

## AFGHANISTAN

### ZALMAY KHALILZAD

April 4, 2004

**Hamre:** Thank you all very much for coming. I'm delighted that we have this opportunity, and it is an opportunity. It's an opportunity for CSI. It's frankly an opportunity for Washington to hear from Ambassador Khalilzad. We're very very fortunate that he has given us this time. This is a town that is absolutely plum full of questions and has far too few answers, so we're going to hopefully reverse that ratio this afternoon.

Let me turn to Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski who is going to open up our discussion this afternoon and moderate our question and answer.

**Brzezinski:** Thank you, John.

Ladies and gentlemen, it's very appropriate for CSIS to be sponsoring this very special briefing that you'll be getting from one of the very key players in the current undertaking that the United States is pursuing in Afghanistan and in that part of Eurasia. CSIS is engaged under John Hamre's leadership in a number of important studies which pertain to Afghanistan, to the region more generally, and more broadly to American foreign policy. So in these circumstances it's particularly appropriate that Ambassador Khalilzad's sole public appearance here in the United States on the occasion of this visit is within these premises.

Now insofar as introduction is concerned, let me say first of all to my good friend Zal, that I want to declare publicly that you are not responsible for what I'm going to be saying by way of introduction. [Laughter] Although hopefully you agree at least with some of it.

But I do want to emphasize as the point of departure for this event that I am not yet quite certain that the American public fully understands the scale and the unprecedented nature of Americans' recent engagement in a huge swath of Eurasia, ranging from Suez to Sinjong [ph], from the southern frontier of Russia to Pakistan's frontier shoreline on the Arabian Sea. This is a massive undertaking which is going to last a long time, of enormous complexity, beset by many problems, and posing a great challenge to our foreign policy and even to our role in the world.

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Within that area there are several outstanding problems. There is first of all Afghanistan which interacts with the dilemmas of Pakistan. There is the American involvement in Iraq which interacts with the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And in between there is Iran which poses a particularly complex issue for the United States.

We're going to be involved and we are doing better in some areas and worse in some areas. In my view what is striking is the contrast between how we're doing in Iraq and how we're doing in Afghanistan.

In neither spot are we still in a position to be absolutely certain that the outcome will be good, but in one area we are making visible progress; in another area we're encountering very visible increasing difficulties.

I think there are two reasons why Afghanistan in my perspective is more promising.

The first is that we're acting in Afghanistan with many Afghan friends and we earned their trust and their commitment because we stood by them when Afghanistan was invaded and subsequently devastated. If we didn't have these friends we would be in a much more difficult position, many more Americans would have died, and I'm not sure that we would have a government in Kabul today with which we can work.

The second reason is our guest, because he has been absolutely central in shaping American policy towards Afghanistan and in being willing to go there and face the music, and he has not made the errors that have plagued our policies elsewhere. He has been able to work with the Afghans. He has their respect, their confidence, their trust, and he plays a decisive role in shaping a policy which step by step is overcoming major difficulties.

I won't go on, but let me simply add that he is the product of Chicago University where he got his PhD. He has spent a number of years working in different branches of the U.S. government, the NSC, the Defense Department. He has been a prolific writer. He worked for Rand and has thought about grand strategy. And currently he is pursuing on the ground some of the major senses of direction that the strategic thinking that he articulated some years ago has pointed to.

So without further ado I want to yield the floor to Zal Khalilzad who I truly respect as a great American, right there in the front line, doing what needs to be done.

**Khalilzad:** Thank you, Zbig. Thank you very much for that generous introduction. You are one of the reasons that we're all in public service, those of us who have grown up reading your work and watching you serve the nation. And also I personally thank you not only for your work but also for sending us Jen Brzezinski. And of course --

**Brzezinski:** -- in my family. [Laughter]

**Khalilzad:** I want to thank you also for your role in Afghanistan in the late 1970s, for initiating the assistance program to the Afghan resistance to communism and to the Soviet Union.

I'd also like to thank John Hamre and the CSIS for graciously hosting this forum and for the good work that they do. I see so many friends in the audience here, Ambassador Jawad, my friend, it's good to see you. The Ambassador of Qatar, it's great to see you. Former Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, it's a great pleasure to see you and so many other friends.

What I thought I'll do here tonight is to give you a status report on Afghanistan, but I would also like to speak about the future. Not only the future of Afghanistan but also the role that events in Afghanistan can play in this broader region.

Let me state my bottom line at the outset. Our goal is to improve the security of the American people by achieving three objectives. Defeat the remnants of the Taliban and al Qaida and other terrorists, and to deny the use of Afghan territory to terrorist organizations. Help Afghans build a new Afghanistan, one that is moderate, democratic, and increasingly prosperous, and use success in Afghanistan to promote the transformation of the wider region --some call it the Greater Middle East -- moving away from the present period when the region has been the principal source of instability and security threats to the United States and the international community, towards political and economic reform and economic cooperation among the states of the area.

Though unfinished business remains, Afghanistan in my view is succeeding. Progress has been noteworthy, especially when measured against the level of effort and resources devoted to Afghanistan. However, to succeed fully, to consolidate the victory over extremism and terrorism in Afghanistan will take a sustained commitment of at least five years by the United States and its partners.

The next major task for us is for the United States, both

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parties and both branches of the government, to make that commitment and to put in place the five-year program that will enable Afghanistan to stand on its own feet. This is important and worthwhile even as we face budget deficits and substantial costs in Iraq. In Afghanistan we will be investing in success. Failure there is not an acceptable option.

Now I would like to turn to an assessment of what we have done to date and what remains to be done. I'll take you through where we began, what we have achieved, what challenges remain, and what we are doing to meet those challenges.

First the security situation. The Taliban and other terrorists continue to seek to destabilize Afghanistan but they are not succeeding. They are too weak to threaten the government and the coalition. Their actions are concentrated in southern and eastern parts of the country along the Pakistani border. They have not been able to establish a popularly supported insurgency. Their attacks consist of terrorist actions or small uncoordinated military activities.

We are currently in what could be called the manhunt phase of the war. We're pursuing the leaders of terrorist organizations through an adaptive military strategy that places a premium on intelligence.

The Afghan government and the Afghan communities in contested areas are playing increasing roles. We have moved to an approach that involves permanently deploying forces in contested areas rather than simply conducting strikes or sweep operations. Our continuing military pressure, which will include the creation of 16 Provincial Reconstruction Teams by mid year encourages local leaders to form relationships with coalition units to provide intelligence and to cooperate in rooting out terrorists.

The results are already encouraging. Afghans have provided tips that have significantly increased the number of arms caches found by our forces. Our presence in the countryside assisted by the multiplier effect of local cooperation will impede the enemy's freedom of action. In addition, we are devoting more military and intelligence resources to Afghanistan, surging our military forces for spring operations and devoting additional intelligence assets for collection and fusion of information.

A major continuing challenge is the problem of enemy sanctuaries in Pakistan. Pakistan has moved its Army into the tribal areas for operations along the Afghan border. This is a positive and hopeful development. However, the Taliban and other terrorist organizations continue to be able to base, train and operate from Pakistani territories. Unless the issue of

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sanctuaries is solved it will be difficult fully to eliminate security problems in the south and east. We cannot allow this problem to fester indefinitely. We have told the Pakistani leadership that either they must solve this problem or we will have to do it for ourselves. We prefer that Pakistan takes responsibility and the Pakistani government agrees. We are prepared to help President Musharraf, however one way or the other this problem will have to be dealt with.

Now I would like to turn to our efforts to build a new Afghanistan.

First of all we will not repeat the mistake of abandoning Afghanistan, a mistake made after the withdrawal of Soviet forces. Even if we capture Usama bin Laden and the other terrorist leaders, we will stay the course. Convincing Afghans of our steadfastness of purpose remains a challenge. Some continue to lack confidence in our commitment which leads them to adopt counter-productive hedging strategies in the event of an American withdrawal. Yet we will need a long-term commitment to change this key perception.

I would like to take you through our efforts on the political, security, and economic fronts.

On the political track we are helping the Afghans put in place the foundation of a democratic order. We have made important progress. This has been the result of a step-by-step process led by Afghans but with an important guiding role for the United States and the international community.

After the fall of the Taliban regime we did not seek to govern Afghanistan. Instead we supported the process to set up an Afghan government through the consultative process began at Bonn Conference at the end of 2001. We sought to reopen the political space that would allow the nation's moderate tradition to reassert itself and that would encourage restoration of national unity. This would then open the way for Afghan leaders to build a new legitimate political order through a process of consensus.

A key principle was to address the concern of those such as women and various ethnic groups who were deprived of rights of participation by the previous regime. Initially we needed to proceed very cautiously. The fragility of the political situation required a step-by-step process.

The Constitutional Loya Jurga in December and in January was a turning point. The new constitution is the most enlightened constitution in the Islamic world. It provides for democratic elections, for president and parliament. It establishes a strong

presidency but also creates checks and balances by establishing a parliament that cannot be dismissed by the executive. It enshrines individual rights, including a provision to abide by the UN Declaration of Human Rights. It gives women equality before the law. It also requires that 25 percent of the parliament, the lower house, be composed of women delegates. It recognizes the need of ethnic minority communities through provision to give legal status to their languages. It provides for an independent commission on human rights and elections at all levels.

With Afghan leaders I like to joke that the authors of the new constitution should cite the authors of the new Iraqi constitution for copyright violations. There are a number of provisions in the Iraqi constitution that suspiciously resembles the Afghan constitution.

Of course challenges remain. Taking the principles set forth in a document and making them into living institutions is not easy. Nor is the development of the democratic political habits in a country that lacked representative bodies for more than a quarter century.

The most immediate challenge is the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections this fall. The key challenges are logistical and operational. The United Nations, which has the lead responsibility for elections, has registered more than 1.5 million of the estimated nine to ten million Afghans eligible to vote.

The United States has helped finance this effort. We have also made available through the UN the planning capabilities of the U.S. Embassy and military command to work out a sound logistical and operational plan for the elections.

Holding the elections in September was necessitated partly because of these operational challenges, but also because of the importance to Afghan leaders and groups of holding simultaneous presidential and parliamentary elections.

In the light of the greater complexity of parliamentary elections, the UN says that it would not have been possible to hold them in June/July period, however by early fall it should be possible to elect both branches of government. This will add to the legitimacy and stability of the new political order.

Looking beyond the elections, the key to a successful transition is development of habits of liberal democracy, acceptance of majority rule, respect of the rights of the minorities, subordination of all individuals and institutions to

the rule of law, and the willingness to compromise in political disputes.

Afghans have not had the chance to practice these habits at the national level since the 1970s. The United States as well as the international community is also supporting efforts to build grassroots democracy, starting at the village level.

The Afghan government has instituted a program, the National Solidarity Program, that will create councils to guide reconstruction priorities at the village level. It builds on the Afghan tradition of Shuras or Jurgas and consensus-based decisionmaking.

Over the next three years these councils which include the participation of women will be formed in all of the country's 20,000 villages. These village councils will complement the top-down democratization of the Bonn process with the bottom-up democratization necessary to build a democratic culture.

Looking forward, the political moment in Afghanistan is immensely promising. There is a palpable desire among Afghans to take charge of their country. The level of political consciousness and interest is very high. This is the greatest asset we have in terms of helping the Afghans succeed in this political transition.

After the political track the next area of emphasis is security and governance. Our objective is to enable the Afghan government to stand on its own feet, to provide for its own needs in terms of security and to put in place an effective government. Our military presence, as well as that of the international community is essential until Afghans can provide for their own security. Though we will be security partners in the future, our forces should play a role on the ground only until the Afghans can do this for themselves.

The security challenge in Afghanistan is two-fold. First there is the terrorist threat that I spoke about earlier. Second, there is the problem of lawlessness and warlordism. In the background is the nexus of both of these problems to the challenge of the illegal drug industry.

Initially our military approach emphasized counterterrorism operations, however this has been broadened into a wider civilization strategy. The creation and proliferation of Provincial Reconstruction Teams was intended to enhance security, extend the reach of the central government and facilitate reconstruction.

The long-term solution is the development of Afghan security institutions. Here we have significantly stepped up our efforts in recent months. The Afghan National Army which numbers about 8,000 now will reach 10,000 by mid-year and potentially 20,000 by the end of the year. The current training rate is approaching 10,000 per year and I anticipate that we will accelerate this rate further.

It's difficult to overstate the impact of ANA. Afghans at all levels of society say where the ANA goes stability breaks out. More recently this has been the case in Herat where more than 1,000 ANA soldiers have been sent in response to recent factional fighting. In addition the United States is helping to accelerate the multilateral police training program led by Germany. We will have trained and equipped 20,000 police by mid-year and 30,000 by the end of the year. We will complete the 50,000 person force structure of the police by the end of next year.

As these forces flow into contested areas the security situation should improve steadily. Our efforts to develop Afghan security institutions is closely related to the issue of improving governance. In early 2002 Afghanistan had only the shell of a government. None of the ministries functioned and most were dominated by one political faction. Provincial and district governments were dominated by warlords or their commanders whose abuses of local people if unchecked when undermining the legitimacy of the new government.

President Karzai has spoken eloquently about the need to improve governance. We agree with his assessment. We have adopted a joint approach with the Afghan government to address this problem. In the central government this has involved efforts to reform ministries politically and technically.

For example, the United States played a central role in promoting the reform of the Ministry of Defense. A new senior leadership was appointed last September, increasing ethnic and political balance. The middle levels of the ministry were then appointed later in the fall. As a result, Afghans are increasingly viewing the Ministry of Defense as a national institution, not one controlled exclusively by one faction. The evidence for this change is the increase in the volunteers for the national army. Much more needs to be done and we should help other ministries undertake this kind of systematic reform.

In the provinces we are working with President Karzai on the problem of warlordism and on extending the reach of the central government. We agree with President Karzai that Afghan political figures will continue to behave as warlords, will not have a

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future in the new Afghanistan, and there has been progress here too. President Karzai has appointed new governors and police chiefs in more than half of Afghanistan's provinces. Governance in Kandahar has been improved since the appointment of a new governor last fall.

Other major regional leaders, particularly in northern Afghanistan have turned in heavy weapons, demobilized fighters, and expressed a willingness to accept new roles that will transfer them from their current areas. In Kabul, heavy weapons have been cantoned and some militia forces have been demobilized. The Afghan government has launched a program which we and others are supporting to rebuild government institutions at the district level and the deployment of ANA, the Afghan National Army, and newly trained police forces to areas where political changes have been made or are underway has reinforced efforts to improve governance.

A key challenge to security and governance is the demobilization of non-ANA military units. There are positive developments here. The Ministry of Defense has offered to canton all heavy weapons nationwide, to demobilize 40 percent of non-ANA military units, and to withdraw forces from cities such as Kabul as called for by the Bonn agreement by the end of June. To demobilize an additional 20 percent by September and to demobilize the remainder of non-ANA units by the end of June of 2005.

This agreement must be implemented. We will work with the Afghan leaders and the international community to influence militia leaders to encourage implementation.

The joint effort of the Afghan government and the international community to improve governance is work in progress. Clearly much remains to be done. However, governance in Afghanistan today is better today than it was last year and it will be better next year than it is today. We are on the right track.

Finally, let us look at the economy. Afghanistan's economy grew at an estimated rate of 30 percent last year and is growing at 20 percent now. This is the peace dividend, the immediate second-order effect of the coalition's stabilizing military presence and the increasing confidence of the Afghan people in the political future of their country.

Our efforts are focused on investing resources to create the basis for a successful legal economy in the long term.

Today Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the

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world. A few indicators give you a sense of the scale of scale of the problem. Per capita income is below \$200. The modest infrastructure in place before the Soviet invasion in 1979 has been destroyed as a result of 25 years of war. Only six percent of the population has access to electricity. Health indicators including maternal mortality in childbirth are almost among the worst in the world. Illiteracy is estimated to be more than 50 percent and much worse for women than men.

Our focus is to work with the Afghan government to improve the quality of life of the people and to put in place an economic infrastructure to support a private sector-led economy.

First, we are helping to rebuild Afghanistan's health system. To address this crisis we are building clinics, training health workers and planning to develop referral hospitals.

Second, we are contributing to the rebuilding of the education system. We're refurbishing and building schools, training teachers, and supplying textbooks. We are developing plans to expand vocational education and to create an American University of Afghanistan.

Third, we are rebuilding key infrastructure. The completion of the initial paving of the Kabul-Kandahar Road has had a major positive effect economically and politically. We are moving on the Kandahar-Herat Road and have initiated a program to pave important secondary roads. Other countries and international organizations are also helping with other roads. Our goal is to reestablish Afghan's historic role as a switching point for regional trade and commerce.

In addition to roads, the power sector, industrial parks, irrigation works and other infrastructure projects are also in our program.

Fourth, we are helping Afghans create the legal framework of a market economy, a new banking law has been enacted, other commercial laws are being prepared. We are supporting the rebuilding of judicial institutions and we are supporting efforts to create a sound, land titling system.

Despite this progress there are major challenges. The greatest is the threat posed by the illegal drug economy. We are working with the United Kingdom which is the lead nation for counternarcotics. We are supportive of eradication effort that will be undertaken in the coming year. our police training program will create the needed enforcement mechanism for anti-drug programs and we are training specialized counternarcotics units as well.

Our economic assistance, particularly in an area of agriculture, will support alternative livelihood. While we understand that it will take time to reduce and then eliminate this problem we do not accept the view that little can be done in the short term.

Another challenge is addressing the lack of capacity and the growth of corruption in the government. Afghans in urban areas complain that inefficient and corrupt government officials or bureaucracies stymies economic growth. In response we are working with the Afghan government on civil service reform with the goal of enabling a Civil Service Commission to set and enforce the rules that will produce merit-based appointments. We are planning programs to train administrative personnel nationwide. We are supporting Afghan leaders who are pressing for the enactment of a code of conduct for government officials.

Though these are difficult challenges the bottom line is that economic progress is underway. Also as we make political progress and improve security in governance I am confident we will see the economic progress will pick up as well.

I have taken you through my assessment of Afghanistan and our efforts to assist the Afghans to get to the point where their country can stand on its own feet. Though I have argued that we are making progress, I do not want to leave the impression that we are near the finish line. Enormous challenges remain and I have tried to cite those that are the focal point of our efforts.

My point is that despite the difficulty of our starting point there is now a positive trajectory in Afghanistan, one that we must sustain and one that we can even improve upon. Success is achievable. The Afghans want to succeed. They are immensely grateful for our help. Their greatest worry is that we will not stay the course.

We have the right strategy, we just need to stay the course together with the rest of the international community. The broad-based commitment within the international community was demonstrated again at the Berlin conference with a pledge of \$4.5 billion in assistance for the current Afghan fiscal year. IN fact the level of these pledges is a sign of the world's increasing confidence that Afghanistan will succeed. In 2002 the world made a \$4.5 billion commitment for a multiyear program at the Tokyo meeting. As a result of the promising developments in Afghanistan, the world pledged a similar amount for one year in Berlin.

Assistance on this scale for five to seven years is what it

will take to rebuild Afghanistan.

Another key to success is the broad-based commitment to Afghanistan in the United States. The Administration, of course, is fully committed to success as evidenced by more than doubling of U.S. assistance in 2004. However, this support also extends to the Congress and is strong among leaders of both houses and both political parties. I have the pleasure of hosing many members of Congress who visit Afghanistan. I have also closely consulted with key senators and members of Congress on my visits to Washington. All are fully committed to success in Afghanistan.

When we achieve success in Afghanistan it will be an American success produced by leaders in the executive and legislative branches and both political parties. This is the American foreign policy community at its best.

In closing, I want to make one final point. Let us take a moment to consider the wider effects that succession Afghanistan can create. The war against terror is set within the context of the stalled political development of the Greater Middle East. Transforming the politics of the region is essential to achieving a full victory against extremists and terrorists and making the region become more functional. Success in Afghanistan will give Central Asian countries straight options and open new opportunities for regional economic cooperation.

President Bush, has articulated a forward strategy of freedom, a strategy designed to change the political context that has given life to extremism and militancy, to move political trends in a direction conducive to moderate and democratic politics.

The forward strategy of freedom begins in Afghanistan -- the first theater in the war against terror. By virtue of its strategic location and the fact that al Qaida hijacked the country as its base of operation, establishing freedom and democracy in Afghanistan is the cornerstone of this wider regional strategy. This strategy will require the use of all our policy instruments -- diplomatic, military, political and economic. As we recalibrate our international military footprints to cope with new realities we should look to create enduring partnerships with countries such as Afghanistan that want to move forward politically.

Success in Afghanistan is a central requirement for this strategy. Afghans, as I said before, want to succeed. They welcome our support. They seek a long-term partnership with us. Together we are making progress. Success will require a sustained commitment both in time and resources. It is a commitment that is

well worth it in terms of U.S. interests and U.S. values.

Thank you very much.

[Applause]

**Brzezinski:** Thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador.

I was particularly impressed by your conclusion. Your report was both frank and comprehensive, but at the end you added a further dimension to it by stressing what seems to me to be very important to recognize and to remember, namely that the progress in Afghanistan which you have so ably led is the by-product of national consensus here, a sense of bipartisan support for policies shaped by American national interests understood broadly and widely. And secondly, that it enjoys international support and therefore it has more capacity for effective action. Those are important lessons to bear in mind in this wider context of challenge that we face today.

You have kindly indicated that you are willing to respond to questions so let me suggest to the audience that you indicate your name, identify yourself in some fashion, and the questions should be posed directly and without lengthy speeches so that there is the maximum opportunity for an exchange of views.

Yes, sir. Then I'll let you, Zal, recognize people.

**Question:** Good evening, Ambassador. My name is Clay Swisher. I work for CNO Resources.

I was wondering if you could comment or describe for us your assessment of the cooperation by the government of Iran in Afghani reconstruction.

**Khalilzad:** We have had since the meetings in Bonn generally reasonable cooperation with Iran with regard to Afghanistan. I sometimes joke with interlocutors who talk with the Iranians that in getting rid of the Taliban we did them a great favor since relations between Iran and the Taliban were quite hostile.

However, of course, we know that there are multiple centers of power in Iran and there are elements in Iran that fear success in Afghanistan and at times pursue policies that are not entirely supportive of the requirements for success in Afghanistan.

I think the dominant theme for most of the period since the fall of the Taliban has been one of broad support for effort in Afghanistan to build this new Afghanistan and to consolidate success there. Thank you.

**Question:** I'm Al Millican, affiliated with Washington Independent Writers.

At the meetings to finalize the constitution of Afghanistan, what did the U.S. suggest regarding how Islam should be referred to in the constitution? And among Afghan citizens, how many interpretations do you see as far as implementing what it means to be under Islam?

**Khalilzad:** This is one of the most sensitive issues and as you see throughout the Islamic world there are different views of the role of Islam in politics, from those who believe that only by returning to the days of the Prophet and the Caliphs after the Prophet by accepting the Sharia as the law of the land can Muslims solve their problems and achieve greatness again; to the other extreme that requires the separation of religion from state and embracing secularism and Western concepts across the board.

In Afghanistan these views, the full range of them exists, but the dominant view historically has been one of moderate interpretation of Islam and a mix of influences from Islam and from the Sharia with other sources for law in the country. Islam and Sharia has been accepted as "a" source for laws in Afghanistan.

In the Loya Jurga dealing with the constitution these views existed and a compromise was struck emphasizing both Islam and democracy and human rights and equality of men and women and a consensus was arrived at with regard to these issues. We did not have a particular view on some of these issues except to say to them that it was very important for the success of Afghanistan that the rights of all its citizens be recognized, and particularly with regard to women, that Afghanistan couldn't achieve the potential that it had if half of its population could be denied the right to participate or be treated as equal before the law. We did emphasize the importance of not only the fact that Afghans are Muslims and the importance of Islam, but those who had other religions should be free to practice their religion as well. Both of these concepts were enshrined in the constitution. That's why I regard that constitution as being very enlightened. But it reflected the compromise between the various trends that exist in Afghanistan.

**Question:** I'm Cathy Ward with the International Crisis Group. Thank you again for meeting with all of us this evening. I apologize, I have a two-part question.

The first one is the elections. It sounds from your remarks like you're fairly comfortable that September actually will work.

In regards to the elections I'm wondering in a worst-case scenario would the possibility of extending the transitional authority until next spring be something that could be considered? Also what role do the Afghan guard forces that have been discussed play in terms of making September work?

The other part of the question is on the safe havens in Pakistan. Do you feel that the recent operations in [Waziristan] made a significant difference? Thank you.

**Khalilzad:** Those are three questions. [Laughter]

On the first question, of course there had to be a compromise between having a crisis of legitimacy which if elections had been delayed extensively, let's say until next year, next spring, next summer, that there would have been a long period, the mandate of the current government through the Bonn process runs until the end of June. There was a concern that a long delay would be seen by the Afghans and some people in the government felt they would not have the legitimate basis for governing for that long a period of time and questions would be raised as to whether the government extended itself and that this has been the case at times in the past in Afghanistan and that crisis of legitimacy had been a source of instability and conflict. So there was a desire to avoid that to the maximum extent possible.

But there was also a issue that although presidential elections could be held at the end of June or early July, that was a possibility, that some felt there were important voices in Afghanistan that felt that a president unconstrained by parliament would also not be desirable. There were strong advocates that parliamentary elections also have to be held at the same time so other forces could also be represented in the political structure because a single individual being elected as president without counterbalancing presence of other forces that could be elected to parliament would have been difficult for them, problematic for them to accept.

So taking these political considerations into account and then the logistical requirements of doing a parliamentary election the compromise was struck, the agreement was made to hold the elections in September and the UN assesses that the logistical requirements and the operational requirements can be met by then.

If it's not met by then, there is the option of holding presidential elections at that time, but the assumption is, the plan is for both elections at that time.

With regard to the question of the camps in Pakistan, the sanctuary issue. Of course the recent effort by Pakistan was a welcome step. I think they recognized in the course of those operations how difficult the situation was, how significant the presence of these terrorists were in those areas. And that they have considerable more work needs to be done to eliminate the threat.

There is the issue of the border areas but there is also the issue of presence of some of the Taliban leaders in the cities of Pakistan that needs to be addressed, and that President Musharraf is very much of the view that the Taliban and al Qaida are a threat to Pakistan as well. That's what he has stated. It's important in terms of al Qaida's statements against him, the attacks against him, but also for his vision of a moderate Islamic country, what he wants for his country, and the presence of these forces are problems for him.

So we very much are encouraged by what he's done so far, but more needs to be done clearly, and I think they agree with that.

On the last part with regard to the guard force, we're still considering the establishment of the guard force. No final decision has been made on it. Clearly as I suggested, more international or Afghan capacity to deal with the security challenges that Afghanistan faces would be welcomed.

NATO has agreed to establish five PRTs in the coming months. That's welcome. There is also a consideration by NATO to send some forces in Afghanistan to assist with elections. That would be welcomed as well. One of the reasons that's at least some people in the UN system thought was important for the election delay or change from June/July to September was that there was no possibility that NATO could have deployed forces to assist with elections by June/July. September it's a possibility, so we will have to see what they can do.

But security is not in my view the principal factor affecting the timing of the election. It's been more the logistical and operational issues, registration and so forth. So I think September looks quite good in my view as well for elections for both the president and parliament.

**Question:** -- from VUA.

It's a nice segue actually into my question. Security is needed not just for the elections but for the registration. People have to be able to register in safety.

What is going to be done to provide security for the

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registration and what plans have you heard about NATO providing security for the elections themselves in terms of force deployment numbers, anything?

**Khalilzad:** Registration of course is very important. The first phase is about to be completed. That was concentrated in the major urban areas. Eight centers around the country.

Under the current plan that the UN has embraced, there will be some 4200 plus registration sites that will become operational in May that will take registration to the people so to speak rather than people coming to the eight registration sites. Afghanistan is a large country, bigger than France territorially, and with the road infrastructure that I alluded to its even in reality much larger than that for people to get from the villages to the cities to register.

So the decision has been made to take the registration to the various areas of Afghanistan.

With regard to security for registration, by May we will have more police forces, we will have more ANA, there will be more PRTs. At the same time our military operations are being conducted in a way to shape the environment for registration and elections, and there is a consideration of course for NATO forces that you referred to, but not for registration period. As I said, if those forces do arrive they will arrive for the election period.

So I think the security issues is sometimes exaggerated. People that the Loya Jurga elections will not take place because some Taliban-al Qaida types said people who participate will be killed. In fact 85 percent of so participated in that process.

The Afghans are yearning to participate. They know, they recognize, they appear to be stating that they think this is important.

The UN, some foreign workers, of course they are more concerned to go into some areas. One way that Afghans are moving about this is to Afghanize the process, to have more Afghans participate in the implementation of the registration program. And where there are difficulties, where there is coordination with us and other coalition forces, to deploy forces, ANA assets, police forces, to those areas. So there is close cooperation between the UN, the [WNAMA] and the coalition and the Afghan authorities and we'll do what we can to assist.

Steve?

**Question:** It's good to see you. Zal, you said that the U.S. made an important mistake in pulling out of Afghanistan after the Soviets were defeated, and I think we all agree that that's true. But looking ahead five to seven years, what kind of relationship do you foresee America having with Afghanistan? Do you see it in the shape of an alliance? Would this be a military alliance? Would we have bases there? Would it be a UN arrangement where we were there perhaps under UN auspices? Could it be a NATO arrangement? Have you done much thinking? Or would Afghanistan be declared a non-aligned country where its neighbors would agree that it was neutral. How do you see the different alternatives for Afghanistan?

**Khalilzad:** Of course it's important to win the peace, so to speak, in Afghanistan. Finish off what remains of the al Qaida and the Taliban and create this new order that's self-sustaining. Then of course we will have to see.

The Afghans are interested in a long term partnership with the United States. I think we are also interested in a long term partnership with Afghanistan. How that will be manifested is something that will have to be discussed, agreed upon, over the longer term. There is no immediate blueprint for what that relationship might look like down the road, except a commitment by both sides, by senior people, that this close relationship between our two countries serves the interest of both countries. We'll have to see what an elected government in Afghanistan desires, but I think that the Afghans generally, they fear abandonment by the United States. That's their fear. They don't fear -- I have not heard a fear of entrapment, sort of some U.S. grand strategy that is inconsistent with Afghan interests. It's more a fear of abandonment and they refer to it as kind of we have a great project that started with Dr. Brzezinski against the Soviets, and then we left them on their own. They worry about that. So we have reassured them at this time we understand the mistake that we made and our commitment is a long term commitment to them.

Okay, the last question back there.

**Question:** Thank you. Merati Akim from Turkish Press.

**Khalilzad:** Mahalo.

**Question:** Mahalo.

Sir, do you believe that democracy can be taken to a country from outside, especially a tribal country? And do you believe we can talk about a real democratization process in a Muslim country without separating religion from government?

**Khalilzad:** Of course there are no simple blueprints developed here to be exported to other countries whether Afghanistan or elsewhere. But I do think that the idea of people electing their own government, a government that is accountable, that serves the interests of the people. The idea of majority respecting the rights of minority, the idea of being able to criticize the government, freedom of the press. The idea of people organizing themselves in terms of civil society. And expressing their interests, pushing for them. These are ideas that have resonance in Afghanistan. They say they have been tested by fire. This is what I hear by the president of Afghanistan, by village elders, that some of the other formulas that they have tried have been very expensive for them. That they need to follow within the context of Afghan traditions that are also very important, the Jurgas and the councils and the Loya Jurga and so on, formulas that have worked elsewhere but in the Afghan context.

The question of whether you need a separation of religion and state is something that Afghanistan at this stage has not been prepared to do. There are people who are advocates of it. Some significant numbers of members of the Loya Jurga distributed a petition asking for that. That religion should be separated from politics. Secularism was embraced. But given the recent history of Afghanistan there is also the Islamic forces that presently struck this compromise and that you can have in other words the Islamic without complete separation but a compromise and yet move towards democracy.

We will have to see whether this will work or not. It may be that they will make other adaptations as they move forward, as institutions that are very fragile and in the early stages become more robust in the country and that changes can be made without them being very destabilizing or so destabilizing that could bring about a new conflict.

So this is where they are now. Most think that this would work, but this is not carved in stone. Adoptions and amendments to the constitution and changes can be made down the road, but this is a very hopeful and significant step and progress that has been made, especially if you take into account where only two years or two years and four months ago where the country was. I think it shows a commitment and a broad agreement to move in this direction. I have certainly been very pleased by the progress that has been made. But as I said before, there is a long way still to go and major challenges remain.

Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

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[Applause]

**Brzezinski:** In a way your applause anticipates what I was going to say. I'm sure I speak for everyone here that we are very grateful for your very candid, informed, nuanced, wise analysis of the situation in Afghanistan, and that we are very fortunate as a country to have such a dedicated public servant there on the spot serving our national interests.

Thank you, Zal.

**Khalilzad:** Thank you.

(END)