

## IS AFGHANISTAN A LOST CAUSE?

### INTELLIGENCE SQUARED U.S. AUDIENCE IS SPLIT BUT TEAM ARGUING AGAINST THE MOTION WINS THE DEBATE

NEW YORK – November 11, 2010 –Intelligence Squared U.S. (IQ2US), the Oxford-style debate series, an initiative of The Rosenkranz Foundation, hosted a debate last night on the motion, *Afghanistan is a Lost Cause*. Four experts in the region and in international and military affairs considered whether the time was right to pull U.S. troops out of the war torn country. In the end, the team arguing against the motion moved more of the audience to their point of view, thus winning the debate.

At the beginning of the evening at NYU's Skirball Center for the Performing Arts, 46% of the audience was for the motion, *Afghanistan is a Lost Cause*, 23 % were against it and 31% were undecided. After the debate, the side arguing against the motion had moved more of the audience members to their position; they ended up with 36% of the vote, 51% were for the motion and 13% remained undecided.

The evening's winning team included Peter Bergen, the co-director of New America Foundation's Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative and a journalist and CNN national security analyst and Max Boot, an author and senior fellow for National Security Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations.

On the other side in support of the motion was Matthew Hoh, director of the Afghanistan Study Group and a former State Department official who resigned in protest from his post in Afghanistan over U.S. strategic policy and Nir Rosen, author and freelance journalist who has worked in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and across the Middle East.

Among the debate's highlights:

"It would be a moral catastrophe to allow the Taliban to take over and impose a regime on Afghans. We overthrew their government. We have a moral responsibility to more or less get it right." – **Peter Bergen**

...They (al-Qaeda) don't operate in a manner that we can attack with conventional forces..... Since 2001 al-Qaeda has evolved into an organization that is decentralized, it's near virtual, and it does not exist in a manner that we can attack...So the smart way to go about them is to attack al-Qaeda as they actually exist and not as we want them to be or not how they were 10 years ago." – **Matthew Hoh**

"...if we are concerned about the future of Pakistan -- and I certainly am -- then running out of Afghanistan is not the strategy to pursue. That will in fact weaken the government of Pakistan and destabilize it, whereas if we can stabilize Afghanistan that will do much to strengthen the forces of moderation in Pakistan..." – **Max Boot**

"In my travels...I was in Afghanistan last January and February and I was shocked to see that school teachers, local government officials, bus drivers were all complaining to me about the Americans and their night raids and their operations killing civilians. I don't think the American people know the extent to which the Afghans resent their presence or feel humiliated by it." – **Nir Rosen**

John Donvan, correspondent for ABC News Nightline, is moderator of Intelligence Squared U.S. debates. Dana Wolfe is the executive producer.

To view transcripts and videos, download audio or video clips or learn more about Intelligence Squared U.S. please visit: <http://www.intelligencesquaredus.org>

This debate will air on Bloomberg Television on Monday, November 15, Tuesday, November 16 and November 17 at 9 PM. To find Bloomberg TV in your area, please visit <http://bloomberg.viewerlink.tv/>

#### ABOUT INTELLIGENCE SQUARED U.S.

Launched in September 2006, the goal of Intelligence Squared U.S., an initiative of the Rosenkranz Foundation, is to raise the level of public discourse and promote a realization that, on contentious issues, those who challenge the conventional wisdom have intellectually respectable and often persuasive viewpoints. We encourage citizens to “Think Twice” about their opinions and participate in the conversation, and we provide a forum for balanced discussion that transcends emotion and ideology. Through an annual series of between 10 to 12 live Oxford-style debates, IQ2US brings together experts and audience around public policy and cultural issues. IQ2US debates air on the Bloomberg Television network and are heard on more than 220 NPR stations nationwide.

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