 42-country alliance. It isn't just us there. Each of the regions, aside from the East, has someone else, in theory, as a NATO-ISAF head of the regional structure – not only the military but they also have their own PRTs. So when we talk about this, it isn't just us.

We've got to fix the ISAF structure, deal with the problems in those national caveats and at some point we have to address what's going on in UNAMA in the international aid effort because, as you pointed out, and I think virtually everybody has pointed out, we have a total mess with no one in charge; the same person who basically followed up much of the U.N. effort for the election, has spent years following up the U.N. effort to supervise aid programs. We can't afford that.

MR. : Who?

(Cross talk.)

MR. : Who is that?

MR. CORDESMAN: Head of the U.N. mission. I mean, 8 years on, UNAMA has never issued a report that shows how aid money is being spent, where it's going and what the project structure is intended to be. That is an incredible indictment of the level of management and capability. The crisis we have is a –

MS. DOZIER: I see a lot of questions; I don't know if we should take some more?

MR. SCHIEFFER: Sure.

MS. DOZIER: (Chuckles.) Some anxious people.

Q: Hi, good evening, this is very interesting. I'm Hassina Sherjan, the founder and president of Aid Afghanistan for Education, and I also established a company called Boumi. I live in Kabul; I just happened to be here and I was lucky to join you here today.

Do you agree that this is not an Afghan war? Do you agree that this is a U.S. and international war, and we happen to fight it in Afghanistan? That Afghans are becoming a victim to fight another international enemy? Or does anybody agree with that at all?

And then there are some very basic problems. I mean, we talk about – it seems like U.S. has never really had a foreign policy for Afghanistan. The foreign policy has always been a reaction to what happens next – if we have an attack tomorrow, there's going to be more than 60,000 troops deployed the day after that.

And then on top of that, to talk about having a functional government in Afghanistan, it's not so easy, of course. We need transitional justice, which never happened. It's crucial; it has to happen. Unless that happens, we will never have peace and we will never have a functional government in Afghanistan.

When parliamentarians sit there and they give themselves amnesty, they're supposed to represent the people of Afghanistan. They cannot give themselves amnesty; people can only give them amnesty.

And also, there cannot be an election and a democracy when there is no political ideology. What are the people voting for?

MS. NAWABI: I think the Afghans themselves were the first ones who were invaded, if we go back in history to the Soviet Union. The Afghans fought their own war and, then, with the help of the United States. And I think as Americans here, we sometimes forget the cost that the Afghans paid for the freedom of Eastern Europe; that after the Afghans defeated the Soviet Union, people around the world – including Americans – had more freedom. And America's position in the world then rose to becoming the only superpower.

So in terms of it being an Afghan war, the Afghans themselves have unfortunately been at the crossroads of so many different political ideologies that they have been invaded by foreign forces, and they needed that assistance. When it wasn't there, there was a power vacuum that led to a lot of problems inside the country.

Now, whether it's been an Afghan war – I mean, obviously Afghans themselves – there were more Afghans killed by terrorists and people coming from abroad – and also from within Afghanistan – than those outside. So obviously, they're the ones who are going to suffer the most if there's not more stability and security.

MR. SCHIEFFER: All right. Another question, over here?

Q: I'm Charlie Stevenson; I teach at SAIS. Both Adm. Mullen and Congressman Obey have said that we need visible evidence of success within 12 to 18 months. Are there any particular things you think are actually accomplishable in that time period that would reassure the American people that this is being successful?

MR. CORDESMAN: I think the measures in developing the strategy were very clear. You either had to be able to show you could secure population areas and actually bring in at least the kind of minimal economic aid, services and stability that we discussed; that we called, again, "shape, clear, hold and build."

You can't do it throughout Afghanistan; you can't do it in any area without making some tradeoffs as to how you phase this strategy. But if you can't show you can do it in 12 to 18 months, we don't have time or the support for alternatives. Our allies aren't going to stay; we won't have the support of the Congress and the American people. One of the problems we have in the region is that so many people don't know whether we're going to stay and whether staying means that it's going to give them security.

So your question is a vital one, and if we can't at least show in key populated areas that we made a difference in 12 to 18 months, we effectively probably lost the war.

MR. WOODWARD: Can I just take – I mean, "lost" the war, I'm not sure what that means, exactly. And these terms get thrown, and Gen. McChrystal, in his assessment, said, if I don't get more force, more resource, in 12 months, there is the likelihood of mission failure. And that sounds very urgent and dramatic in these things.

One of the things – as you look at this through a long lens, I think you realize that our president has an awful lot of leeway in terms of time – if he's really committed and if he really defines the strategy and the goals and the national interests and, as you suggest, there have to be some models where this actually works, and it's not just a matter of clear, hold and build; you have to do that but then you have to give it over to the Afghans and you have to see that they can hold these areas from what is really a form of civil war; there's an insurgency in Afghanistan.

MR. SCHIEFFER: That is part of the strategy, and I think one of the key shifts is to just change the nature of Afghan partnering, because up until now, we really haven't empowered people in the field. We've only begun to do that.

Q: I want to take a slightly different tack – I'm Don Ritter, former congressman, very active in Afghanistan for 30 years, and I'm president of the Afghan International Chamber of Commerce. I wanted to posit to the panelists what possibly could be the influence of billions and billions of dollars flowing into a backward country through channels that are – it's not a market economy that's defining who gets this money; somebody has money and other people want it. And there has been, one would think, a corrupting influence of the money itself.

And it seems to me that the more money we put in through channels that are not driven by market forces and market-clearing prices; that people want money and they pay for contracts and all that – what do you think is this influence, and could it be that while we build up the

country and build up capacities, we're also corrupting the Afghan political economy and the Afghan polity?

MR. SCHIEFFER: That'll have to be our last question, why don't we just go around quickly, and Bob, you have a 20-second answer for that. (Laughter.)

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you. I mean, the big issue here is where does the money go? And it turns out that a lot of the money that flowed into Afghanistan went to private contractors who went in and did things that didn't flow through the government. So the government didn't get credit for this and it had the effect of eroding the power of the central government.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Kimberly?

MS. DOZIER: One of the most effective uses I've seen of foreign aid is through some of the USAID projects in Iraq that partner with local contractors and therefore had a lot of oversight. The big problem with that is – as the attack on the U.N. compound showed today – security. How do you put an Afghan face on it when, at this point, you need the foreign firepower to protect almost any project?

MR. SCHIEFFER: Mariam?

MS. NAWABI: I think that Afghanistan is testing a lot of capabilities, whether it's NATO, whether it's our USAID system, and there are a lot of problems that need to be fixed on this end of how money gets allocated, especially for a post-conflict situation.

But where I've seen a big opportunity is the public/private partnerships, where there's money allocated that helps develop the private sector. And lest everybody walk away from this panel with a dismal, gloomy picture, Afghanistan has transformed from the last 7 years – you've traveled back and forth numerous times – and it's been the private sector that is putting the banks and the wireless telephone companies and restaurants and services. In every area you go, there's progress.

So there has been great progress made. And I don't know when we're defining what success means – what is that – because maybe we're setting ourselves up for failure. And I think that with assistance, we can do things differently. But the Afghan people, through the private sector, are making enormous change in their own country. And we just need to help them continue to do that.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Tony, wrap it up for us.

MR. CORDESMAN: To be very realistic, we have no management, no planning, no unity of effort, no accountability and no transparency. Look at the U.S. State Department or Web page. Look at the report that's coming out of the special inspector general for Afghan reconstruction. We're still repeating every mistake we made that's documented by the special inspector general for Iraqi reconstruction.

We are in a government that has no one in charge of the U.S. aid process; we have no one in charge in the U.N. And what we have are individual, national efforts – some successful, and many without coordination.

And the private sector you talk about is important, but it reaches about 8 percent of the Afghan people out of 33 million. In other areas, there is too much danger, too much of a threat, too much corruption, too many powerbrokers for the private sector to operate in the classic sense.

So if we're not realistic about this and we're not honest about it, we are going to continue to fail on the civil side as we failed on the military.

MR. SCHIEFFER: So that really does beg the question, and this is the last question, so what does the president do here? Just fire everybody? (Laughter.)

MR. CORDESMAN: Well, effectively, he already has. I mean, we have a new ambassador; we have a new U.S. commander. This is probably one of the most serious shake-ups in any kind of field commander structure we've had. And in some ways, that's what happened in Iraq because it was Parker and Petraeus that made a critical set of differences.

But are we going to have to change a lot of this? The secretary of State has said very clearly, the aid process in the U.S. government is broken to the point where it has to be fundamentally changed. This isn't some sort of outside speculation. This is something that the government has to deal with. And the president has to face those facts.

MR. SCHIEFFER: All right, well, thanks to all of you, and thank you for coming. (Applause.)

(END)