



**THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS AND THE SECURITY
POLICY STUDIES PROGRAM OF THE ELLIOTT SCHOOL OF
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AT GEORGE WASHINGTON
UNIVERSITY PRESENT:**

**“AFGHANISTAN, FOUR YEARS LATER: PROGRESS,
PROBLEMS, AND PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE”**

**PANEL II – AFGHANISTAN: IMPLICATIONS FOR
INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM**

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ROBERT O. BOORSTIN: Okay. Welcome back for the second part of our program on Afghanistan four years after the invasion. I'm Bob Boorstin. I'm the vice president for national security at the Center for American Progress. This panel is going to focus on the question of Afghanistan: its current state and implications for international terrorism. Essentially, what we're going to do here is move beyond the borders and look at Afghanistan through a wider lens. The United States invaded Afghanistan four years ago on October 7th in order to remove the Taliban regime from power and in order to get at the leadership of al Qaeda. The question now is, how are we doing in the global terrorist network fight? What is the relationship of Afghanistan to this? How important is Afghanistan to that? And this panel will assess that.

We are honored to have a tremendous lineup of speakers, as we had in the first panel, and you have their bios in your folders, but let me just briefly introduce them. To my direct right is "Anonymous," a.k.a. Dr. Michael Scheuer who is the best-selling author of *Imperial Hubris* and *Through our Enemy's Eyes: Osama bin Laden, Radical Islam, and the Future of America*. Before his retirement from the CIA last year, Dr. Scheuer served as the head of the agency's unit that's devoted to bin Laden and al Qaeda. It must have been a great and fun job. And he currently is serving as adjunct professor of security studies at Georgetown University.

Next to him is Steve Coll, who recently moved to become a staff writer at the *New Yorker* after about 20 years – have I got this right? – at the *Washington Post*. Steve is a two-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize, the latest for his book *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10th 2001*. As I said, Steve spent about 20 years at the *Post* as a foreign correspondent with a three-year stint in South Asia and as an editor.

Moving down the line, we have – and here, my pronunciation will fail me, Ersel Aydinli.

ERSEL AYDINLI: Close, yeah.

MR. BOORSTIN: Okay, close. Thank you. Who is visiting assistant professor of political science and international affairs here at the Elliott School at George Washington. Last year, he was a fellow at Harvard's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, and he's on leave from Bilkent University in Ankara, Turkey. Previous to joining the ivory tower, he served as an officer in the counterterrorism department in the Istanbul police.

Our last panelist is Ellen Laipson, who is president and CEO of the Henry L. Stimson Center, which is one of Washington's premier national security think-tanks. Ellen has served in a wide variety of government posts including time as vice chairman of the National Intelligence Council, acting assistant director of central intelligence for

analysis and production, and director for Near East and South Asian affairs at the National Security Council, which is where we first met many years ago.

We're glad to have all of you here. What we're going to do in this panel is a little different; I'm going to ask each of the panelists a question and we're going to try to move into a discussion between them rapidly. And I want to also introduce a contest to my panelists during the next hour and a half or so. This morning, we heard from Jim Dobbins a great factoid. He told us that it was the Iranian delegation in Bonn that introduced the concept of democracy into that agreement, not the American delegation. I just want to know if any of you over the course of this panel can match that factoid for interest. (Laughter.) So first question to Dr. Scheuer: how do you think Afghanistan fits into what President Bush calls the global war on terror, and how important is it that we capture Osama bin Laden?

MICHAEL SCHEUER: I think in many ways we've kind of assumed that when the cities of Afghanistan fell, the war was over and the Taliban was beaten and bin Laden was kind of yesterday's news. A former colleague of mine at the agency once wrote that the Americans invaded Afghanistan, the cities quickly fell... they always do. And that's where we are. The war in Afghanistan is one, I think we can all see, that's coming to a tempo that is unexpected, and neither election has had much impact on that.

In terms of what Afghanistan means, if you call it the war on terrorism or if you call it Islamic militancy, Afghanistan is the keystone – the event that is looked by Islamic militants as proof that Islam will triumph. Because in the West we pay little attention to the claims of Ahmad Shah Massoud or Younis Khalis or anyone else who said they were the ones who beat the Soviets and defeated the Soviet Union and caused it to destruct, that doesn't mean they don't believe it themselves, and Afghanistan is the bellwether of victories for Islam. And in terms of an inspirational moment, an inspirational tool, Afghanistan remains very important.

Frankly, I think Afghanistan remains also not very difficult to operate in. I think we operate on a lot of assumptions. We have troops in a couple of provinces, a half a dozen or ten. We don't do much search and destroy. We don't do much of anything. So I think we greatly overestimate how much of what we would view as negative activity, training, organization is going on there.

Do we need to capture Osama bin Laden? No. We need to kill Osama bin Laden. There's a lot of whistling past the graveyard at the moment regarding bin Laden that he really doesn't matter anymore, that he is somehow yesterday's news, and we've broken – I think we now – we've broken al Qaeda's back 17 or 19 times and we kind of want to believe that, but bin Laden is – whether you like to hear it or not – I think the single most important Islamic leader and certainly the greatest Islamic hero in the world today. He is a man who fairly clatters with Islamic history, is cut from the mold of Muslim heroes of the past in terms – you know, if you take from the Prophet to Salah ad-Din to Nur al-Din to Osama bin Laden, there's a resonance in Islamic history of what Osama bin Laden is up to that is actually larger than he is.

Will it end – will killing bin Laden end the problem? Certainly not. It may have tempered the problem had it been done before 2000 when we had ample opportunities to do it, but the horse is out of the barn. Our back was broken in terms of the war on terrorism or the war on Islamic militancy by Iraq. Whether or not Saddam was a threat, I have no idea at all, but Iraq certainly broke our back in terms of being able to handle the problems of Islamic militancy without a full-scale military, economic, and political effort. So I would leave it at that. I think the worst thing we could possibly do is to capture Osama bin Laden, and I hope someone, when they finally find him, has the good sense to kill him.

MR. BOORSTIN: Well, after that sobering note – (laughter) – I'll turn to Steve.

This morning, in the first panel, we heard from Professor Shahrani that – he gave us a warning that Afghanistan could become what he'd called “a malicious state in the service of other countries.” My question to you is basically, do you think that Afghanistan poses a threat beyond its borders, and if so, what should the U.S. and our NATO allies – the ISAF force – be doing to most effectively clamp down on that threat?

STEVE COLL: Well, an unstable Afghanistan clearly poses a threat to its neighbors and, as we learned recently enough, well beyond oceans that others might think isolate it. It all depends on what kind of a state Afghanistan is going to become over the next five or ten years. I think it's impossible to assess militancy and stability in Afghanistan without seeing it in the context of its neighbors, particularly to the east in Pakistan, and to some extent to the north in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

And there are both sort of inherited and perhaps changing problems to think about. The inherited problems are the ones that we sort of woke up to on September 11th, the physical and social and political sanctuary that Afghanistan can provide to certain groups, its terrain, its social geography, the relationship between networks on the Afghan side of the border and on the Pakistan side of the border, and we can see from the frustrating searches for remnant al Qaeda leaders, remnant Taliban leaders, and the reinserted Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and his network that this social and political terrain is pretty, pretty comfortable if you're a fugitive with a certain Islamic sort of militant outlook.

The second way in which it's destabilizing for its neighbors is, of course, the – also visible in the past, which is the relationship between drug and criminal networks and these militant networks, and some of this takes you into sort of problems of Pakistan military intelligence and border forces and the corruption of those entities on the Pakistan side, but it's also independent of any state failure, and when you have governors in Afghanistan who – somebody told me yesterday, I presume this is not apocryphal, kept some 15 tons of opium in his office, was raided, and is still governor, you have a kind of a structure of governance that wouldn't really resemble the ideal.

And then I just – briefly I would mention, looking ahead because I think it's – let's challenge ourselves not to think about the problem of Afghanistan only in reference to the inherited problems, but also to recognize that everything is changing and has been changing since September 11th. This is an extraordinary pivot period in South Asia in all kinds of ways, some of them potentially hopeful, and some of them not. And one of the – just one among several ways that you might try to forecast where Afghanistan could fit in the region out five or six years is to think, for instance, about the problem of potential state failure in Pakistan.

If we're evolving, as everybody in the region, I think, who is realistic about it believes, towards a world where India and Pakistan are ultimately going to possess and attempt to deploy a nuclear deterrent numbering in the dozens, if not the hundreds of weapons in a dyad and maybe a triad in five or ten years, and unless they completely break the pattern of periodic crises in their relations, and unless the Pakistan army completely changes its strategy and its character over the next five or ten years, you're going to have a neighborhood in Pakistan where the consequences of state failure or breakdown of elements of state control are going to be much more catastrophic than even in the difficult days of the last 20 years. And I think that Afghanistan figures in that in all kinds of ways as both a – sort of a potential catalyst of some of these sources of radicalism and breakdown, but also as part of the geography where this plays out, we can come back to that later maybe.

MR. BOORSTIN: Let me just follow up. This morning, I read a report that the Pakistanis have arrested the Taliban's spokesperson, and it just seems to me, reading the newspapers and not being a real expert in this area, that every once in a while when the Pakistanis feel that they are coming under some pressure internationally to do something, they just happen to go out and find someone.

MR. COLL: Right.

MR. BOORSTIN: And that's probably an incredibly cynical view of what's going on, but I'm just wondering what your view is of this kind of –

MR. COLL: Right. No, I think that cynicism is easy to understand and I do think that you just have to – you don't have to look very far to see a pattern and the series of facts that would give rise to that sort of skepticism.

First of all, I believe that the – at the level of the Afghan Bureau where the Inter Services Intelligence Directorate of the Pakistan army has traditionally managed Afghan affairs, many of the personalities both serving and retired but still active are exactly the same as they were before, and many of these relationships have a history that directly involves some of the fugitives that are being sought, not just the Taliban, but the Hekmatyar, Jalaluddin Haqqani, Haqqani's clan, all of these characters have a rich history of involvement with ISI, and many of the ISI officers who are up working these accounts or attempting to find their own clients are the same folks.

And I do think that, in the end, Pakistani decision-making about whether or not to abandon jihad as an instrument of its foreign policy, both to the West and to the East, is something that's going to have to be measured by observable change in these kinds of facts, not by statements of intent and not by isolated arrests. Otherwise, I don't think history would give you any reason to be confident that they've actually changed their policy.

MR. BOORSTIN: Ellen, do you want to pitch in here?

ELLEN LAIPSON: Well, I largely agree with Steve. I think that we have given the Pakistani government the benefit of the doubt because we've made generally what is a security-driven deal with them. It's not about real transformation, the word that we like to use in other parts of the Muslim world. So I do think that we're – that Pakistanis are a little bit running out of credibility in terms of whether they are really committed to a kind of long-term, structural shift back to more participatory, democratic system. And these one-off security interventions that they do still don't quite meet the threshold of solving the Afghan-Pak border problems, which is where – at least to the best of my knowledge, the Afghans believe that a lot of the problems in Southern Afghanistan are still because of things that are coming across the border.

MR. SCHEUER: I think at times we forget that, like every other nation on earth, Pakistan has national interests and kind of a geopolitical theory of its own, and to expect – in my mind, Musharraf has done extraordinary things for us, more than I would have ever thought he would have done, especially in terms of al Qaeda in the cities, but to think that somehow it's in Pakistan's national interest to have a non-Islamic, non-Pashtun, non-traditional, Afghan government in Kabul is to subscribe to a newsletter by a guy who wrote *Alice in Wonderland*.

What Musharraf has done by supporting us has now come around to find his western border completely unsafe, and his American ally is giving nuclear assistance to the Indians and exercising with Indian naval and special forces and air forces around the country, including with the special forces in Kashmir. So it's good to pound the Pakistanis because we need their help, but to expect somehow that any nation will sacrifice its national interests for someone else, especially in terms of as fickle a friend as we have been and as a pro-Indian bureaucracy as we have, I think kind of is an unreasonable expectation.

MS. LAIPSON: I can't disagree with the dramatic presentation that Mike has made, but I would argue that part of our relationship with Pakistan has been to encourage them to try to redefine or rearticulate what their national interests actually are, and I do think with respect to their relations with India and Kashmir, for example, such a gradual, subtle process is in fact underway where the Pakistanis are learning to say, "Well, we have this, you know, sort of steady policy towards Kashmir and guess what? It didn't work. So let's see if we can try something else."

Similarly, I would argue that they need to develop a greater appreciation, and I think some Pakistanis do, of what their stakes are in Afghanistan, and it's not just a sort of ethnically based alliance with one part of Afghan society, but it does seem to me that in the long run, Pakistan has its own stake in building a more stable government in Afghanistan, so – you know, and I do think that our intervention in Afghanistan in a way was a great setback for how Pakistan saw its interests at that time. The question is whether there's an agility there to redefine what's at stake for Pakistan and whether their interests, in fact, are shifting as circumstances change.

MR. BOORSTIN: We'll come back to this question, but let me ask Ersel just to reflect on a different aspect of this problem, and that is, you've spent a lot of time looking closely at the Islamic terrorist networks in Europe and around the world, and I'm wondering what kind of connections you see between what's going on in Afghanistan with al Qaeda, with the – I guess you could call them al Qaeda wannabes that seem to be sprouting up around the world, and whether or not there are things that the Europeans should be doing that currently they're not doing. Let me kind of give you that as a starting point.

MR. AYDINLI: Just before that, one quick comment about this Pakistani situation. I think there are real limits to a state, and that is any state, to do really a full job on these matters. And particularly, in that part of the world and most part of the developing world, which seem to be plunged in terrorism, we are not talking about full-fledged, full functioning state capacities. So their national interest, however they see it, is also being shaped by the ability or the limits to their ability. I don't know; they might formulate very well national interests or some type of strategy, but these states historically have always failed to really – to implement or serve to that national interest. I think we have to also acknowledge their original limits because of the imperfect state capacity in those lines.

We respect to the question, my comments are going to be based on my – some type of field research that I've been doing the last year and this summer in some part of the Middle Eastern countries as well across the diasporas in Europe, and they are not really fully processed, but these are kind of the early impressions. One thing, I am not sure, for example, that OBL – Osama bin Laden – is the most popular person among these people. That wasn't exactly what I felt last summer in Europe. There is a huge debate within these diasporas and there is a huge debate within the Muslim communities whether he served or he really hindered, you know, the Muslim world interest. So there is a debate there. I don't think the verdict is out in terms of his fame or his popularity. In fact, I really think that his impact and his legacy has already surpassed him, whether it's a good thing or a bad thing, but it's already beyond him, so I don't know what would happen if we even had him or killed him. Probably we would still have to deal with his legacy beyond him, so that would be one kind of quick observation.

In order to – here is what I was asking to myself when I am trying to talk to people or I call them sometimes “al Qaeda wannabes” because there is a huge heterogeneity within the Muslim world, obviously, and not only within the Muslim

world, but within the jihadists. You can quickly divide them, the violent and nonviolent jihadists. And even the nonviolent jihadists would have a huge variation. You know, there's a huge difference between Islamist, Muslim, political Islamist, radical Islamist, violent jihadist, nonviolent jihadist, so it would be a grave mistake to kind of lump them, you know, into one thing and then try to tackle them.

Just like any other terrorist organization, what we are facing, I think, sits on also three columns: their ideology, their organization – organizational functioning, and their capacity to violence. So after Afghanistan when I reposed the question, what happens – or the invasion of Afghanistan, “What happened to the jihadist movement, you know, across these three columns?” what I see is a kind of a mixed result.

In terms of the capacity, I think their capacity has gone down in terms of creating a 9/11 size of attacks because now it's too loose and too disconnected in a way that I think it would be very hard, unless they get ahold of a WMD or something, to inflict such a major damage, yet small attacks, but multiple attacks – that capacity might have risen up because what I have been observing is that you see this *sui generis* kind of homegrown groupings here and there, almost they are waiting for where they are connected with some know-how and something else with clear direction, with more charisma come to them and tell them that “Hey, let's move to the next phase, which is the action.” So in that sense, you can say that there's a potential for multiple attacks in – across the globe. So capacity side is that way.

When it comes to their organizational thing, of course, after the invasion it became very dispersed, very disconnected, but spiritually connected, so I think it's gone even beyond now – beyond even this loose networkness that you have franchising here and there, homegrown kind of constructs. They seem to be producing their own type of jihadi discourse, and they are ready to do something, but they don't know necessarily how they're going to do it or where they should do it or whether they could do it. So organization has gone global in that sense. One would definitely argue that as opposed to the hierarchical, you know, the top-to-bottom type – that is forever gone. Now what we've got spiritually linked beyond even the loose networkness groups. You know, inspired groups seem to have some potential waiting for the right moment and right type of connection. Someone from maybe the jihadi land with some know-how and money and et cetera.

I think the significant change after the Afghan invasion has really taken place in the ideology. The jihadism, the discourse of – the jihadist discourse – I think that has gone some significant transformation. We used to talk about these local jihadist discourses. We had the Afghani jihad, we had the Chechen jihad, Bosnian, and all that. Now definitely it's a global jihadi discourse; that all those homegrown communities – one thing very common between them is how they see the jihad. They see it now as a real global struggle. They see it linked to each other. They see that if something happens in Australia, that's part of this larger struggle now. That discourse has gone really global. I think the connection is there. The only serious connection that they seem to now share, some type of common ideology.

This locality of Iraqi jihad, I think that shouldn't deceive us. That's because of how things turned out. The jihadi discourse is extremely global. Al Qaeda jihadists in Iraq, they are not trying to save Iraq. They are still a part of that OBL – Osama bin Laden – strategy of inflicting some type of big transformative conflict so that the *umma* would get together. They are still part of that philosophy rather than doing something in Iraq.

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So one good news – maybe I should just end up with that – is that it looks like OBL or bin Laden or al Qaeda has really failed in terms of, you know, getting enough attention for their call for jihad, but we are talking to still a very limited number of people. It looks like their failure in terms of bringing up jihadi potential in a violent way was not really stemming from the American policies or international, you know, counterterrorism strategies. I think they miscalculated on the heterogeneity. The divided structure in Islam is much more deep-seated, much more embedded that, you know, it would probably require even larger confrontation between West and the seeming Islamists to bring those people together. That heterogeneity seems to be saving us because there is a lot of debate still across these diasporas. I see communities basically trying to – starting to try, save their religion being kidnapped by these guys, by these violent jihadists who are claiming to rise to the flagship representation of Islam, and I don't think they are doing very well. I mean, at least that's my impression when I talked to people.

Thank you.

MR. BOORSTIN: Michael, do you want to comment on that?

MR. SCHEUER: No, I can't disagree with someone who's actually done the research in the field. I think that perhaps counting on the heterogeneity of Islam is less than a perfect solution for what's going on because I really think that the leaders of the jihad, whether it's Zawahiri or whether it's Osama bin Laden or whether it's Bashir in Indonesia have more than recognized the fact that unity is not going to come, except by focus on an external enemy; that the focus on our foreign policy, whether it's a correct perception or not, as an enemy of Islam is the glue that allows, as you said, I think, sir, that the Chechen jihadists and the Indonesian jihadists and the Afghan jihadists to see a global jihad.

And the current leaders of militant Islam went to school on, I think, the Ayatollah Khomeini. When he came in, he was clearly – kill the Americans because they are debauches and because they have terrible movies and women in the workplace. Very few people blew themselves up for that, but I think the focus on our policy, in a way, is at least a tool to submerge the – as you say – the great diversity of Islamic thought and political thought within Islam.

MR. BOORSTIN: Let me just turn to you for a second, Steve. Ersel said something about there being less of a chance, he thought, of having a WMD attack by

one of these folks, an attack with a nuclear or biological weapon, I'm assuming. I believe it was a talk that you gave or an article that you wrote in which you had asked a number of people, scientists at Los Alamos or somewhere like that what they felt about the possibility of this, and I'm wondering if you could just comment on your feelings about the possibility of al Qaeda through another network getting hold of one of those weapons.

MR. COLL: Well, I heard Ersel say that he thought that a conspiracy on the scale of 9/11 where you require long planning cycles and basically lots of room to run is a lot harder now than it was, and that it would be difficult to pull off a spectacular transformational attack absent the acquisition and use of weapons in mass destruction. I think that's a – I agree with that assessment and I think that one reason why biological and nuclear devices are so worrisome is that they do seem to be the one means by which even a small but determined element of this movement could attempt to replicate the big spectacular that is now sort of out there as the model.

The specific thing that you alluded to is I was at a conference like this at Los Alamos and the audience were all weapon scientists and usually, and most of them in T-division, and I just asked how many of them believed that the probability of a fission bomb detonating on American soil in the next 50 years was negligible: less than 5 percent, and it was a very small number of people who thought the chances were so poor. You can ask that question to all kinds of well-informed audiences and get all kinds of different ranges. They usually settle in the 10 or 15 percent range. I think that's just more the way the human mind works rather than any sort of empirical assessment.

But I think that we don't have to have a long discussion about how difficult it is to operate in this space: if you are a stateless group, it's extremely difficult and the easiest thing, of course, is to use a radiological device. That's not so difficult, but then of course your achievement is considerably less. Actually being able to acquire, control, and detonate a fission bomb in an area where you don't have a state to help you is extraordinarily difficult. Biological weapons I'm not so much of a specialist on, but when I talk to people who are, you hear just a range of views about how difficult it is; some very focused on this as a big concern, and others more skeptical that it could be done by a stateless group.

I don't think there's any – so it's all about capacity. I don't think we can doubt intent. I guess that was one of the sort of points that I wanted to make when I wrote that piece originally, which is that I think we're kidding ourselves if we doubt the intent of some wings of this movement to acquire and use and – than resting only on the difficulty of their actual capacity to do so doesn't really seem enough.

MR. BOORSTIN: Thank you.

Let me turn to Ellen now and switch gears. I'm going to give you the unfortunate thought of right now you are the national security advisor and you're charged with squaring the circle between some very difficult things. On the one hand, you want to combat global terrorist networks and curb Islamist jihadism. On the other hand, your

boss tells you that his big goal out there is to promote democracy in some of the countries where this may be going on.

What are the tradeoffs that you're dealing with here, and do you have any guiding principles? I'm not going to ask you exactly what you would do because that's really unfair. This is only slightly unfair. What are the principles that you would apply when thinking about how to square this circle?

MS. LAIPSON: Thanks, Bob. Well –

MR. BOORSTIN: Pleasure.

MS. LAIPSON: The good news is, I don't ever want to be the national security advisor because I think these – but I think you've framed it right, that the democracy versus security conundrum is kind of a way to at least begin to breakdown this terrible choice – these Hobson's choices that come to policymakers. It seems to me that the Bush administration attempted to do it sequentially instead of simultaneously. They spent their first administration working almost exclusively on the security agenda, building up relationships that were premised almost exclusively on 'are you with us,' and were driven very emotionally by this American feeling that 9/11 changed the world for every one. And I think what they learned was that 9/11 changed the world for Americans, but did not necessarily change the world for everybody else. And so we stopped hearing, I think, in this – by frontloading security on every relationship in the world, I think we failed to hear that the world didn't necessarily change. The entire international order did not necessarily change for all other countries, as shocked as they were by 9/11 and as much as they, I think, sympathized with the United States.

Okay. Second term, we switched to freedom as the mantra. Freedom is the driving conceptual frame in which we're supposed to engage with the world, and I guess what I think is implicit in Bob's question is that we're finding that we are perhaps underachieving on both of these scores, or is there a better way to get at it. It does seem to me that this is a permanent predicament of governments that, as the previous panel said, when you have your choice of your first – of your short-term security imperatives versus long-term strategic, noble, honorable goals, the short-term is always going to get the attention and going to get the money, and that's certainly been the case in both Afghanistan and Iraq that what we spent on security dwarfs what we spend on funding this quest of freedom and desire for transformation.

So I guess, you know, looking at it from outside government, one wants to see a better mix, a better balance, and a better tone in terms of what is achievable. We need to have, I think, sort of more acceptable milestones or goals for – and to show a little bit more insight and understanding into how the transformation part happens, and that security isn't necessarily the be all and end all – I mean, security matters to every society for sure, but I think if you look at our relations with both Pakistan and Uzbekistan, you get to some of the predicament of what happens when your security imperative so

overwhelms your agenda with a country that you then find yourself being accused of hypocrisy or inattention when you try to squeeze in a little bit on the democracy front.

I mean, the Uzbek story, which is different than the Pakistan one, is that we did say security is what mattered. We got the Uzbeks to agree to giving us basing rights there, and the first time that – or the most dramatic time very recently this summer where we were at odds with the Uzbeks over their treatment of domestic political opponents, and we decided to show sympathy for some people who had fled Uzbekistan for human rights violations, the Uzbeks got hopping mad at us, asked us to leave the bases, and are now turning back to the Russians as their security partner. So this getting the mix right, getting the balance right between security and democratization, I think is hugely important.

I guess my sense is that the Bush administration may have over-promised on democracy in terms of timing, techniques, and tools, and yet is in a way under-performing in terms of the resources that it's giving to those very long-term and strategic objectives.

MR. BOORSTIN: Yeah, I think that what Jim Dobbins said this morning about the Bonn agreement and how they – I think, his words were something like “a reasonable representative government,” that those were the things that people were – that the goal in Afghanistan was to create that kind of government, was very interesting because there was a sense that they did not set expectations out of control in that case, and that in Iraq and elsewhere we now may be suffering from kind of a crisis of expectations.

Let me actually ask if any of the panelists or the moderator from the first panel has a question for this panel. Barney, Rick, do you have anything you want to say? There's a microphone up here, if you would.

Barney?

BARNETT RUBIN: I'm not sure who to direct this to. I'll direct it to anyone who thinks they know the answer. There is a – there is disagreement now about the nature and trends in the – and driver in the insurgency in Afghanistan. The official U.S. government position, as far as I understand, is that there's no increase in the insurgency quantitatively, but the reason there are more casualties is because the quality of their activity has gone up. There is disagreement about the extent of the Pakistani role, which for someone who's been involved with Afghanistan for a long time is strangely reminiscent of when a high official told me in 1995 that the U.S. government had no information to prove that Pakistan was supporting the Taliban. (Laughter.) And there is disagreement about the extent to which this insurgency is, in fact, locally based, based on grievances inside Afghanistan, the extent to which it is based on support from Pakistan, and the extent to which it is based on global jihadi networks, all of which, as we always say, have some role, but what is their relative importance?

So I'll leave it at that.

MR. SCHEUER: Well, I would think just on the bare point of the quality of the attacks are better, one suggests that perhaps the training grounds are still available in Afghanistan. I think sometimes that when we look at the problem we have with either Afghanistan or Islamic militancy writ large is we have such an odd – wide gap, rather, between our sense of time and their sense of time. Patience of the enemy, if you will, is extraordinary. And even when the Soviets invaded, it was three or four years before they got their act together in terms of exerting a lot of pressure. And so I think what we're seeing is the natural course of the small-D democratic society in Afghanistan. They talk amongst themselves and they argue who's going to do what, and you know better than I do. So what we're seeing is a maturing insurgency.

The idea that somehow – and I just caught the end of your panel – the idea that Karzai is going to last or his government is going to last is, I think, probably not a healthy one for America to have. The insurgency will continue to grow. It grows wherever we are most active. It's most active in the south; that's where marines have been active in Uzghan (ph) and other places. If we become active more in eastern Afghanistan, in Nangarhar, up in the Konar, it's going to be come more reactive there.

Is there a Pakistani role? Of course. Is there an Iranian role? Yeah. How about the Saudis? The Saudis have invested \$5 billion to keep – to put an Islamic government into Kabul. Do you think they are not supporting them? So the whole analysis, at least the official analysis, and bipartisan and the Congress and the White House, is suffused with assumptions that are probably incorrect, and I don't think there's any reason to be hopeful that we're going to see a democracy that will remind us anything of our own in Afghanistan.

MR. COLL: You know, I'll just jump in and go back to the specific list that Barney ticked off, and I'd want to go out and walk around in the middle of it myself before offering a confident answer. I think the only thing I can report is what people I respect who have recently been out walking around come back and say about some of those questions, and the one thing that strikes me is their belief that in the last year in particular the insurgency's ability to recruit across the board in all regions has been linked to rising frustration with the government's performance and with the pattern of corruption and sort of expectations, both in the north and the south, not just in the traditional Taliban country.

The other pattern that I hear people talk about in a convincing way is the breadth of organizations that now see themselves participating in this insurgency even if they have weak ties to the old Taliban government or reject its ideology. Of course, the Taliban was always a flag of convenience for some militant groups, particularly in east, and I think it's probably a flag of convenience again for diverse grievances, and some of those may be quite local.

And yet I do think on this – on the sort of Pakistani sponsorship side – you know, who knows? It's very difficult to – it's always been difficult to present a very confident

order of battle about these kinds of operations, but, as I said before, a lot of the personnel are the same and there's really no evidence that the senior leadership of the Pakistan army, as Mike said, has changed or for that matter from their point of view has reason to change their view of how to manage their interests in Pakistan. I mean, in Afghanistan. They truly believe that the Indians are creating their insurgency problems in Baluchistan. They truly believe that the Indian consulates all around are sort of already engaged in a proxy war designed to weaken Pakistan without fingerprints, and so their traditional response to that view has been to play themselves, and they seem to be playing.

MR. BOORSTIN: Other comments?

MR. AYDINLI: One thing actually related to what Michael said. Most of the time, the counterterrorists, they are really professional. They are 9-to-5 people who are fighting with 24/7, and with a lifetime commitment without any exit strategy type of people. No holiday plan – nothing. (Laughter.) So what happens is that they wait, and in fact so it's a limitless patience comes out of this natural, you know, structure of their job; that they wait. They wait until you relax. They wait until you start thinking that it's all right, so you leave, and then they move in. So in that sense unless the ground that they are sitting – these people or insurgents – is being dramatically transformed, they always wait.

So how could you then transform that ground? Then you really need to have an efficient and legitimate and a strong state existence but a homegrown state existence. That links it back to the arguments, I think, made in the previous panel. If you don't have a legitimate functioning state – forget the democratic part for a second, but a state existence, governance, a functioning governance, a legitimate and a working one, that ground will remain the same and they will only wait for your patience to grow and then leave, and they're going to move in.

So I think we have to make a distinction between democracy building and state building. I think we need first a legitimate state existence, governance existence, I think. We have to make some type of choices there if we can't find a simultaneous formulation.

MR. BOORSTIN: Professor Shahrani, do you want to comment on that?

NAZIF SHAHRANI: I actually wanted to raise a question to the panelists having to do with Pakistan. I mean, one of the complaints has been that Pakistanis are not doing enough or perhaps there is not one Pakistan. What is Pakistan's interest is another question that came up. There are, by some accounts, three Pakistani governments, not one, with very different and divergent interests. And that is the government that is the military in Pakistan, government that is ISI in Pakistan, and government that's the political parties in Pakistan. And those three entities are in competition with one another, and that their interests or the way they have also linked themselves with al Qaeda and Taliban were not all the same.

It's possible that Pervez Musharraf, who is now – perhaps with help of some of the military forces that he controls may wish to do certain things, and sometimes they can do something, but it may be the other two who have other agenda, and I would very much like to hear what the –

MR. SCHEUER: From my own experience, I've always thought that the idea that ISID was a rogue organization was one convenient for the president or prime minister of Pakistan to believe. ISID is arm of the military. It's as disciplined as the rest of the military. And ISID, like any intelligent service, is designed to protect Pakistan's national interests as it's decided by the generals. And so to think that somehow ISID is conducting their own foreign policy without Pervez Musharraf's knowledge is – it might be right on the periphery, but the core of what they're up to is what Musharraf wants them to be up to, or before him, Zia or – I think a rogue organization maybe when Benazir was there, but –

MR. COLL: I would just say that I think that that's – I agree with that. I mean, it's important to recognize ISI is a division of the Pakistan army. I mean, it is not a separate organization, and while some of its bureaus are staffed by officers who stay there an awful long time, have a lot of contact with radical clients, probably become radicalized in some cases themselves, still they are serving officers subject to full Pakistani military discipline.

I think the complexity is that there's a kind of a continuum that leads from the very sort of well organized apparatus of the military and the state at the top, down to these bureaus, then to the client groups, then to the political parties and international Islamist networks that are associated with the client groups. And then you have retired officers and other people all kind of running around in this mix, and at that stage it starts together very gray. And so there still is a question, even – you don't have to see ISI as a rogue organization to note that if you're sitting on top and you pull the lever, the electricity is not necessarily going to run all the way down to the end of the line.

MS. LAIPSON: I'd like to put the discussion of Pakistan in maybe even a little bigger box. It does – every once in a while, we go through these cycles of revisiting the partition of India and Pakistan and sort of some of the deep, existential issues that linger even after two generations over what's the real purpose and identity of the Pakistani state.

You know, it was created, of course, as kind of a haven or a refuge for Muslims when – even though India has turned out to be a multicultural, tolerant country with over 100 million Muslims in it itself, so some of the basic precepts of what's the core identity of Pakistan I feel are still kind of unresolved. We know that Ali Jinnah, the founding president, actually did expect Pakistan to move on the path of a more secular, modern state; that some elites in Pakistan look to Turkey as a model of where they wanted to be, and yet it didn't quite happen. And there's sociologic reasons and economic reasons, et cetera, but it does seem to me that we need to bear in mind this kind of troubled history that still lingers over the Pakistani leadership over which image or vision of Pakistan are they serving.

I hear now that there is a kind of – I wouldn't – maybe resurgence is a too strong a word, but there is a rise of real desire, at least among urban elites, to see the restoration of the political parties.

Now, outside of Pakistan, people think that the parties of Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto were discredited by their performance in government and that what Pakistan really needs is kind of a turnover in political party life and that you would hope to see maybe a different set of actors and some new faces, but there is still some legitimacy to the core values and platform of those two political parties and that one of the problems is that Musharraf hasn't quite found a way to bring back some level of contestational political life.

It is also true, and I think we have other cases beyond Pakistan to show this, that in the absence of competitive political party life, the Islamists rise as a ratio of – in terms of attractiveness and that what we right now have is a kind of tacit alliance, if you will, between conservative Islamists, political actors, and the military. And one has to imagine how different would it look if Musharraf opened up – restored a little bit of the political institution life that Pakistan has enjoyed in the past. Would the kind of – our sort of belief as non-Pakistanis is that Islamists have huge legitimacy in Pakistan and that this is one of the very powerful both constraints or dynamics that Musharraf's government deals with. What we don't know is how different would it look if there were some return to more competition. Would the People's Party and Nawaz Sharif's Muslim Alliance sort of bring back a different kind of mix in the political preferences of Pakistani citizens?

MR. BOORSTIN: We've now heard a great deal about Pakistan. I want to put another country on the table, as it were, and that's Iran, and what people's current assessment is of Iran's role in Afghanistan and its interest in Afghanistan.

Anybody wants to take that up?

MR. COLL: Well, I'd be interested in other panelists on this. Iran's interests in Afghanistan are easy to describe at some broad-brush level. Here is a second of two neighboring countries where the United States appears to be constructing long-term military bases and where there is a minority population with ethnic, linguistic, and religious ties to the Iranian leadership and Iranian society.

Iran has always attempted to both sort of manage its statecraft interests in Afghanistan by preventing a hostile government from rising there, and at the same time to develop its diaspora ties with the Hazar and the other Shi'a population; sometimes for political purposes, other times just – I mean they dropped food to starving Afghan Shi'a when the rest of the world wasn't paying attention. So they do see a sense of connection there that goes beyond traditional sort of statecraft.

What they're doing now – I mean, the one great mystery – and I don't know if anybody has some insight into it, is – you know, Hekmatyar was one of the odd sort of

exiles in Iran when Pakistan switched from promoting his attempt to take power in Kabul and decided to promote the Taliban. Hekmatyar was sort of a man without a sponsor, so he went to Iran for a while. Iranians apparently sort of dropped him back into Afghanistan or allowed him to migrate after pulling his visa. I don't know what the circumstances were or what we believe the circumstances were.

Barney, do you have something?

MR. RUBIN: Briefly, as I understand the circumstances, the circumstances were as follows: the Iranian revolutionary guards helped the United States supply the Northern Alliance in Tajikistan. They welcomed us to the base in Bagram. At Bonn, they cooperated with us diplomatically to help us to get the Bonn agreement. And then the United States criticized them for harboring this terrorist Hekmatyar and called them a member of the Axis of Evil, and they were expecting a different response to their cooperation in Afghanistan. (Laughter.) So they said, "Okay, we won't harbor this terrorist, Hekmatyar, anymore."

MR. SCHEUER: Hekmatyar has a way of believing that he allows people to support him – (laughter) – rather than feeling he's being sponsored by any one. I think the Iranians for most of the – for many – of my many sins, I have worked off and on in Afghanistan since 1986 and I have always been impressed by the Iranian media and their journals as translated by FBIS. I don't have Persian. They have a healthy respect for the absolute impossibility of controlling events within Afghanistan and they have kept their interests, I think, primarily toward during the war keeping the alliance alive in the north as the best they could and, as Steve said, protecting the Hazars.

I think they are certainly worried about our construction of bases there, but at the same time they have – I think they probably have a smug belief that the Americans are going to eventually have the same problem the Russians had and the British had in the past. And so it doesn't seem to me at the moment that Iran is an activist player. It's an important player, but I don't think they are very active except they have a terrible problem with heroin, drug trafficking, so I think they are very active along the border.

MR. BOORSTIN: You're nodding your head.

MS. LAIPSON: Yeah, I was going to make the same point: that I think at this point Iran is in a kind of protective crouch vis-à-vis Afghanistan. It does not have great ambitions to transform Afghan culture or society, but it does house still hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees that it hopes to facilitate their return. It believes the international community has not been attentive enough to the burden on Iranian resources of caring for those refugees. And, as Mike said, the drug issue is a huge, huge issue in Iran. Iran has now, in part of because of the despair that lives within Iran, a terrible, terrible problem with domestic addiction and that those drugs are coming almost exclusively from Afghanistan. And drugs in the area in the '90s where I think the United States and Iran believed they could try to work together. If we wanted to pursue kind of

practical engagement with Iran, certainly the drug problem and helping the Iranians on their drug issues would be a promising area of cooperation.

MR. SCHEUER: I was thinking as Ellen was speaking the previous time about the introduction of – the reestablishment of the two political parties. For a factoid, I've read that when Zia took over in '70 – was it '77? – something like 84 percent of the Pakistani general officer corps had been trained in British or American staff schools, command colleges, war colleges. When Musharraf took over in '99, it was 11 percent because of the sanctions the West had put onto Pakistan over the nuclear issue.

And so when your officer corps is 84 percent, the introduction of semi-Western political parties probably is not a threat to them. When the officer corps is 11 percent trained in the West, the reestablishment of the Western-type political parties may be much more of a threat. So I think the attitude of the military as a whole may have changed dramatically in 20 years.

MR. COLL: Yeah, I think that it has. And certainly anyone who interacts with serving or retired officers in Pakistan military can feel that gap – that 11 percent. And one of the things it does is it makes those 11 percent isolated in their own military because they are now viewed as suspect and they are minority of the conversation. Of course, Musharraf is an interesting character because he does have exposure, personal and through his family, to the United States and Britain, and so he's managed to sort of create more of a balancing act in the past.

But I do think the break with the narrative that Ellen refers to in this, I think, conversation about the revival of political parties and political competition in Pakistan, one break that you hear quite a lot of Pakistanis talk about worriedly is from the pattern in which the army over the course of 50 years since independence would tack back and forth between the barracks and political control. And that when they withdrew, they would leave a little bit of control over foreign and nuclear policy, but essentially they would pull back and then intervene again when they felt compelled to do so.

What you hear quite a lot of discussion about now is the institutionalization of the army's role in all levels of Pakistani society, on the boards of corporations, on the – vice rectors of universities, running hospitals –

MR. SCHEUER: Water supply.

MR. COLL: – water supply; that essentially the army is spreading out and so we would then – might not expect the kind of return to the barracks that characterized political revival in the past. Instead, you would expect a very managed, very controlled competition for a weak partnership with the army in running Pakistan.

MS. LAIPSON: I know you've not wanted us to dwell on Pakistan, but one thought I just had to try to get us a little bit back to Iran is that both Pakistan and Afghanistan are between India and Iran, and as we watch the India-Iran relationship

improve, that creates a new sense of siege or isolation on the part of the Pakistanis. I don't know the geopolitical context.

MR. BOORSTIN: We have some time for questions now, I ask that you come up to the mike in front of the auditorium, identify yourself, your organization, and please ask a question.

Q: I'm Farah Stockman with the *Boston Globe*, and I was struck earlier by the comment that the idea that Karzai's government is going to last is not a healthy one, and I just wanted – I've recently returned from Afghanistan and heard a similar sentiment from somebody involved in fighting narcotics and he was speaking about it as, you know, narcotics was really going to be the biggest threat, not this insurgency. You seem to be talking about it in terms of the insurgency. I was hoping you could clarify that.

And I also wanted to know if you felt there was any intertwined nature between the narcotics and the insurgency. I mean, there's been a lot of talk about that.

MR. SCHEUER: Oh, I think it's very much entwined. You know, during the war against the Soviets, almost all of the major Afghan commanders in one way or other were involved in narcotics. I tend to be one who thinks on the bigger question of Afghan governance, there's been much wailing and gnashing of teeth about how the Americans abandoned the Afghans after the Soviets left. My argument to that is that the Afghans' problem was that we did not abandon them, that we sent Mr. Khalilzad to try to – and other people, Mr. Thomson, to try to establish a government of former communists, Western technocrats, people that hid from fighting the Soviets in India and the Gulf and Germany, and tried to cut off the guys who actually bled and fought for 10 years against the Soviets, and tried to establish a government that way.

The civil war was basically induced because Western diplomats, charmed by the idea of Afghans who wore suits, tried to put them in the power. What did we do after we took Afghanistan in 2001? Mr. Khalilzad, some very wealthy wine growers from California became governors in Eastern Afghanistan, and we restored any number of people who have not shared the fate of their country over the last 25 years.

Now, is it a noble thing to bring these quality people back? And I believe their quality. I believe Mr. Karzai is a very great man, but he's about as much an Afghan as I am. And it's – one way or another, the boys that carried the guns are going to carry the day, and we've been in a state of denial since that kind of Vaudeville show the Soviet general put on by walking across the bridge by himself in 1989. And I just think we're fooling ourselves. The Afghans have a tremendous – they have two millennia of history. They think the Persians are the new kids on the block. They are not going to – I don't think put up with the kind of people we've installed there for the long term. I think those people will remain as long as the foreign aid comes in, as long as our bayonets are there. Otherwise, Afghan history will have a way of finding its own course.

MR. BOORSTIN: Any other comments from the panel? Okay.

Q: Al Millikan, Washington Independent Writers. Among international terrorists like Osama bin Laden, who not only claim Islam, but who can trace their roots and Islamic credentials to Afghanistan and the fight against the atheist, communist Soviet Union, how have their religious beliefs changed beyond justifying and glorifying suicide and murder and terrorism? Have any of their world plans for Islam diminished, and how do they view Muslims who accuse them of hijacking Islam?

MR. BOORSTIN: Let's start with Ersel on this question.

MR. AYDINLI: You know what? Actually, that's a very hard question and it goes down to this – the question that how much of this is politics; how much of it's religion; how do they interplay, really, in the jihadist discourse? But one thing I realized, that the jihadist discourse has been really evolving depending on the counterterrorism policies and also depending on what takes place within the larger Muslim community.

I think just like any other terrorist organization, the violent jihadists sit down together in their own little community. They think they are being appreciated, but it's not that they can go out and really measure that with the larger segments of the Muslim society. They think they are being appreciated because I think they think – when you talk to them one to one also you realize they think that the way they are seeing the relationship they've got with religion is the same type of relationship almost most of the other Muslims have. They are mistaken in that. That's not the case.

So their perception – the violent jihadist perception about the Muslim world, I think – yeah, they think they are being supported, but that ground I think has been shifted. That is, you don't see that when you talk to the other people, so – but one last thing about this religion, and religion-plus-political kind of combo as the jihadist ideology: it has become more and political, less and less religious. I mean, there is that – there is an evolution, but when you look at it, it's becoming more and more political because it starts with a political picturesque. It starts with a political grievance. It goes on with a political formula. It ends up for a political goal: creating a state. So it is becoming less and less religious.

So that's where I see a chance that maybe the other people – the other Muslim who are kind of – who is going to have a larger room to distance themselves from this radical, but more fragmented, more isolated group. But there is problem there – a little problem. When there is an isolation of a group, that sounds like a good news, but unfortunately every isolation – in the jihadist movement historically and any other terrorist organization also – always preceded more violence. Isolation means that they're going to go sit together and get more angry and plan more attacks. As a larger picture, it's good for us. Why? Because we think they are now isolated because there is another Imam's party who is trying to really claim for the religion, but in the shortest – that's good for the long term because that's good for regime transformation and everything – some type of reformation. But in the shortest term, we are going to have angry and isolated and disappointed people who are going to think that they really couldn't

convince the others and they're going to try to do bigger things. So I think we are facing that dilemma.

MR. BOORSTIN: Did you want to say something?

MR. SCHEUER: The only thing I was going to say is that their course – I don't see any difference between political goals and religious goals. If there's a more earthly focused religion than Islam, I'm not quite sure what it would be. The idea of building a state is inherently part of the religion, and so I don't think that there is really much of the difference between the political aspect or the religious aspect, to some extent. I think the goal of building an Islamic state on earth is perfectly in keeping with what –

MR. AYDINLI: Actually, you know, that's true. This is, I think, what I was getting at. There are several ways in the jihadist discourse – even in the jihadist discourse to reach an Islamic state. You don't have to go grab a weapon. So that gap seems to be expanding now; the gap between those who would like to get that state through violence and those who say that they could do it through education, missionary and et cetera. It seems like that gap is expanding, and I think that also provides a golden opportunity for the counterterrorism policies. That's what I was getting at.

MR. COLL: And you see that in the correspondence between Zawahiri and the Jamaa Islamiya in Egypt where there in this really vitriolic argument not about goals, but about means. But I think the other part of this discourse that is very active right now, if you just read what the jihadists are saying to each other, is focused around the Sunni-Shi'a conflict in Iraq, and Zarqawi, who has this unusually vitriolic view of Shiism as heretical, has created a whole conversation about that in Iraq that just wasn't present in the Afghan day because bin Laden really didn't share that view.

Q: Gary Thomas, correspondent for VOA News. Actually, segues nicely into what I wanted to ask about, which is the religious parties in Pakistan. The MMA or the religious alliance did very well in the elections. They control the northwest frontier province. What is their potential in terms of destabilization in Pakistan and what is, do you think, the nexus between the religious parties in Pakistan and the jihadists?

And the last question is, how much is Musharraf constrained in cooperating with us by domestic political considerations wrought by the MMA?

MR. COLL: Well, the MMA did in the last round of open parliamentary elections exceed by a great deal their historical performance – the groups that make up the MMA, which include some longstanding political parties in Pakistan. Somebody was telling me that these sort of strange municipal elections that are just kind of being counted and sorted out suggest that the MMA certainly didn't increase from where it was last time, but also hasn't fallen back to its historical performance, which is about 5 percent.

Who are these characters in the MMA? You have two longstanding political parties that have the links to the Muslim Brotherhood on the subcontinent and have been

very much a part of the establishment in Pakistan and at the same time have been an instrument of the army's political strategy over a long period of time, often concentrating on peaceful, charitable, educational institutions, businesses, but at the same time they've have been instruments of a kind of political wing of the Afghan war in the '80s and then the Kashmir program; mostly involved with relatively mainstream groups that then produce violent splinters on the ground.

If you look at the, for instance, the – you ask about what are the constraints on Musharraf? Well, let's ask who tried to kill him? Who is trying to kill him now? If we were him, we'd be interested that question. (Laughter.) And so it turns out that the conspiracies appeared to have arisen from the distribution of jihadi ideology to relatively unorganized members of his own security forces and remnant al Qaeda South Asia cells. And so you really can't blame the political parties at all for that.

On the other hand, when you find al Qaeda fugitives in Pakistani cities, they seem to be sitting inside houses that are part of the JUI network, so this basic ambivalence that the parties developed in the '80s as being kind of on the one hand peaceful and political wings, and on the other hand instrumental to the prosecution of the war persists, and they're bigger than they were before. That's the only thing to say about – they're bigger.

Q: Michelle Steinberg from *EIR* magazine. The Bush administration has zeroed in on a spin-off of the Afghan war in Iraq, an entity that they call Al-Zarqawi – Steve Coll mentioned just for a moment – and they've identified him as our most significant enemy or effective enemy growing in strength. My question is, in the opinion of people who study this, is this a real person or a composite or an entity that is being used to explain something which is a little bit different? And if he really is a veteran of the Afghan War, as we've heard described, who moved to Iraq, are there dozens or hundreds of other junior officers, senior officers who are out there waiting to continue the tradition? So I'd like to hear from as many panelists who could address that.

MR. COLL: Well, Zarqawi is a real person as far as I understand all of the available evidence, including the daily press releases that his organization posts on their websites, which seem to have global reach because the servers and the mechanisms by which he communicates so effectively to his followers and to his adversaries are distributed at least around the Gulf and seems to show up in Europe and the United States occasionally.

He has himself affiliated with al Qaeda after a long period of uncertainty about whether or not he wished to be seen as subordinate to bin Laden's leadership. Last November, he announced that he would be, and that appeared to be a decision based on his own assessment of his self interest: that his ability to recruit money and followers and volunteers from outside Iraq would be enhanced by his sort of establishing himself as an al Qaeda affiliate.

Where does his group and the foreign fighters associated with them fit in the Iraqi insurgency more broadly? Now, that's a question about which I gather there's still a

great deal of disagreement inside the U.S. government among people who have access to all of the empirical evidence you'd want to have access to: detainees, interrogations, patterns of attack, and all of the rest of it. I don't really know how to assess that other than I don't think there's any doubt that foreign fighters carry out a significant number of suicide bombings, and there's no doubt also that the insurgency in Iraq is much bigger than them.

MR. SCHEUER: I would just say Zarqawi – I don't think he's anywhere near the stature of Zawahiri or bin Laden. I think that he happens to be extraordinarily adept at the media, and if I thought – if I had to guess what kind of support he got from agreeing to cooperate with al Qaeda, it is media support because the difference in quality and, as Steve said, availability of Zarqawi's media machine from the first days of the war until – and then since he signed up with al Qaeda is extraordinary. It rivals al Qaeda's media capabilities.

In terms of Iraq generally, I think he's one of many players. I think the insurgency – just as the insurgency in Afghanistan was many headed, and that's a weakness in terms of unity for our opponents, but it's also a strength because it can't be decapitated – you know, generally speaking in terms of foreign fighters, I think we face the same problem the Soviets faced in Afghanistan. If we're not going to close the borders to Syria, Jordan, and especially to Saudi Arabia, the number of foreign fighters will grow and we will bleed.

MR. BOORSTIN: Last question.

Q: My name is Sayeed Ischaf (ph) from the Voice of America. I'll just return to the main topic of our discussion and my question is addressed to Mike and Mr. Steve. Since I have read your books and you have – I think I find it a realistic portrayal of the situation as far as Afghanistan is concerned. It is since four years that Taliban have gone and we see many changes in Afghanistan, but as a former diplomat and soldier of my country, I think – maybe you agree or not – that most of our expectations might prove short-lived.

Let us suppose that the Western armies will decide to leave Afghanistan one day and leave the entire security mechanism in the hands of the Afghan army, who till this moment don't have any heavy weapons. They are just security guards and so-called interior ministry force, which is no more than a rag-tag recruit army – police force, sorry.

So what do you think in the absence of continued Western presence, I mean military presence, in Afghanistan, the survival chance is of Mr. Karzai? And the reason I'm asking this question is, on the one hand Mr. Karzai's trying to portray himself as a national figure, as an elected leader of Afghanistan; on the other hand, he might have the stigma of having come with (our?) forces' help, and this is something that – which runs counter through the basic rules of Afghan history. Thank you very much.

MR. BOORSTIN: Go.

MR. SCHEUER: I think this – we could cut back here to Ellen’s point early in the discussion about the balance between security and democracy, and in fact, I think in Afghanistan, the balance has never been adequate in terms of security. We really didn’t beat anyone. And because we did not annihilate the enemy, however you want to think that could have been done or if it could have been done, the enemy remains and, indeed, it’s held at bay simply because of the international force that’s in Afghanistan, and that is the beginning of wisdom. I can’t see how Mr. Karzai can survive without Western bayonets, and certainly if he has neither a security instrument nor an infrastructure which people value enough to protect from the depredations of the guerillas, he can’t survive. It’s a nonsense to believe that that’s possible just in the simple logic of things.

MR. COLL: Well, I’m not a forecaster. I guess I would dissent from the view that Afghan’s future is inevitably going to be determined by the patterns of its past. I don’t know. Maybe it will be. But I sort of think that it’s the obligation of states to try to imagine alternatives to pasts of that character, and that I don’t think that just looking at the next five or ten years through sort of the question of the art of the possible that it’s necessary or desirable to assume the worst.

There are very complicated coalitions present in Afghanistan right now despite all of the frustration they feel about their own government. And Karzai’s isolation, which I think we can stipulate, is not the only fact that’s going to determine how Afghanistan evolves over the next five or ten years. And so – anyway, I just for my own part as a taxpayer wouldn’t want my own government to proceed from the assumption that it has no role in attempting to shape the environment in which Afghans decide on their own future.

MR. BOORSTIN: Any last comments, Ersel or Ellen? Okay.

All right. Well, let’s all thank these panelists for what I think was a terrific presentation.

(Applause.)

Let me thank Dr. Gordon Adams and the program here at the Elliott School and Ambassador Rick Inderfurth, and all the people who helped set this forum up today. I think we’ve got what we came for, which was a realistic view of what is going on in Afghanistan four years after the invasion, and some perspective on what that means for the global terrorist networks in our fight against them. Thank you all – to the audience for coming. I would refer you again to the report we put out today – if I could do my last advertisement – on Afghanistan four years after the invasion. You can also find it on our website, which is www.americanprogress.org. Again, thanks very much for coming.

(Applause.)

(END)