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EXPLORING THREE STRATEGIES FOR AFGHANISTAN

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EXPLORING THREE STRATEGIES FOR AFGHANISTAN

WESNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2009

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:35 p.m., in room SD–419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. John F. Kerry (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Kerry, Feingold, Menendez, Cardin, Casey, Shaheen, Kaufman, Lugar, Corker, and Risch.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN F. KERRY, U.S. SENATOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS

The CHAIRMAN. This hearing of the Foreign Relations Committee will now come to order.

Delighted to welcome our distinguished panel, and appreciate very much their taking time to come and share this first hearing in a series of hearings on the subject of Afghanistan.

I also want to welcome—I am told we have a group of members of the Afghan Parliament who are here, and maybe they would just stand up and be recognized. Where are they, right back here? Thank you very much. We appreciate your being here, and we hope that this is helpful to you, as it will be, hopefully, to us.

The future course of our mission in Afghanistan has become one of the most important and one of the most difficult questions that we face. In the weeks ahead, this committee will hold a series of hearings to study the situation in greater depth and to weigh our options going forward. I know that all of my colleagues on this committee and in Congress take that responsibility seriously, and I look forward to using this venue to ask some tough questions and, hopefully, to uncover some answers together.

Frankly, I am concerned by where we are today in Afghanistan, about the rising number of casualties among our troops and those of our allies, about the deeply flawed Presidential voting that just took place, about the impunity with which drug traffickers have been to operate, and about the rampant corruption undermining the faith of Afghans in their government and ours. And most of all, I am concerned because, at the very moment when our troops and our allies' troops are sacrificing more and more, our plan, our path, our progress seem to be growing less and less clear.

Nearly all of us agree that it was right to go into Afghanistan when we originally did. There is no such consensus about what comes next. The eighth anniversary of our presence in Afghanistan

approaches at a time of growing doubts about our mission, at home and abroad. I've heard some of my colleagues express reservations in many different ways about different aspects of what we are engaged in, ranging from the size of our military commitment, and our Afghan and NATO partners' commitment, to what is possible, to fundamental questions about the underlying presumptions of our presence there.

It's very easy to understand why some people have become skeptical. We appeared to achieve our key objectives very early and very easily. We toppled the Taliban, and we drove out al-Qaeda's leaders, although obviously the intent was to either capture or kill them. But, we didn't drive them very far—only a 100 miles or so across the border into Pakistan, from where they have been able to organize and perpetuate their activities in perhaps as many as 60 countries around the globe.

Year after year, while many of us warned that our mission was not just adrift, but even slipping out of control, the last administration's focus was definitively elsewhere; in Iraq. In fact, many military people complained to me at various times about the diversion of resources and of strategic thinking from Afghanistan to Iraq.

Now the window is closing. Today, we face a tougher foe, a more educated foe, in a sense, to our practices, an insurgency that has adapted to our tactics and honed its own deadly methods. Afghans, who once welcomed Americans with open arms, have, in many cases, grown suspicious. American and allied populations are suspicious, too. They want a clearer explanation of our goals, of our methodology, our plans. And so do we, here.

Each time I visit Afghanistan—and I intend to go again in October—I return with a renewed appreciation for our troops. In Kunar and Zabul, I have seen the Provincial Reconstruction Teams weave their way through the complex web of tribal alliances to empower local governments to deliver basic services to the Afghan people. I've seen a Navy commander and an Army lieutenant colonel directing unbelievable activities, engaging in being mayor, psychologist, judge, diplomat, and soldier, all at the same time.

What our troops are doing is extraordinary, and extraordinarily difficult. We have an obligation to make certain that we give them a strategy that is worthy of their sacrifice. President Obama has promised to weigh the recommendations of the top commander in Afghanistan—GEN Stanley McChrystal—on whether to commit more troops to this effort. We don't know what the answer will be. But, we do know that August was the deadliest month on record for United States troops in Afghanistan.

We also know, and we know this definitively, that this should not become a partisan issue. Democrats and Republicans alike can best support the President, and our country, by not acting as a rubberstamp. We can help him best by asking tough questions, just as he is doing, and partnering with the administration to craft policies that reflect the answers.

Secretary Clinton has committed to testify before the committee next month, once the President has finalized some of these choices that he faces. And I know that all of my colleagues will welcome the chance to further this dialogue with her.

So far, the limited debate has really focused on absolute numbers and on different kinds of metrics: How many United States and allied troops are required; how many Afghan soldiers and police do we need to train; how many more billions do we need to invest in a moment of enormous need here at home. Of course, no amount of money, no rise in troop levels, and no clever metrics will matter if the mission itself is ill-defined or ill-conceived. That's why we need to expand the discussion to grapple with fundamental questions and examine core assumptions. We need to agree on a clear definition of the mission and of what is possible. We need to decide what is achievable and what is an acceptable goal for the future shape of Afghanistan. We need to know the size of the footprint—military footprint—that that goal will demand. We need to weigh the probabilities and the cost of getting there.

I believe that certain principles must guide this thinking, and I will say to you that—there was an interesting article in today's Washington Post, and it's one that sort of reflected some of the thinking that I and others have shared recently, which is—I mean, I recall full well, in 1964 and 1965, being one of those troops who responded to the call to augment our presence in Vietnam, and there was this constant refrain from President Johnson and from General Westmoreland to, you know, "Give us more troops. We just need X more, and we'll get the job done." But, in fact, some of the core assumptions were not being examined—about the domino theory, about the nature of the civil war, and the structure.

This is the kind of thinking we need to apply now to this challenge. And I believe certain principles must guide our thinking.

First, it will be the Afghans who must ultimately win or lose the struggle with the Taliban. We need to ensure that the Afghan people feel a sense of ownership, not of occupation.

Second, as I warned, back in February, in an op-ed piece in the Washington Post, we need to recognize that we are in a race against time. In a region suspicious of foreign troops, an open-ended obligation of large numbers of United States troops risks consigning us to the same fate as others who've tried to master Afghanistan. No matter how long we remain there, history should teach us that there will be no purely military solution in that country. What's needed instead is a comprehensive strategy, one that emphasizes the need for the right level of civilian effort as much as for the right military deployment to provide security for that other effort to take hold.

We must also understand Afghan realities, and recognize the decentralized nature of Afghan society. I won't go into it all right now, but there is a distinction between Iraq and the civil structure that existed in Iraq and the capacity of that civil structure, and the system that existed, and the level of education, and the commerce, and the development—a clear distinction between that and what exists in Afghanistan, one of the poorest countries in the world.

So, we need to understand this decentralized nature of Afghan society and the history of its monarchy and its relationship to a centralized government, and that requires us, I think, to be flexible. Afghanistan is a very diverse place, and we need to understand that what works in Mazar-e Sharif, a predominantly Uzbek city that fought the Taliban tooth and nail in the 1990s, is very dif-

ferent from what works in Kandahar, a Pashtun city that welcomed the Taliban with open arms. It also requires us to be humble about our ability to bring large-scale change to other societies. That was true in Iraq, it remains true in Iraq, and it is even more true in Afghanistan. We have to weigh our choices against what is possible.

We also need to consider our mission in Afghanistan in the context of a highly volatile and strategically vital region. And I emphasize that this is a very important part of our thinking—Pakistan, Iran, and other questions. These permeable borders are straddled by clans, ethnic groups, and militants, where what happens in one country can have profound implications for the security of its neighbors. It is also true that the Pashtun represent a people divided by an artificial line, many years ago by Sir Durand and the British, which was drawn right down the center, putting part of them in Pakistan, part of them in Afghanistan, but it is a border that they have never recognized.

We also face the continued stability of Pakistan, and those issues, a nuclear-armed nation in an existential struggle with extremists and insurgents. I might add, Pakistan has made a significant advance from where it was a year ago. And where many people thought that, in fact, Pakistan was the problem without a solution at that point in time, they have been surprised by the results. And I think we need to take note of that as we think about these mutual implications.

We also need to set realistic goals. The purpose of our mission, is what the President said it was: To prevent Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven or sanctuary for al-Qaeda, and to make sure al-Qaeda is not there in Afghanistan, and, therefore, a destabilizing force in the region. I do not believe that we are in Afghanistan to create a carbon copy of American-style democracy or to impose a strong central government in a nation that has never had one. We need to ensure that we not only set realistic goals, but also align them with our chosen strategy.

In a week when U.S. commandos killed a top al-Qaeda leader in Somalia without a major troop presence, we should be asking ourselves, How much counterinsurgency and nation-building are required to meet a sufficient set of goals to achieve America's objectives with respect to counterinsurgency? And whatever approach we decide on, we do need to find a clear set of metrics to measure the progress.

And finally, we need to ask ourselves the questions that General Petraeus famously asked in 2003 during the invasion of Iraq, How does this end? Supporters and opponents of this war should agree, we need to have this discussion. It may be that we will decide that there need to be additional troops. I don't know the answer to that question until we ask all of these other questions. But, we should not do it in a knee-jerk, automatic, predisposed way that has not thoroughly examined the assumptions and the possibilities. Therefore, this discussion is essential. We've already lost 827 Americans in Operation Enduring Freedom. We have spent over $200 billion. And all of us have attended the funerals and met with families of those who have been lost. We have an obligation to make certain that their sacrifice is not forgotten, but also not in vain, and that

we give them a strategy that is worthy of the sacrifice they've made.

For the first time, the Pentagon has requested more war funding next year for Afghanistan than for Iraq. It is critical for us to communicate a clear goal, and begin to show progress toward achieving it. And we risk losing support for our mission, not just in Afghanistan, but here at home, if we don't undertake that effort.

Dr. John Nagl is a retired Army lieutenant colonel and president of the Center for New American Security. He was selected by General Petraeus to coauthor the Army's Counterinsurgency Field Manual. And we appreciate him being here today.

Dr. Stephen Biddle is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, an independent thinker and an incisive military analyst. He spent a month in Afghanistan this summer as a member of General McChrystal's assessment team.

And our last witness, Rory Stewart, got the ultimate ground education on Afghanistan by walking straight across the country from Herat to Jalalabad right after the Taliban's fall. He is director of the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard's Kennedy School, a former British diplomat and soldier, an early and eloquent critic of our Afghan strategy. So, I welcome you—each of you today, and look forward to your testimony.

Senator Lugar.

Senator LUGAR. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to ask permission to vote at this point. We're about halfway through the rollcall.

The CHAIRMAN. I think that's wise. And——

Senator LUGAR. And then, as I come back, I'll commence my statement, if that's permissible.

The CHAIRMAN. Absolutely. We will—in fact, what I'd like to do, because I think it's important for everybody to hear your statement, we will recess until we return from this vote.

And we stand in recess until such time. It will probably be about 10 minutes, folks. Thanks.

We stand in recess.

[Recess.]

The CHAIRMAN. The hearing will come back to order.

I apologize to everybody. We had two votes, not one, so it took us a little longer, and I apologize to our witnesses and those watching.

Senator Lugar, we look forward to your opening. Thank you.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. RICHARD G. LUGAR, U.S. SENATOR FROM INDIANA

Senator LUGAR. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I join you in welcoming our distinguished panel.

Having reviewed the range of strategies suggested by our experts, it's evident that each has his own perspective on international military forces in Afghanistan. What they have in common is acknowledging the important role for international civilian agencies in Afghanistan to help create stability. This hearing provides an opportunity to review progress on a key asset that I've long sought in our foreign policy efforts, a coordinator for reconstruction and stabilization in the State Department.

The story of the development of this office, which began under the previous administration and continues today, is a discouraging one, unfortunately. Despite the long-evident need for a coherent and efficient civilian coordination capacity to assist our troops in crisis response, we still don't have one and continue to rely solely upon the Defense Department to provide personnel, equipment, resources, and ideas.

In 2003, I convened a series of Policy Analysis Group meetings of senior officials from within our government and beyond to discuss the appropriate role for civilian agencies in post-conflict or crisis situations. Since 1989 and the fall of the Berlin Wall, we've been engaged in post-conflict situations in the first gulf war, Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti, Kosovo, Iraq, Liberia, and, of course, Afghanistan. Each crisis required the deployment of technically proficient civilians familiar with unstable situations. Each situation was hampered by the inability to identify and to deploy such skilled civilians, either independently or as part of a multilateral or military operation.

In 2004, then-Senator Biden and I introduced legislation to create a civilian reconstruction office, but that legislation was not championed initially by the previous administration. Belatedly, the value of this effort was recognized, but despite the Bush administration's 2009 budget request of $249 million to fund the Civilian Stabilization Initiative and the new administration's increased 2010 budget request of $323 million for the same purposes, Congress has sharply cut these funds.

As a result, as President Obama determines the strategic and tactical approach for Afghanistan and the region, he and his commanders and ambassadors are constrained by the inability to provide all the tools necessary. Ambassador Holbrooke was hired by this administration to improve our policy impact in Afghanistan and Pakistan. He determined that he would need a team of experts and the means to wield decisionmaking authority over human and financial resources. I would have hoped that by 2009, some 6 years after I broached the idea with then-Secretary of State Colin Powell, Ambassador Holbrooke could turn to the coordinator for reconstruction and stabilization, Ambassador John Herbst, and an integrated civilian organization capable of assembling a large contingent of specialists. Instead, Ambassador Holbrooke concluded the capacity of these folks was not sufficient to perform the mission. Ambassador Holbrooke has instead established, within his own office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, what is, in essence, a central coordinating function for civilian agencies involved in the crisis. He's built a team that now competes in size with the State Department CRS, and dwarfs that entity in its ability to empower and to employ personnel.

The Department of Defense shares my concern over this gap in our civilian post-conflict capabilities. A variety of experienced military leaders have said the lack of an effective civilian partner is hurting our national interests. Secretary Gates has made clear that our national security is as dependent upon our foreign assistance budget and authorities as it is on our defense budget. Congress must now prioritize these parallel budgets and authorities in order

to strengthen our effectiveness in the realm of diplomacy and defense.

Afghanistan is the priority our President has identified. It is in this engagement that we must provide the civilian resources and skills to complement our military effort, whatever shape the military posture may take.

I look forward to hearing our witnesses. And I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Lugar, that's a very thoughtful statement, and we appreciate it.

We're going to start with you, Dr. Nagl, and then Dr. Biddle, and finally Rory Stewart. Your full testimonies will be placed in the record in full, as if read in full; if you want to summarize and give us a little more time to have a dialogue.

STATEMENT OF JOHN NAGL, PRESIDENT, CENTER FOR A NEW AMERICAN SECURITY, WASHINGTON, DC

Dr. NAGL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, Senator Lugar, members of the committee, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss U.S. strategy in Afghanistan. Achieving an outcome in Afghanistan advantageous to our national security interest demands a careful appraisal of what America is trying to accomplish, and an appreciation for the resources required to get there, and I am honored to be there as part of that important discussion.

Preventing the return of the Taliban to control of Afghanistan, maintaining stability in Pakistan, and keeping up the pressure against al-Qaeda are all objectives very worthy of American effort. U.S. policymakers must, of course, weigh all strategic actions against America's global interests and against our opportunity costs. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, low-cost strategies do not have an encouraging track record of success, since the initial successes of Operation Enduring Freedom. Drone attacks, which are very useful for their ability to eliminate Taliban and al-Qaeda leaders, have not prevented militant forces from making threatening advances in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. The light-footprint option has failed to secure U.S. objectives, as the Obama administration and the American military leadership have recognized. It is well past time for a different approach.

Preventing Afghanistan from again serving as a sanctuary for terrorists with global reach or as the catalyst for a broader regional security meltdown are the key objectives of our campaign there. Securing these objectives requires helping the Afghans to build a sustainable system of governance that can adequately ensure stability and security for the Afghan people, the keystone upon which a successful exit strategy depends.

While an expanded international commitment of security and development forces can assist in the achievement of these goals in the short term, ultimately Afghans must ensure security and stability in their own country. The development of a state that is able to provide a modicum of security and governance to its people is necessary to ensure that American security interests will be preserved without a major U.S. ground presence. And the classic clear-

hold-build counterinsurgency strategy offers the best way to achieve that objective.

The first requirement for success in a counterinsurgency campaign is the ability to secure the population, but at present there are insufficient Afghan soldiers and police to implement that approach by holding areas that had been cleared of insurgents by United States and international forces. As a result, American troops have had to clear the same areas repeatedly, paying a price for each operation, both in American lives and in Afghan public support, which suffers each time we clear and leave. More United States combat soldiers are required now to implement a clear, hold, and build counterinsurgency strategy, but, over time, responsibility must transition to the Afghans to secure their own country.

Ultimately, therefore, much of the focus on the direct counterinsurgency role of United States forces should shift to a focus on developing Afghan security forces. The preexisting numerical targets for the development of Afghan security forces are not based on the actual security requirements for the country. The current end-strength targets for the Afghan National Army and National Police are 134,000 and 82,000 respectively, about half what would be required to provide adequate security in a war-torn country of over 30 million people with very rough terrain. The United States should initiate a greater international effort to expand the Afghan national security forces. If that means the U.S. Government and the international community has to pay for them, then so be it. Doing so will be far cheaper than maintaining substantial numbers of American and international forces in Afghanistan for an even longer period of time to do the jobs that Afghans should do. Building Afghan security forces will be a long-term effort that will require United States and international assistance and advisers for many years.

Security must come first, but these wars are not only won with bullets, so a renewed U.S. commitment to development assistance must also be initiated. And Senator Lugar has mentioned the fact that we simply don't have the expeditionary capability we need in the civilian agencies of government here in this country, and therefore, I'm afraid, much of that burden for development will have to continue to be borne by the U.S. military.

In particular, I'd like to highlight the contributions of the National Security Program in Afghanistan, perhaps the best investment of dollars we've made there. Ultimately, the NSP is an important step toward the defeat of the insurgency, which we will see when the Afghan people know that a non-Taliban political order can offer them a modicum of security and governance.

St. Augustine teaches us that the purpose of war is to build a better peace, but America built nothing in Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal, and the Taliban filled the vacuum. Afghanistan became the vipers' nest in which al-Qaeda grew, and the United States paid a heavy price for its strategic neglect of Afghanistan.

Over the next 5 years, we want to create an Afghanistan from which al-Qaeda has been displaced and from which we can continue to attack its remnants. By that point, the Government of Afghanistan should be able, with only minimal external help, to secure itself from internal threats like the Taliban or the return of

al-Qaeda. It should have the support of its people, earned through reduced corruption and the provision of a reasonable level of government services, particularly security and an improving economy, and it should be determined to never again provide a safe haven for terror. These are difficult tasks, but the American military has a long history of demonstrating that "hard" is not "impossible" as long as the American people stand behind it.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Nagl follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. JOHN NAGL, PRESIDENT, CENTER FOR A NEW AMERICAN SECURITY, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. Chairman, Senator Lugar, and members of the committee, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss U.S. strategy in Afghanistan. Achieving an outcome in Afghanistan advantageous to our national security interests demands a careful appraisal of what America is trying to accomplish and an appreciation for the resources required to get there.[1]

THE ENDS: NO SANCTUARY FOR TERRORISTS AND NO REGIONAL MELTDOWN[2]

Coalition forces invaded Afghanistan in the fall of 2001 with the objective of toppling the Taliban government and defeating al-Qaeda. The Bonn Agreement and subsequent accords expanded Afghan and coalition aims far beyond these original objectives. After 7 years of strategic drift, coalition efforts have failed to persuade many Afghans that it is wise or safe to defy the Taliban.[3] Just as ominously, the prolonged nature of the conflict, mounting casualties and financial costs, and the lack of demonstrable progress have combined to weaken popular support for the mission in many NATO nations, even in the United States. But the fact that progress has been hampered by confused strategy and insufficient resources is an indictment of the conduct of this war, not its objectives. It does not mean that the campaign in Afghanistan is fruitless or that America's interests in this part of the world are unimportant.

The primary objective of American efforts in Pakistan and Afghanistan remains the elimination of the al-Qaeda-associated sanctuaries and, if possible, top leaders that support transnational terrorist operations. Originally based in Afghanistan but squeezed by allied military operations, many in this shadowy alliance have shifted to Pakistan's cities and frontier areas, beyond easy reach of the coalition. American efforts now focus on Pakistan as a launching pad for transnational terrorists and insurgents fighting in Afghanistan. But the problem runs both ways: A failed Afghanistan would become a base from which Taliban and al-Qaeda militants could work to further destabilize the surrounding region. Al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban have served as an inspiration and sometime-ally of violent extremist groups targeting resource-rich states of Central Asia.[4] More dangerously, they also have ties to the insurgents seeking to overthrow Pakistan, and the ultimate prize in that contest would be not another ridge or valley, but possibly access to the Pakistani nuclear arsenal. An unraveling, whether gradual or unexpectedly rapid, of Pakistan in the face of the Taliban insurgency could spark a cascading regional meltdown and lead to nuclear arms falling into the hands of a terrorist group that would use them against the United States or its allies. This is, to be sure, widely considered a low-

[1] This testimony draws upon John A. Nagl, "A Better War in Afghanistan," to be published in Joint Force Quarterly in November 2009. The author thanks Brian M. Burton of the Center for a New American Security for his assistance in the preparation of this testimony.

[2] This section draws upon Nathaniel C. Fick, David Kilcullen, John A. Nagl, and Vikram J. Singh, "Tell Me Why We're There? Enduring Interests in Afghanistan (and Pakistan)," Center for a New American Security Policy Brief, 22 January 2009; and John A. Nagl, "Surge In Afghanistan Can Work, With Right Resources, Enough Time," U.S. News and World Report, 23 February 2009.

[3] Ann Scott Tyson, "In Helmand, Caught Between U.S., Taliban; 'Skittish' Afghans Wary of Both Sides," The Washington Post, August 15, 2009.

[4] See Ahmed Rashid "Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia" (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001) and Ahmed Rashid, "Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia" (New York: Penguin Books, 2003).

probability event, but the security of Pakistan's nuclear weapons is hardly clear and U.S. visibility into events there is fairly low.[5]

Because these threats of terrorist sanctuary and regional instability emanate from territory shared by Pakistan and Afghanistan, Pakistan must be encouraged to confront terrorism within its borders and curtail its military's clandestine support for extremist factions. Stepping back America's commitment to the theater would be a particularly odd choice at the present time, given the recent improvement in Pakistani efforts to conduct counterinsurgency against its own radical elements and in American-Pakistani intelligence-sharing. The course of 2009 has seen dramatic changes in the Pakistani willingness to wage war against insurgents who increasingly threaten the survival of the government. In that sense, the alarming advances of Taliban-aligned forces in Pakistan during the early months of 2009 proved to be something of a blessing in disguise: The militants' attacks into heartland provinces like Swat and Buner galvanized a previously indifferent Pakistani public and military to stand up to the militants and drive them back.[6] This is momentum toward that the United States should seek to encourage while working to overcome decades of Pakistani mistrust of an America that has not been perceived as a reliable or supportive partner.

Following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in the late 1980s, the United States curtailed virtually all of its assistance to Pakistan and was perceived by a generation of Pakistani leaders as having abandoned the region. In sharp contrast to the close security relationship that prevailed for the preceding decade, Washington quickly moved to distance itself from engagement and support of Pakistan, culminating in decisions to impose sanctions and ban military-to-military exchanges with Pakistan over its nuclear weapons programs and tests. Pakistani leaders, military officers, and policy elites have not forgotten these events, and our actions ensured that U.S. policymakers lost one of our most significant sources of understanding and levers of influence over events in the region for a generation.[7] The improving but still fragile relationship of cooperation on counterterrorism and counterinsurgency would be damaged by an American pullback now: The Pakistani leadership would be further convinced that the United States cannot be relied upon and encouraged to maintain its ties to Islamist militant groups as a strategic hedge, both dangerous developments from a U.S. national security standpoint.

Preventing the return of the Taliban to control of Afghanistan, maintaining stability in Pakistan, and keeping up the pressure against al-Qaeda are objectives worthy of American effort. U.S. policymakers must, of course, weigh all strategic actions against America's global interests and possible opportunity costs. But in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the low-cost strategies do not have an encouraging track record of success since the initial success of Operation Enduring Freedom. After the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, the United States sought to limit its own involvement by working by, with, and through militia or tribal commanders to provide security and mop up the remaining al-Qaeda presence. But in many cases this approach empowered these commanders to act abusively and unaccountably, which alienated an Afghan population that had been promised a new "Marshall Plan" by the United States and thereby facilitated the Taliban's reemergence as an insurgency against the new government and international presence.[8] Drone attacks, which have been highly touted for their ability to eliminate Taliban and al-Qaeda leaders,[9] have certainly killed numerous terrorists and insurgents. But they have not prevented militant forces from making threatening advances in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. This is not to say that drone strikes or alliances of convenience with tribal and militia commanders should not have a role in the U.S. campaign, but neither should form the primary basis for our strategy going forward. The "light footprint" option has failed to secure U.S. objectives; as the Obama administration and the U.S. military leadership have recognized, it is well past time for a different approach.

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[5] See David Sanger, "Obama's Worst Pakistan Nightmare," New York Times Magazine, January 11, 2009.

[6] See Haider Ali Hussein Mullick, "Lions and Jackals: Pakistan's Emerging Counterinsurgency Strategy," Foreign Affairs (online only), July 15, 2009, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65191/haider-ali-hussein-mullick/lions-and-jackals.

[7] See, for example, Hussain Haqqani, "Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military" (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), 282–99.

[8] See Antonio Giustozzi, "Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan" (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 15–21.

[9] See Greg Miller, "U.S. Missile Strikes Said to Take Heavy Toll on Al Qaeda," Los Angeles Times, March 22, 2009.

TOWARD A "BETTER WAR" IN AFGHANISTAN

Preventing Afghanistan from again serving as a sanctuary for terrorists with global reach or serving as the catalyst for a broader regional security meltdown are the key objectives of the campaign there. Securing these objectives requires helping the Afghans to build a sustainable system of governance that can adequately ensure security for the Afghan people—the keystone upon which a successful exit strategy depends. In order to achieve this objective, the coalition and its Afghan partners must seek to build a state that reconciles some degree of centralized governance with the traditional tribal and religious power structures that hold sway outside Kabul. An internal balance between centralized and traditional power centers—not central government control everywhere—is a practical basis for assuring the country's stability, much as it was in the years prior to the Soviet invasion. Achieving these minimal goals will require more military forces, but also a much greater commitment to good governance and to providing for the needs of the Afghan people where they live. The coalition will need to use its considerable leverage to counter Afghan Government corruption at every level.

While an expanded international commitment of security and development forces can assist in the achievement of these goals in the short term, ultimately Afghans must ensure stability and security in their own country. The development of a rudimentary state, even a highly flawed one, that is able to provide a modicum of security and governance to its people is necessary to ensure that American security interests will be preserved without a major U.S. ground presence. The successful implementation of a better-resourced effort to build Iraqi security forces, after years of floundering, is now enabling the drawdown of American forces from that country as Iraqi forces increasingly take responsibility for their own security; a similar situation will be the definition of success in Afghanistan, some years from now.

The "clear, hold, and build" counterinsurgency model was relearned over several painful years in Iraq, but at present there are insufficient Afghan soldiers and police to implement that approach by holding areas that have been cleared of insurgents. As a result, American troops have had to clear the same areas repeatedly—paying a price for each operation in both American lives and in Afghan public support, which suffers from Taliban reprisals whenever we "clear and leave."

These lessons are well-understood, but the question remains whether U.S., NATO, and Afghan forces can execute them. The paucity of Afghan security forces relative to U.S. Marines involved in the summer 2009 offensive in Helmand province was troubling and indicative of a security force assistance effort that has not been taken seriously enough for much of the past 8 years.[10] After an area is cleared of insurgents, it must be held by Afghan troops supported by international advisers and combat multipliers, including artillery and air support. These operations are intended to create the conditions that facilitate Afghan central government reconciliation with traditional local power structures to establish better-secured communities that "freeze out" future Taliban infiltration. Since the additional troops we have deployed in 2009 won't be enough to secure the whole country, ISAF and Afghan commanders will have to select the most important population centers, such as Kandahar, to secure first. These "oil spots" of security will then spread over time as more Afghan forces come online and gain more competence.

Ultimately, therefore, much of the focus on the direct counterinsurgency role of U.S. forces should shift over time to a clear focus on developing Afghan security forces. More U.S. soldiers are required now to implement a "Clear, Hold, and Build" counterinsurgency strategy, but over time responsibility must transition to the Afghans to secure their own country. If the first requirement for success in a counterinsurgency campaign is the ability to secure the population, the counterinsurgent requires boots on the ground and plenty of them.

The long-term answer is a significantly expanded, and more effective, Afghan security apparatus. The preexisting numerical targets for the development of Afghan security forces are not based on the actual security requirements for the country. The current end strength targets for the Afghan National Army and National Police are 134,000 and 82,000 men, respectively—not nearly enough to provide adequate security in a war-torn country of over 30 million people with very rough terrain. The Obama administration's interagency policy review team recommended a substantial expansion of the effort to build these forces up to those prescribed end strengths, but that will not be sufficient.[11] Some argue that the inter-

[10] See Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "A Fight for Ordinary Peace," Washington Post, July 11, 2009.

[11] The White House, "White Paper of the Interagency Policy Group's Report on U.S. Strategy Toward Afghanistan and Pakistan," March 27, 2009, 3.

national community should not develop an Afghan security force larger than what that country's economy can support. Under peacetime conditions that concern would be important, but basing our security force assistance efforts on the Afghan economy rather than a realistic estimate of the numbers needed to impose a reasonable level of security is not the appropriate course of action now. The United States should initiate a greater international effort to expand the Afghan national security forces. If that means the U.S. Government and the international community has to help pay for them, that is what should be done—it will still be far cheaper than maintaining substantial numbers of American and international forces in Afghanistan for an even longer period of time to do the jobs that Afghans should do.

Building Afghan security forces will be a long-term effort that will require U.S. and international assistance and advisers for many years. Unfortunately, the advisory mission has long been treated as a low priority in practice if not in rhetoric, with advisory teams being assembled in an ad hoc fashion and provided with insufficient training and resources before deploying.[12] The Obama administration has bolstered the effort with the deployment of 4,000 additional troops to serve as advisors.[13] But it remains unclear whether the U.S. military—and our government as a whole—has truly cracked the code on effectively developing host nation security forces. It is as important to address the qualitative problems with the current security force assistance program as it is to solve the quantitative ones. Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan (CSTC–A) must be reviewed to ensure that it has the best organization and sufficient capacity to do its job. The advisory effort must have access to the most talented and experienced personnel available—not just those left over after the regular units have picked first. It must be structured in a way that incorporates best practices for security force assistance and is most suited to the specific demands of the Afghan operating environment—not simply assembled in the fashion that is most convenient for America's existing unit structure. It must focus on developing an Afghan security force that can fulfill the mission of countering the insurgency and providing a sufficient, if imperfect, level of internal security—not on mirror-imaging the force structure of a more advanced Western army dedicated to external defense. And ultimately the entire effort must be judged on the quality of its outputs—professional, competent, reliable Afghan forces—rather than simply how many armed men in uniform come out of its training centers, an approach that clearly produced poor results in the first 4 years of the Iraq war.

The United States and ISAF also need to get smarter about the way they engage Afghan communities at the local level. Insurgencies can be won or lost at the local level because securing the support of the population requires understanding the specific issues that cause it to sympathize with one side or another. Additionally, insurgencies are rarely monolithic: they comprise numerous local factions and individuals fighting for personal gain, revenge against real or perceived slights, tribal loyalties, or other reasons that may have little to do with the insurgency's professed cause. The Afghan insurgency is no different in this regard.[14] The Taliban is an amalgam of local fighters and mercenary and criminal elements around a hard core of committed jihadists; according to one detailed study, approximately 40–50 percent of the insurgency is made up of "local allies" fighting for tribal causes or opportunism.[15]

Based on such analyses, U.S. commanders are interested in trying to "flip" less ideological factions and promoting the development of local self-defense militias to encourage the Afghan tribes to defend against Taliban infiltration.[16] Exploiting divisions within an insurgency paid dividends in Iraq, where the emergence of Anbar Awakening and Sons of Iraq played a major role in crippling al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and dramatically reducing violence. Again, this is a simple concept that is much harder in practice. Thus far, the insurgency has proven less susceptible to cooptation than its fragmented nature might suggest, partly because U.S. overtures have been limited and partly because the Taliban still holds a level of legitimacy in certain parts of the country. Even in the case of Iraq, the more secular insurgents did not turn against the extremists until they were sufficiently alienated by AQI's

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[12] See Captain Daniel Helmer, "Twelve Urgent Steps for the Advisor Mission in Afghanistan," Military Review, July/August 2008, 73–81.

[13] The White House, "Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan," transcript, March 27, 2009, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the__press__office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-a-New-Strategy-for-Afghanistan-and-Pakistan/.

[14] See Ganesh Sitaraman, "The Land of 10,000 Wars," The New York Times, 16 August 2009.

[15] Antonio Giustozzi, "Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop," 42–43.

[16] See Fontini Christia and Michael Semple, "Flipping the Taliban," Foreign Affairs, July/August 2009.

brutal tactics and disregard for local customs.[17] The Taliban's leadership may not make the same mistakes.

This experience suggests that emphasizing tribal engagement or "flipping" less committed insurgents is not a panacea that will enable the United States to achieve a modicum of security in Afghanistan on the cheap. Local communities are unlikely to turn in favor of ISAF and the Afghan Government until these entities demonstrate that they are fully willing and able to drive out the insurgents and provide some level of lasting security and competent (read: Less corrupt) governance. They won't resist the Taliban or help the security forces as long as the insurgency appears to hold the upper hand while the government remains weak at best and abusive at worst. Seizing the initiative from the Taliban and reestablishing the political order's legitimacy requires securing the population and developing a sophisticated, nuanced understanding of local communities, particularly the conflicts within them that insurgents can exploit to their own ends. Simply targeting militant leaders and foot soldiers and then leaving won't solve the problem, because local populations know that the insurgents will just go underground to avoid U.S. strikes and then reemerge to take vengeance on those who collaborate with the government once the security forces move on. Security forces that just pass through on sweeps and raids will not gain the local knowledge necessary to understand the particular drivers of the insurgency within the community nor the ability to identify when that community is being infiltrated by outside militants. Attempts to reassert central government authority without a clear grasp of local power structures and relationships will only engender more popular resentment against Kabul that plays directly into the hands of the Taliban. In short, until the Afghan Government, the United States, and ISAF get their approach to local communities right, those communities will not decisively turn against the insurgency. That means, of course, that while developing anti-Taliban tribal militias and coopting nonextremist elements of the insurgency will be aspects of the new Afghanistan strategy, they cannot be its primary components.

Cultivating a limited Afghan state apparatus that is legitimate in the eyes of its citizens and works with, rather than against, local communities is a more important element of the American approach to Afghanistan. Since 2001, presented with an Afghan central government whose presence at the local level has often been either absent, incompetent, or corrupt, the international community has turned increasingly toward nongovernmental organizations for the delivery of services. Yet this approach rarely strengthens the perceived legitimacy of the government in the very communities whose loyalty to the government is being contested. A renewed U.S. commitment to funding grassroots development and governance in Afghanistan must accompany the influx of troops. The Afghan Government's National Solidarity Program (NSP) and other programs like it deserve much more American support.[18] The NSP has become one of the government's most successful rural development projects. Under the program, the Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) disburses modest grants to village-level elected organizations called Community Development Councils (CDCs), which in turn identify local priorities and implement small-scale development projects. A limited number of domestic and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) then assist the CDCs. Once a CDC agrees on a venture, $200 per family (with a ceiling of $60,000 per village) is distributed for project execution. Afghans contribute 10 percent of project costs through cash, labor, or other means.

Under this model, the NSP has built schools for thousands of children, constructed village water pumps that save many hours of labor, and assembled irrigation networks that have enabled far higher agricultural yields. More than 12,000 village development councils have been elected, more than 19,000 project plans have been approved, and nearly half of these projects have already been completed. The NSP is the only government program functioning in all 34 provinces, and it has affected nearly two-thirds of Afghanistan's rural population. Moreover, women—whose inclusion is a mandatory component of the program—constitute 35 percent of the elected CDC representatives.

The NSP provides one example of how to establish positive links between the Afghan people and the government in Kabul, and there are undoubtedly other models that might offer success stories of their own. The point is that the insurgency

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[17] See John A. McCary, "The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives," The Washington Quarterly, January 2009, 43–59; David Kilcullen ,"The Accidental Guerrilla," (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 158–76.

[18] This discussion of the NSP draws upon John Nagl, Andrew Exum, and Ahmed A. Humayun, "A Pathway to Success in Afghanistan: The National Solidarity Program," Center for a New American Security Policy Brief, 16 March 2009.

and the international security threat it represents will not be defeated simply with armed force, drone strikes, and alliances of convenience with certain factions, although all of those things will play a part. It will ultimately be defeated when the Afghan people see tangible evidence that a non-Taliban political order that really can offer them a modicum of security and governance.

CONCLUSION: LEARNING FROM OUR MISTAKES

The United States played a role in creating the Taliban and al-Qaeda: They grew and thrived amidst the chaos that followed the Soviet withdrawal and subsequent international neglect. Saint Augustine taught that "the purpose of war is to build a better peace," but America built nothing in Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal, and the Taliban filled the vacuum that its inaction allowed. Afghanistan became the viper's nest in which al-Qaeda grew, and the United States paid a price for its inattention and strategic neglect of the region.

After the success of a lightning campaign that overthrew the Taliban and chased al-Qaeda out of Afghanistan, American policy toward the country returned to one of benign neglect. Too few soldiers to secure the population, too little development assistance poorly coordinated, and too little attention to the Pakistan side of the Durand Line allowed the Taliban to regroup, gain strength, and return to threaten the young Afghan Government that we created but did not adequately support, particularly in the development of an Afghan Army large enough to secure itself from its (and our) enemies.

The objectives of American policy in Afghanistan are clear, although they have not been articulated as clearly as they should have. Over the next 5 years, we want to create an Afghanistan from which al-Qaeda has been displaced and from which it continues to suffer disruptive attacks. The Government of Afghanistan should be able, with minimal external help, to secure itself from internal threats like the Taliban or the return of al-Qaeda; it should have the support of its people, earned through the provision of a reasonable level of government services (particularly security and an improving economy) and reduced corruption, and be determined to never again provide a safe haven for terror.

The question now is not how to achieve our goals in Afghanistan and Pakistan—we know the answer to that question. The only remaining question is whether America has the will to do what is necessary, or whether we are again determined to abandon this supposedly "unimportant" region of the world in the hope that this time it won't blow up in our face.

Senator MENENDEZ. Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Senator MENENDEZ. Mr. Chairman——

The CHAIRMAN. Senator.

Senator MENENDEZ [continuing]. If I may. Mr. Chairman, unfortunately I have to go to the State Department, and, between votes and everything, I don't know if I'll get back for the hearing, so, I'd ask unanimous consent to include my opening statement in the record, expressing my alarm at the escalation that is proposed, as well as our focus of our policy initiatives.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection, that will be made part of the record. And I think the people listening at the State Department heard you say "unfortunately you have to go down there," so——

[Laughter.]

[The prepared statement of Senator Menendez follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ, U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY

Thank you, Chairman Kerry, for this important hearing, and I would like to thank all the witnesses for coming here today to discuss this important topic. I believe Afghanistan is a critical issue in our overall foreign policy and that our ability to work with the international community to successfully achieve sustainable stability in both Afghanistan and Pakistan will be a key component to the success of our overall foreign policy in the Middle East and our broader efforts against terrorism.

I want to express my alarm with the prospect of a significant buildup of U.S. forces in Afghanistan without a clear strategy and metrics for success. I think we

need to have a clear sense of what we intend to accomplish, how we intend to accomplish it, and when we will know if we have in fact accomplished it.

Thank you, Chairman Kerry, for your attention to this issue and I look forward to working with all the members of the committee on this moving forward.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Biddle.

STATEMENT OF STEPHEN BIDDLE, SENIOR FELLOW FOR DEFENSE POLICY, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS, WASHINGTON, DC

Dr. BIDDLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd also like to thank the committee for this opportunity to speak with you on an issue that's obviously of vital national importance.

There are many important questions before the Nation with respect to Afghanistan. Maybe the most important of them is also the most fundamental of them: Is the war worth waging? The written testimony that is submitted to the record provides my answer in more detail, but my bottom line from the statement, is that I think the case for waging war in Afghanistan is a very close call on the merits. I think the war is neither the obvious necessity that many of its strongest proponents argue, nor the clear loser that some war opponents see it to be. I think this conflict engages important, but indirect, U.S. interests, and I think failure is not predetermined. On the other hand, it'll clearly be a very costly war to wage; and, while failure isn't guaranteed, neither is success; and the result of that, I think, is a war that isn't an open-and-shut case, on analytic grounds, either for or against. The case for war, as a result, in this instance, turns on a value judgment about excepting cost and risk.

For me, this balance of cost and risk suggest a close call, but a war worth waging. Reasonable people, though, are going to differ on close calls of this kind. And I think, in many ways, the most important conclusion that analysis can offer is that what we face here is inevitably a hard choice between unattractive alternatives on either side that, at the end of the day, turns on issues that cannot completely be resolved by analysis alone. There is no easy way out of Afghanistan, either way, in 2009.

With the remainder of my time, having summarized where I come out, I want to pick up one particularly important aspect of the problem, though, and that's the issue of the interests we have at stake in the conflict.

There are many things to which we aspire for Afghanistan, as we would for any country in the international system. We would like Afghanistan to be ruled in accordance with the will of the governed. We would like Afghanistan to respect the rights of minorities and women. We would like Afghanistan's children to be educated and its people to be prosperous. Normally speaking, we pursue these objectives through means other than the waging of war.

When it comes to pursuing U.S. interests abroad that warrant the waging of war, there is typically a much narrower subset of the things we hope for, for a country, that are considered pertinent. And I think, with respect to Afghanistan, those are largely twofold: First, that the country not be a base for striking the United States or our allies in the West; and second, that the country not be a base for destabilizing its neighbors, and especially Pakistan.

Of these two interests, the first is the more talked about, and, I believe, the second is the more important. Afghanistan obviously can be a base for striking the United States. It was in 2001, it could be again; but, so can many other places. So could Yemen. So could Somalia. So could Djibouti. So could potentially dozens of ill-governed spaces in South Asia, the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, or even Latin America. If we are going to adopt a systematic strategy of deploying multiple brigades of American combat forces to deny al-Qaeda potential havens, we are going to run out of brigades a long time before al-Qaeda runs out of havens. This is an important concern, but it's not one that, in my view, constitutes a particularly strong argument for waging war in Afghanistan.

But, while Afghanistan is not unique as a base for striking the United States, it is unique as a basis for destabilizing the region, and especially Pakistan, where it is located precisely across the Durand Line. Pakistan is a clear vital national security interest of the United States, for reasons that I don't need to articulate to this committee. Moreover, Pakistan, an actual ongoing nuclear weapons state, is in the midst of an active insurgency against a collection of heterogeneous insurgent groups, some of which are closely aligned with the Quetta Shura Taliban and other factions that we're fighting in Afghanistan. Should we fail in the undertaking in Afghanistan, we run the risk of creating a substantial base for a variety of insurgent groups whose relationships with one another are complex, but potentially dangerous, to destabilize a Pakistani state, whose security is vital to the United States.

Note, however, that the more important of these two interests is, thus, an indirect U.S. interest. What we care about most is Pakistan. Our ability to directly influence what happens in Pakistan, however, has important limits on it. We cannot deploy 60,000 American soldiers to Pakistan to assist them in a counterinsurgency campaign. We are politically radioactive in Pakistan. Our ability to affect events directly there has very important limits on it. Our aid can be redirected in ways that we wouldn't like. Our influence is very partial.

In a situation in which we see a country whose future is terribly important to the United States, but whose fate we have a very limited ability to deal with and affect directly, perhaps the best strategy for us is to invoke the Hippocratic Oath, and at least do no harm. And it seems to me that one important way in which we could do harm for the prospects for stability in Pakistan is by failing in our undertaking in Afghanistan and allowing chaos, or a potential Taliban version 2.0 regime in Kabul, to be a source of instability for an already dangerous and difficult situation on the other side of the Durand Line.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Biddle follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. STEPHEN BIDDLE, SENIOR FELLOW FOR DEFENSE POLICY, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS, WASHINGTON, DC

The war in Afghanistan had been nearly invisible to the public since 2001–02, but this is rapidly changing. In the process, basic questions have reemerged in a very different light than they assumed when this war began. What was once the "good war" to defeat a clear and present danger from a state that harbored al-Qaeda has now become a much more ambiguous struggle to preserve a deeply flawed successor

government from an insurgency allied with, but separate from, an al-Qaeda that is now based across the border in Pakistan. Is this more complex conflict still worth waging?

The answer is a close call on the merits. The debate often treats Afghanistan in absolutes: It is either a graveyard of empires in which no outsider can succeed and a country where we have no meaningful interests at stake; or it is a war where victory can be assured if we show sufficient resolve and where only success can avert a direct threat of attack on the American homeland. In fact it is a harder call. This war is neither the obvious necessity that its strongest supporters claim, nor the clear loser that its opponents typically see. The war engages important, but indirect, U.S. interests. It will be expensive to wage properly, will require many years to resolve, and might ultimately fail even if waged vigorously, but failure is not guaranteed and the United States enjoys advantages that other outsiders in Afghanistan have not.

Most defense decisions are ultimately value judgments on how much risk we find tolerable and what price we are willing to pay to reduce a risk. The war in Afghanistan poses this problem more starkly than most given the scale of the costs and risks on both sides of the ledger here. Analysis can illuminate the costs and identify the risks, but especially in close calls it cannot predetermine value judgments on how much cost to bear and how much risk to accept. What the analysis shows here is that this ledger is close enough for reasonable people to differ. For me, the balance of cost and risk suggests a war that is worth waging, but only barely. What is clearest, however, is that neither the case for the war nor the case against it is beyond challenge or without important counterarguments.

I present this argument in four parts: The interests at stake; the war's likely costs; the prospects for success in securing the interests if the costs are borne; and finally an assessment of the overall balance of cost and risk in light of this.

U.S. INTERESTS AT STAKE IN AFGHANISTAN

The United States has many aspirations for Afghanistan, as we would for any country. Americans would like Afghanistan to be ruled in accordance with the will of the governed; we would like to see minority and women's rights respected; we would like to see its youth educated and its people prosperous. But while we surely wish these things for any state, we do not ordinarily wage war to bring them about. The U.S. national security interests that might warrant war to achieve here are much narrower.

In fact, they are essentially twofold: That Afghanistan not become a base for terrorism against the United States, and that chaos in Afghanistan not destabilize its neighbors, especially Pakistan. Neither of these two primary security interests can be dismissed, but both have limits as casus belli.

The first interest is the most discussed—and the weakest argument for waging war. The United States invaded Afghanistan in the first place to destroy the al-Qaeda safe haven there, and Afghanistan's role in the 9/11 attacks clearly justified this. But al-Qaeda central is no longer based in Afghanistan, nor has it been since early 2002. Bin Laden and his core operation are, by all accounts, now based across the border in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The Taliban movement in Afghanistan is clearly linked with al-Qaeda and sympathetic to it, but there is little evidence of al-Qaeda infrastructure within Afghanistan today that could threaten the U.S. homeland in any direct way. If today's Afghan Government collapsed, if it were replaced with a neo-Taliban regime, or if the Taliban were able to secure real political control over some major contiguous fraction of Afghan territory then perhaps al-Qaeda could reestablish a real haven there.

But this risk is shared with a wide range of other weak states in many parts of the world, from Yemen to Somalia to Djibouti to Eritrea to Sudan to the Philippines or even parts of Latin America or Central, West, or North Africa, among other possibilities. And of course Iraq and Pakistan fit the description of weak states whose failure could provide havens for al-Qaeda. Many of these—and especially Iraq and Pakistan—offer bin Laden prospects superior in important ways to Afghanistan's. Iraq and Pakistan, for example, are richer and far better connected to the outside world than is primitive, land-locked Afghanistan with its minimal communications and transportation systems. Iraq is an Arab state in the very heart of the Middle East. Pakistan, of course, is a nuclear power. Afghanistan does enjoy a historical connection with al-Qaeda, familiarity to bin Laden, and proximity to his current base in the FATA, and it is important to deny al-Qaeda sanctuary on the Afghan side of the Durand Line. But its intrinsic importance is no greater than many other potential havens—and probably smaller than many. We clearly cannot afford to wage protracted warfare with multiple brigades of American ground forces simply

to deny al-Qaeda potential safe havens; we would run out of brigades long before bin Laden ran out of prospective sanctuaries.

The more important U.S. interest in Afghanistan is indirect: To prevent Afghan chaos from destabilizing its Pakistani neighbor. With a population of 173 million (five times Afghanistan's), a GDP of over $160 billion (over 10 times Afghanistan's) and an actual, existing, functional nuclear arsenal of perhaps 20–50 warheads, Pakistan is a much more dangerous prospective state sanctuary for al-Qaeda, and one where the likelihood of government collapse enabling such a sanctuary may be in the same ballpark as Afghanistan, at least in the medium to long term. Pakistan is already at war with internal Islamist insurgents allied to al-Qaeda, and by most measures that war is not going well. Should the Pakistani insurgency succeed in collapsing the state or toppling the government, the risk of nuclear weapons falling into al-Qaeda's hands would be grave indeed. In fact, given the difficulties terrorists face in acquiring usable nuclear weapons, Pakistani state collapse is the likeliest scenario for a nuclear-armed al-Qaeda.

Pakistani state collapse, moreover, is a danger over which the United States has limited influence. The United States is now so unpopular in Pakistan that we have no meaningful prospect of deploying major ground forces there to assist the government in counterinsurgency. U.S. air strikes can harass insurgents and terrorists within Pakistan, but the inevitable collateral damage arouses harsh public opposition that could itself threaten the weak government's stability. U.S. aid is easily—and routinely—diverted to purposes remote from countering Islamist insurgents, such as the maintenance of military counterweights to India, graft and patronage, or even support for Islamist groups seen by Pakistani authorities as potential allies against their Indian neighbor. U.S. assistance can—and should—be made conditional on progress in countering insurgents, but harsh conditionality can induce rejection of the terms, and the aid, by the Pakistanis, removing U.S. leverage in the process. The net result is a major threat over which Americans have very limited influence.

If the United States has few ways to make Pakistan any better, the best policy may be to invoke the Hippocratic Oath: at least do no harm. With so little actual leverage, the United States cannot afford to make the problem any worse than it already is. And failure in Afghanistan would make the problem in Pakistan much harder.

The Taliban are a transnational Pashtun movement that is active on either side of the Durand Line and sympathetic to other Pakistani Islamist insurgents. Their presence within Pakistan is thus already an important threat to the regime in Islamabad. But if the Taliban regained control of the Afghan state or even a major fraction of it, their ability to use even a poor state's resources as a base to destabilize secular government in Pakistan would enable a major increase in the risk of state collapse there. Much has been made of the threat Pakistani base camps pose to Afghan Government stability, but this danger works both ways: Instability in Afghanistan poses a serious threat to secular civilian government in Pakistan. And this is the single greatest stake the United States has in Afghanistan: To prevent it from aggravating Pakistan's internal problems and magnifying the danger of an al-Qaeda nuclear sanctuary there.

These stakes are thus important. But they do not merit infinite cost to secure. Afghanistan is just one of many possible al-Qaeda sanctuaries. And Afghanistan's influence over Pakistan's future is important, but incomplete and indirect. A Taliban Afghanistan is a real possibility in the long run absent U.S. action, and makes Pakistani collapse more likely, but it does not guarantee it. Nor would success in Afghanistan guarantee success in Pakistan: There is a chance that we could struggle our way to stability in Afghanistan at great cost and sacrifice only to see Pakistan collapse anyway under the weight of its own errors and internal divisions.

THE COST

What will it cost to defeat the Taliban? No one really knows; war is an uncertain business. But it is very hard to succeed at counterinsurgency (COIN) on the cheap. Current U.S. Army doctrine is very clear on this:

> [M]aintaining security in an unstable environment requires vast resources, whether host nation, U.S., or multinational. In contrast, a small number of highly motivated insurgents with simple weapons, good operations security, and even limited mobility can undermine security over a large area. Thus, successful COIN operations often require a high ratio of security forces to the protected population. For that reason, protracted COIN operations are hard to sustain. The effort requires a firm political

will and substantial patience by the government, its people, and the countries providing support.[1]

Insurgencies are protracted by nature. Thus, COIN operations always demand considerable expenditures of time and resources.[2]

A proper analysis of troop requirements for Afghanistan is a more complex undertaking than can be provided here; GEN McChrystal's staff is now producing such an assessment. But it is safe to say that most counterinsurgency theorists see COIN as an extremely labor-intensive form of warfare. In fact, the doctrinal norm for troop requirements in COIN is around 1 security provider per 50 civilians in the population to be secured.[3] If one simply applies the doctrinal rule of thumb to Afghanistan, a state of roughly 32 million people, this crude yardstick would imply a need for perhaps 640,000 trained soldiers and police. Many argue that the doctrinal density need not be maintained across the entire country; it is widely believed, for example, that the north and west of the country are safer than the south and east. And of course a sound estimate of resource needs would require a much more discriminating mapping of troop needs to specific tasks in specific places. But it is clear that COIN in a country the size of Afghanistan can be very demanding of resources. Ideally most of these security forces would be indigenous Afghans rather than foreign troops. But some will clearly have to be Americans and other foreigners. And the commitment could be very long: Successful counterinsurgency campaigns commonly last 10 to 15 years or more.[4]

At least initially, the casualties to be expected from such an effort would also be heavy. In Iraq, a force of 130,000–160,000 U.S. troops averaged over 90 fatalities per month during the most intense period of COIN operations in January to August of 2007. Depending on the troop strength ultimately deployed and the intensity of the fighting, it is not implausible to suppose that casualty rates in Afghanistan could approach such levels. And it may well take longer for those losses to reverse and decline in Afghanistan than in Iraq; it would be prudent to assume that fatality rates in excess of 50 per month could persist for many months, if not years.[5]

THE ODDS OF SUCCESS

The aggregate historical record of great power success in COIN is not encouraging. The political scientists, Jason Lyall of Princeton and Isaiah Wilson of West Point, estimate that since 1975, the success rate of all government counterinsurgents has been just 25 percent.[6] Given the costs of trying, this average offers a sobering context.

Nor are current conditions in Afghanistan encouraging. Orthodox COIN theory puts host government legitimacy at the heart of success and failure, yet the Karzai government is widely seen as corrupt, inept, inefficient, and en route to losing the support of its population. The recent election's results are not yet clear, but widely reported electoral fraud could easily reduce Karzai's perceived legitimacy if he is ultimately declared the winner of a disputed contest. Economic and political development prospects are constrained by Afghanistan's forbidding geography, tribal social structure, lack of infrastructure, and political history. The Taliban enjoy a cross-border sanctuary in the FATA that the Pakistani Government seems unwilling or unable to eliminate. Violence is up, perceptions of security are down, casualties are increasing, and the Taliban is widely believed to be increasing its freedom of movement and access to the population. And only some of these challenges are things Americans can affect directly: The United States can increase security by de-

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[1] "The U.S. Army-Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual" (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), (republication of: Headquarters, Department of the Army, "FM 3–24: Counterinsurgency"), p. 4.

[2] Ibid., p. 43.

[3] Ibid., p. 23.

[4] Seth Jones, "Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan," (Washington, DC: RAND, 2008), p. 10.

[5] The financial costs are also likely to be large. The Congressional Research Service estimates that the war in Afghanistan cost $34 billion in FY 2008, and projects that this figure will increase in coming years: Amy Belasco, "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan and other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11" (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, October 15, 2008), RL33110, pp. 6, 19.

[6] Jason Lyall and Isaiah Wilson, "Rage Against the Machines: Explaining Outcomes in Counterinsurgency Wars," International Organization, Vol. 63, No. 1 (Winter 2009), pp. 67–106 at 69–71. For all counterinsurgencies since 1900, they find a government success rate of 40 percent; hence the odds have been getting worse over time. See also Ivan Arreguin-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict," International Security, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 93–128, and Arreguin-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict," (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), which finds "strong actors" winning only 45 of 100 asymmetric conflicts between 1950 and 1998: p. 97.

ploying more U.S. troops, it can bolster the economy to a degree with U.S. economic aid, and it can pressure Karzai to reform, but only the Afghans can create a legitimate government, and only the Pakistanis can shut down the safe havens in the FATA. Americans can influence these choices to a much greater degree than we have so far. But the United States cannot itself guarantee Afghan reform, and to date neither ally seems ready to do what it takes.

But this does not make failure inevitable. The poor track record for COIN overall is due partly to the inherent difficulty of the undertaking, but most analysts also believe that many counterinsurgents have made poor strategic choices, and that these poor choices have been major contributors to failure. Strategies and methods can be changed—it is possible to learn from experience. And the U.S. military has learned a great deal about COIN in recent years.

The new Army/Marine counterinsurgency doctrine, for example, is the product of a nearly unprecedented degree of internal debate, external vetting, historical analysis, and direct recent combat experience.[7] None of this makes it a magic silver bullet for COIN success, and in important ways it makes underlying assumptions about the nature of counterinsurgency that made it an awkward fit for conditions in Iraq.[8] But those same assumptions make it a much stronger fit for Afghanistan, which is precisely the kind of war the manual was built around. And there is some, albeit preliminary, empirical evidence to suggest that the new doctrine's emphasis on population security as opposed to insurgent attrition has been substantially more successful historically than more-violent, attrition-oriented strategies: Andrew Enterline and Joseph Magagnoli, for example, estimate that since World War II, COIN strategies emphasizing population security over insurgent attrition have succeeded almost 70 percent of the time.[9]

One of the doctrine's remaining shortcomings, moreover, is a problem the Obama administration seems likely to address. The published doctrine assumes a very close alignment of interests between the United States and its host government: The manual assumes that the U.S. role is to enable the host to realize its own best interest by making itself into a legitimate defender of all its citizens' well-being, and that the host will see it this way, too.[10] In many ways, the Bush administration shared this view, offering assistance with few conditions or strings on the assumption that developing its allies' capacity for good governance was all that would be needed to realize better performance. In fact, though, many allies—notably including Hamid Karzai and Pervez Musharraf, have had much more complex interests that have led them to misdirect U.S. aid and fall far short of U.S. hopes for their popular legitimacy. Some students of counterinsurgency have thus emphasized the need for conditionality in outside assistance to reduce this problem of moral hazard: The U.S. should not assume that allies share all its interests, and Americans should impose conditions, and combine carrots with sticks in order to push reluctant hosts toward behavior that could better realize U.S. interests in their broader legitimacy and thereby damp insurgencies.[11] The Obama administration has made it very clear that they intend to combine bigger carrots with real sticks in the form of prospective aid withdrawals should the recipients fail to adopt needed reforms. This is an important step forward in competing for hearts and minds via effective host governance.

The U.S. military forces that implement this doctrine are also much improved over their ancestors in Vietnam, or even their immediate predecessors in Iraq in 2003–2004—and they are vastly superior in training, equipment, and doctrine to the Soviet military that failed in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Soviet methods in the 1980s made lavish use of indiscriminate firepower that created enemies much faster than it killed insurgents. Soviet troops, moreover, were so poorly trained and motivated

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[7] On the vetting and development process, see "U.S. Army-Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual," pp. xlvii-xlviii.

[8] In particular, the doctrine presumes an ideological struggle for the allegiance of an uncommitted public, rather than a highly mobilized ethnosectarian war of identity, as Iraq has been: for details, see Jeffrey Isaac, editor, "The New U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual as Political Science and Political Praxis," Perspectives on Politics, Vol. 6, No. 2 (June 2008), pp. 347–50 at 349–50.

[9] See Andrew Enterline and Joseph Magagnoli, "Is the Chance of Success in Afghanistan Better Than a Coin Toss?" Foreignpolicy.com [accessed on August 27, 2009 at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/08/27/is__the__chance__of__success__in__afghanistan__better__than__a__coin__toss].

[10] See, for example, "U.S. Army-Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual," pp. 7–8, 25, 35, 37–39, 47 (e.g., paragraph 1–147: "Support the Host Nation").

[11] For a more extensive discussion, see, esp., Daniel Byman, "Friends Like These: Counterinsurgency and the War on Terrorism," International Security, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Fall 2006), pp. 79–115.

that their commanders were often forced to use elite commando units to carry out routine missions; regular Soviet infantry often could not be relied upon to do much more than passive garrison duty. And Soviet equipment was almost entirely designed for major warfare against NATO in central Europe—the Soviets never made a systematic decision to reequip for counterinsurgency.[12] By contrast, the U.S. military of 2009 has adapted into an unusually proficient counterinsurgency force. It did not begin the war this way, but hard experience in Iraq, coupled with an almost preclusive training emphasis on COIN since the early years of the Iraq war, a new doctrine with a heavy focus on the population-defense methods that have proven most effective historically, and systematic reequipment with new mine-resistant armored vehicles and other ground-force equipment designed for counter-insurgency has produced a vastly more effective military for this mission than the Soviets ever fielded.

Perhaps most important, the United States is blessed with deeply flawed enemies in Afghanistan. Afghans know the Taliban; they know what life was like under their rule. And polling has consistently suggested that few Afghans want to return to the medieval theocracy they endured before. Most Afghans want education for their daughters; they want access to media and ideas from abroad; they want freedom from thugs enforcing fundamentalism for all under the aegis of a Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. Of course, these preferences are secondary to the need for security. And many are secondary to the desire for basic services such as courts free of corruption or police who enforce the laws without demanding bribes first. But because most Afghans oppose Taliban rule, the United States and its allies enjoy a strong presumption in favor of the Afghan Government as long as that government can be made to provide at least basic services competently. The Taliban face an inherently uphill battle to secure compliance with their policies that even a modestly proficient government does not. And in a struggle for hearts and minds this is an important advantage.

The Taliban, moreover, are far from a unified opposition group. In fact, to refer to the opposition in Afghanistan via a singular noun is in many ways a misnomer. By contrast with the Viet Cong of 1964, for example, where a common ideology bound the leadership together and linked it to its fighters, the neo-Taliban of 2009 are a much looser, much more heterogeneous, much more divided coalition of often fractious and very independent actors. There is a hard core of committed Islamist ideologues, centered on Mullah Omar and based in Quetta. But by all accounts much of the Taliban's actual combat strength is provided by an array of warlords and other factions with often much more secular motivations, who side with the Taliban for reasons of profit, prestige, or convenience, and who may or may not follow orders from the Quetta Shura leadership. Americans often lament the challenges to unity of effort that flow from a divided NATO command structure, but the Taliban face difficulties on this score at least as severe and potentially much worse: No NATO member is going to change sides and fight for the Taliban, but the Taliban need to be constantly alert lest one or more of their component factions leave the alliance for the government side. And this makes it difficult for the Taliban to mount large-scale, coordinated offensives of the kind that would be needed to conquer a defended city, for example—such efforts would be hard for any one faction or any one commander to accomplish without closely coordinated assistance from others, yet such coordination can be hard to achieve in such a decentralized, factionalized leadership structure.

The Taliban also face major constraints in extending their influence beyond their ethnic base in southern and eastern Afghanistan. The Taliban is an overwhelmingly Pashtun movement. Yet Pashtuns make up less than 45 percent of Afghanistan's population overall, and constitute only a small fraction of the population outside the south and east. Afghanistan is not primarily an ethnosectarian war of identity, as Iraq has been—most Taliban are Pashtuns, but most Pashtuns are not Taliban (in fact the government is itself headed by a Pashtun in President Hamid Karzai). Afghanistan is a war fought over the Taliban's ideology for governing, not the hope for a Pashtun government. But whereas the government has members from many ethnic groups and a presumptive claim to the loyalty of all citizens, the Taliban has a much more exclusivist identity and is especially unpopular and unwelcome outside its geographic ethnic base. This in turn will make it harder for them to conquer the north and west of the country, and acts as a limiter on their expansion in the near term. This is not to say that the north or west of Afghanistan are permanently or inherently secure; on the contrary, recent trends there are worrisome, and even

[12] On Soviet methods in Afghanistan, see, e.g., Lester Grau, "The Bear Went over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan" (New York: Routledge, 1998), 2nd ed.; Gregory Feifer, "The Great Gamble: The Soviet War in Afghanistan" (New York: HarperCollins, 2009).

these parts of the country will eventually require attention to stabilize. But the Taliban's Pashtun ethnic identity makes it harder for them to expand out of the south and east, and this in turn buys time and reduces resource requirements for effective counterinsurgency nationally. (It is worth noting that even in their first rule, the Taliban never completely secured the north—it was the unconquered "Northern Alliance's" hold over contiguous territory in that part of Afghanistan that provided allies, a base, and a jumpoff point for the American Special Forces who teamed with them to topple the Taliban in 2001.)

Finally, by all accounts the enemy in Afghanistan today is much less numerous than that faced by the Soviets, for example, in the late 1980s. Intelligence estimates on insurgents' order of battle are always imprecise and uncertain. But most sources suggest that the Mujaheddin opposing the Soviets by the late 1980s numbered around 150,000 armed combatants.[13] After 1986, these guerillas were also equipped with increasingly sophisticated Western-supplied arms, and especially shoulder-fired precision guided antiaircraft missiles. By contrast, the Taliban today are usually assessed at a strength of 20–40,000 fighters, of whom only around one-fourth are full-time combatants, and who have to date deployed little or no precision weaponry.[14] The size of the insurgent force is not necessarily the most important variable in COIN, but against the commonplace assumption that the Soviet experience will be America's fate in Afghanistan, we must keep in mind that the situation the United States faces is less dire in important respects—including the strength of the insurgent enemy.

ASSESSMENT

Withdrawal advocates certainly have a case. The stakes are not unlimited. The costs of pursuing them are high. And there is no guarantee that even a high-cost pursuit of COIN in Afghanistan will succeed given the inherent difficulties of the undertaking and the particular challenges of this theater in 2009.

But while success is not guaranteed, neither is failure. Some governments succeed in COIN, and the familiar comparisons of today with the Soviets in Afghanistan or the United States in Vietnam pit apples against oranges: In 2009, the U.S. military is much more proficient, and the Taliban insurgency much less so, than their forebears. Great powers do not always fail in COIN; the United States is an unusually experienced counterinsurgent force today; the Taliban have serious problems of their own; and astute strategic choices can make an important difference. This combination gives the United States an important possibility for successful counterinsurgency.

Moreover, U.S. withdrawal poses important risks, too—and especially, it could easily cause an Afghan Government collapse with potentially serious consequences for U.S. security. The Taliban's weaknesses make it hard for them to overthrow a U.S.-supported government while large Western military forces defend it. But without those Western troops, the Afghan state would offer a much easier target. Even with over 50,000 Western troops in its defense, the Karzai government has proven unable to contain Taliban influence and prevent insurgents from expanding their presence; if abandoned to its fate the government would surely fare much worse. Nor would an orphaned Karzai regime be in any position to negotiate a compromise settlement that could deny the Taliban full control: With outright victory within their grasp, it is hard to see why the Taliban would settle for anything less than a complete restoration.

A Taliban restoration would put the resources of a state at their disposal. Even the resources of a weak state would enable a major increase in funding, freedom of operation, training opportunities, planning capacity, recruitment potential, and military staging, refitting, reconstitution and resupply for cross-border operations. The result could afford al-Qaeda with an improved sanctuary for attacking the United States. But even if it did not, it would almost certainly afford Pashtun militants and their allies in Pakistan with a massive sanctuary for destabilizing the regime in Islamabad, and thereby create a major increase in the threat to the Pakistani Government and the security of its nuclear arsenal. Even without a state haven in Afghanistan, Pakistani insurgents might ultimately topple the government in Islamabad, but with the additional resources of an openly sympathetic state across the Durand Line this threat is even more dangerous. And this threat con-

[13] See, e.g., Olivier Roy, "Islam and the Resistance in Afghanistan" (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 171, 176.

[14] For estimates of Taliban combatant strength, see David Kilcullen, "The Accidental Guerilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One" (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 48–49; Antonio Giustozzi, "Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan" (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), pp. 33, 35, 68.

stitutes one of the few really plausible pathways by which al-Qaeda could obtain a useable nuclear weapon.

This danger is real, but it is not unlimited and should not be exaggerated. For a U.S. withdrawal to result in a nuclear al-Qaeda would require a chain of multiple intervening events: A Taliban restoration in Kabul, collapse of secular government in Islamabad, and loss of control over the Pakistani nuclear arsenal (or deliberate transfer of weapons by sympathetic Pakistanis). None of these events are certainties, and the compound probability is inherently lower than the odds of any one step taken alone. Though these odds are hard to estimate, analysts such as John Mueller make a persuasive case that terrorists are more likely to fail in their efforts to obtain nuclear weapons than they are to succeed, and the series of setbacks needed for a U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan to yield a useable al-Qaeda nuclear capability probably implies a compound likelihood that is low in absolute terms.[15]

But U.S. withdrawal increases all the probabilities at each stage. And the consequences for U.S. security if the chain does play itself out are very severe. Unlike the Soviet Union in the cold war (or even contemporary states such as Iran), al-Qaeda may be much less susceptible to deterrence, and considerably more likely to use a nuclear weapon if they acquire it. One need not accept "one percent doctrines" or other extremist versions of nuclear threat-mongering to be concerned with the consequences of a potential al-Qaeda nuclear capability.[16] Nor does it resolve the issue simply to find that al-Qaeda is "unlikely" to acquire nuclear weapons even if the Karzai government falls. When the stakes are high, even low probabilities of true disasters can be too high to accept: Most Americans buy life insurance in a society in which the risk of death in a given year is less than one-half of one percent for 45–54-year-olds; it is clearly not unreasonable to consider accepting costs to address low-probability events.[17] If a nuclear al-Qaeda were impossible or virtually so, then the prospect could simply be ignored. But otherwise the issue inevitably comes back to a difficult value judgment on risk tolerance. This is not a new problem. After all, a central feature of U.S. security policy throughout the cold war was America's willingness to expend large resources to reduce the odds of unlikely events: A Soviet bolt-from-the-blue nuclear strike was surely never very likely, but the consequences if it ever did happen would have been so severe that the nation accepted huge costs to reduce the odds of such a disaster from low to very low. Americans have long debated whether this judgment was wise. But there is considerable precedent for American governments, of both parties, displaying enough concern with unlikely but dangerous scenarios to expend great effort to reduce the odds.

The net result is thus a difficult value judgment between unattractive alternatives, rather than a clear cut, open-and-shut case on analytical grounds. In this context, analysis can exclude certain popular but overstated positions: In fact, COIN in Afghanistan is not hopeless; the United States is not without important interests in the conflict; to secure these interests does not require a modern, centralized, Westernized Switzerland of the Hindu Kush; conversely, success is not guaranteed if only we are resolute; U.S. interests in Afghanistan are not unlimited; and the most important U.S. interests in the conflict are indirect and concern Pakistan more than Afghanistan per se. Analysis can also establish that the likely costs of pursuing COIN success will be high, and it can illuminate the causal pathways by which different outcomes can affect U.S. interests in general, or the danger of a nuclear al-Qaeda in particular. But with important costs and risks on both sides of the ledger, the answer for how much cost is worth bearing for what reduction in risk is ultimately a value judgment rather than an analytical finding. This is not a judgment on the value of American lives or the moral worthiness of sacrifice or resolve. Either course here involves risks to American lives—a choice to withdraw is neither more nor less humanitarian, neither more nor less respectful of sacrifice

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[15] John Mueller, "Overblown: How Politicians and the Terrorism Industry Inflate National Security Threats, and Why We Believe Them" (New York: Free Press, 2006); idem, "How Dangerous are the Taliban? Why Afghanistan is the Wrong War," ForeignAffairs.com, April 15, 2009; for a debate on this issue, see Paul Pillar, Fawaz Gerges, Jessica Stern, James Fallows, and John Mueller, "Are We Safe Yet?" ForeignAffairs.com, September 7, 2006.

[16] See Ron Susskind, "The One Percent Doctrine: Deep Inside America's Pursuit of its Enemies Since 9/11" (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006). Susskind argues that Vice President Cheney held that any risk of a nuclear attack greater than one percent should be treated as a certainty for purposes of U.S. policy.

[17] On the death rate for 45–54 year olds, see M.P. Heron, D.L. Hoyert, J.Q. Xu, C. Scott, and B. Tejada-Vera, "Deaths: Preliminary Data for 2006," National Vital Statistics Report, Vol. 56, No. 16 (2008), Table 1; on the rate of life insurance ownership among Americans, see Anna Sachko Gandolfi and Laurence Miners, "Gender-Based Differences in Life Insurance Ownership," The Journal of Risk and Insurance, Vol. 63, No. 4 (1996), pp. 683–693 at 691.

or service or others' suffering, than the opposite. Rather, the judgment here is between accepting greater casualties and sacrifices in the nearer term to reduce some probability of higher casualties and sacrifices in the longer term. For me, this balance is a close call but ultimately favors the waging of war in Afghanistan. But reasonable people can differ on such judgments. Perhaps the most important conclusion is instead that the choice is unavoidably hard: What analysis can show is that there is no course open to us that is without important downsides—there is no easy way out of Afghanistan for the United States in 2009.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Dr. Biddle. Very important and competent summary of the challenge, and we'll come back to it.

Rory Stewart, thank you again for being here. I failed to mention your wonderful book that I enjoyed, "The Places In Between." And we look forward to your testimony.

STATEMENT OF RORY STEWART, DIRECTOR, CARR CENTER ON HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY, HARVARD UNIVERSITY, CAMBRIDGE, MA

Mr. STEWART. Thank you all very, very much——

The CHAIRMAN. Can you pull the mike, and make sure——

Mr. STEWART. Thank you all very much, indeed, for having me.

One of the bewildering elements in trying to develop policy for Afghanistan at the moment is the very large number of justifications which are being put forward at the moment for our presence, so that there are people, recently, who have been justifying our presence in terms of elections, in terms of human rights; some who justify our presence in terms of the credibility of the United States, the notion that we can't be seen to be defeated, even if we can't win.

The administration's policy, however, focusing on counterterrorism, and I just want to very quickly address Dr. Biddle's statements about Pakistan.

It's very dangerous, I think, to mount an argument or justification for our presence in Afghanistan based on our interests in Pakistan. The relationships between those two countries is, at best, as Dr. Biddle says, indirect. It's far from clear that the most cost-effective way of deploying United States resources to address Pakistan is for an attempt to build a state in Afghanistan or defeat the Taliban in Afghanistan. In fact, if we had more time, you could make a number of arguments why United States operations in Afghanistan may, in fact, contribute to the destabilization of Pakistan.

In reality, the attempt to create an Afghanistan/Pakistan strategy seems to me a little bit as though we've gone into a room with an angry cat and a tiger—the angry cat being Afghanistan and the tiger being Pakistan—and we're beating the cat. And when you say, "Why are you beating the cat?" the answer is, "Oh, it's a cat/tiger strategy. It's an Afghanistan/Pakistan strategy." But, in fact, you're beating the cat because you don't know what to do about the tiger. And the connection between those two countries is somewhat indirect.

So, to come to the administration's policy, a very minimal target has been set of counterterrorism, and a very maximal definition of how to achieve it. In other words, the administration is suggesting

that the way to achieve the counterterrorist objective, is through the building of a state and through a counterinsurgency campaign.

I believe the problem with this theory lies in the fact that neither of those two means are achievable. We are neither going to be able to defeat the Taliban through a counterinsurgency campaign, nor is the United States or its allies in a position to build a legitimate, effective, stabile Afghan state. The reason for believing this relies on an understanding of the lack of capacity in the Afghan Government, demonstrated most dramatically recently, of course, through the elections, but demonstrated also through the lack of progress over the last 7 years. Our counterinsurgency policy, based, as Dr. Nagl said, on a notion of "clear, hold, build," unfortunately owes too much to an inaccurate analogy with Iraq. Iraq has, in its government in Baghdad, mass political parties behind al-Maliki. The Sunni tribes who've been driven out of many areas of Baghdad; they felt under pressure, they were coming to us, asking for assistance. Essentially, Iraqi politics drove the success of the surge. Those political forces are lacking in Afghanistan. In addition, it's a much more rural country. It is completely implausible that, in a country about the size of Texas, with 20,000 villages, we would be able, in effect, to garrison the country; in other words, to clear and hold it. Even were we to be able to clear and hold it, the build element is extremely implausible. There simply are not the resources within the Afghan Government or the Afghan state to imagine that we would be able, in any realistic timeframe, to create the kind of economic growth, governance, or stability which this project imagines.

What, then, should we do? Well, I believe we should try to adopt a much more modest position. The danger facing, I believe, the United States and the international community, at the moment, is that we're going to lurch from troop increases to withdrawal, from engagement to isolation. What worries me most about the increase in troops is that it's going to create an unsustainable footprint on the ground. We already are in a problem with public opinion. Our commitment, our will, and our resources are limited. Afghan history suggests that the very worst thing you can do for a country like Afghanistan, is to attempt to go from electroshock therapy with huge amounts of resources one year to none the next year. And yet, I fear, that's where we may end up being in 5 or 10 years if we insist on these kinds of immoderate increases. A light footprint is a more sustainable footprint. That footprint should focus on just two things: a very narrow counterterrorist objective, which does not require the troop deployments that we're talking about, and the humanitarian objective of contributing, in the way that we do in many other countries, to making Afghanistan more stable, prosperous, and humane in 30 years' time than it is today.

So, a patient, tolerant, long-term relationship with the international community, a sustainable presence, which requires a light footprint.

Thank you all very much, indeed.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Stewart follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RORY STEWART, DIRECTOR, CARR CENTER ON HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY, HARVARD UNIVERSITY, CAMBRIDGE, MA

The administration's new policy on Afghanistan has a very narrow focus—counterterrorism—and a very broad definition of how to achieve it: No less than the fixing of the Afghan state and defeating the Taliban insurgency. President Obama has presented this in a formal argument. The final goal in the region is "to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future." A necessary condition of the defeat of al-Qaeda is the defeat of the Taliban because "if the Afghan Government falls to the Taliban, that country will again be a base for terrorists who want to kill as many of our people as they possibly can." He, therefore, proposes a counterinsurgency strategy, which includes the deployment of more troops "to take the fight to the Taliban in the south and the east" and a more comprehensive approach, which aims to "promote a more capable and accountable Afghan Government . . . advance security, opportunity, and justice . . . develop an economy that isn't dominated by illicit drugs."

This policy is rooted in the preset categories of counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, state-building and economic development. These categories are so closely linked that policymakers appear to put them in almost any sequence or combination. You need to defeat the Taliban to build a state and you need to build a state to defeat the Taliban. There cannot be security without development, or development without security. If you have the Taliban you have terrorists, if you don't have development you have terrorists, and as Obama informed the New Yorker, "If you have ungoverned spaces, they become havens for terrorists." These connections are global: In Obama's words, "our security and prosperity depend on the security and prosperity of others." Indeed, at times it seems that all these activities—building a state, defeating the Taliban, defeating al-Qaeda, and eliminating poverty—are the same activity. The new U.S. Army and Marine Corps counterinsurgency doctrine sounds like a World Bank policy document, replete with commitments to the rule of law, economic development, governance, state-building, and human rights. In Obama's words, "security and humanitarian concerns are all part of one project."

The fundamental problem with the strategy is that it is trying to do the impossible. It is highly unlikely that the United States will be able either to build an effective, legitimate state or to defeat a Taliban insurgency. It needs to find another way of protecting the United States against terrorist attack.

We claim to be engaged in a neutral, technocratic, universal project of "state-building" but we don't know exactly what that means. Those who see Afghanistan as reverting to the Taliban or becoming a traditional autocratic state are referring to situations that existed there in 1972 and 1994. But the international community's ambition appears to be to create something that has not existed before. Obama calls it "a more capable and accountable Afghan Government." The United States, the United Kingdom, and their allies agreed unanimously at the NATO 60th anniversary summit in April to create "a stronger democratic state" in Afghanistan.

Whatever this state is, it could come only from an Afghan national movement, not as a gift from foreigners. As we have seen over the last 7 years—and most starkly in the recent election—Afghan Government is certainly unlikely in the next 5 years to reflect U.S. ideas of legitimacy, legal process, civil service function, rights, economic behavior or even broader international assumption about development. Even an aim as modest as "stability" is highly ambitious. Afghanistan is a mountainous country, with strong traditions of local self-government and autonomy, significant ethnic differences, but strong shared moral values. A centralizing constitution may well be combined with de facto local independence and Afghanistan is starting from a very low base: 30 years of investment might allow its army, police, civil service and economy to approach the levels of Pakistan. And Pakistan clearly still does not have whatever mixture of state-formation, legitimacy, accountability or effectiveness that is apparently necessary to prevent the Taliban and al-Qaeda from operating.

Nor is it clear that even if stronger central institutions were to emerge that they would assist U.S. national security objectives. Osama bin Laden is still in Pakistan, not Afghanistan. He chooses to be there precisely because Pakistan can be more assertive in its state sovereignty than Afghanistan and restricts U.S. operations. From a narrow (and harsh) U.S. national security perspective, a poor failed state could be easier to handle than a more developed one: Yemen is less threatening than Iran, Somalia than Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan than Pakistan.

Second, it is highly unlikely that the United States will be able to defeat the Taliban in Afghanistan. The ingredients of successful counterinsurgency campaigns in places like Malaya—control of the borders, large numbers of troops in relation

to the population, strong support from the majority ethnic groups, a long-term commitment and a credible local government—are lacking in Afghanistan.

Nor is Afghanistan, comparable to Iraq. There are no mass political parties in Afghanistan and the Kabul government lacks the base, strength or legitimacy of the Baghdad government. Afghan tribal groups lack the coherence of the Iraqi Sunni tribes and their relation to state structures: They are not being driven out of neighbourhood after neighbourhood and they do not have the same relation to the Taliban that the Sunni groups had to "al-Qaeda in Iraq." Afghans are weary of the war but the Afghan chiefs are not approaching us, seeking a deal. Since the political players and state structures in Afghanistan are much more fragile than those in Iraq, they are less likely to play a strong role in ending the insurgency.

A strategy of "clear, hold, and build" seems particularly implausible in Afghanistan. In Iraq—which is a much more urban society—it was possible for U.S. and Iraqi security forces around Baghdad to "clear and hold" ground because the geographical area was relatively limited. Afghanistan has an overwhelmingly rural population scattered through an inhospitable terrain, the size of Texas and encompassing perhaps thousand villages. Even 100,000 U.S. troops would be far too few to hold or garrison even a fraction of such a vast area. In Iraq, a tradition of strong central government and a much more educated population with an indigenous resource base at least allowed for the possibility of "building," following the "clear and hold." In Afghanistan the lack of the most basic education and capacity and will in governmental structures (and even in the private sector) means that very little of substance could be "built" during the time that the United States and its allies attempted to "hold."

Meanwhile, the Taliban can exploit the ideology of religious resistance that the West deliberately fostered in the 1980s to defeat the Russians. They can portray the Kabul government as U.S. slaves, NATO as an infidel occupying force and their own insurgency as a jihad. Their complaints about corruption, human rights abuses, and aerial bombardments appeal to a large audience. They are attracting Afghans to their rural courts by giving quicker and more predictable rulings than government judges. They can now easily exploit the corrupt practices in the election to portray the Kabul government as fraudulent and illegitimate. But our inability to inflict a final defeat on the Taliban may not be as dangerous as policymakers imagine.

If the administration cannot create an effective, stable, legitimate state and cannot defeat a Taliban insurgency it must find another method of protecting U.S. national security and fulfilling our obligations to the Afghan people. And if it is impossible to build a state or defeat the Taliban, there is no point in deploying a hundred thousand troops or spending hundreds of billions of dollars in Afghanistan.

The best Afghan policy would be to reduce the number of foreign troops from the current level of 90,000 to far fewer—perhaps 20,000. In that case, two distinct objectives would remain for the international community: Development and counterterrorism. Neither would amount to the building of an Afghan state or winning a counterinsurgency campaign. A reduction in troop numbers and a turn away from state-building should not mean total withdrawal: Good projects could continue to be undertaken in electricity, water, irrigation, health, education, agriculture, rural development and in other areas favoured by development agencies. Even a light U.S. presence could continue to allow for aggressive operations against al-Qaeda terrorists, in Afghanistan, who plan to attack the United States. The United States has successfully prevent al-Qaeda from reestablishing itself since 2001 (though the result has only been to move bin Laden across the border). The U.S. military could also (with other forms of assistance) support the Afghan military to prevent the Taliban from seizing a city or taking over the country.

These twin objectives will require a very long-term presence, as indeed is almost inevitable in a country which is as poor, as fragile and traumatized as Afghanistan (and which lacks the internal capacity at the moment to become independent of Foreign aid or control its territory). But a long-term presence will in turn mean a much lighter and more limited presence (if it is to retain U.S. domestic support). We should not control and cannot predict the future of Afghanistan. It may in the future become more violent, or find a decentralised equilibrium or a new national unity, but if its communities continue to want to work with us, we can, over 30 years, encourage the more positive trends in Afghan society and help to contain the more negative.

Such a policy can seem strained, unrealistic, counterintuitive, and unappealing. They appear to betray the hopes of Afghans who trusted us and to allow the Taliban to abuse district towns. No politician wants to be perceived to have underestimated, or failed to address, a terrorist threat; or to write off the "blood and treasure" that we have sunk into Afghanistan; or to admit defeat. Americans are particularly unwilling to believe that problems are insoluble; Obama's motto is not "no we can't";

soldiers are not trained to admit defeat or to say a mission is impossible. And to suggest that what worked in Iraq won't work in Afghanistan requires a detailed knowledge of each country's past, a bold analysis of the causes of development and a rigorous exposition of the differences, for which few have patience.

The greatest risk of our inflated ambitions and fears, encapsulated in the current surge is that it will achieve the exact opposite of its intentions and in fact precipitate a total withdrawal. The heavier our footprint, and the more costly, the less we are likely to be able to sustain it. Public opinion is already turning against it. NATO allies are mostly staying in Afghanistan simply to please the United States and have little confidence in our objectives or our reasons. Contemporary political culture tends to encourage black and white solutions: Either we garrison or we abandon.

While, I strongly oppose troop increases, I equally strongly oppose a total flight. We are currently in danger of lurching from troop increases to withdrawal and from engagement to isolation. We are threatening to provide instant electro-shock therapy followed by abandonment. This is the last thing Afghanistan needs. The international community should aim to provide a patient, tolerant long-term relationship with a country as poor and traumatized as Afghanistan. Judging by comparable countries in the developing world (and Afghanistan is very near the bottom of the U.N. Human Development index), making Afghanistan more stable, prosperous, and humane is a project which will take decades. It is a worthwhile project in the long term for us and for Afghans but we will only be able to sustain our presence if we massively reduce our investment and our ambitions and begin to approach Afghanistan more as we do other poor countries in the developing world. The best way of avoiding the mistakes of the 1980s and 1990s—the familiar cycle of investment and abandonment which most Afghans expect and fear and which have contributed so much to instability and danger—is to husband and conserve our resources, limit our objectives to counterterrorism and humanitarian assistance, and work out how to work with fewer troops and less money over a longer period. In Afghanistan in the long term, less will be more.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Stewart and—let me begin with this question. Is there not a distinction between counterterrorism and counterinsurgency?

Dr. Nagl.

Dr. NAGL. There is, Senator. Counterterrorism is a component of a counterinsurgency strategy. Counterterrorism focuses on the enemy, where counterinsurgency focuses correctly on protecting the people. So, in any effective counterinsurgency strategy, you will conduct counterterrorism as part of what you're trying to do, but it is only a part and it's——

The CHAIRMAN. Counterinsurgency is a more expansive strategy, is it not?

Dr. NAGL. That is correct, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Biddle, do you agree with that?

Dr. BIDDLE. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Is it possible to wage a counterinsurgency and/or a counterterrorist activity without it being a war?

Dr. NAGL. Senator, by definition, a counterinsurgency campaign is an attempt to support a government that is afflicted by those who are illegally using force to overthrow the government or change its policies. So, counterinsurgency demands insurgence; insurgence makes it a war.

The CHAIRMAN. Automatically?

Dr. NAGL. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. You agree with that, Dr. Biddle?

Dr. BIDDLE. I think, certainly, for the situation we see in Afghanistan, it's important to regard it as a war, yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Stewart.

Mr. STEWART. I think this a very important question about to what extent defeating the Taliban is a necessary or sufficient part of protecting the United States against al-Qaeda attack.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, let's come back, then, to, sort of, basics, here. If it is a war, you want to win it. Is that correct?

Dr. NAGL. That is correct, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. If you're going to deploy American troops and ask them to sacrifice their lives, it's important that they do so with the notion that there's a strategy to win.

Dr. NAGL. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. What does the counterinsurgency manual say is the number of troops needed in Afghanistan to win?

Dr. NAGL. The counterinsurgency manual, based on historical records of previous counterinsurgency campaigns, suggests some 600,000 counterinsurgents would be required to succeed in Afghanistan.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Biddle, you agree with that?

Dr. BIDDLE. The figure in the counterinsurgency manual is a reasonable rule of thumb, but is a very crude rule of thumb. General McChrystal is in the process now of doing a much more detailed troop-to-task analysis that I trust will have a much stronger basis for a specific troop recommendation. If one is going to apply the doctrinal rule of thumb, the doctrinal rule of thumb in the manual is one trained, capable counterinsurgent per 50 members of the population to be defended, which implies a figure roughly in the neighborhood of what Dr. Nagl said, yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Somewhere between 500,000 and 600,000 troops.

Dr. BIDDLE. Well, yes. I mean, among the complications here is that many people believe that the north and the west in Afghanistan, for example, is less threatened than the south and the east. And hence the need to——

The CHAIRMAN. It's less threatened today.

Dr. BIDDLE. Sorry?

The CHAIRMAN. Today.

Dr. BIDDLE. I actually think that that——

The CHAIRMAN. But, is it——

Dr. BIDDLE [continuing]. Assessment is seriously problematic, and that the north and the west today are in many ways—the best way to think about them is, they're where the south and the east were in 2003, 2004. So, I share your concern. But, important in generating——

The CHAIRMAN. Well, the point is, if you're going to think about this policy intelligently, you can't just look at it today and say, "Well, the west and the east, or the west and the north, are doing fine." The presumption is, if 27 percent of the country was under Taliban a year or 2 ago, and now it's 37 percent, that's growing. So, you know, this troop relationship to what is necessary is really fundamental to the choices that we make about whether it is in our interest to fight a counterterrorist activity versus a full-fledged counter-—you know, counterinsurgency, and whether or not one, in fact, will allow the other. I mean, this is—really takes a lot of discussion, and it's more than I'm going to get in the 7 minutes I have. But, you got to go down this trail. Do you need to have X

number of troops in order to provide sufficient security so the counterinsurgency can take hold?

Yes.

Dr. NAGL. Yes, sir, I believe you do. The vast majority of those forces should be Afghans, not Americans, so I would like to see 400,000 Afghan National Security Forces, more than double—roughly double what we were currently planning to build, and I believe that those forces, with minimal American assistance, advisers, air power, would be able to secure Afghanistan. I believe that that's probably 5 years away.

The CHAIRMAN. And what would be the expectation of the American people as we go forward, here, in terms of the cost that you would envision over that 5-year period? And with what level of, sort of, guarantee of success?

Dr. NAGL. Senator, I believe that we should expect to spend, over the next 5 years of that effort, probably as much as we have spent in lives and dollars over the preceding 8 years. I feel that cost very deeply, as I know you do. But, I would point out that we have been spending that for 8 years in Afghanistan to date, and the situation is getting worse. We've tried the light-footprint counterterrorism option, and it has not succeeded. There is no reason to believe that it would get any better or any easier with the Taliban getting stronger.

The CHAIRMAN. But, let me stop you there for a minute.

Dr. NAGL. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. You say "it has not succeeded." Al-Qaeda is not in Afghanistan, is it?

Dr. NAGL. To my knowledge, it is not, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. And the goal of the President is to prevent al-Qaeda from being in there and attacking the United States, correct?

Dr. NAGL. Sir, that is one of the goals of the President.

The CHAIRMAN. The second goal is to prevent the destabilization of Pakistan.

Dr. NAGL. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Those are the principal goals.

Dr. NAGL. Yes, sir. I agree.

The CHAIRMAN. We are doing better in Pakistan.

Dr. NAGL. We are, yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. And there is no al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.

Dr. NAGL. That is correct, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. We just knocked out a major al-Qaeda figure in Somalia without 67,000 troops on the ground. In fact, we don't have any American troops on the ground, except for the moment that they were there to do what they did.

Dr. NAGL. Correct, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Does that tell us something about the potential of a lighter footprint in Afghanistan?

Dr. NAGL. Sir, it tells us that you can conduct counterterrorism with a light footprint; you cannot conduct counterinsurgency with a light footprint, and——

The CHAIRMAN. Exactly the point I'm trying to——

Dr. NAGL. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. Get at. But, isn't the President's goal fundamentally counterterrorism, or is it linked to the counterinsurgency that is critical to preventing the destabilization? And is it, as Mr. Stewart has suggested, in fact critical to that destabilization? And he actually offered the notion that it might be possible that's it creating more destabilization. Have we, in fact, thoroughly examined that?

Dr. NAGL. Sir, we—I have, at least I believe—I do not claim to be an expert on Pakistan. I agree with Steve that the reason that counterterrorism will not work in Afghanistan, although it does in Somalia, is because of the presence of Pakistan next door to Afghanistan. Pakistan, I believe, is the key to the puzzle. Pakistan is America's vital national interest. And I am convinced that American counterinsurgency and counterterrorism efforts in Afghanistan have contributed to the more effective Pakistani counterinsurgency campaign.

The CHAIRMAN. And let me make it clear. As I said in my opening comments, Pakistan is central, and I agree with that assessment. And I have—I'm not—you know, I haven't determined that, in fact, the counterinsurgency component won't be critical because of Taliban, but I think we have to examine this. I mean, this is fundamental to what we have to really come to some kind of firm conclusion on, because it is going to be critical to the numbers of troops and to the type of commitment that we make.

Mr. Stewart, if you'd just comment quickly on this question of the destabilization, and then I want to turn to the other Senators.

You asserted that it may be, in fact, that the presence of these troops is, in fact, a destabilizing, rather than a stabilizing, factor, and I want you to——

Mr. STEWART. Yes, I mean, I——

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. That out.

Mr. STEWART [continuing]. I think it's destabilizing in two potential ways. One of them is, as Pakistan military and the Pakistan Government complains, it often involves this squeezing and pushing insurgents across the border into Pakistan. And second, it provides some of the material of ideological resistance to the United States within Pakistan that we're perceived by the majority of the Pakistani population to be engaged in an occupation of Afghanistan.

But, more importantly, I think that the strongest argument against this is that if it has some negative and positive effects, those are very minor compared to the real drivers of the problem in Pakistan. Pakistan will not stand or fall on Afghanistan. It's about the Pakistani Government, it's about the Pakistani military, it's about the Pakistani economy and the Pakistani society. There may be some positive results, there may be some negative results. But, by and large, Afghanistan is far less important to the future of Pakistan than we're suggesting.

The CHAIRMAN. And the final question—and I apologize to my colleagues—Dr. Nagl, you helped write this field—this manual on counterinsurgency.

Dr. NAGL. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. And General Petraeus adopted it, correct? So, this is the military's current doctrine about troops needed for counterinsurgency.

Dr. NAGL. Correct, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. So, when you say 500,000 to 600,000 in order to guarantee success, we're not playing around with some sort of light figure, here. This is something you guys sort of settled on in a fairly rigid analysis.

Dr. NAGL. Sir, it is—as Steve suggested, it is more of a rule of thumb than a guarantee. There are no guarantees in war. But, historically, successful counterinsurgency campaigns have relied on large numbers of troops on the ground to protect the population, particularly host-nation security forces.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, if we're going to make the kind of decision we're being called on to make, if I were President in this circumstance, if we're studying the stakes the way we are, I want a guarantee. You know, Roosevelt took his guarantee, in a sense. Truman did. We were committed to that. And I—and as a former troop, let me tell you something, that's one of the things that I missed the most back then. And I would want to make sure we have that for the troops today.

So, you know, I'm looking to make the soundest decision we can with what's necessary. I think the American people have to consider this, if that's what it's going to take to guarantee success.

Senator Lugar.

Senator LUGAR. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Without oversimplifying the problem that you've all addressed, most Americans believe the United States entered into conflict in Afghanistan because of the presence of al-Qaeda training camps there that were believed to have played a direct role in the attacks on Washington and New York on 9/11. Now, the existence of such camps had been known before, and they had been attacked at least once during the previous administration. But, nevertheless, the camps were there, and there were demands by our Government that the Taliban, who were apparently, at least to us, running the country, ought not to protect those camps, and that the United States should be able to eliminate them. At the time, the Taliban resisted that idea, and, as a result, we went in with military force not only to enforce the closing of the camps, but also to involve ourselves in the governance of the country.

Now, experts may have known more about the internal situation in Afghanistan than most of us or the American public, but, by and large, we discovered that the central government was very weak, and there were so-called "warlords," or provincial governments, that for all intents and purposes were more meaningful for most citizens in many areas of the country. This situation existed in part because of transportation problems and other historical dilemmas.

Now, as a result, it seems to me we've attempted to do a number of things; and you've talked about them today. We have had some success in rooting out at least most of the al-Qaeda that we know about, but, at the same time, we have not decided, or maybe even discussed, what our feelings ought to be with regard to the Taliban.

Now, generally our feelings are negative. But, I offer an alternative thought—and I'll ask you, Mr. Stewart, to comment first on

this. What if we were to discover, as some writers have discussed, that there are different degrees of Taliban, in terms of their antipathy to the United States or their responsibilities for Afghanistan—namely, some Taliban that we could deal with in a pragmatic way? And what if we rediscovered—we won't call them "warlords," but various authorities out in the hustings who, in fact, were doing some governance work, and doing it at least fairly efficiently, even if not democratically, and without the problems of people looking in and seeing that there was a degree of corruption or what have you?

I'm just probing as to if, Mr. Stewart, your theory that by having a presence which becomes overwhelming, we create more problems for ourselves without having any real effect on Pakistan, is correct. If we had fewer people, and they were more politically adept in weaving together a governance of Afghanistan, and perhaps they said, "We understand that President Karzai may have some problems of personal or official corruption; maybe his brother does, too; but that seems to be fairly common in many governance positions all over the country." We are probably not going to be able to cure this problem altogether as much as we might abhor it. After all, we say President Karzai is a national figure we ought to plan to work with, as we do with the other regional leaders, in addition to finding more partners such as the good Taliban or whoever else.

Now, under those circumstances, is it conceivable that we could pull together a situation in which Afghanistan did have stable governance and thus posed less of a threat to its neighbors? This would give us options, which we may already have, of discovering that there may be Taliban in 30, 40, or 50 countries, depending upon the breadth of your imagination as to where they are, thus making apparent that Afghanistan is not the source of "al-Qaeda in all these nations." The Taliban is not the objective; it is still people who are plotting to bomb Washington and New York City again, or to think of conspicuous terrorism that would give advantage to whoever doesn't care for us in the world.

Would you probe the politics of this situation as I've tried to describe it?

Mr. STEWART. I think, Senator—I mean, you voice a very important point. The Taliban are clearly an extremely, often horrifying and unpleasant group. There are many things that we object to very strongly about the Taliban. Unfortunately, working in a country like Afghanistan, we need to have a vision of a better future, but we need to have quite a pragmatic and moderate path toward that future. Through brutal terms, "ought" implies "can." We don't have a moral obligation to do what we can't do. So, that will really mean working in southern Afghanistan, particularly, trying to identify who the most powerful, effective, legitimate figures are in those areas. And some of those people may be associated with the Taliban, and some of those figures, as you suggest, Senator, are not, in fact, people who are of great concern to the United States. The majority of the people that we're killing and fighting are semiliterate villagers who would be pressed to find the United States on a map. It also means, unfortunately, that we may have to make compromises with the more progressive members of the

provincial powerholders, which is another way of saying, in brutal terms, "the better warlords."

This doesn't mean that we should be working with everybody, but, if we take the analogy of the Balkans, we are in a much, much better position now than we were in the Balkans 12 years ago. We worked in the Balkans with people who are now in The Hague. We did that on a deliberate strategy, knowing that things would improve, and that we weren't going to work with those people forever. We did elections in the Balkans, which were very flawed in the early days and which have got better now.

So, what I'd like to see, following on from what you're talking about, Senator, is, first, not to get to hypnotized by the idea that these people are a critical threat to United States national security; second, that, although we can perhaps do less than we pretend, we can do more than we fear; and that if we had a genuine long-term vision for how to move forward, that accepted, as you said, that, fundamentally, the problems in Afghanistan are political problems, they're problems that are better addressed by political offices, and there's a real danger that a heavy military footprint will create parallel structures and undermine the sense of responsibility in the Afghan Government to address these problems themselves.

Senator LUGAR. I appreciate the answer. My time is up.

Many would say that the discussion I've suggested, and you've conducted with me, offers a strategy that compromises the usual tenets of American foreign policy. We are for human rights, we're for democracy, we're for doing it the right way in terms of elections, and all the rest of it. And it's not that we've become obsessed with the thought that everybody else must follow us, but many would find it very disappointing for us to say, "Let us take a look at warlords who may not be quite so bad, but, nevertheless, may be effective," or to say that, "As a matter of fact, Taliban, with all of their practices, are not exactly people we want in any governance in the United States, but there may be elements of that group that it would be pragmatic to work with." It must be pointed out that we're now talking, as the chairman has pointed out, about options involving hundreds of billions of dollars, which we don't have in the United States—we're borrowing this from other countries—to finance this war. We're risking American troops, and talking about risking some more. These circumstances suggest that some unorthodox thinking may be required.

And I appreciate your colloquy with me. I wish we had more time to visit along the panel.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, Senator, the question of time is important here, and I'm going to consider, obviously, even, you know, recalling a panel, if necessary, if we think that there's more to be discussed, because I think this has to be thoroughly vetted. It's very difficult sometimes in these settings, but I've tried to do some of that in the roundtable manner that we've done. We're going to continue this. I can promise people, it will be thorough.

Senator Feingold.

Senator FEINGOLD. Mr. Chairman, I really do want to thank you for holding this hearing on the alternative strategies to achieve our objectives in Afghanistan.

I want to thank the witnesses for agreeing to testify.

There has not been adequate discussion regarding the significant risks associated with our current strategy in Afghanistan, or about the potential alternatives, but I think that's begun to change in the last month. And actually a portion of the testimony and the hearing—of this hearing and the comments by these two Senators, I think, could represent something of a turning point with regard to this, as we look forward.

My primary concern with our current strategy is that our massive military footprint may be breeding militancy in the region and could push militants into nuclear-armed Pakistan. That is why I have mentioned the need for a flexible timetable to drawdown our military presence in Afghanistan.

The support of both the American and the Afghan people may well depend upon our clearly stating that we do not intend to occupy that country indefinitely. Indeed, recent polls have shown that 58 percent of Americans oppose the United States mission in Afghanistan, and 51 percent of Afghans want the United States forces to leave within 2 years.

Now, I want to be clear, no one is talking today about abandoning Afghanistan. We are simply discussing the serious possibility that our massive military operations may be destabilizing the region. I happen to think the Taliban is thriving primarily due to poor governance. We must carefully evaluate whether, and to what extent, there is a military—a military—solution to that problem. Meanwhile, our top priority must be to develop the long-term strategy to keep pressure on al-Qaeda globally.

And, you know, I was going to start off by asking what, essentially, Senator Kerry and Senator Lugar have already had you talk about, and that is that—whether or not military operations in Afghanistan may, in fact, be creating more militants in the region, and could be contributing to the destabilization of Pakistan.

So, let me just ask Mr. Stewart the alternative—the opposite. How would you respond to critics of your proposal who argue that a smaller military presence would allow for increased Taliban influence in Afghanistan, and that that, in their argument, would actually destabilize Pakistan?

Mr. STEWART. That's very difficult. To start with, of course, this is a very, very unpredictable country. Nobody predicted the rise of the Taliban properly in 1994, 1995. Nobody predicted that President Najib would stay in power after the Soviet Union withdrew. So, I'm not going to stand here and say that we can predict it. There's a significant risk that a reduction in a military footprint would mean that the Taliban could consolidate some of their holds, particularly in rural areas in southern and eastern Afghanistan. And we need to make a decision on that basis. We need to accept that risk. And we need to think about what we're going to do with that risk.

Personally, I think the Taliban is not in a position to capture a major city. They're not in a position to take over the country. They're not the Taliban of 1994. They no longer have powerful Pakistani military support or planes or artillery or tanks. They discredited themselves when they were in government. There's a much

stronger opposition from the minority groups in the north and the center. They're not in a situation of civil war.

I believe, with United States support, financial support, primarily to the Afghan Army, and a light American military footprint, we should be able to prevent the Taliban from taking major cities in the country without too much problem. All right?

Is this Taliban presence going to destabilize Pakistan? Well, for that we'd have to defer to the Pakistanis. But, my sense, coming from the Government of Pakistan, is that they do not see that as the primary threat to their country. They believe that they can contain and manage the situation in Afghanistan. As I say, Pakistan is a much, much larger country than Afghanistan; it is the tiger to the cat. What destabilizes Pakistan, of course, ranges all the way over to the Indian border, and includes very basic social-economic indicators in that country, and the movement of religion and ideology in that country.

The presence of Afghanistan of some Taliban troops, I don't think is likely to be the decisive factor in the collapse of Pakistan.

Senator FEINGOLD. I really appreciate that answer.

Dr. Biddle, if we were to pursue a middle-of-the-road option, where we reduced the size of our footprint but remain engaged, to support the Afghan security forces and then use our leverage to contain any outside support for the Taliban, do you believe that an outright defeat of the Afghan Government by the Taliban would be likely?

Dr. BIDDLE. I think there are a variety of middle-way options that are attractive. The trouble is, they all have shortcomings, militarily, that I don't think have been adequately discussed.

One of the them, for example, a shift in U.S. emphasis from combat to training and advising, if it's done without a substantial troop strength to do the training and advising and mentoring and partnering, runs the substantial risk of allowing the Taliban to gain control of the country while we're in the process of training, and it also undermines the efficacy of the training that we conduct.

In many ways, the business of building up an indigenous military, where there is not one at the moment, is a poor analogy to many kinds of educational activity. It requires a great deal of learning by doing, and it requires a great deal of close cooperation with Western mentors in the conduct of actual combat operations.

I very much agree with Dr. Nagl, that the development of an indigenous Afghan military force is absolutely necessary if we're going to get out of this with our interests realized. To do that, however, I think requires a more substantial U.S. investment than many who would like to see a middle option are prepared to provide.

Senator FEINGOLD. Mr. Stewart, what percentage of the people currently fighting alongside the Taliban would you estimate share al-Qaeda's international terrorist agenda, and what percentage are fighting us because we are there?

Mr. Stewart.

The CHAIRMAN. Can I just intervene? And I won't take it——

Senator FEINGOLD. Yes, OK.

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. From your time. But, could you just quantify that, what you just said: "It'll require a substantially greater investment"? Can you put us——

Dr. BIDDLE. Well, again, I'm reluctant to prejudge General McChrystal, who's now calculating precisely that number. Some figures I've seen are on the order of one American per three Afghans to be trained. But, again, there's a very detailed analysis, now ongoing, that, unfortunately, as an outsider, I don't have the resources to compete with. And I hope that analysis will be made public shortly.

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks.

And thank you, Senator Feingold.

Senator FEINGOLD. I'll just repeat, Mr. Stewart, the question. What percentage of the people currently fighting alongside the Taliban would you estimate share al-Qaeda's international terrorist agenda, and what percentage are fighting us because we are there?

Mr. STEWART. This is a very complicated question to answer, of course. There are links between those two groups, but, broadly speaking, there is a distinction which is worth maintaining. Al-Qaeda began, and remains to some extent, a non-Afghan movement. In a sense, the people who are interested in international terrorists attacks against the United States, and who even would have the imagination to mount those kinds of attacks, have tended to be people, in fact, from relatively educated middle-class backgrounds. It's no accident that Mohammad Atta was a German resident, or that Zawahiri, for example, is a doctor and comes from an elite Egyptian family. Most of the people we're fighting are, broadly speaking, peasants and, broadly speaking—I don't mean that in an offensive sense, but I mean in terms of their lifestyle and their mindset and the way in which they view the world—they're not particularly interested in international terrorism. And of that small proportion that are, far fewer would ever be able to have any serious chance of carrying out whatever ambitions they might have in their fantasies.

So, I would repeat, in terms of protecting U.S. national security, we're dealing with a very, very focused defense against people who, by and large, should be distinguished from the Taliban and distinguished from the people we're fighting on a daily basis.

Thank you.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Feingold.

Senator Corker.

Senator CORKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the hearing.

And thank you, as panelists, for being here. I think you all have been very good.

You know, today we had a briefing, talking about metrics. I know we're going to be talking about resources here in the near future. One of the things that did occur in Iraq is, there was a discussion about what victory might be, and people ended up trying to envision what that might be, and we'll see if it turns out that way. I hope it does. But, in Afghanistan, no one has really been able to describe what victory is. You all have different viewpoints here, at least there's two distinct ones. And I wonder if, in a very brief way,

you might be able to describe to us what you think victory in Afghanistan would look like?

Dr. NAGL. Sir, I would define victory in Afghanistan as an Afghan state that is able to secure itself from internal threats with minimal external help, that does not present a security threat to the region, does not serve as a base for attacks upon its neighbors, and that does not harbor al-Qaeda and is opposed to the interests on al-Qaeda, worldwide.

Dr. BIDDLE. I would——

Senator CORKER. So, sort of a three-tiered victory.

Yes, sir.

Dr. BIDDLE. I would articulate a minimalist conception of what's necessary to secure our interests in Afghanistan. We need only a country that is sufficiently in control of its territory, that large contiguous blocks of meaningful Afghanistan cannot be used as a base for attacking others. Beyond that, our goals are aspirational. That is sufficient for our purposes. I think that can be attained with a good deal less than Switzerland and the Hindu Kush.

Senator CORKER. OK.

Yes, sir.

Mr. STEWART. I'd go even further in a minimal direction and say that we have two very narrow objectives there. The most important, from the point of view of the United States, would simply be that Afghanistan does not in any way pose a majorly increased terrorist threat to the United States. I don't think we need to get into whether that's involved in state-building or contiguous blocks of territory or safe havens. The question is, Is there anything that they would gain in that country which would make them better able to hurt the United States than they're currently able to do in Pakistan? So, if we could achieve that and, at the same time, follow a long and, I think, honorable process of rebuilding Afghanistan, with a humanitarian objective and obligation—not with a huge amount of resources, but showing that the United States is serious about helping the Afghan people and fulfilling our commitments over the last 20 years—I think that would be enough. And, broadly speaking, to follow on from Senator Kerry, what we'd be looking at is a strategy which—I don't want to put it too boldly, but would look on the counterterrorist side a little bit like what we do in Somalia, and maybe, on the development side, a little bit like what we do in countries like Nepal, but maybe on a more generous level.

Thank you.

Senator CORKER. Thank you. And obviously it's—I think it's going to be imperative for us to first agree on what we think that is, because these are very different views as to what victory is.

So, let me move on to the second one. We've talked a lot about military presence, here, and the administration has talked about a much more narrow focus than being counterterrorism. But, if you really look at the metrics that they're looking at, I mean, this is all-out nation-building. I mean, I was there on election day—I'm amazed that some of the historic-site-rebuilding. I mean, we are nation-building right now in Afghanistan.

So, I guess my question is, in addition to the security piece—and I—you all have talked about different components of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency, meaning keeping the population

safe—what degree of nation-building—economics, highways, judicial systems, corruption—anticorruption efforts—what degree of nation-building should be undertaken with whatever military presence we have there?

Dr. NAGL. Senator, it's a commonly accepted principle of counterinsurgency that, if you are losing a counterinsurgency campaign, you're not being outfought, you're being outgoverned. And what's happening now is that the Taliban is providing many essential services to the Afghan people; in particular, in the south and in the east. It's providing them with some degree of security and some degree of justice. It's not necessarily a justice or a security that they would choose if they had a choice. And, in fact, those—when they're given the option, they support the United States involvement at about 50 percent, and they support the Taliban at about 5 percent. But, it is better than what the Afghan Government is able to give them.

So, to succeed in this campaign, we have to build an Afghan Government that can provide them with security first, and then with some degree of justice and some degree of economic potential, in order to provide a more positive alternative than the Taliban presents.

Senator CORKER. So, you have three goals for victory, and a pretty all-out nation-building effort to go with it.

Dr. NAGL. Sir, I would not say that I'm trying to "build a nation" as much as I'm trying to build a state that can secure its people and care for its people and protect them against—I consider—what I consider to be a pretty insidious, vicious, and horrible alternative, called the Taliban.

Senator CORKER. Thank you.

Dr. Biddle.

Dr. BIDDLE. I am minimalist with respect to what I think we can accomplish in Afghanistan, but I'm also minimalist with respect to what I think we need to accomplish in Afghanistan. War, at the end of the day, is a competitive undertaking. One doesn't need to meet some abstract, absolute standard. One needs to do better than the enemy one's fighting with respect to most dimensions of the problem, including governance. And happily, I actually agree with Rory Stewart, that the Taliban has very important weaknesses and shortcomings. I think that's actually an important basis for my belief that failure is not inevitable, is that our opponent in this conflict has very important weaknesses and shortcomings; among them, their ability to provide a form of governance that the Afghan people actually want.

What's happening at the moment is that an unpopular Taliban, with an unpopular form of governance, is in danger of being in direct competition with a government that's becoming almost as unpopular as they are.

What we need, at the end of the day, is simply to provide an alternative to the population that is preferable to a Taliban that they don't want. And I think that's a rather modest standard which I—you know, subject to the uncertainties of war and the difficulties of the undertaking, I think is, in principle, achievable.

Senator CORKER. Thank you.

Rory.

Mr. STEWART. I think that state-building is not a national security priority for the United States in Afghanistan. I think it's a good thing, for humanitarian reasons, it's a good thing for the Afghan people, it's something we should support as a development project over a long period. But, it is so problematic. This country is so poor. The majority of civil servants don't have a high school education. Forty percent of the people in the country can't read and write. The government is really lacking in legitimacy and popularity; the elections have illustrated that. We could invest 30 years in Afghanistan trying to develop the military and the civil service in the state, and, if we were lucky, we would make Afghanistan and its state structures resemble Pakistan. And I mean that. I mean any Pakistani, I think, would confirm that the Pakistani military, the Pakistani civil service, its government, its economy, its society is in many ways, far advanced than that of Afghanistan. And there's not a great United States national security interest involved in trying to make Afghanistan become, over 20 or 30 years of investment, more like Pakistan. But, I think, there could be a good humanitarian reason for improving things in those directions, and it's one we should support, for humanitarian reasons.

Senator CORKER. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I know my time is up.

Thank you for your testimony and very diverse viewpoints.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, it's very, very important lines that I think can be—are sort of defined in the three answers, and there's sort of a matrix there, if you will, for some of the choices. And we're going to try to set it up as such.

But, a really interesting question that we have to look at more—and I'm not going to go in it—but, it's just this question of the Taliban. We keep coming back to the Taliban and to what their impact may or may not be. And I was very interested in Dr. Biddle's answer, which came in at a slightly different place from Dr. Nagl. And I think it begins to frame the connections that we've got to look at here, you know. And Rory Stewart very, you know, appropriately said, is it a national security interest, in fact, or is it a—you know, some other kind of interest? And that's something that we've got to really think through carefully.

Senator CARDIN. Well, Mr. Chairman——

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN [continuing]. Mr. Chairman, I'm going to follow up on the Taliban in one moment, because I do think that is an important factor in achieving our mission in Afghanistan. You have pointed out many times that the al-Qaeda is not indigenous to Afghanistan, and that the Taliban has been somewhat of a support system for the terrorist activities.

You know, one of the things that concerns me is that—I think you all have expressed minimalist expectations for what we can achieve in Afghanistan, and that makes it difficult for us to want to invest to increase combat troops in Afghanistan. I think most of us support the President's mission of trying to disrupt terrorist operations, and we want to see that done effectively, but we don't see the endgame here, by adding more combat troops. Of course, we're going to wait to see General McChrystal's recommendations. But, one thing is clear: we need to build up a more functioning soci-

ety to take care of the population's own needs. That's in everyone's interests. I think we all agree on that point.

Now, Senator Levin has talked about increasing the amount of national security forces within Afghanistan. He's also talked about trying to reintegrate the Taliban into Afghan society in a more constructive manner. And I think there is support for this. I just want to understand how realistic this is. At least it's our view that al-Qaeda's not popular in Afghanistan. The Taliban are not really zealous when it comes to wanting to fight; at least it appears that it's more pragmatic and economic and political than it is philosophical.

Our strategies in the Helmand region and elsewhere have been to periodically destroy poppy crops, but not really to provide alternative economic opportunities for the farmers. I know that we're trying to change that strategy. It seems to me that we could be effective in reducing the influence of the Taliban if we could reintegrate those that are looking for a better life for their families, with opportunities—real opportunities—through a real concerted effort. To me, that would have much more political support, but I haven't seen an effective policy today.

Is there promise in trying to disrupt the growth of the Taliban's influence in Afghanistan by directing alternatives to those who have joined the Taliban forces—by offering alternatives and other crops than poppy—and to really try to deal with this in a much more sophisticated way? What's the prognosis, here?

The CHAIRMAN. Before you answer, I need to apologize. I need to go to a Finance Committee meeting on health care for a brief moment. Senator Lugar will chair in my absence. I'm going to try and get back, but I can't guarantee it.

Thanks.

Dr. BIDDLE. Reconciliation, as well as economic development and the development of an indigenous military, is clearly an important part of any successful outcome we might be able to attain in Afghanistan. The issue is whether it's separable from a larger counterinsurgency campaign. In many ways, it would be nice if it would be, because it would enable us to do this at much lower cost and much lower effort. The trouble is, the pieces of the component problem tend to interact strongly with one another.

Take, for example, economic development. It's very difficult for us to provide economic development in an insecure environment. The Taliban——

Senator CARDIN. Well, part of Senator Levin's point is that we need to significantly increase—and I think the administration has agreed on this—significantly increase the security forces, both military and police, in Afghanistan.

Dr. BIDDLE. Yes, and as we develop security forces that can provide that degree of protection for the population, a variety of other things become possible in lockstep, one being a better prospect for economic development, another being better prospect for reconciliation with reconcilable elements of the Taliban. When we say "the Taliban," it's in many ways a misnomer. This is a very heterogeneous collection of factions that have very different interests, very different motivations, very different component parts and ways of working.

In principle, it should be possible to drive wedges between these, and reach settlements with an important fraction of what is now a collection of those who oppose us and oppose the Government of Afghanistan. The trouble we face at the moment is, the perception on that side of the frontier, if you like, is that they are ascendant. And when they are ascendant, that poses a variety of difficulties for a reconciliation strategy, among which being, it's very dangerous to get caught on the losing side in a negotiated end to a conflict like Afghanistan.

If the military tide begins to turn and perceptions of the longer term trajectory of this conflict change from a high expectation that the Karzai government is going fall and will be replaced by a Quetta Shura-based alternative to something in which there's an expectation that the Karzai government will survive, and staying in the field simply means a long-grinding stalemate, then it becomes much more possible for us to reach reconciliation deals, either with faction leaders among this collection of factions or with the individual foot soldiers that comprise their armed forces in the field. It's very difficult to persuade a $10 Taliban, a member of the village who is simply fighting to feed his family, to side with us when there's no expectation that the environment is going to be secure and their erstwhile allies will come get them after they accept our offer.

Senator CARDIN. I agree with what you're saying, but I think the weakness of your position is that it appears to say that we're going to have a large international, primarily United States, military combat mission for a long time and, ultimately, the chances of success are unclear. This comes with other negative impacts, with us being perceived as an occupation force within Afghanistan. It seems that the proper way to do this is to accelerate the training of Afghan security forces and be realistic as to what regions we can secure and make advancements in, rather than trying to have a military combat solution to a problem where we're trying to build up government capacity.

Dr. BIDDLE. Well, I do think that the prospects for success, while—you know, while nonzero, involve a great deal of cost, and potentially a great deal of time. And that's why I see this as a close call on the merits. If I thought that we could succeed without incurring this kind of cost, I would see this as a clear argument for proceeding. If I thought that success was impossible were we even—even were we to incur the cost, I would see this as a clearly inappropriate mission. I think what we've got is a very difficult, very costly undertaking, which can succeed if we invest the cost and the effort, and where we have nonnegligible stakes involved. And that's preciously what makes this, I think, on the merits, such a difficult case and such a close call.

Senator CARDIN. Well, I'm not sure I agree that it's all or nothing. We do have combat troops there now. We've increased the number of combat troops. It seems to me we've not made progress, and we haven't trained more troops. I think we have squandered some time, but I don't want to see us continue this current policy. And I'm not sure the circumstances on the ground give us the prospect that you're referring to.

Dr. NAGL. Senator, can I talk to this from my personal experience?

Senator CARDIN. Well, my time has expired so——

Dr. NAGL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Sir, I served in Al Anbar in 2003 and 2004 with the 1st Brigade of the 1st Infantry Division. I tried to conduct a comprehensive counterinsurgency campaign with insufficient resources. I worked to build Iraqi security forces. I worked to conduct economic development. I didn't have enough boots on the ground to secure my area. The insurgents blew up all of my economic development projects. They killed my battalion commanders that I trained. I am not going to say we went backward during my service in Al Anbar, but we certainly did not make progress very rapidly. And I'm—I very—I agree with Steve, I very much wish that, with economic development and with training host-nation security forces, that that were sufficient. But, the truth is that there is a base level of security that has to be provided on the ground.

Senator CARDIN. And I don't disagree with that. We have to have security for the economics in the region to be successful. The question is, Who supplies the security? I understand the United States and international community have a responsibility for training, but ultimately, the security has to be provided by the Afghans.

Dr. NAGL. And, Senator, it's my contention that I've worked with the Afghan security forces. They are good fighters. There are far, far too few of them to do that now. So, I agree with Senator Levin, we absolutely have to build more Afghan security forces, but if we do not also provide more security on the ground where we're doing that, an awful lot of those battalion commanders will be killed by the Taliban.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you.

Senator LUGAR [presiding]. Thank you very much, Senator Cardin.

Senator Casey.

Senator CASEY. Thank you very much.

And I appreciate the time that all of you have put into this, both your presence here today, your testimony in answering questions, as well as the experience and scholarship that you bring to this issue.

I want to try to focus on at least two areas, maybe three. I, like a lot of other Senators, in the last couple of months had a chance to go to both Afghanistan and Pakistan for a limited period of time, but, even in a short amount of time, you learn a lot, or at least you gain better insights. I was particularly impressed by a lot of the fighting men and women who were there starting with the briefing General McChrystal as well as the nonmilitary folks gave us. Also, I was very impressed by not just his appreciation for, and respect for, but the General's demonstrable—of course, it's my own assessment, but I think I can judge people pretty well—integration of the State Department folks as well. It is one team over there, people working from the Department of Agriculture, DEA, you name it, USAID—go down the list—brave, committed, capable Americans, both military and nonmilitary, doing that work. And it's really early in their assignment. We just changed strategy. So, I hope we all don't make conclusions too early, here. I know, in Washington,

they want us to. That's what we do in Washington, we have very limited debates, and people go into their political corners, and we don't often have a full debate.

I was glad that Senator Kerry raised the question of how important it is to have a full and substantive debate about troop levels—not the usual political Washington debate, which, candidly, sometimes people in both parties engage in. It's critically important we get that right.

I think, prior to a serious consideration of the troop question—since, technically, right now that's not before us and there has been no recommendation beyond 17 plus 4—I think it's very important, in my judgment, that we listen to and take all information into consideration. I have spent a lot of time with some of the questions raised by Senator Levin in his speech.

To this end, the elevation of the number of Afghan Army and police—we've already talked about that and Senator Cardin mentioned it, as well. On this issue, I have two quick questions, then I'll move to another one.

The question is, How and then, how many? How do we—if you accept the premise that we're not moving fast enough on developing army and police there, and I think that's an imperative, for a whole variety of reasons—how do we accelerate the training of the Afghan Army and police force? And the second question is, How many do we need? Is there a metric or is there a ratio that you can use for number of trainers, either American or coalition forces, training Afghan troops, or not?

And I'd start with Dr. Nagl, and we can go from there.

Dr. NAGL. Yes, sir.

I absolutely agree that we can, and should, accelerate the training of the Afghan security forces. This has—frankly, this has not been a success story for the United States over the past 8 years. The effort to build Iraqi security forces also suffered from a slow start, but has succeeded to a more than reasonable degree at this point. And the Iraqis are increasingly able to provide for their own security. There are many lessons that can be drawn from the process of building the Iraqi security forces that can, and should, be applied to building the Afghan security forces.

It's important to note just what a low point we're at right now, as we speak. So, currently, today, we have less than 50 percent of the advisers assigned to the Afghan Army that we say—that the United States says are required to train them. And we'll fill that role—those are the 4,000—the 17 plus 4—those 4,000 will arrive in-country this month. I expect to see a pretty substantial increase in the performance of the Afghan security forces as those 4,000 advisers catch hold and, for the first time in the 8-year war, we fully man our advisers to the Afghan military. So, that's a huge step in the right direction.

I believe the right answer is approximately 250,000 Afghan soldiers, 150,000 Afghan police. We are currently planning to build to about half that level. I believe we can accelerate—we can't quite double our rate of growth, but we can increase it substantially, perhaps a third. I believe that doing so would take the commitment of an additional 10,000 or so U.S. advisers and trainers over the course of 2010.

But, I would like to echo something Steve said——

Senator CASEY. You mean noncombat troops——

Dr. NAGL. Not in—those are——

Senator CASEY. Right.

Dr. NAGL [continuing]. Those are advisers. But, frankly, sir, many, if not—an appreciable number of the soldiers we've lost in combat—and the chairman mentioned that August was the worst month of the war for us—an appreciable number of the soldiers we've lost have been advisers and trainers. So, no one should think that, because we're sending over trainers, that they're not going in harm's way. They will—and we will lose some in this hard fight against a vicious enemy.

So, another 10,000 advisers over the course of the next—over the course of 2010, but it's important that we mentor units, as well. So, they have to have American or international units to partner with, which will increase the rate of growth of those Afghan security forces, make them more capable, faster. And all of these efforts will ultimately lead to an earlier withdrawal, an earlier exit strategy that has accomplished our national security objectives.

Senator CASEY. Because of the prelude to my question, I'm down to just about a minute. But, maybe for our other two witnesses, can you just give a quick summation? When we talk about that border region—I don't think we've spent a lot of time in Washington talking about the extremist—the networks that are there. I'm aware of at least three networks—the Quetta Shura, which is in the southern end of the border between both countries; the Haqqani network; and then the so called H-I-Q, or H-I-G network. How would you describe the three of them? And are there major differences? And does one pose more of a threat to our security, or the security of the region, than another? I know that's a lot, and you've got 9 seconds, but——

Dr. BIDDLE. Just very briefly, the most threatening to U.S. national security interests is the Quetta Shura Taliban, which is based around the old Taliban government and Mullah Omar. The other two factions are people—are lead by people that I wouldn't want to have dinner with, but that I think are less ideologically committed and much more radically self-interested; and thus, you could conceivably imagine splitting off from the remainder of this alliance.

Were the preconditions for negotiating success present? And again, my concern is that, at the moment, I don't see those preconditions being present.

Senator CASEY. Thank you very much.

Mr. Stewart, I know I'm over but I'll——

Mr. STEWART. Unfortunately, it's an area I know very little about, so I have very little to say. Sorry, Senator. I'm not an expert on the details. In fact, I would say, as a caution on this, that the amount of information available on those groups is considerably more limited than is suggested by some of the confident statements made about them.

Senator CASEY. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator LUGAR. Thank you, Senator Casey.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Mr. Stewart, I think I understood you to say that one alternative we have in Afghanistan is to pursue a narrow counterterrorism objective and a humanitarian effort. Can you describe, in about a minute or less, how you define a narrow counterterrorism objective? What that would look like, in terms of troops, in terms of support from either the United States or an international effort?

Mr. STEWART. Yes. I think the central question is, What kind of benefit would al-Qaeda find in being based in Afghanistan? How would that increase their ability to harm the United States? Clearly, our priority isn't to keep them out of Afghanistan just for the sake of keeping them out of Afghanistan; it's to protect the United States. So, we need to look seriously at what we mean when we talk about the Taliban providing a safe haven. How safe is that haven? What can a very poor, technologically incompetent group like the Taliban really do to protect al-Qaeda?

To some extent, what they did in the leadup to 2001 was not much more than saying, "Pitch your tent over there and we're not going to hand you over to the United States." How much ability do they really have to protect al-Qaeda if they built a Quantico-style camp against Delta Force or against predators coming in?

In fact, curiously, one of the things that we've learned, is that a failed state may be less threatening to U.S. national security than a partially formed state. It's very noticeable that Osama bin Laden has chosen to be in Pakistan, not in Afghanistan, a country which has considerably more established state structures, and that is because, to some extent, he's protected by Pakistani claims to state sovereignty.

One of the things we may be learning through this period is that, in fact, states like Pakistan, or, of course, states like Iran, may be proved to be more damaging, more dangerous to U.S. national security, than failed states like Afghanistan or Somalia, where our freedom of operation is so much greater.

Senator SHAHEEN. But, I guess I still am not clear on what you're saying it would take, in terms of an American effort, to provide just that narrow counterterrorism objective. I understood what you said with respect to the ability of the Taliban to support al-Qaeda. But, what is not yet clear to me is what it would take for the United States to actually ensure that they don't have the ability to support al-Qaeda.

Mr. STEWART. So, if the only thing you were trying to do is to ensure that al-Qaeda did not discover in Afghanistan something that gave them a serious comparative advantage, a serious advantage in their ability to attack the United States, I believe you could do that with an intelligent use of Special Forces and intelligence operatives, whose job would simply be to identify those vary narrow group of people called "al-Qaeda" with an international objective against the United States, and then to eliminate them. If that's the only thing we're involved in, we don't need too many troops.

Senator SHAHEEN. Was that not, however, how—what we were doing for much of the last 7 years that we've been in Afghanistan? And it has not——

Mr. STEWART. It's worked——

Senator SHAHEEN [continuing]. Accomplished——

Mr. STEWART [continuing]. It's worked very well, Senator. There have been no al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. They haven't attacked us from Afghanistan. If our only objective is to stop al-Qaeda from reforming, we've won. We've achieved that objective.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, how would you respond to—I think it was Dr. Nagl's comments, that our efforts in Afghanistan have made Pakistan more stable? Would you agree with that?

Mr. STEWART. I can't see any evidence that our efforts in Afghanistan have made Pakistan more stable. I would consider Pakistan less stable today than it was. And I don't think that's largely because of our efforts in Afghanistan; that because of eternal Pakistani factors to which Afghanistan is largely irrelevant.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, when we were—I had the opportunity to visit, shortly after the President announced that new strategy for Afghanistan, and one of the things that I thought I heard from those that we talked to was that our efforts were important, not just in addressing the Taliban, but because of, as you've all pointed out I think, the relationship between the Taliban and al-Qaeda. And isn't one of the challenges here the fact that if they are successful, whether it's the Taliban—the bad Taliban, however we want to describe them—or al-Qaeda, that the potential for getting access to nuclear weapons because of the situation in Pakistan is one of the real challenges, and that that's part of what we're trying to address here? And so, I guess, if what we've done is to move al-Qaeda into Pakistan by the efforts that we've had on the ground in Afghanistan, how does that access to nuclear weapons in Pakistan and the potential destabilization there get affected by our reducing a footprint there to just what you're describing as a narrow counterterrorism object? And I guess I'd like for each of you to answer that question.

Dr. BIDDLE. Well, I suppose I'll start. I think the question of the security of the Pakistani nuclear arsenal turns centrally on the question of the survival of the secular Pakistani state. As long as the state survives, and as long as the state's writ runs, I think there's a reasonable basis for confidence that that arsenal is secure.

The problem is precisely if the Pakistani insurgency succeeds and either the government falls or the state collapses. And again, to the extent—to the extent that there is a serious United States national security interest uniquely engaged in Afghanistan and not elsewhere, it is precisely the concern that chaos on the other side of the Durand Line could have effects that would swamp what may be marginally deleterious effects of the United States presence on Pakistani public opinion now with the enormous massive problem of a hostile or—either a hostile state on the other side of the Durand Line or simply an uncontrolled environment of violence in which factions hostile to the Pakistani Government are running rampant.

This raises the issue that underlies several of your questions, which is, What is the meaning of a haven in this—in today's environment, with the Internet and with the ability to plan in remote locations? And I disagree, fundamentally, with Rory Stewart on the function that havens provide and the ability of the United States

to thwart geographic havens with Special Forces strikes or with drone attacks from a distance.

What havens do is not to provide real estate for the construction of tent farms where you can conduct training seminars. What havens do is to protect insurgent organizations or terrorists from human intelligence penetration on the ground, which is the primary threat to their survival. The efficacy of our drone attacks turns, importantly, on our ability to find intelligence on where these organizations, and where these individuals, are located. That intelligence comes to an important degree—not wholly, but to an important degree—from human intelligence through penetration on the ground, which would be made extraordinarily difficult by the presence of a hostile government that actively prevented people from getting access to the members of the organization. That's why control of the government underneath the drones is so important to the efficacy of drone-based counterterrorism, and another reason why, again, I think the problem here is that the component elements of what people talk about when they talk about counterinsurgency are very difficult to pull out of context and make them work on their own without the rest.

Senator SHAHEEN. Do you—you're nodding, Dr. Nagl, so I assume you agree with that.

Dr. NAGL. I agree with everything Steve said. I'd like to disagree with Rory a little bit, though.

What's happened over the past 8 years is that the Taliban has slowly gained strength, first—we chased it out of Afghanistan into Pakistan. It gained strength in Pakistan and started creeping across the border. And it has gained strength steadily in Afghanistan, and arguably continues to do so today, because of insufficient Afghan and international security forces on the Afghan side of the Durand Line. It gained strength in Pakistan, and achieved an extraordinary success, in March of this year, by taking the Swat River Valley, some 60 miles from Islamabad. At that point, because of—in no small part because of very diligent and impressive diplomatic efforts by a number of members of the administration, the Pakistani Government, which had ceded the Swat River Valley to the Pakistani Taliban, decided to retake it. It did so in a very unsophisticated counterinsurgency campaign, but in a successful one.

And it is important to note that the Pakistani Government has since continued to improve its cooperation with the United States, in both counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations. Any withdrawal or retreat on our part from the conduct of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism would put that progress at risk, in my opinion.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Senator LUGAR. Thank you very much, Senator Shaheen.

Senator Kaufman.

Senator KAUFMAN. Thank you, Senator Lugar.

I've tried to avoid, since I've been in the Senate, making statements before I make these. But I think the last two statements, by Dr. Biddle and Dr. Nagl, go a long way to explaining what I think is going on in Afghanistan.

And the other thing I'd like to point out, which has not been raised, because I think it's a basic misunderstanding of the Amer-

ican people—and that is, we left Afghanistan in 2003. We spent almost as much money in Iraq in 2008 as we spent in Afghanistan from 2003–2008. This is not like we've had a failed policy. We had the Taliban beat before we left, which is one of our big problems, in terms of convincing the people in Afghanistan to be with us, because we left in 1990 and left in 2009.

We've talked a lot—I think there's a lot of confusion here about what you can do, in terms of "build," if you don't do "clear" and "hold." There's been a number—I think, half a dozen comments, I think, here. So, Dr. Nagl, could you kind of just explain the difficulties—you did a little bit of it, in terms your Anbar—but, just the difficulties with doing the "build" part, the economic development, the governance, and all those other things, when you do not "clear" and "hold"?

Dr. NAGL. Yes, sir.

The peril of fighting an insurgency—in a conventional war, the hard part is killing your enemy. He's relatively easy to identify. You shoot the tanks that don't look like yours. In an unconventional war, an irregular war, a counterinsurgency campaign, the hard part is finding the enemy. And Steve has talked to the importance of having a good base, a government that is willing to allow you to conduct the kind of human intelligence that is essential to finding out who the insurgents are. If you have not provided that security network, the insurgents have freedom of action. You own only the ground you're standing on at any given point in time. And the insurgents, in particular, tend to operate through night letters. Very good article, in the Post on Monday about Kandahar, in which the Taliban has a great degree of control over what happens inside Kandahar, and they drop night letters through the front doors of people who are working with the United States, with the international community, with the Government of Afghanistan. And they tell them that, "If you continue to work for the government, if you continue to work for the security forces, your family will be killed, you will be killed." And they follow up on enough of those to make that a credible threat. Those sorts of night letters, which happen in the absence of a stable security network provided by counterinsurgent forces, make real progress impossible.

And, unfortunately, the Taliban is gaining strength in Kandahar. I believe that Kandahar is the next—is the locus of the Taliban-based insurgency inside Afghanistan. I believe it has to be cleared out. I believe that if it is not cleared out, any efforts we make to conduct economic development, to build Afghan security forces, will be crippled by the Taliban's ability to infiltrate and to destroy, at night, what we've built during the day.

Senator KAUFMAN. Mr. Stewart, I agree with a great deal of what you said, and your insights, but I was a little confused about Bosnia. It seems to me, in Bosnia, we did the "clear" and "hold," and then we did the "build." And without the "clear" and "hold," which we need troops to do—combat troops, local—so, is Bosnia really a good model for how we should be preceding in Afghanistan, under any circumstance, or any of the circumstances that you, kind of, spelled out?

Mr. STEWART. I think Bosnia is a symbol of hope. It's a symbol of how the complicated, messy engagement of the international

community, and particularly the United States, can, in the long term, do good in a fragile conflict zone. But, it's not a good analogy, as you suggested, Senator, from the point of view of the huge differences between those countries. Afghanistan is almost the limit case. So fragile, so poor, so traumatized, so lacking in basic structure or education, that the kinds of advances, which, in Bosnia, at its best, really involved simply liberating Bosnian capacity, reinforcing—in some cases, simply reconstructing things that had been there before. In Afghanistan, honestly there wasn't much there before. And I suppose—I'm absolutely with a lot of these concepts, if they could be done. And the only thing that I'm saying is that, on the basis of my experience in Afghanistan, that progress is much more difficult in that country than one could imagine, that even were you able to "clear" and "hold," the "building" part, as somebody who runs a development project, always takes four times as long, and you always achieve a quarter as much as you hope, simply because of the lack of capacity on the ground. So, it's really a note of pragmatic caution.

Thank you.

Senator KAUFMAN. Great, thanks. That was my—Dr. Biddle, as you know, in town, here, there's a lot of talk of the kind of Somalia raid or having—I mean, the same thing went on in Iraq. We can leave Iraq, but we're going to leave 35,000 troops behind. And when we find a terrorist, we can—can you, kind of, talk a little bit about what the problems are of using a Somalia-type-raid approach as a policy in Afghanistan?

Dr. BIDDLE. Yes. I think one source of insight is to look at Somalia itself. We have been, in principle, able to conduct raids from offshore in Somalia since the 1990s, and yet the country has continued to descend, and security, especially since foreign forces left Somalia fairly recently, has gotten worse, not better.

We will occasionally be able to find a target, and we will occasionally be able to kill an important leader. That's a different thing from being able to do enough to prevent a place from getting worse rather than better, and to prevent people that we find threatening to us from operating there.

And I think there are a variety of challenges facing this kind of counterterrorism from offshore approach. One of them, which I think is the most important, is the one I alluded to earlier, that counterterrorism from a distance centrally requires intelligence information on where the targets are. If you cede control of the government and you cede control of the country, you lose the ability to find the targets. If you can't find the targets, none of the rest matters.

Second, if we're going to do this kind of attack with things like drones, for instance—drones are not wonder-weapons; they are large, slow airplanes, without pilots, that tend to spend a long time over a specific point of territory. It doesn't take very much of an air force to clear the skies of American drones of the kind that we prefer to use for these kinds of campaigns.

We depend on the host government in Pakistan for a variety of key enablers for the success, whatever it may be—and that's unclear—of this campaign. One of them is intelligence; another is

a benign airspace of the kind that these drones are designed to require for successful operation.

A third enabler that we require for this kind of campaign is basing that enables these drones to maintain the kind of dwell time over target that they require in order to be effective. At the moment, it has been reported that the Pakistanis provide the basing. Pakistan and Afghanistan are remote, landlocked countries for which basing is difficult to find.

In general, I think what this suggests—for the case of standoff counterterrorism, in particular, but, by extension, to the larger collection of middle-way options that I understand are popular—is that they depend on a variety of things that you tend to lose if you take them out of the larger context and try and do them alone.

Senator KAUFMAN. Thank you very much.

I had—can I have one more question, since I'm the last one? I wanted to ask Dr. Stewart—and this is not, like, a devil's-advocate hypothetical; I mean, I really think this would happen.

If, in fact, we leave Afghanistan, and if, in fact, the Taliban takes over Afghanistan, and if, in fact, the Pakistan Taliban does what they did before, is move out of Swat Valley and move toward Islamabad, with the support—nothing to worry them in their back—with the support of the Taliban from Afghanistan, isn't that—I mean, what do you think the probability of something like that happen? And that would be incredibly—as we know, would be incredibly destabilizing to Pakistan.

Mr. STEWART. I think this is a very important worst-case scenario to end with, because, of course, that is the major problem. I mean, as Dr. Biddle said from the beginning, our real issue here is not actually counterterrorism, our real issue here is what kind of situation we have in Pakistan and what kind of situation we want in Pakistan.

On the probabilities of it, I would say, personally, very, very low. I don't believe the Taliban in Afghanistan are in any position to take over the country, have planes, control the airspace, deny the United States from having bases in that country. So, I think we need to be realistic, that even a reduction in troops would be extremely unlikely to lead to a Taliban takeover of Afghanistan.

But, if I follow it right through to your worst-case scenario, if you imagine that very worst-case situation, if you imagine even the possibility that they invite back in al-Qaeda, but, most importantly of all, if you imagine that somehow the Pakistani state, which—far stronger than the Afghan state—I mean, as they revealed in the Swat Valley, and as John was saying, I mean, who are really capable, when they want to, of showing real muscle. I mean, there's much more capacity in the Pakistan Government than the Afghan Government. It's largely a question of will. It's whether they want to do this. It's not that they lack the capacity to do these things. But, were Pakistan to fall, were there to be some sort equivalent of an Iranian revolution in Pakistan, that would have massive and very deleterious effects on the United States foreign policy position worldwide.

So, I certainly think everybody in this room agrees that our No. 1 priority is to stop Pakistan going in that direction. The question is, How much relevance does our talk about counterterrorism and

our talk about Afghanistan have to the question of the future of Pakistan? And my view is, perhaps not as much as we pretend.

Thank you.

Senator KAUFMAN. I want to thank all the panelists. This has been an excellent discussion.

And I want to thank the ranking member and the chairman, in his absence, for having this hearing. I think it's been very, very helpful.

Thank you.

Senator LUGAR. Well, I join you, Senator Kaufman, in thanking the chairman for scheduling this hearing.

In a sense, all the members are reading, as you are, that General McCrystal has given documents to the administration, which they are reviewing. It's not clear how long they will analyze these documents before we know something about them. Beyond that, there at least is a hint that General McChrystal, after a certain indefinite period of time, may also forward some thoughts about troop strength and at that point, the administration may have a comment. But, this is why this hearing is especially important for us, in terms of constructive education and an exploration, really, of the background for whatever decisions may be made, because inevitably we will have some responsibility for that.

And so, we thank each one of you for your assistance to our understanding, and we're genuinely appreciative, as Senator Kaufman and the chairman have stated.

With that, the hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 5 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]