

Program Information:

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MODERATOR: My name is Lyse Doucet - nod nod you have ruined my opening line. I had something very personal to share with you. I'm going to depart from protocol because as you all know despite your very long and distinguished careers of everyone sitting in this hall, a first is always lovely. And this is the first time that I can say welcome to this session of the International Security forum. Welcome to Halifax. Welcome to my home. Now if there was a good Afghan in this audience they would say Lyse this is not your home, this not your [INAUDIBLE] this is not your district, and that's true. It's the [INAUDIBLE] of Peter MacKay who is from the Halifax region. I am from New Brunswick which is the province next door but we're all from the maritime provinces and I think Peter MacKay has been saying for some time if you truly are a transatlantic form you have to come to Canada, not just Canada but eastern Canada. Credit to Craig, he took it seriously so he went and Googled Atlantic Canada and you know what there were thousands of entries about Miami so he has been talking about Miami. Journalism is an excuse for bad manners. I have to say Craig Miami is where people from Atlantic Canada go to escape the winter. We do know a lot about Miami here but this is not Miami. Atlantic Canada is a perfect place to hold a session on Afghanistan because we too, have had many NATO Armies invading us over the centuries but they used to call them explorers and missionaries and also Atlantic Canada is a good place because as Peter MacKay knows very well a very high percentage of the Canadian armed forces come from the maritime provinces and so here in the maritime we feel acutely the losses of Canadian soldiers even in my home town but we also feel the pride.

So welcome to the session on Afghanistan. Thank you for turning up for this early session. What is the title? The title itself is troubling, transition to what? That means, that suggests that 8 years after the fall of the Taliban that Afghanistan and its international partners are not agreed on where Afghanistan is going, where it should be going and how to get there. It is, as the German Marshall Fund described it as the [INAUDIBLE] political insecurity situation in Afghanistan is one of the most urgent challenges facing the international community today. Does anyone here this morning disagree with that assessment? We want to look at that in the next hour and a half. What are some of the questions we want to examine? What are realistic goals in Afghanistan now? What about the transatlantic partnership despite the overwhelming resources both troops in aid by the United States, this is a partnership of NATO allies and much more. What about a credible partner in Kabul in the Afghan government and in Hamid Karzai, how important is that and can we talk about the situation in Afghanistan without addressing the situation in Pakistan, too.

Now, sadly because the event is coincided with the presidential inauguration in Kabul no senior members of the Afghan government including President Karzai himself who has come before to the German Marshall Fund were unable to attend. But what did we hear from the presidential palace this week? We heard a commitment to fight corruption, to

choose competent ministers, we heard from a president saying that in 5 years Afghan security forces would take the lead when it comes to security and stability. We also heard there is going to be a corruption conference, there is going to be a la jerga, there's going to be an international conference. So we've heard from the palace what they plan to do. This morning we're going to hear from four people who have followed Afghanistan closely, who have been involved in Afghanistan. Where do they think Afghanistan is going? We have Senator John McCain, Republican Senator, naval aviator, prisoner of war in Vietnam, leading Senator, they call him a maverick. He has also been a very outspoken spokesperson on the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan and a defender of American troops.

Rick Hillier, General Hillier retired, another maverick. They call him a soldier's soldier. He comes from [INAUDIBLE] a little bit further from where Peter MacKay and myself come from, from Newfoundland. He says that when he was growing up he wanted to be a soldier most of all, a soldier first and indeed that is the title of his recently published book, A Soldier First. But gentleman I'm afraid if we had a competition for who is the top maverick, it must go to Michael Semple. Michael Semple joins us from the Carr Center at Harvard University. He has been working in Afghanistan since 1989. And Michael gives a whole new meaning to what General Hillier will know about camouflage, it's what the military uses to blend into the environment in the countries in which they are working. Michael speaks the main languages of Afghanistan, Pashto and Persian. He has an unparalleled network of contacts there and is known for his research and his writing now on the whole messy question but crucial question of reconciliation.

Last and not least a long time friend and colleague Najam Sethi who has traveled all the way from the Pakistani city of Lahore to join us. You know that phrase about how the war is on your door step, well sadly for Najam the war in Afghanistan is not only on his door step in Lahore, it is trying to get into his house. He has been awarded for his bravery in speaking out on the situation in his own country, Pakistan and also in Afghanistan. He recently won the Golden Pen of Freedom award. He is the editor Editor-in-Chief, Daily Times, and also has a television program Pakistan. Welcome to all of you.

The journalist always like to know the terrain, actually soldiers; politicians like to know the terrain they are operating in. I would like to start with all of you and starting with you Senator McCain, where do you see Afghanistan going in the next 12 to 18 months. We know that General Stanley McCrystal has already said he's about a year to make some progress so where do you think Afghanistan will be in 12 to 18 months time?

THE HON. JOHN MCCAIN: I assume that the President of the United States will make a decision that largely implements the strategy recommended by General McCrystal. I even doubt if it is exact but I assume that the president will and every indication to me is that that will be the case. And after some delay we will probably within a week or two have that decision. If that's the case then I think within a year to 18 months we can see a reversal of what General McCrystal has described as a deteriorating situation. We can see some progress in going into areas such as a fish hook area around Kandahar where we can perhaps address some of the poppy issues. I think we can see some success in the training of the Afghan Army which will be a long process given the small numbers that they are in today. And so I think we can show our friends and allies some signs of success. It's not going to be easy. Casualties will go up, I'm sorry to say just as they did in Iraq at the implementation of the surge and it will require a degree of steadfastness that will try the governments not only of our allies but of the United

States, as well, as public opinion may be not totally in favor of what we're doing.

MODERATOR: You have spoken of success in the next 12 to 18 months but unless you were quoted incorrectly you were quoted in the papers in today here in Canada as saying you think the war could be won in the next 12 to 18 months, is that your view?

THE HON. JOHN MCCAIN: I think it depends on what your definition obviously of won is. There will not be any surrender ceremonies or parades down Broadway in New York City, but I think we can see a situation such as we have seen in Iraq as a result of the surge, flawed but functioning democracy perhaps the only one outside of Israel and the Middle East. A military and police that are affective not always perfect and probably continued violence for years to come in the form of suicide bombings, etc., but a government that continues to improve. There are many issues that all of us will be discussing. I would point out that at the time the surge began the Maliki's government was far, far worse off than Karzai government is and the country was driven by total sectarian violence so there are some advantages to the situation that we are in today including having learned a lot of lessons in Iraq.

MODERATOR: 12 to 18 months where will it be?

GENERAL RICK HILLIER: We have to have beaten the incrementalism that we have gotten into with NATO with the security surge that is going to be sufficient to do the job. We've got one shot to do it. I think we have a window of 12 to 18 months to make the impression, make a strategic change on the security side. That's one. Two. I think the government of Afghanistan, President Karzai, has got an opportunity in the next 3 to 6 to 9 months to convince all of us and Afghans that they are actually going to have an effective government that can deliver the programs people want without overwhelming corruption. I think actually it's 6 months he has to take actions and actions speak loudly to convince us that he is changing the government and then with a la jerga tell us what Afghans want to do in their country in the future with respect to government. Three, I think we have to change the developmental, the economic investment model. I think we have to shape the investment through the Afghan government in a way we simply have not done here. Four, Country's and agencies that invest have got to support the government and at the same time have to support the government building the structures to be effective and lastly we have to have Pakistan continue to realize that the Taliban in my view are the greatest threat to their society and unless they are willing to neutralize that Taliban strong hold on the northwest frontier, stop the insurgents across the border but most importantly stop the command structure from operating inside of Pakistan relatively freely that is going to remain a major challenge. I think we have an 18 month window to make a strategic change on the security of government economic plan and the regional side.

MODERATOR: A lot of shoulds, a lot of got to. I don't know whether [INAUDIBLE] are betting men and women. Do you think they are going to?

GENERAL RICK HILLIER: Actually I do but it will depend on the international community getting through the incremental approach that we have had for the last 10 years inside of Afghan.

MICHAEL SEMPLE:

I think in 12 to 18 months Afghanistan will still be messy, difficult and very important. I think that if anything has gotten better, if there has been any turning of the security situation it will be because it has become evident that the U.S. and allied commitment is long term, that it is not all bad on a short term search. It will have gotten better because there is a political strategy to guide what the U.S. and its allies are doing inside Afghanistan and it also have

gotten better because there is some kind of a peace process underway, not one which promises to deliver in 12 months, 18 months or 24 months which basically are both to the western allies who are being asked to buy into this and also to Afghans that there is a peaceful way out of this. There is eventually an end to the war but not one that is going to happen in 12 to 18 months.

MODERATOR: What do you mean by peace process? Are we talking everyone around the table? Are we talking about deals district by district across the areas most threatened by the insurgency?

MICHAEL SEMPLE:

The only kind of thing which is likely to deliver in short term will be local deals. But that's not good enough to stabilize Afghanistan. A meaningful peace process will be something which does offer an engagement rights to the leadership of the insurgency of course on appropriate terms whereby they have a chance to come into the Afghan political system.

MODERATOR: Do you think that the Taliban you speak to and hear about want to engage in this process after what's happened this year? A very bloody summer and also a flaw of the election process?

MICHAEL SEMPLE:

The good news is that there are people who are involved in the insurgency who have their version of the kind of debate that we've had in western countries in the past few months, who are well aware of the costs imposed on Afghanistan by sustaining the conflict, who are well aware of Pakistan that they consider to be a friendly neighbor has been destabilized by the conflict and they want to bring this thing to an end. The bad news is currently and they have a weak hand inside the insurgent movement, while the message being put around by the hawks inside the insurgency is that the Americans aren't serious. They are getting out. We are about to win. Stick with it brothers and we'll topple the government. As far as I'm concerned one of the best things you can do to help the progress of reconciliation of peace is to make sure that those hawks inside the insurgency decisively lose that argument, that it should be absolutely clear that nobody can topple the system which was put in place in Afghanistan by the process.

MODERATOR: Najam Sethi, 12 to 18 months?

MR. NAJAM SETHI: More of the same, I suspect. You know it would have been a good thing if we had known today what the American administration is going to do, what the new strategy is going to be. There are a lot of if's and but's. About 6 months ago in conversations with very top ranking Pakistani Army officers I got the distinct impression that they thought [INAUDIBLE] would worsen the situation and that this would from some point of view be good from their point of view which is to say that the Pakistani military establishment is looking for a very key role in Afghanistan which has not yet been given to them. Their assessment is that America is losing. Unless the assessment changes to, America is going to win this war, I am afraid it is going to be will be a self-fulfilling prophecy. The Pakistani's have distributed the Taliban as there are Iran Taliban, there are Pakistani Taliban, and then there is al Qaeda. The Pakistani military establishment will not help America with the Iran Taliban. I'm absolutely sure of that. And I think that is where the problem is going to be. The minute America takes action against the Iran Taliban, the Pakistani's are going to start screaming and saying this is having an adverse impact on us something like just referred to. So I would rather suspect that without bringing Pakistan on board in terms of the solution rather than the problem it is going to be very difficult to make headway in Afghanistan. The Pakistanis are very determined to protect

their assets as they call it and the Americans are determined to take out those assets. If American strategy now extends into [INAUDIBLE] and then maybe even into [INAUDIBLE] then I think there is going to be a disaster because the Pakistani military establishment will whip up the nationalist Pakistani media and the government of Pakistan may fall. That is how bad the situation could get. Already the military establishment is saying that the government of Pakistan is soft on America, soft on India and this is not the position to take. The Pakistanis are now saying that we will support the war on terror now we are the principles or one of the principles. We need to sit in on the review and that has not yet happened.

So I think the Pakistani military establishment will be looking out very closely to see the steps that the Obama administration takes. At the same time I think that they are determined to protect their assets. That is where the problem is going to be. This very briefly could put the whole of Afghanistan and Pakistan could be destabilized and all the American efforts there could be derailed if there is an India, Pakistan problem. If there is another [INAUDIBLE] everything is up for grabs. And that's the nightmares.

MODERATOR: When you talk about the Pakistani's want a role, you're talking about the military or the military in which everyone here knows who has been watching Afghanistan has had a long role in Afghanistan or are the military and civilian walking in step now?

MR. NAJAM SETHI: You see the Pakistani military has accused the Pakistani government of being soft of doing everything the Americans want Pakistan to do, but the military is not listening. The military has a voice of its own, a mind of its own, and a strategic thinking of its own. Unfortunately the Pakistani government is not the most efficient or good government in town, which is to say they are on the defensive. You saw the reaction that was inspired by the military's criticism of the [INAUDIBLE] and I dare say the military is taking a very hard line. They think that America has been visiting and they think that America can't do without them. They think America needs them more than they need America. As long as they are kept out of the table in the sense [INAUDIBLE] they are not going to be a part of your solution.

MODERATOR: Let me just get a sense of everyone gathered here, when we meet next year at the second Halifax International Security forum, how many of you believe that you will have seen an improvement in the situation in Afghanistan. How many of you believe the glass is half full rather than half empty? Let's see some hands. How many of you think we will be saying, "oh dear, it has gotten worse"? How many of you just don't know? Including the people who came up with the title for this panel, Transition to What. There you go. I always say in Afghanistan you can't be optimistic or pessimistic you have to be realistic. Let's take up the last of the comments made by Najam Sethi, let's go to John McCain. Because you believe absolutely there should be more troops sent, 40,000 is what General McCrystal has asked for, what about what the critics say, what is the point of sending 40,000 more troops, until you deal with the problem in Quetta, and we have now senior military officers saying this in the United States and saying it in Kabul, what's the point? We're just going to get more and more soldiers killed and conflict is not going to be ending. Do you think they have to deal with the kind of issues that Najam says he has hinted at?

THE HON. JOHN MCCAIN: Obviously, to a large degree we are dependent upon the Pakistani government and military to do their part on the other side of the border. They don't have to do a complete job. Second of all, I think it's important to remember that just a year ago, 8 or 9 months ago many in this room predicted the collapse of the Pakistani government

and military. I have seen all the headlines and all the stories. I didn't believe it then. I don't believe it now. They are operating in Waziristan with significant efficiency in ways that most experts didn't predict. In Iraq we had a problem on the Syrian border and with the Iranians. In fact, we still have a problem with the Iranians. And the Iranians are also beginning to play in Afghanistan. So you don't have total and complete control on the other side of the border. The key to the surge is not what happens on the other side of the border. The key to the surge is to go in and provide an environment of security so that the people can then pursue the economic, political, all the other aspects of normal living.

If you do what we did early years in Iraq, if you do what we did in the early years in Vietnam, where you go out and kill bad guys and then you come back to the base and that night the bad guys kill the people that cooperated you lose. But I want to mention one other aspect of this issue. I am comfort about the military's ability with 40,000 troops or roughly so to establish an environment of security, the ink blot and then the rest of the process can move forward. And it is fought with many of the difficulties that we've already discussed and will discuss during the remainder of the time. What I am now deeply concerned about the governmental side. We have one of the unfortunate things about the process that we've gone through is the constant leaking of the deliberations that are taking place including - from our ambassador in Kabul saying we don't need any surge at all. I mean, that was devastating, those revelations. So I'm not concerned about the ability of our military to establish the security environment. I am deeply concerned about the ability of developing a plan for the rest of it, the governance, the addressing of the training of the police, participation of our allies, but also I'm very worried about the situation within our own embassy in Kabul. And that part of it, although the security element is vital as far as the beginning is concerned, you don't succeed without the rest of the equation being implemented, as well. And I would suggest that perhaps one of the great stories that we will look back on is not just the leadership of General Petraeus in Iraq but the partnership between General Petraeus and Ryan Crocker who work together as an incredible team and were, I think, General Hillier would certainly agree were largely responsible for a success by working so closely together. I haven't seen that in Kabul yet.

MODERATOR: General Hillier, the other parts of the equation, as John McCain said, do they have to include what Mike Semple says a meaningful peace process? When you were in office heading the Armed Forces you had very strong words against the Taliban.

GENERAL RICK HILLIER: I absolutely believe they have to have a peace process that works effectively. When you talk about offering the Taliban an opportunity to come to the table, not the Taliban as an organization but individual within who actually maybe want to move away from the violence and the tearing up of the region and maybe actually come to the political process and maybe actually change a country in that political process as opposed to at the end of a gun barrel. Back to what Senator McCain says here I never really had worries about our ability to contain the security situation. Situation given the right support and the incrementalism really has challenges on that side. So the surge in my view is fundamental here. It's absolutely essential. I have always had challenges and concerns and worries about our ability to help President Karzai build a government. I mean, God knows we criticize and watch but how much do we really help him change what he's doing there? And so those two actions, surging in and fighting the corruption, getting effective in government have got to be large and have got to be visible going forward here to change the strategic context but less visible but probably far more important is how Pakistan is going to behave. And as Najam said, I think the

Pakistani government is going to be between a rock and a hard place. I mean, if you let the extremism and the control in the Northwest Frontier belong to the Taliban it is only a matter of time before another incident like Bombay occurs and I'm not sure that peace in that Southwest Asia region could survive a second attack into India or one of the other neighbors from that side. So I said many times, if I had three parties for Afghanistan it would be Pakistan, Pakistan, Pakistan because there is where the solution lies.

MODERATOR: We just heard from Najam Sethi, though. He is not optimistic that while the Pakistani have moved against the Pakistani Taliban and al Qaeda they have not touched the Afghan Taliban. They haven't touched Quetta. They haven't touched Waziristan. What do you say to that?

GENERAL RICK HILLIER: That we have to let help them do that. There is a relationship that has to be built over this next 12 to 18 months where the international community and it has to be led by the United States of America. I don't think NATO brings the leadership in the kind of concentrated form that can change that dynamic. They have to help the government articulate what it is going to do in a very sensitive way being cognizant of what Najam describes as a sensitivity between the Pakistani military and their government. They've got to bring the economic vitality to help them change the ignorance and poverty that is in the northwest frontier because they are the most dangerous things and they have to bring the assistance into the military, also, so they can do the job throughout Pakistan to help secure their population, not just in the northwest frontier but largely.

MODERATOR: Would that help, Najam?

MR. NAJAM SETHI: General [INAUDIBLE] has been going around America saying that America should not pull troops out. But the military establishment in Pakistan is now saying we don't want a troop surge and the argument that they are giving is that a troop surge would lead to a backlash. The more America controls the problem in Afghanistan the more it will become Pakistan's problem in terms of the backlash. That's where the whole situation is right now. So ideally the military establishment would like the current status quo to remain which helps them improve their own position in the bargaining. Since that is not going to happen it is going to be a very tricky situation now. And I think you need to bring the Pakistanis into the loop so that instead of seeing this as a [INAUDIBLE] they will see this as a part of solving of their problem, as well. I think this troop surge is too little too late. But we've got to get on with it. It has left this impression in that whole region that NATO and America don't have the will to fight. It's only a matter of time. Nobody wants to be on the losing side. They all want to [INAUDIBLE] And so far the Taliban have been winning. So you want to change that perception. How do you do that? I think General McCrystal ventured in the right area when he said that you got to look at some of Pakistan's strategic concerns within India. And that, of course, is a sensitive area because India refuses to consider any American role in trying to solve [INAUDIBLE]. But I think that's where the action is right now. And the Pakistanis will not give up the [INAUDIBLE]. You know, now you have the Saudis. You have the Turks. The Turkish prime minister was in Pakistan about two weeks ago. The Turks are now trying to play a role. They are trying to put together some kind of [INAUDIBLE] It hasn't gone anywhere but the Turks, Saudis, Pakistanis and British are trying to do this. Those are the opening statements in a sense. You've got to have more of that. To what extent will America facilitate that? To what extent will Mr. Karzai be amenable to something like that? All of these are big questions.

MODERATOR: Michael Semple, we have heard from Senator McCain and also from

General Hillier. 40,000 troops is essential. Is it? President Obama said to the expressing concern that too big of a footprint could also backfire.

MICHAEL SEMPLE: The point is it is not enough. Not in terms of 30 versus 40 versus 50, but this is not only going to be won through the U.S. military. Where we have really [INAUDIBLE] problems in international intervention over the past 8 years have been more in the political domain; difficult maintaining the coherence of the international presence there and insuring that there is a real relationship with the partner in Kabul. And, of course, we haven't managed significantly to improve the performance of the Afghan government. So I've said quite clearly that maintaining a robust U.S. military commitment and its allied commitment is important. I rather think that are insuring that that is long term because this problem is not going to go away. It is going to be messy for a long time, just as Najam Sethi said. For me that looks more important the kind of dialogues that I have. When it comes down to it this war is going to be decided over the decisions of fathers of Pashto young men who are being asked by Taliban commanders to give them their sons to go out and fight against the Afghan government. And at the moment the message that those Taliban commander recruiters are bringing is that give us our son. It's a great fight against the United States. It's a fight against the puppet regime and we're going to chase the Americans out and the puppet regime is going to be toppled. It is the argument, the discussion in those houses which will decide the fate of Afghanistan and also stability inside of South Asia. And anything we can do to change the tenor of that discussion will help so that fathers of those Pashto young men say that's what you said last year when you took my other son and he's dead and the Americans still haven't run away and the puppet regime still hasn't toppled and actually this year it looks less likely to topple. That's the way that you can change the tenor of the debate, but I don't think it is going to be the 30 or 40 or 50,000 this year. It is going to be the impression that the commitment is long enough to ensure that there actually is stability in this country that will decide it.

GENERAL RICK HILLIER: I think that runs right up to the fact, and you are absolutely right there, of creating that confidence that we are there until we get to the situations where Afghans are rich enough to live, that sadly runs up against the fact that in western countries contributing the perception is exactly as you decide that the Taliban have the momentum and that perception continues throughout. I speak around in Canada. Canadians know three things about the mission: we have lost young soldiers; improvised explosive devices and corruption in the Afghanistan government. And really all three of those start to lead to a lack of confidence that we are going to be successful in the longer term. So the two butt head to head without question. How do we change the geopolitical strategic dynamic in the next 6 to 18 months, because I think you have to do it then, and if you haven't changed it so that at the end of the 18 months we all have a confidence that we are going to come out this right 3, 5, 7, 9 years down the road, if we haven't changed in 18 months then we will now change it.

THE HON. JOHN MCCAIN: Can I add? My I voice agreement in this long period, what appears to be a long period of decision making process that has been gone through combined with all the leaks in the difference of opinion combined with the important thing is a "exit strategy" being banded about. The exit strategy is success. The exit strategy is not a time and date certain. Exit strategy is when you succeed and can begin to draw down. And I worry that this process along with the things that General and Michael have said have sounded an uncertain trumpet. And that uncertain trumpet is heard by people who have to stay in the neighborhood. We leave. They're there and they have to accommodate. The people don't

want the Taliban back. Do they Michael? They don't want it back. But the point is if you're going to accommodate to the United States of America and our allied forces and then they leave they know what the consequences of that are. It argues for a firm decision, a discussion about success, not about date certain for exit or even exit strategies. And that's what I worry about the message that's being sent that we are going to be there but we are planning on getting out as a higher priority as to how much we succeed.

MODERATOR: Sir.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE] From Ministry of Defense of Spain. And I am happy that we have [INAUDIBLE] My questions are directed [INAUDIBLE] on behalf of all regional actors, not only but also Russia and China. Second, are those legitimate interests compatible with our strategy. And third, are those among legitimate interests compatible amongst themselves?

MODERATOR: Najam. We have been focusing on the region more broadly. There is Russia. There is China. There are other regional actors. Do they also have [INAUDIBLE] because we have been focusing on Pakistan.

MR. NAJAM SETHI: If you noticed Secretary Gates talked about other regional players and he mentioned India and Russia and then he referred to south central Asia, as well because of the [INAUDIBLE] and the fact that that's an alternative supply root. Yes they do have legitimate interests. If the Taliban were to overrun Afghanistan then, of course, the central Asian states would be directly threatened which is why Turkey is not interested and is getting into the act. So yes they do have a stake. So does India and Pakistan. The problem with this is although we started off by talking about a regional approach it ended up as ad hoc which really has been a very negative thing because it's enabled India to stay out of the loop formally. Whereas it is very much part of the loop informally. And I think when Secretary Clinton was in Lahore two weeks ago one of the things a lot of us said to her was that you have to pay attention to India and Pakistan and not sufficient attention has been paid there. In fact, I personally think you need to bring Saudi Arabia into the game, as well, even though it is not a part of the region yet I think Saudi Arabia would play a very important role in terms of mediating conflict in that area because of its historic role there, the role of the southeast intelligence agencies. And the Saudis have clout with the Pakistanis. So therefore you need to bring in India and Saudi Arabia. Russia I don't know. I don't think Russia has a major role to play there but certainly the [INAUDIBLE], absolutely.

MODERATOR: Gentleman in the back.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE] Former U.S. Ambassador NATO. I wanted to draw a connection between two things that have been said already by the panel. First is the perceptions of resolve and commitment. Who is ultimately going to be there in the long term to succeed and the effect that has on everyone's day to day decision making? But a lot of the language that people use when talking about this has been about America. Is America going to make a troop increase? Is America going to win? Is America going to lose? Does America have a resolve? My question is how important is it that it not be seen as America's war but rather a true international community effort? Does it take the ownership of the international community and are we doing what it takes to get that ownership?

MICHAEL SEMPLE: I can certainly say that in many of the conversations that I have with Pashto fathers they are clearly the people who are trying to persuade them to give them their sons to fight are playing on the American card. And I think that Afghans are much less willing to fight against the whole world or against the United Nations or against a government which is

legitimately supported. I was rather taken by reading through the Department of Defense Strategic Communications Strategy finding that there was something like 80 references in it to NATO and the role of NATO and a half a dozen references to the role of the United Nations. There is something to be done about the presentation, the way that we go around doing business that we need firm NATO commitment but it shouldn't just look like it's a NATO show and it's important that nobody should be able to forget that this is a United Nations mandated operation with a very important role for the United Nations. And this is the world trying to help Afghanistan with the United States as a key player in that.

MODERATOR: Gentleman here.

AUDIENCE: Senator McCain as a Vietnam War veteran what do you make of the new domino theory that tell us if the Taliban return to power in Kabul the next consequence would be another 9/11? And for Michael what do you make of the new debate about the American military about the need to [INAUDIBLE] the complaint, bringing special forces doing civilian operations in each [INAUDIBLE] tribe as opposed to be conventional or quasi-conventional approaches?

MODERATOR: Senator McCain.

THE HON. JOHN MCCAIN: As far as the domino theory is concerned I'm convinced that we cannot allow Afghanistan to return to be a base for attacks on the United States and our allies. It is different from the Vietnam War. We now have stateless terrorist organizations as one of the really the source of the major threat. And I have very little doubt that al Qaeda would return to Afghanistan if the Taliban regained control. This is not - I don't know how you can describe it. You can change the perception that this is America's war but a lot of thinking people also know that this is a test for NATO, a first real test for NATO since it is the first conflict outside of Europe that we have engaged in. I love central Asia. I have always been intrigued by it. I have been intrigued by the great gain and the events there particularly with the enormous energy resources that reside there I think is going to be one of the more fascinating repeats perhaps of history as different powers compete for influence in a very weak region. Can I just finally say very quickly? Of course Pakistan and Afghanistan are vital. You cannot separate the other. But in my view right now it depends on our policy towards Afghanistan that will effect directly the Afghan situation. If we don't show a clear, strong commitment then the Pakistanis will be seeking accommodations that will allow them to survive in the region.

GENERAL RICK HILLIER: I think you've got two conflicting timelines. I think you have a 6 to 18 month timeline that you have to got to create with actions a change [INAUDIBLE] strategic dynamic to convince people that we are going to be successful in helping Afghans get to the kind of society and country that they want to have. And, two, you can't change and revitalize United Nations, refocus it in that timeline and you certainly can't revolutionize NATO sufficiently in that timeline. It is going to rest up on the Americans.

MODERATOR: Michael about changes to the operations?

MICHAEL SEMPLE: I was going to say that domino theories should be looked at imperricly, not just taken as series. And I think if you look at this one you are going to find that the consequences of failing in Afghanistan or leaving Afghanistan would be destabilization of south Asia. That is the first domino that topples, not rather just what is going to happen directly here. But on [INAUDIBLE] the war I think that when it comes down to ending the conflict in Afghanistan that is going to be done by the Afghans and the Pastos and not just going to be U.S. forces. It is not just going to be foreign soldiers. If the Afghans believe they are going

to have a stake in this they will stick with it.

AUDIENCE: My name is Christina and I am a journalist for the Sunday Times in London. I have been reporting from Afghanistan since 87 when the Russians were there. I agree very much with Michael Semple with what he said about Taliban using nationalism to get people to recruit using the whole spectra for occupation which is very immensive in a country which has never been conquered. If that is the case doesn't that mean the more troops that you send the more that people are going to be recruiting? The other point I would like to make is I don't see ordinary Afghans are seeing benefit from the presence of western forces there. A report just came out showing that Afghanistan after 8 years of international presence is still the most dangerous place in the world to have a baby, 70 percent of people don't have water or electricity. I would think that after 8 years we could have done a bit better than that. And if you take [INAUDIBLE] for example where I have spent a lot of time with British forces, it is very difficult to see how anybody can see that they are getting benefit from the presence of international troops because almost everybody there now has lost a home or had a cousin killed or had some terrible story and it is very hard to see anybody that has a positive experience and I think that's what we need to be addressing.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE] From the Guardian. A lot of emphasis put today on showing that NATO and the west are there for the long haul, that they will outweigh the Taliban. I just wonder where the surge isn't a contradiction of that because Pakistan, the Taliban, the other players know it is not sustainable politically and if we go for a sprint with a lot of troops all the Taliban have to do is absorb the punches and wait us out knowing we talked here about 12 months or 18 months whether it is a success or not. Isn't a smaller footprint more sustainable?

THE HON. JOHN MCCAIN: Let me just respond to that very quickly. Sir, I don't think you understand what surge is. A surge is sending in sufficient troops to acquire and attain a situation of security so that the people can continue with normal lives. By the way, anybody who believes that the Afghans would like to see a return from the Taliban where they hung women from the goal posts at the soccer stadium on Saturdays I don't think is truly understanding of Afghan opinion. But the surge, then, trains and equips the Afghan Army. They take over the responsibilities. That's what the whole object is to transition from allied forces to Iraqi or in this case Afghan forces who will then take over the responsibilities and ensure safety and security and we withdraw. So it is not a matter of sustainability. It's a matter of success. It is a matter of breaking the enemy's will and training and equipping availing the people of Afghanistan the ability to lead some kind of lives that all of us want people all over this planet to live in. So you and I have a very different interpretation to what a surge is. A surge, the object is to withdraw troops but first you have to obtain success.

GENERAL RICK HILLIER: But if the surge is exclusive of anything else but soldiers, but troops, it will not be success in my view. What is it we want President Karzai and his government to deliver? We have never said what it is. Here are the ten things that we expect you to deliver. What are we going to do then to help him and his government deliver that? Where is the government building battalion going to come out NATO or the United Nations or the international organizations or the universities? And where is the economic revitalization of businessmen and women willing to risk dollars now to provide jobs that will go down the road and help the soldiers. So it cannot be exclusive -

MODERATOR: What about Christina's point? That is Afghan [INAUDIBLE] in the last 8 years, why should they believe it is going to bring them any benefit now?

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□□□□□□□□□□GENERAL RICK HILLIER: That is why it has got to be not exclusive to troops only and □□□□□□□□□□lastly that surge has got to include, as was articulated back here, a significantly different □□□□□□□□□□approach with the Pakistanis who have to be at the table and sustain in an entirely different □□□□□□□□□□way.

□□□□□□□□□□THE HON. JOHN MCCAIN: And that is why we have a short timeframe rather than a long □□□□□□□□□□one and I am convinced that militarily, as the general said, I'm not concerned. What I am very □□□□□□□□□□concerned about is the other parts of the equation which are not there yet.

□□□□□□□□□□MR. NAJAM SETHI: The surge is too little too late. The perception there is even if the □□□□□□□□□□[INAUDIBLE] the perception there is that all your polls are saying the American people don't like □□□□□□□□□□it and the president has done this very reluctantly or is going to do it very reluctantly that it is □□□□□□□□□□only a matter of time before the same popular pressure, the withdrawal of the troops to find □□□□□□□□□□[INAUDIBLE] come pouring forth from America and from Europe. So the holding operation - it □□□□□□□□□□can at best be a holding operation. All of this talk about exit strategies and congressional □□□□□□□□□□elections coming next year, all of this feeds into the perception that the Americans are not □□□□□□□□□□going to win. So I think the general is right. We need to use this as space in which to create the □□□□□□□□□□will and move towards a political long term solution. I think what you need to do is break the □□□□□□□□□□back of al Qaeda and then do a deal with the Pakistanis to incorporate elements of the Taliban □□□□□□□□□□into any future dispensation.

□□□□□□□□□□MODERATOR: Lady in the back.

□□□□□□□□□□AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE] I would like to pick up on your last point. The panel has □□□□□□□□□□emphasized [INAUDIBLE] commitment and the need for the international community to show □□□□□□□□□□commitment that we are staying and we are in for the long run. How do we do that when the □□□□□□□□□□U.S. public, public and NATO has clearly shown and shows in poll after poll after poll that when □□□□□□□□□□not necessarily committed how do you square those two things?

□□□□□□□□□□THE HON. JOHN MCCAIN: Let me quickly respond to that. I know much to my dismay □□□□□□□□□□we have the most eloquent president in a long, long time. I am absolutely convinced that when □□□□□□□□□□President Obama speaks to the American people and outlines the strategy and the path to □□□□□□□□□□success that he will win a significant amount of time and patience on the part of the American □□□□□□□□□□people because I think he has very great communications with the American people. And once □□□□□□□□□□he decides on this strategy and presents his case to the American people I think they will have □□□□□□□□□□the patience and give him the opportunities to succeed with this strategy. So it is not going to □□□□□□□□□□be unlimited and it possibly could have an effect on the 2010 elections but my view is the □□□□□□□□□□economy that is going to have the effect on the 2010 elections.

□□□□□□□□□□AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE] I have a question to Senator McCain. You are referring to the □□□□□□□□□□[INAUDIBLE] Turks have the problem. I am 50 years of age living all my life in Turkey and never □□□□□□□□□□a problem so I don't know where you get this idea of finding similarity between [INAUDIBLE] □□□□□□□□□□and my second question.

□□□□□□□□□□THE HON. JOHN MCCAIN: I get the idea of the fact that poppy production in Turkey has □□□□□□□□□□dropped dramatically over the past several years and I'll be glad to show you the facts.

□□□□□□□□□□MODERATOR: We'll pick it up later.

□□□□□□□□□□AUDIENCE: My question is to the panel. How are you going to read the hearts and the □□□□□□□□□□minds of the Afghan people why those [INAUDIBLE] civilian casualties?

□□□□□□□□□□MODERATOR: We are going to take a few questions in a row because we are coming □□□□□□□□□□to the end. Let's keep them short questions, please.

MICHAEL SEMPLE: If Netherlands was to make a positive contribution it should keep its troops and secondly be part of an effective peace process.

THE HON. JOHN MCCAIN: My first message to the Karzai government would be clean up the corruption. People aren't going to pay taxes to a corrupt regime. As far as the withdrawal is concerned, again, I would argue to our NATO allies that we are in this together. I understand public opinion. Do what you can rather than have recriminations towards our allies who will not provide more, let's thank them for what they've done including the Canadians for the first time have been engaged outside of Canada in many, many conflicts. And finally on the hearts and minds it's not that the people of Afghanistan show any loyalty to the Taliban. They don't. The fact is that whether we can convince the people of Afghanistan that they will have a government that they can trust and an environment in which they can raise their families and achieve their aspirations and their goals.

GENERAL RICK HILLIER: You know, I think that on the corruption side I think it is step 1, restore the destroyed confidence in the government with very specific and concrete actions over the next 6 months that is going to be worthy of investments from Canada and the United States and the rest of the international community and worthy of continued support from the people in Afghanistan in whatever manner that transpires. Priority two is that surge which has to be fundamentally linked to that restoration of confidence in the government has lost confidence, has lost confidence of somewhat of investing nations and contributing nations and the people themselves.

MODERATOR: To pick up on his question do you worry that Canadian troops preparing to leave is also going to send the wrong message?

GENERAL RICK HILLIER: We always worry about the messages that are sent out. What we want to do is restore at the geopolitical level a seriousness that we're going to get this right. That, then, might change the entire dynamic. I think Senator McCain saying that President Obama when he articulates his strategy, he is not just the leader of the United States of America. He does represent a huge leadership in the world and his ability to articulate eloquently the need and what we're doing and what we are going to achieve and why we should stay there can shape many countries, not just the United States of America.

MR. NAJAM SETHI: You left me out.

MODERATOR: There are so many more questions. You are going to get your chance.

AUDIENCE: Congressman [INAUDIBLE] from United States, California. The corollaries between Vietnam and Afghanistan have become so undeniable. I want to ask a question in the light of that. Early in the Vietnam War we sided with the chosen government and the chosen leaders and they were incredibly corrupt. There came a time when we said we are there for the people of Vietnam and we clearly showed signs that we were not necessarily there for any particular leader. If that be true and if that is part of showing broadly the Afghan people the importance of our presence there for them and not necessarily for somebody who was earlier chosen and earlier sort of a consensus, how do we express that, I don't want to use Vietnam as the example of how to do it, how do we express it, how do we transition? What are the do's and don'ts of making the transition toward we are there for the people of Afghanistan we are not there for a government that failed to defend and support its people through eliminating corruption.

MODERATOR: We are going to get a few comments from the floor before we turn back to the panel.

AUDIENCE: I am a [INAUDIBLE] in Turkey in fact, I was confused about Afghanistan when the debate was started but I am now more confused after 90 minutes of discussion. As a poor academic throughout all my professional life I try to find simple reasonable answers to two simple questions, why? And what? So why are we in Afghanistan? Are we far from our initial targets in 2001 and what are we searching in Afghanistan? Are we trying to bring a [INAUDIBLE] to Afghanistan? Are we trying to stabilize Afghanistan economy? Are we trying to create more prosperous [INAUDIBLE] or just are we trying to find Osama bin Laden? So when will this mission end? What is the ultimate goal of NATO and the United States? Thank you.

MODERATOR: Very hard question. And pass it just across the row to this gentleman here?

AUDIENCE: I very much agree that Afghanistan is a test for NATO. So the question is Russia really interested in solving the Afghan problem. And, second, is there a place in this strategy in Afghanistan for buying the hearts and minds of the Taliban for winning the hearts and minds of the Afghan people and does it contradict the requirement for the Karzai government to combat corruption?

MODERATOR: We start with you.

MR. NAJAM SETHI: A very important issue has been raised. What is the objective in Afghanistan? If you recall after 9/11 the Pakistanis are asked by the Americans to go and talk to [INAUDIBLE] and tell him to get rid of Osama bin Laden, that America didn't have a fight on its hand with the Taliban. It had no quarrels with the Taliban, but [INAUDIBLE] refused. That's where it began. We have to end up in a situation where the Taliban and [INAUDIBLE] and Osama bin Laden are separated. The Taliban have to be accommodated at some level or the other because they never posed a threat to Pakistan at that time far less to the United States. Its Osama bin Laden and the other Muslims from the other [INAUDIBLE] who landed up there and created a problem. So the idea is that Afghanistan should not be a base area for the export of terror. The Taliban are not competent to do that, therefore the Taliban have to be accommodated and al Qaeda has to be crushed. Pakistan has to be part of that equation. There is no question of nation building or staying on. All of these are non-issues, frankly and they will always be non-issues. We ought to go back and leave Afghanistan to be Afghanistan people as long as the Afghanistan people and their representatives, whether they are Taliban or any body else, are not involved in the export of terror or in creating base areas for more terrorists. That should be the end game.

Number two, in terms of what Mr. Karzai should do in the next 12 months or so, I think since I've been arguing that you need to bring Pakistan on the table I think Mr. Karzai needs to establish a degree of trust with Pakistan. Pakistan has a major problem with Mr. Karzai. We have 100,000 Pakistani troops in [INAUDIBLE]. There is an insurgency going on there right now. [INAUDIBLE] are being targeted, it is a very serious problem and the insurgents are [INAUDIBLE]. And the first thing Mr. Karzai can do is to create that bridge of trust with the Pakistanis by getting rid of [INAUDIBLE] insurgents and helping Pakistan establish, shall we say, a political homecoming for them. That's the sort of thing you need to build trust with Karzai and Pakistan which is going to be very important in the next 12 months or so.

MODERATOR: The clock is ticking and I'm getting very stern looks from the German Marshall Fund. Senator McCain would you like to respond to your fellow Senators comments about concerns and strategy?

THE HON. JOHN MCCAIN: Very quickly, it's interesting how we are now revisiting the

Vietnam War in light of Afghanistan and others. And it's also interesting very different views of history. My view of history was the assassination of Z M and his brother. It was one of the shameful sagas in American history. Henry Cabot Lodge and the CIA orchestrated his overthrow, President Kennedy unwittingly agreed to it when it was [INAUDIBLE] with our orchestration we took the head of a government and his brother. They were over thrown and assassinated. That's not what the United States of America should be all about. So when you keep talking about replacements for Karzai I used to hear about replacements for Maliki, so let's be careful you might end up with unintended consequences and I think that's important. I'm sorry you are confused, sir. I think I can tell you just read what we did in Iraq and adapt that to Afghanistan with significant changes in accord with the very different situation. I don't think the Russians are going to be helpful. In fact, I think the Russians are taking a certain amount of pleasure over our difficulties there in Afghanistan. And so anyway why are we there? Because we don't want Afghanistan to return to be a base for attacks on the United States of America and our allies. And we will see in my view if we do it right, a two steps forward and one step back progress towards peace and security for not only Afghan people but for United States and our allies.

MODERATOR: Can you answer just one line answer to can money play a role? Can it be bought?

MICHAEL SEMPLE:

No. Resources are important but the people who are fighting there they believe they are doing it for a cause. And they have an explanation for it. You have to make them feel good about being part of the political process in Afghanistan. Don't think you can turn them into mercenaries. Make them feel good about being on the right side.

MODERATOR: I have Roger Cone as the last person on my list so I have to ask privileges.

AUDIENCE: New York Times. Question for Senator McCain and Michael Semple. Given what you both said about the importance of tenacity and endurance, how damaging would it be if president Obama combines a commitment of more troops with a specific time table or exit strategy? Would that undo whatever gain there is to be had from sending more troops? And quickly to Najam, in terms of Pashtun buy in what's the one step you would take or use to get it.

MODERATOR: Very brief.

THE HON. JOHN MCCAIN: Let me say that I think bench marks are important. They are even more important perhaps in Afghanistan than they were in Iraq given the lack of credibility that the Karzai government has on offer benchmarks. But if we set a date that we are going to withdraw I don't want to go. I don't want to go if we are going to set a date so that the Taliban and others can just sit back and wait until we left.

MR. NAJAM SETHI: You know the Pashtuns are a majority in Afghanistan so you have to have a Pashtun government. And Mr. Karzai does not represent the Pashtuns. Point number one. Number two, Pakistan has a huge Pashtun population. We have a problem [INAUDIBLE] in Afghanistan. Afghanistan refuses to accept it as the international border. We want our Pashtuns to look towards Islamabad. We want the Iran Pashtuns to look towards Kabul. That can only happen if the Pashtuns rule are predominant players in Afghanistan and number two if the [INAUDIBLE] line is accepted as an international border so that Pakistan's fears about its areas are being taken over by the Pashtuns of Iran are [INAUDIBLE] . So that's the sort of

□□□□□□□□□□solution you need which is why you need to firm up the [INAUDIBLE] line, you need a strong
□□□□□□□□□□Pashtun presence in Afghanistan and you need the Pashtuns of Pakistan to look toward Islam.
□□□□□□□□□□MODERATOR: I want to end by thanking all of you for all of your patience. There was many
□□□□□□□□□□good questions. I hope I did catch the hands of all of you. I wish I could have taken more but
□□□□□□□□□□don't forget we're here in the lovely city of Halifax for at least 2 more days. There's lots of
□□□□□□□□□□time to discuss. I want to thank our panelists and Michael Semple, Senator McCain, General
□□□□□□□□□□Hillier, Nijam Sethi. I have to say when it comes to Afghanistan you hear a lost of must,
□□□□□□□□□□should, must do, can do. But let's hope that Obama is right, that in one year we will say yes
□□□□□□□□□□we can. Thank you very much to all of you for joining us.