

# AFGHANISTAN: EVOLVING U.S. STRATEGY

EDITOR  
DR NOOR UL HAQ

ASSISTANT EDITOR  
YASIR IMTIAZ

## CONTENTS

<b>Preface</b>	v
<b><u>National</u></b>	
1. U.S., FATA and Afghanistan	1
2. Obama's Foreign Policy Challenges	3
3. Obama's Early Initiatives	7
4. Obama's Afghan Policy	10
5. Pakistan's Eight Points for Holbrooke	13
6. It is Af-Pak-Ind, Mr Obama	16
7. Drone Attacks will Continue	20
8. U.S. has No Long-term Designs on Afghanistan, says Obama	23
9. Obama Hints at Talks with Moderate Taliban	25
10. US Strategy to Split Taliban Draws Mixed Reaction	25
11. An Afghanistan Perspective	27
<b><u>International</u></b>	
12. From Great Game to Grand Bargain	30
13. Fearing Another Quagmire in Afghanistan	43
14. Gates Predicts 'Slog' in Afghanistan	46
15. Debunking Five Fallacies on Afghanistan	48
16. Afghanistan will be a Quagmire for al Qaeda	54
17. Biden Addresses Munich Conference	57
18. Obama Team Outlines 'New Realism' for Afghanistan	65
19. A Turnaround Strategy	67
20. Our Man in Kabul	72
21. Obama Sees Afghan Situation Deteriorating	74
22. Obama OKs 17,000 More Troops for Afghanistan	74

23.	Strategies for Afghanistan	76
24.	Taliban Strategy in Afghanistan is Smart Politics, So U.S. Needs to Wise Up	80
25.	The Way Forward	82
26.	Our Must-Win War	85
27.	Surging Toward Failure in Afghanistan	88
28.	What's New in the Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan	90

## PREFACE

The evolving U.S. strategy for Afghanistan seems to be based on “realism” when it aims at attainable goals matched by resources. Its objective is “a stable Afghanistan that is not a haven for terrorists”. Now, under the new thinking, “stability” has acquired priority over “democracy”. In addition, there is emphasis on both defence and diplomacy. There is consensus on engaging Taliban and a broader approach to the region involving Central Asian states, Russia, China and India. Pakistan, however, continues to be a “crucial” actor.

U.S. President Barack Obama’s selection of Richard Holbrooke as presidential representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan (designated as AFPAK region) implies that Afghanistan and Pakistan are being considered as one geo-political region because it is thought that al Qaeda and Taliban militants have safe havens in Pakistan. In fact, as long as there is turmoil in Afghanistan, Pakistan will continue to suffer from terrorist attacks and remain a victim of terrorism. The al Qaeda/Taliban militants are active both in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and even beyond, targeting security forces, government offices, and other high profile targets such as the Marriot Hotel in Islamabad and the Taj Mahal Hotel in Bombay.

Although there has been no ground attack inside Pakistan along the Afghan border since September last by military Special Operations units operating in collaboration with the CIA, Pakistan’s problems have been multiplying due to attacks by unmanned Predator aircraft against the supposed high level al Qaeda and Taliban militants. These attacks, instead, cause death to hundreds of civilians, and are therefore being perceived by the public as American invasion of Afghanistan/Pakistan. The numerous civilian casualties are arousing the religious-nationalistic feelings of Pushtuns, strengthening the militants, and are partly responsible for the resurgence of Taliban in Afghanistan and along border areas of Pakistan. Presently, the war in Afghanistan is not going well for the U.S.

As for Pakistan, its security interests do not allow it to transfer all its troops towards the western borders, because the public perceives a

continuous threat from India, whose leaders had not willingly accepted the emergence of Pakistan based on the agreed principle that the “contiguous Muslim majority areas would constitute Pakistan”. The state of Jammu and Kashmir, which is contiguous to Pakistan and which had over 77 per cent Muslim population, should have been an integral part of Pakistan. The UN resolutions on Kashmir required a plebiscite under UN auspices, which is being denied to the people of Kashmir.

The solution demands that the Pakistan-Afghan border should be manned by NATO-Afghan and Pakistan forces with high tech equipment, greater manpower and resources to stop the movement of militants, as Pakistan alone does not have enough resources to seal the rugged western border. Second, millions of Afghan refugees are scattered throughout Pakistan, who are facilitating cross-border movement, and need to be repatriated to Afghanistan. Third, the traditional *jirga* system in the region should be given due importance to resolve animosities and disputes. Fourth, it is imperative to strengthen the Afghan government and its institutions, especially the armed forces and police. Finally, the prevalent perception that it is an “American war” and that the U.S. and the West have been consistently unjust to Muslims should be revisited.

The *IPRI Factfile* provides selected articles and reports appearing in the national and international media from November 11, 2008 till March 27, 2009, when Barack Obama announced America’s new strategy for Afghanistan.

March 31, 2009

Noor ul Haq

---

## NATIONAL

### U.S., FATA AND AFGHANISTAN

After Barack Obama's victory in the US presidential elections many people wonder whether there will be a reduction of tension in the region. The policies of great powers are grounded in these countries' particular geo-strategic compulsions. Such geo-strategic determinants remain permanent and do not shift. Mr Obama may have won an election, but he will have limited choices as far as Pakistan and Afghanistan are concerned. This election has not given Mr Obama a big mandate. He obtained 52 percent of the popular vote. The US remains a divided country and it will be difficult for the new president to usher in a radically new policy in Afghanistan.

During the campaign Mr Obama stated that he will focus on Afghanistan. Although he may shift his focus of attention from Iraq to Afghanistan when he assumes office, he would be guided by his country's approved policies, one of which is the US National Defence Strategy 2008. Unless this is drastically revised--and I don't see that happening--the policies circumscribe what Mr Obama will be able to do.

Firstly, defence policy clearly states that threats to regional peace and security come from areas which are soft and lightly governed. They permit non-state actors to establish safe havens. It is thus clear that under this definition FATA and other isolated pockets causing a threat to global peace will be the focus of US attention. Secondly, the strategy states that unless violent extremist movements are neutralised the US will remain under threat--an obvious pointer towards Al-Qaeda. Thirdly, it stresses that the US will ensure the free flow of energy so that it is not affected by instability. Among other things, it means that the US military would wish to hold critical points in locating its bases. One expects long-term US presence in Afghanistan because of its strategic location on the path to the Central Asian energy resources. Fourthly, the US strategy speaks of containing an expanding China, which is emerging as a regional hegemon having close links with Pakistan. All these factors of the US strategic vision indicate that Pakistan's position will remain exceptionally critical because of her being a neighbor of Afghanistan.

Obama has said that the real war is in Afghanistan and wants NATO and other US allies to carry more of the Afghan war burden. This means

that he expects Europe to supply more troops and carry a higher proportion of the financial burden of the war. Sadly for Mr Obama, the populations of European countries dislike wars and a large proportion of their voters are in no mood to help. Secondly, Europeans are extremely averse to seeing casualties. Many European nations are already withdrawing troops owing to the global financial crisis.

Therefore, for all practical purposes it will be unlikely for the US to have a sizable force, which is required to stabilise Afghanistan and defeat the Taliban. If the US does not have the numbers to stabilise Afghanistan the Americans obviously lack the strength to launch any large-scale incursion into FATA. So what real options does Mr Obama have in this matter? He may either continue with the present holding strategy in Afghanistan while mounting pressure on Pakistan. However, to continue with an endless holding strategy will be politically suicidal for him. If the US withdraws from Afghanistan it would be like transferring power to the Taliban and that would again be something disastrous for the new president. Or Mr Obama could be forced by circumstances to agree to the Afghan government negotiating a power-sharing agreement with the Taliban for establishing a coalition government based on providing representation to the various ethnic groups. This too is likely to lead to another round of war because the Taliban are an ideological movement and such movements never share power.

All these options will be anathema to those Americans who do not subscribe to Mr Obama's worldview and did not vote for him. They constituted 48 percent of US voters in the presidential election. This analysis clearly shows that despite what the US defence strategy may state the range of options before the next president are limited. An examination of the situation presents only two probable options that are available to Mr Obama. He continues on the present course of a long-term holding action (a war of attrition) in the hope that the concurrent transformational efforts may produce a more pliable generation of Taliban leadership in the future who are amenable to a settlement. The second imminent probability is that pressure will be mounted on Pakistan to do more. This course of policy begs the question whether Pakistan holds the key to neutralising the Taliban inside Afghanistan. Under the latter assumption Pakistan will come under more pressure. Secondly, we are going to see more and deeper attacks by the UAVs. No one stops to ask what exactly are the UAVs achieving? At best they may succeed in getting rid of some Al-Qaeda leaders. Yet these leaders'

elimination has little impact on the reduction of the overall strength of the Taliban movement inside Afghanistan. The Taliban continue to expand their area of control inside Afghanistan, and Pakistan has nothing to do with that. Therefore, policing by air through the UAVs does not get us near a solution of the problem.

On the other hand, the related collateral deaths as a result of UAV attacks in FATA and Afghanistan increase acrimony against the US. Under these hopeless circumstances, what should Mr Obama do? One can sympathise with his situation and refer him to the US defence strategy itself and to one of its rarely highlighted gems of wisdom, which says that victory against insurgencies does not lie in the use of military force alone. Success would lie in taking other measures of a transformation nature which relate to economic growth and political participation as the means to removal of grievances which are at the heart of insurgencies. Building the capacity of the Afghan national army to do the fighting would also help.

It is thus clear that one should not hope for too much with the arrival of a new leader in the US. The war in Afghanistan will continue to rage while pressure will mount on Pakistan in FATA, although what happens there has only a marginal influence on the fighting inside Afghanistan. The solution to the Afghan war lies in Afghanistan.

Khalid Aziz, *News*, November 11, 2008  
[http://www.thenews.com.pk/editorial\\_detail.asp?id=146042](http://www.thenews.com.pk/editorial_detail.asp?id=146042)

## OBAMA'S FOREIGN POLICY CHALLENGES

With Barack Obama's election America has turned a new page in its history. Will this landmark moment be seized to give US foreign policy a new direction? An anxious world awaits a change in course from a man who on the election trail spoke repeatedly of the need to build a new international consensus to confront the transnational problems the world faces today.

President-elect Obama inherits daunting foreign-policy challenges at a time when his pressing preoccupation will be domestic: dealing with the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Some believe that domestic priorities will so consume his attention that he will initially opt for a cautious foreign policy approach. But this does not square with the imperative to take pressing decisions about the two wars Washington is involved in. Obama has to confront the consequences of both economic

and strategic overreach.

In confronting a very troubled world Obama will need to address both the “urgent” and the “important.” Amongst the “important” tasks is to repair America’s reputation and rebuild trust, so gravely undermined by the unilateralist and overbearing global conduct of the US under President Bush.

The enthusiastic international approval of America’s presidential choice now provides Obama with an extraordinary opportunity to tap this goodwill to re-establish US credibility, especially in the Muslim world. This is not simply a matter of “reaching out,” but of fundamental change in policy. It also means complying with the rules of the international system that the US expects other nations to observe. Obama should move decisively on his promise to close down the prison at Guantanamo Bay, the most visible symbol of the Bush Administration’s disregard for rule of law.

America’s poor standing in the Muslim world is rooted in the unresolved disputes in which Washington has either been disinterested or singularly un-evenhanded, placing the security of Israel and its need for cheap oil above and beyond the concerns of others or considerations of justice and international law.

Among the steps Obama can take in the Middle East, and one of the “important” issues for him to deal with, is to signal an early resolve to address the issue of Palestine, which symbolises the sense of historical grievance and injustice of Muslims everywhere. This, along with translating Obama’s election pledge to pursue talks without preconditions with Iran and Syria, will help reverse the belligerent approach that characterised the Bush years. Indeed, without engagement with Iran, no policy change will be possible, given Tehran’s influence on every issue in the region: Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Afghanistan.

Obama has already spelled out the direction of such realignment, pledging to wind down from Iraq in the next 16 months (whether this timetable is adhered to is an open question), and switch strategic focus and resources to Afghanistan. This would aim to correct the monumental blunder of the Bush Administration that took its eye off the ball from what Obama sees as global terrorism’s real front, to give strategic priority to an unnecessary war.

This contributed to the marked deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan, acknowledged in the closing months of the Bush administration in the leaked draft of the National Intelligence Estimate

that represents the assessment of the US intelligence community's 17 agencies and departments. This painted a "grim" picture of Afghanistan, describing it to be in a "downward spiral," and cast doubts on the ability of Kabul to stem the rise in the Taliban's influence. In similar vein, Admiral Michael Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told Congress in September that he was not convinced the US was winning in Afghanistan.

This prompted the Bush White House to order a major review of Afghan policy that is expected to conclude this month. The new head of Centcom, General David Petraeus, is engaged in his own review, while the Pentagon is conducting high-level reviews of Afghanistan. Following his promise to give top priority to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Obama's most urgent foreign challenge will be to overhaul Afghan strategy, and evolve a more regional approach on the premise that present policy has failed. He recognises that a more comprehensive and effective strategy entails greater focus on Pakistan, regarded as pivotal to the goals of defeating terrorism and stabilising Afghanistan. Both Pakistan and Afghanistan will require a new and integrated foreign-policy strategy that relies on soft, rather than hard, power. This means evolving a holistic approach that enhances the stability of Pakistan and Afghanistan in a mutually reinforcing way.

With Pakistan, the most significant first step should address the trust deficit. Indeed, for the first time in the history of these chequered ties, the relationship is held together precariously only at the leadership level. Building confidence should be among Obama's pressing priorities, because on that will depend both the quantum and quality of cooperation that Washington and Islamabad will be able to mobilise in order to stabilise the region.

The place to start is to cease unilateral US strikes into Pakistan's tribal area, which have inflamed public opinion and risk undercutting Islamabad's counter-insurgency efforts and destabilising the country. Instead, Washington should help strengthen Pakistan's capacity to contain the militants. The Obama administration should recognise that Afghanistan's stabilisation cannot be achieved at the expense of Pakistan's security. Indeed, the military missteps and misplaced priorities of the Bush years have already led to a situation where the war in Afghanistan has increasingly been pushed into Pakistan.

Obama is committed to a troop surge in Afghanistan. But without a radical change in strategy, this will not reverse the collapse of security

there, and likely worsen the situation. It risks miring the US in an unwinnable war without end. Moscow, after all, deployed over 100,000 troops at the height of its occupation of Afghanistan and failed spectacularly to subdue the resistance in a terrain that has been the graveyard of empires.

A rethink of strategy must start with redefining US goals, distinguishing between what is vital (disruption of terrorist networks) and what is best left for Afghans to undertake (building democracy, transforming society). So far, Washington has tried to do several things, in a piecemeal and inchoate way. This has resulted in the fusion between Pakhtun nationalism and Muslim radicalism which have fuelled the growing insurgency and risks turning this into a “Pakhtun war of liberation.” Over-reliance on military force has led to high civilian casualties and become a potent factor behind support for the Taliban.

A new strategy must seek to decouple al Qaeda and the Taliban, by engaging the Taliban in a reconciliation process and holding out the offer for an eventual withdrawal of foreign forces in return for a cessation of attacks and suicide bombings and support for the creation of a viable Afghan military. Meanwhile, emphasis should shift from bombing campaigns to political accommodation and economic development and reconstruction. Efforts to build peace should be undertaken region by region, village by village, through power-sharing arrangements and disbursement of development resources via local communities. A new Afghan grand assembly, or Loya Jirga, should be convened to endorse such a process. This plan will also need to have all regional stakeholders on board. Washington should help to orchestrate a regional consensus that should also include Iran and Russia.

Pakistan’s political and military leadership, should for its part, evolve a credible plan for regional stabilisation, including a more coherent strategy for its own border regions, and share this with Washington while the various policy reviews are in progress. This should specify redlines so that the US understands the limits of cooperation dictated by Pakistan’s own security considerations and commits to respect Pakistan’s sovereignty. The window of opportunity for Islamabad to press its views should be thoughtfully and boldly utilised.

In doing so, Pakistan’s leadership should remind the US of the need to get down to addressing the “root causes” and “breeding grounds” of violent extremism and terrorism: poverty, deprivation, political injustice, and hopelessness. Engaging substantively with the grievances that

terrorists exploit is not to be “soft” on terrorism, but to be “smart” about meeting the challenge.

Dr Maleeha Lodhi, *News*, November 17, 2008  
<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print1.asp?id=147149>

## OBAMA’S EARLY INITIATIVES

No sooner had the music died and the Capitol cleared of celebrities than President Barack Obama got down to the business of the state.

Aware that the US was confronted by its worst economic crisis while entangled in two wars overseas, Obama had been brutally frank in his inaugural address, signalling a sharp break from his predecessor’s policies. Though renouncing the curtailment of liberties and affirming that he would “reject as false the choice between our safety and our ideals”, he struck a note of defiance on terrorism and asserted that Americans would “not apologise for our way of life, nor will we waver in its defence”.

Of special interest was his message to Muslim nations when he declared that America sought a “new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect”, while he warned autocrats “who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent” that they were “on the wrong side of history”. Pious sentiments that will take a monumental effort to translate into reality!

Soon thereafter, the president waded into the intractable problems, issuing an executive order to close the ill-famed Guantanamo prison and appointing veteran politician George Mitchell as special envoy for the Middle East and the highly regarded Richard Holbrooke as special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Obama avoided references to the “war on terror”, a phrase pregnant with misgivings in the Muslim world, or to our border area as “the epicentre of global terror”. Instead, he vowed to “forge a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan”. Nonetheless, he cautioned “those who seek to advance their aims by introducing terror and slaughtering innocents, we say to you now, that our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken”. The appointments are acknowledgment that without close, institutional American involvement, these problems could destabilise critical regions and destroy all prospects of combating terrorism. But, in more specific terms, what will Obama’s policies be in the region identified as constituting the greatest threat to the US?

An evolution in his thinking can be easily discerned. In 2007, Obama

had threatened to act unilaterally against high-value targets in Pakistan if Islamabad failed to do so itself. The next year, he spoke in favour of a policy that compelled “Pakistani actions against terrorists”. A quick learner, Obama modified his stand in 2008, supporting the Biden-Lugar bill and, more importantly, emphasising that greater democracy in Pakistan was essential for tackling terrorism.

A most significant change, however, was his endorsement of the “regional approach”, an important element of which is support for the normalisation of Pakistan-India ties and the early resolution of the Kashmir issue, albeit to allay Pakistan’s concern for its eastern border so that its focus could remain on combating terrorism. Not surprisingly, these remarks upset the Indians who have worked assiduously to keep foreign involvement out of South Asia.

While not disputing the premise that Afghanistan’s problems could not be resolved without addressing the sources of support for terrorism in Pakistan, nor quibbling with the assessment that meeting Pakistan’s security concerns would encourage Islamabad to go the extra mile in its anti-terror efforts, Delhi reacted sharply to any linkage between its occupation of Kashmir and extremism in the region.

India’s concerns were heightened by British Foreign Secretary David Miliband’s article in the *Guardian*, in which he emphasised that the “resolution of the dispute over Kashmir would deny extremists one of their main calls to arms and allow Pakistani authorities to focus more effectively on tackling the threat on their western borders”. When Miliband echoed those sentiments during his recent visit, Indian officials could not contain their anger.

There have been other important, though subtle, changes in Obama’s thinking. In comments a week before assuming office, he charged that there was little emphasis on building infrastructure, combating narco-trafficking and ensuring reliance on the rule of law in Afghanistan. This theme was picked up by the NATO chief, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, who in an article in the *Washington Post* denounced the Karzai regime as “ineffective”. Analysts also noted that Obama’s national security advisor, Gen James Jones, in a study for the Atlantic Council, had earlier admitted that “the international community is not winning in Afghanistan”. These have given rise to speculation that Karzai is losing the West’s confidence.

As regards Richard Holbrooke’s appointment, some observers are intrigued by the change in his designation, especially as he had himself written about the need for a “regional approach” to resolve the Afghan

imbroglio. Was it then merely a change in form to mollify New Delhi, or did it represent a retreat in the face of Indian opposition, as claimed by its media and as confirmed by informed sources in Washington? Incidentally, in a recent report, the Asia Society endorses Obama's "regional approach", but seeks to reassure India that it need not fear the "re-hyphenation" of US relations with Pakistan and India. More importantly, it warns against any American pressure on India recalling that "the US has been wise not to try to mediate on Kashmir", while advocating a leadership role for India in multilateral institutions. Did these considerations weigh with Obama when he remarked recently that Kashmir is a "potential tar pit diplomatically"? Holbrooke's appointment will not be an unmixed blessing for us nor will the "regional approach" meet all our requirements, but it is nevertheless the only viable option available and therefore in our interest to ensure that the Americans do not resile from it.

The administration is in its infancy and will take time to evolve a new strategy for the region. Early indications point to Obama not hesitating to use the military option, as demonstrated by the recent drone attacks, but it will be buttressed by greater economic assistance and the provision of weapons essential for anti-terror operations.

Obama is also likely to demonstrate greater support for democracy in Pakistan as evident from his earlier message of congratulations to President Zardari, in which he praised the latter for pledging to "return to parliament the power unconstitutionally appropriated to the presidency" and characterised the judges' return as "an important step towards the restoration of a truly independent judiciary". But he will be a far more demanding "friend" than Bush.

Inclined to eschew personal or emotional factors, he is likely to show little patience with any weakening of our resolve and certainly none with our shenanigans. Meeting the challenges likely to come our way from the Obama administration will require a comprehensive strategy backed by national consensus and executed by a resolute leadership with skillful diplomacy.

Tariq Fatemi, *Dawn*, January 29, 2009  
<http://www.dawn.com/2009/01/29/op.htm#2>

---

## OBAMA'S AFGHAN POLICY

Our TV commentators and newspaper columnists have had a great deal to say about US Defence Secretary Robert Gates' testimony in Congress where he seemed to confirm that the drone attacks on suspected al Qaeda safe havens in Pakistan's tribal areas will continue. This is important to us as is Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's statement, when asked about the same drone attacks, that "there's little doubt in anyone's mind that the border areas between Afghanistan and Pakistan are a source of instability for Afghanistan, for Pakistan, and far beyond the borders of those two countries".

The government should acknowledge publicly that our own campaign against extremist and criminal elements in Swat and the tribal areas is floundering, that we do not have the resources to take on al Qaeda in the remote relatively inaccessible areas where they have ensconced themselves, and that drone attacks are helping rather than hindering our own anti-terrorism efforts.

Rather than allowing public debate to focus on the infringement of our sovereignty, we should be talking about our discussions with the Americans on how the targeting could be made more effective and how civilian casualties could be avoided. This may sound like we are making the best of a bad bargain, but that is the ground reality.

We have become a country in which the government has lost control over significant swathes of its territory, and in which bombings and suicide attacks are taking place all over the country not because of the foreign presence in Afghanistan, as some of us would like to believe, but because the extremists think that they have the strength and perhaps the support to be able to "Talibanise" Pakistan's polity.

On the other hand, we have a new administration in Washington that, perhaps even more than the Bush administration, will seek to make America safe against attacks from non-state actors. It recognises that Pakistan is a vital ally in the campaign given the belief that the al Qaeda safe havens are in Pakistan or along the Pak-Afghan border. It is prepared to offer the economic assistance that Pakistan needs and to finance the military operations needed to quell al Qaeda and indigenously inspired insurgencies with which Pakistan has now to contend.

It will even make noises about helping Pakistan resolve its problems with India and will certainly work hard to prevent any Indian moves that impede Pakistan's anti-terrorism effort. If this fails, however, we can be

sure that they will be prepared to take other measures to “keep America safe”.

For the moment, however, let us return to what Gates had to say about Afghanistan and the goals he believes the Obama administration should set for itself in that benighted country. In his prepared testimony, he said that “Our primary goal is to prevent Afghanistan from being used as a base for terrorists and extremists to attack the US and our allies, and whatever else we need to do flows from that objective.”

Later, while taking questions, he said that “If we set ourselves the objective of creating some sort of Central Asian Valhalla over there, we will lose.” In an earlier press conference at the Pentagon, Gates had spoken of the goals that had been set for Afghanistan being “too broad and too far into the future”, and opined that “we need more concrete goals that can be achieved realistically within three to five years in terms of re-establishing control in certain areas, providing security for the population, going after al Qaeda, preventing the re-establishment of terrorism, better performance in terms of delivery of services to the people, some very concrete things.”

Gates has also called upon the European coalition partners to take on a greater part of the burden for economic development and to contribute the funding necessary to build the Afghan army to the proposed strength of 134,000. Administration officials have said, echoing the thought that Obama had often expressed in the campaign, that the new administration wanted to be able to focus its effort in Afghanistan on the elimination of the al Qaeda.

In the new dispensation in Washington, there appears to be a realisation that the deterioration in the situation in Afghanistan is attributable largely to ineffective administration, corruption and lack of economic development, and only in small part to the existence of safe havens in Pakistan. Gates himself conceded that the coordination of the efforts of “40 nations, hundreds of NGOs and international institutions” to help Afghanistan “have been less than stellar and too often the whole of these activities has added up to less than the sum of the parts”.

I did not, however, see anything that suggested a focus on economic development. What will happen is that American military expenditure in Afghanistan will probably come to \$60 billion a year but funds for economic development will remain abysmally low.

Secretary Clinton has said that “we view defence, diplomacy, and development as the three pillars of American foreign policy. That’s not

rhetoric. That is our commitment”. Secretary Gates has also talked about supporting an expanded role for the State Department, but the truth of the matter is that it is the Department of Defence that has the resources. As one State Department official put it, the Department of Defence has more musicians than the State Department has diplomats (the Pakistani Foreign Office is, of course, in even worse shape as compared not only to the military establishment but even to the ISI).

More importantly, there is the fear that President Obama, having said that Afghanistan is the central front in the fight against terrorism, is going to rely on the military option to achieve quick results because taking the development path is, in Afghanistan’s circumstances, likely to take a decade or more to produce substantive results.

In practice, this means that the Americans will be returning to the highly flawed policies with which they started in Afghanistan in 2001. At that time, they decided that eliminating al-Qaeda and the more violent Taliban rather than nation-building was their objective in Afghanistan. If this required resurrecting the warlord culture, patronising the Northern Alliance and turning a blind eye towards the renewed poppy cultivation, then this is what they would do.

Today, it seems that they see little hope for good governance emerging from Kabul and therefore intend to work with local leaders in the provinces and districts. This of course means working for the most part with warlords who, by force of arms, have achieved dominance locally. They also intend to arm villagers to help them fight the Taliban and while they deny that this will lead to the resurrection of warlord militias, this is what is bound to happen.

No development work is likely to take place even if the coalition partners were willing to take it on, because the outline of the emerging American strategy does not appear to suggest that they will have the forces to provide the security needed for such work. The Afghan National Army, even if comes up to scratch, will be of little help since by all accounts it is going to be largely Tajik officered and will therefore be even less welcome in the troubled Taliban dominated Pushtun areas than coalition forces. There is also a very real fear that this may lead, despite the strong nationalism of the Afghans, to a north-south divide.

Karzai is under fire in Washington. Obama probably shares Joe Biden’s aversion to Karzai but it seems unlikely that before the elections that must be held this year the Americans or the Afghans can find a suitable replacement. The prospect of strong leadership and good

governance will remain a distant dream.

Pakistan must therefore assume that Afghanistan will remain a mess and that American aspirations notwithstanding, the Americans will be mired in that quagmire for some time to come. For Pakistan, it is therefore imperative to devise policies that will to the maximum extent possible insulate it from Afghanistan and prevent developments in Afghanistan from adding to the destabilisation in Pakistan itself.

Najmuddin A Shaikh, *Daily Times*, January 30, 2009  
[http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009\01\30\story\\_30-1-2009\\_pg3\\_2](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009\01\30\story_30-1-2009_pg3_2)

## PAKISTAN'S EIGHT POINTS FOR HOLBROOKE

Speaking in Washington to a conference sponsored by the Reserve Officers Association on Monday, Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen said, "I never talk about Afghanistan without mentioning Pakistan."

### **Mullen Emphasized Two Key Issues**

One, that "establishing good governance is the lead issue for Afghanistan." Two, that policy discussions on Afghanistan policy discussions must include ample consideration of extremist forces being able to set up shop in neighbouring Pakistan. Mullen's general focus was on the possible resources crunch that may hit US military operations in these times of recession.

### **For Pakistan Mullen's Views on Afghanistan are Significant**

Mullen, like many others in the Obama administration, are emphasising both the significance and the need to defeat the insurgency. The expectation from Pakistan is that it will help in ensuring the defeat of the Taliban. How realistic this expectation is and what kind of policy is likely to at least initiate a viable political and security-enforcement process in Afghanistan are key questions for

Pakistan—which has suffered greatly because of its own policies and the policies of other countries in this country. In addition to the deployment of 30,000 additional US troops in Afghanistan the appointment of General Eikenberry as ambassador to Afghanistan is also on the cards. Eikenberry, completed his 18-month command in

Afghanistan in 2007, is familiar with that country's complex problems and knows the players in Afghanistan.

Significantly, if Eikenberry's appointment goes through, the Obama administration will have four influential voices on Afghanistan, men with military orientation. The others are General David Petraeus, head of the Central Command, General David McKiernan, the top commander in Afghanistan, and General James Jones, a retired Marine Corps officer who is Obama's national security adviser.

To signal the importance that Afghanistan holds for the Obama administration Ambassador Holbrooke will shortly be arriving in Pakistan. As Holbrooke arrives what is it that Pakistan is planning to tell him? How does Pakistan view the situation, what is Pakistan's advice to Washington? Perhaps Pakistan must present its comprehensive position to Holbrooke. As Pakistan works on improving its relations with Kabul and also communicates its concerns to Washington perhaps the bulk of its views on Afghanistan have already been shared with Kabul and Washington. But the Holbrooke visit warrants a comprehensive recall. Such a policy-based recall must include the following eight points.

One, the key trigger for Pakistan's own expanding and complex FATA problem lies in the continued war in Afghanistan. The problem is Afghanistan, not FATA. A near, not absolute, historical analogy could be FATA being for the Afghans today what Cambodia was for the Vietnamese. The Americans must not misread the situation today. Another Vietnam neither can the Americans afford nor can our already volatile region.

Two, unless a genuine political reconciliation effort is initiated in Afghanistan there will never be peace in Afghanistan. Taliban have to be the key interlocutors for whoever governs from Kabul. Many senior officials, including generals from NATO countries, have repeatedly maintained that there is no military solution to Afghanistan's problems. It is for this reason alone that Washington's NATO allies have been reluctant to send additional forces to Afghanistan and to provide transport helicopters, military trainers and other support personnel. Only recently has the US defence secretary Robert Gates openly criticised the NATO allies for not delivering on their promises.

Three, making Karzai the fall guy for a failed policy will not help, but removing the flaws in Washington's Afghan policy will. The key flaw has been Washington's objective to seek the political death of the Taliban either by military defeat or by surrender. Eight years of this policy has

brought death and destruction to the Afghan people. No less has this brought about the expanding military control and political influence of the Taliban.

Four, US drone attacks on Pakistani territory causing the death of innocent Pakistanis must stop. These attacks have continued to compromise Pakistan's own effort to deal with the source of an acute internal security crisis. For example, Pakistan's own effort to deal with terrorism is weakened as US drone attacks strengthen the ranks of the lethally angry and armed militias and criminals.

Five, to aid Pakistan in tracking and fighting militants operating within Pakistani territory and from keeping its Pakistan-Afghan border secure against movement of foreign militants, Washington should provide Pakistan the military means that Pakistani forces have repeatedly requested to ensure effective intelligence gathering, night-time vision and aerial mobility. It is evidently Washington's lack of trust in its key non-ISAF military partner that has prevented the Americans from providing this equipment to Pakistani. In some respects the distrust is reminiscent of the mid-eighties when Pakistan, as a key partner in the CIA- funded war, wanted to purchase AWACS from the US. While the US military recommended the sales the State Department opposed it on the plea that Pakistan would use them against India. Maybe an accurate assessment. However, what is absolutely true today is that greater trust among these non-NATO allies is an absolute must if the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan is to improve.

Six, the mini-jirga process must be viewed as an integral part of resolving the Afghan crisis. The jirga process, to be led by Kabul and Islamabad, should get the full backing of all the foreign players in Afghanistan.

Seven, to deal with the continuing crisis of governance there must be a multiple increase in US expenditure on development activities in Afghanistan. According to recent reports for every 100 million dollars being spent on military activities in Afghanistan only seven million dollars is being spent on development.

Eight, Afghan refugees must return to Afghanistan. The unbearable pressure of almost three million refugees on Pakistan, a country already reeling under resource constraints and new challenges of security, must end. The international community has to be more supportive and appreciative of Pakistan's Afghan refugee problem.

Pakistan must present its position clearly and cogently. Unless

Washington recasts its Afghan policy in a politico-military cast there will be no end to war in Afghanistan. Endless war in Afghanistan also means continued warring and destabilisation in the bordering regions within Pakistan. In the decade of the eighties the primary roots of Afghanistan lay in its neighbourhood, including Pakistan, and in distant capitals including Washington, London and Riyadh, where policies for defeating the "evil Soviets" were being prepared and bankrolled. The Soviet invasion was rolled back and the Soviet Union was broke up, but the huge costs involved included a warring Afghanistan, a security nightmare in many parts of Pakistan, including the NWFP, the rise of transnational, militarised and violent militias using religion, the emergence of suicide bombers, the rise of political extremism, and so on.

Pakistan fully partnered, and indeed authored, the anti-Soviet war of the eighties. Its fallout on Pakistan leaves no doubt in the minds of Pakistanis that that policy was a very costly blunder committed by military dictator General Zia-ul-Haq. Agha Shahi, Pakistan's illustrious foreign minister at that time, had warned the general against an "embrace" with the Americans over Afghanistan. Shahi's famous words were, "Only a handshake with the American not an embrace." But Pakistan's ruling generals were then evidently confident that they could manage an "embrace" on their own terms. From Pakistan's blunder of the eighties onwards our policymakers should have learnt the virtue of wisdom and of realism in policymaking. Now is the time for them to invoke that virtue.

Ambassador Holbrooke should be told that unless a holistic politico-military and development approach to resolving the Afghan problem is adopted, his efforts to initiate a regional peace process in Afghanistan will not succeed. More importantly for Pakistan, it cannot afford a scenario of continued war in Afghanistan. The positive outcome of Pakistan's participation in the US and ISAF effort in Afghanistan will depend largely on the extent to which the US will incorporate the above eight points in its Afghan strategy.

Nasim Zehra, *News*, February 4, 2009  
<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print1.asp?id=160696>

## IT IS AF-PAK-IND, MR OBAMA

Having declared during the election campaign that Afghanistan was the central front in the fight against terrorism – the "good" war on which

America should have been focussing all along – Obama has taken some quick steps to demonstrate how serious he is about winning it. Within days of taking office, he appointed Holbrooke to execute a new Afghanistan policy and dispatched him to the region. A day later, he authorised drone attacks on targets in Pakistan. These attacks, which take place with the connivance of the Zardari government, have continued since then and their scope has been expanded to include Baitullah Mehsud and his followers, besides militants from Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. On Feb 17, Obama announced plans to send an additional 17,000 troops to the 33,000-strong contingent already there. Ultimately, 30,000 additional troops could be deployed in the coming year or so.

At the same time, the Obama Administration is moving to complete a review of its Afghan strategy before NATO holds its next summit on April 2. The new strategy will pursue a more comprehensive regional approach. Pakistan will have a crucial role in that strategy in view of the perception that safe havens provided to al-Qaeda and Taliban elements in FATA is a major cause of the growing insurgency in Afghanistan. Obama has declared that his administration would approach the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan ("Af-Pak" in Washington-speak) as a single issue.

Many American analysts believe that if a terrorist attack takes place on the United States, it is likely to be launched from FATA. Obama has said there was "no doubt" that there were safe havens along Pakistan's border with Afghanistan where terrorists were operating. A classified Pentagon report urges Obama to concentrate more on targeting sanctuaries inside Pakistan with the aid of Pakistani military forces. Dennis Blair, the director of National Intelligence, told Congress on Feb 12 that no improvement was possible in Afghanistan without Pakistan taking control of its border areas. The peace agreement reached by the government in Swat has further heightened US concern about safe havens for the Taliban on Pakistani territory.

There is also said to be a lot of nervousness in the Obama Administration about the "fragility" of Pakistan, particularly as it has nuclear weapons. Pakistan is seen as slipping deeper into political, economic, ethnic and religious chaos. About the only way al Qaeda is likely to get its hands on a nuclear weapon, so the argument goes, is if Pakistan collapses or its government is toppled and loses control of its nuclear stockpile. Obama is reported to have said privately that Pakistan "really scares" him with its mixture of a nuclear arsenal and rising Muslim

fundamentalism. The stability of Pakistan is therefore seen as a critical US security interest. A nearly completed study by the US Central Command is expected to say that nuclear-armed Pakistan, not Iraq, Afghanistan or Iran, is the most urgent foreign-policy challenge facing Obama.

Besides Pakistan, neighbouring countries which have the ability to impact the situation in Afghanistan are also to be included in the broader regional strategy. Mullen, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, has said that a regional approach would also include Iran, as well as India. Petraeus, chief of the US Central Command, has spoken out in favour of involving even more countries. A resolution of the Afghanistan problem, he said recently, requires "a regional approach...that includes Pakistan, India, the Central Asian states and even China and Russia, along with perhaps, at some point, Iran."

India has predictably welcomed the bracketing together of Afghanistan and Pakistan and its own inclusion in the regional approach, but has succeeded in excluding Pakistan-India relations, in particular Kashmir, from its scope. US officials later clarified that although Kashmir is not officially part of his job, Holbrooke would try to draw New Delhi into the conversation because India-Pakistan tensions affect stability in the region.

There is nothing new about the Indians having a fit when Kashmir is mentioned outside a bilateral framework with Pakistan. It is, in fact, a regular part of India's tantrum diplomacy on Kashmir. Therefore, India's outbursts against Obama and Miliband for having suggested a resolution of Kashmir were entirely predictable.

However, the exclusion of Kashmir from Holbrooke's remit is not so tragic from the point of view of either Pakistan or the Kashmiris. Firstly, any discussion on Kashmir under the present circumstances would have as its starting point the deal which Musharraf had been negotiating with India for a "settlement" on the basis of recognition of existing borders, plus the creation of cross-border institutions and enhanced autonomy, which really would amount to a sell-out of the Kashmiris' aspiration for azadi. Secondly, a government under Zardari, who not so long ago equated the Kashmiri freedom-fighters with terrorists and is completely beholden to Washington, can hardly be expected to espouse the cause of the Kashmiris effectively in any such negotiations.

As a candidate, Obama recognised that Pakistan's concerns in Afghanistan derive in large part from its concerns about India. In an article in *Foreign Affairs* (2007), he wrote that he would "encourage

dialogue between Pakistan and India to work toward resolving their dispute over Kashmir and between Afghanistan and Pakistan to resolve their historic differences and develop the Pashtun border region. If Pakistan can look toward the east with greater confidence, it will be less likely to believe that its interests are best advanced through cooperation with the Taliban." Later, shortly before his election, Obama raised the possibility of appointing Bill Clinton as a special envoy to deal with the Kashmir question.

Other American officials and experts have also acknowledged that to address Afghanistan, it is essential to address Pakistan-India issues. As Mullen put it in a recent interview, you cannot "do Pakistan without doing India." Bruce Riedel, who has been designated by Obama to carry out an interagency review on Afghanistan policy, also conceded that Pakistan's concerns in Afghanistan derive in large part from its concerns about India. The same point was made by NATO secretary general Jaap de Hoop Scheffer in an article in *The Washington Post* on Jan 18: "Afghanistan's problems cannot be dealt with exclusively within its borders. The challenges faced by Pakistan are organically linked to those of Afghanistan; so, politically, are Pakistan's relations with India."

Pakistan's concern at India's role in Afghanistan does not, of course, date back only to the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001. It started with the independence of the two countries in 1947 and was greatly intensified when in 1955 the Soviet Union joined in encouraging the Daoud government in Kabul to lay claim to Pakistani territory. India's support for the Soviet-installed regime in Kabul in the decade of the 1980s was a continuation of the same policy of encircling Pakistan.

In an interview prior to his appointment to the interagency policy review on Afghanistan, Riedel said that an agreement on the legitimacy and permanency of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border would be an important first step towards getting that border secured. "After all, if we want Pakistan to provide border security, a good step in the right direction would be an agreement on that border," Riedel said. However, the British weekly *Economist* (Feb 21) has advised Obama not to attempt a resolution of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. The newspaper is right. The drawing of the border is final under international law and does not need any further confirmation by Kabul.

What Pakistan should insist on in talks with the Obama Administration is that India should stop using its presence in Afghanistan to fuel terrorism, insurgency and subversion in Pakistan. It will not be

easy to get India to kick its old habits. But Washington should try. The success of the regional approach to Afghanistan, which the Obama Administration advocates, depends to a great extent upon good behaviour on the part of India. Clearly, "Af-Pak" requires a further hyphenation. It should be "Af-Pak-Ind."

Asif Ezdi, *News*, February 26, 2009  
[http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily\\_detail.asp?id=164576](http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=164576)

## DRONE ATTACKS WILL CONTINUE

Leon Panetta the US Central Intelligence Agency Chief during his visit to Islamabad had refused to halt drone attacks, or assure President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani that drone attacks could be halted. He said what he has been told to state categorically. Richard Holbrooke the US Special representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan has said that Pakistan's city Quetta appears to be Taliban's headquarter. "The number one problem in stabilizing Afghanistan was the Taliban sanctuaries in Western Pakistan, including its tribal areas and border cities like Quetta. Quetta appears to be the headquarters of Taliban leaders, who are some of the worst people in the world".

On Wednesday March 25, 2009 US drones bombed a house in Makeen area of South Waziristan with Hellfire missiles, killing seven, including foreign militants. This was the 60th Predator attack during the last three years in which about five hundred Pushtun's and foreign militants have been killed, and thousands injured. On 28 February, 2008, at a press conference in Washington, the CIA Director had stated that, "US air attacks including drone bombings are vital to demolish extremist strongholds inside Pakistan, despite any backlash in Pakistan. Efforts to go after the terrorists cannot be stopped, before the terrorists stop their ambushes and assaults. The attacks have been successful and a number of Al-Qaeda leaders have been killed."

The Drone missile strikes have continued since three years, but the terrorist capabilities to launch suicide attacks, ambush, kidnap for ransom, and strike at random in Pakistan and Afghanistan remain intact. Despite US drone bombings, terrorist safe heavens and attack capabilities remain intact. Neither Washington, nor Islamabad could devise alternate plans to reduce the terrorists' offensive capabilities and abilities of movement, grouping and attack.

The drone attack policy has been continued by President Barack

Obama, with threats to bomb Quetta and suspected terrorist hideouts in Balochistan. US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Admiral Mike Mullen the Chairman Joint Chief's of Staff have repeated that, "Drone attacks into FATA will continue, as long as there are militant safe heaven in the area".

Predator drones continue to kill and injure Pashtun's and some foreigners. Pushtuns are furious, and anti-American feelings have intensified. The backlash in Pakistan and Afghanistan are suicide attacks, kidnappings for ransom and beheadings by militant criminals on both sides of the border. Instead of any tactical gains or strategic advantage, the daily slaughter of some militants, but heavy collateral damage of civilian lives, homes and property will leave long lasting scars, which will never heal.

Supply of weapons, funds and trained recruits to Taliban militants, by warlords continue. NATO and U.S commanders and the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan have not taken concrete steps to intercept, or interrupt the supply chain of Taliban forces and criminal groups in the Tribal area. Mullahs on both sides of the Pakistan- Afghan border are issuing fatwas against US, and NATO and Afghan and Pakistani authorities. People are being brainwashed by sermons from mosques, madrassas and FM radio stations in the tribal areas and Swat, condemning the drone attacks, and foreigner's lust for the Pashtun blood. Drone attacks have created unabated anger against the United States. The fact that the USAF-CIA drones are using Pakistani bases for refueling, arming, maintenance and logistics, has convinced the public, especially the Pashtun tribes that criticism of USAF drone attacks by the authorities is nothing but eye wash. The government must come upfront, and either forcefully deny American media and Congressional admission about the use of Pakistani bases by Predator drones, or open such bases to the media to ascertain the truth or otherwise

Jammat-e-Islami filed a requisition in the Senate Secretariat to summon a session of the Upper House of the Parliament to debate the US drone attacks, amid reports that US has plans for drone strikes on villages and cities in Balochistan. JI Senator Professor Khurshid Ahmed has expressed concern over US decision to expand the drone attacks from FATA, Pakhtunwah - NWFP to Balochistan. He called upon the Obama administration to reconsider the ongoing military action by US Hellfire missiles inside Pakistani territory, and expand the perimeter of US Predator missile aggression into poverty stricken Balochistan. Senator

Khurshid said that the US had failed in its strategy to defeat the Taliban in Afghanistan, and now wanted to destabilize Pakistan by drone missile attacks on its villages and cities. He urged for a comprehensive strategy to deal with the issue of terrorism, extremism and militancy. It is worth mentioning that Senator Khurshid Ahmed heads the Institute of Policy Studies, which for decades has been engaged in discussing issues of national, regional and international importance; and has the required expertise to prepare a draft paper on the subject for the perusal of The Senate and the Parliament. Parliament should appoint a special committee to go into the matter.

President Obama and his national Security Advisers after discussing two reports on Pakistan and Afghanistan have called for broadening the parameters of drone attacks to include terrorist and insurgent sanctuaries in and around the city of Quetta. According to the US, Mullah Omar the ousted Taliban leader has operated with impunity from Balochistan province for years. Fighting between US-NATO forces and Taliban in southern Afghanistan has gained momentum in recent months. American military commanders argue that Predator strikes in the tribal areas have forced Taliban leaders to flee south towards Quetta. General David H. Petraeus, commander US Central Command and Lt Gen Douglas E. Lute, a top White House Aide in Afghanistan have recommended expanding operations including US drone attacks into Balochistan. The Obama Administration is very serious about the containment of militancy in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the enhanced ferocity of fighting in south Afghanistan could force US and NATO commanders to launch hellfire missile attacks from Predator drones on targets in and around Quetta, and elsewhere in Balochistan.

Underlining the urgency in Washington to step up cooperation with Islamabad to contain the deteriorating security situation in South and West Asia CIA Director Leon Panetta's visit to Islamabad to meet Pakistani authorities, signifies the great importance accorded by the Obama Administration to engage Pakistan on the serious issues of terrorism, extremism, and militancy, especially kidnappings and beheadings of foreigners. It is hoped that the ISI did its home work, and besides presenting facts and figures, urged the CIA Director in strongest terms to stop drone attacks and violation of Pakistani air space and sovereignty. It is about time that the Obama Administration is warned that drone attacks on Quetta or anywhere in Balochistan will be considered as act of war; and the Pakistan Air Force and Pakistan Army

could be ordered to shoot down such intruding Predator drones. The parliament must immediately consider this option to stop US bombing of Pakistan cities, especially the provincial capital of Balochistan. Chief Minister Nawab Mohammad Aslam Raisani said that there are two types of Taliban-the militant Taliban, and those studying in Madrassas. "Our's are peaceful Taliban. If the CIA has proof about the presence of Mullah Omar in Balochistan, his hideout may be disclosed, and we will hand him over to the CIA". Raisani has promised to recover UN Official John Solecki. His efforts to recover John Solecki will be jeopardized by drone attacks. The already existing sense of despair, frustration and anger on continuing drone attacks will accentuate, and will create instability and insurgency in Balochistan.

Air Marshal Ayaz Ahmed Khan, *Nation*, February 27, 2009  
<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Opinions/Columns/27-Mar-2009/Drone-attacks-will-continue>

## US HAS NO LONG-TERM DESIGNS ON AFGHANISTAN, SAYS OBAMA

President Barack Obama promised on Friday that the United States has no long-term designs on Afghanistan as his administration switches focus to the war-torn country with its pullout from Iraq.

Obama, who on Friday announced an 18-month timeline to end combat operations in Iraq, is planning to send another 1,700 US troops to Afghanistan as part of a fresh push to fight Taliban and Al-Qaeda extremists. The new US president made clear he was well-aware of the sentiments of the Afghan people, who have fiercely resisted foreign invaders from the British to the Soviets. "One of the things that I think we have to communicate in Afghanistan is that we have no interest or aspiration to be there over the long term," Obama said in an interview with PBS public television.

"There's a long history, as you know, in Afghanistan of rebuffing what is seen as an occupying force and we have to be mindful of that history as we think about our strategy," he said. The Obama administration is conducting a review of its "war on terror" strategy in Pakistan and Afghanistan and this week held three-way talks in Washington with foreign ministers of the South Asian neighbors. Obama, who opposed his predecessor George W Bush's invasion of Iraq, defended the US involvement in Afghanistan.

Exit: “Our bottom goal in the region is to keep the American people safe,” Obama said. But he declined to set a timeline on when US troops would exit Afghanistan. “Until we have a clear strategy, we’re not going to have a clear exit strategy,” he said. “My goal is to get US troops home as quickly as possible without leaving a situation that allows for potential terrorist attacks against the United States,” Obama said. Some critics within Obama’s Democratic Party have questioned the extra deployment to Afghanistan, fearing that the United States would get bogged down in an escalating conflict similar to Vietnam.

On the other hand Senator John McCain, Obama’s rival for the presidency last year, has called for an overhaul of Afghan policy that includes doubling the size of the Afghan army and bolstering Pakistan’s civilian government. “When you aren’t winning in this kind of war, you are losing. And, in Afghanistan today, we are not winning,” McCain warned on Wednesday. Afghan ministers visiting Washington for the talks took exception to criticism, vowing that they would defeat the Taliban and in time no longer need foreign forces.

“There should be no doubt about the Afghan determination to succeed because it is a question of our national survival,” Defence Minister Mohammad Rahim Wardak told a think tank. Offering a rare estimate of the enemy strength, Interior Minister Hanif Atmar said that 10,000 to 15,000 Taliban were fighting in Afghanistan and said they were active in up to 17 of the 34 provinces. Atmar said that most were foreigners linked to al Qaeda or Central Asian groups.

The Taliban have carried out a recent wave of attacks in Afghanistan, including simultaneous strikes on February 11 on three government offices in Kabul that left 26 people dead as well as eight of the attackers. “These terrorist attacks do not represent their strength but indeed their weakness,” Atmar told reporters. “The fact that they don’t care about their image is a significant indication of their hopelessness,” he said. “They are still capable of threatening the lives of the Afghan people but that does not mean that they can derail the (reconstruction) process or challenge the government of Afghanistan,” he said.

*Daily Times*, March 1, 2009  
[http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009\03\01\story\\_1-3-2009\\_pg20\\_5](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009\03\01\story_1-3-2009_pg20_5)

---

## OBAMA HINTS AT TALKS WITH MODERATE TALIBAN

US President Barack Obama said in an interview released Saturday that the United States is not winning the war in Afghanistan and hinted at possible talks with moderate elements of the Taliban.

Highlighting the success of the US strategy of bringing some Sunni Iraqi insurgents to the negotiating table and away from Al-Qaeda, Obama told media, "there may be some comparable opportunities in Afghanistan and the Pakistani region."

The strategy in Iraq had been deployed by General David Petraeus, then commander of US forces in the country. "If you talk to General Petraeus, I think he would argue that part of the success in Iraq involved reaching out to people that we would consider to be Islamic fundamentalists, but who were willing to work with us because they had been completely alienated by the tactics of al Qaeda in Iraq," Obama said in the interview published on the a website.

Asked if the United States was winning the war in Afghanistan, which he has called the "central front in the war on terror," Obama simply replied, "No." "You've seen conditions deteriorate over the last couple of years. The Taliban is bolder than it was. I think in the southern regions of the country, you're seeing them attack in ways that we have not seen previously," he said and added, "The national government still has not gained the confidence of the Afghan people."

*News*, March 8, 2009

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/updates.asp?id=70824>

## US STRATEGY TO SPLIT TALIBAN DRAWS MIXED REACTION

US President Barack Obama's new strategy to split Taliban has invited mixed reactions from the security experts, according to a report published in the Sunday edition of the New York Times.

The report said the new proposition would certainly cup deep into national psyche. "I think it is clear that you have to have a political solution to Afghanistan, and I wouldn't rule anything off the table, including conversations with some aspects of the Taliban," said Reuben Brigety, an Afghanistan expert at the Centre for American Progress.

It is a point that European -- particularly British officials have pressed on the Americans for some time. With the Bush administration, one European diplomat said, "there was a complete ideological block to the

notion of coming to any kind of deals with anything that could be called the Taliban.” “But now,” the diplomat added, speaking on condition of anonymity, “we’re in a different ballpark.”

According to the Times report, Obama’s assertion that there may be some comparable opportunities in Afghanistan and in the Pakistani region, but the situation in Afghanistan is, if anything, more complex, leaves the Obama administration still light years away from beginning talks with Mulla Mohammad Omar, who was the Taliban’s leader when it ruled Afghanistan on September 11, 2001.

“And even if the United States eventually opted for talking with Taliban members, it is more likely that those Taliban members would be talking to Afghan officials, rather than directly to Americans. But there is a growing belief, particularly among experts who have been advising the Obama administration on Pakistan-Afghan policy, that it is important to peel away some lower members of the Taliban, in sort of a divide-and-conquer strategy,” the report said.

“The key to winning back the (Afghan) population is to establish legitimate government,” said Clare Lockhart, a former adviser to the Afghan government and the co-author of *Fixing Failed States*.

“If you give people a government with sufficient credibility -- and basic jobs -- you can win back their trust,” he said. But critical to winning back the population’s trust, many experts counter, is the absence of war. And getting to the absence of war may require making the American public comfortable with the idea that the Taliban might not necessarily equal al-Qaeda.

“There are multiple motivations for why these insurgents could be fighting,” Brigety asserted, “suggesting that for some lower-level Taliban, the fight against NATO forces could emanate from something other than a desire to bring down the Afghan government or to defeat the United States.”

One NATO official agreed in an interview, saying that some lower-level Taliban members attack coalition forces simply because, say, the foreigners did not ask permission before entering their valley. Or because a Taliban commander paid each Taliban member the equivalent of \$20 a day to do so.

“More importantly, though, is there are fissures that could be exploited,” Brigety said, returning to the divide-and-conquer theme. “As long as we’ve adopted a position that all are our enemies, we could be missing an opportunity to exploit those divisions,” he added.

Daniel Markey, a former South Asia expert at the State Department under President Bush, said that lessons learned in Iraq – where the Bush administration enlisted Sunni militias as allies by negotiating with tribal leaders – do not necessarily apply in Afghanistan.

The tribal structure in Afghanistan is different than in Iraq, he said, adding: There is no clear hierarchy. If you make a deal with one guy, you have a deal with one guy, and not his whole clan.

Markey, now a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, said “the approach had to be carefully calibrated. You fight, you talk, you fight, you talk.” “If by talking, you can divide your enemies, talk. But if by talking, you are just giving your enemies breathing space, then do not talk,” he said.

*News*, March 9, 2009

[http://www.thenews.com.pk/top\\_story\\_detail.asp?Id=20822](http://www.thenews.com.pk/top_story_detail.asp?Id=20822)

## AN AFGHANISTAN PERSPECTIVE

In the words of US special envoy Richard Holbrooke, Afghanistan “is like no other problem we have confronted, and in my view it’s going to be tougher than Vietnam.” He was speaking at the 45th Munich Conference on Security Policy from Feb 6-8 and his assessment was certainly not overly pessimistic. Conflict has been endemic to Afghanistan, peace alien to it. When Ahmed Shah Abdali founded the Kingdom of Afghanistan in 1747 and extended it up to Kashmir, Punjab, Sindh and Baluchistan, he could not have imagined that after his death in 1773 the empire would fragment, spur rivalry between imperial Britain and Russia in the nineteenth century, and ignite ethnic tensions, external aggression and internal conflict which continue to ravage the country as Holbrooke embarks on his mission.

Several distinct phases are identifiable in recent Afghan history that singly and collectively contributed towards the unending turmoil in the country. In a cause-and-effect like manner each phase prompted a reaction and ushered in the next. Thus the PDPA coup of Apr 27, 1978 instigated the Soviet invasion and occupation of the country from Dec 29, 1979 to Feb 15 1989. The decade-long struggle against the Soviets was a decentralized conflict, fought in many theatres through approximately 647,500 square kilometres of rugged terrain. There was no central figure around whom the people could rally. The nationalist upsurge that normally accompanies a successful freedom struggle was, therefore,

absent from Afghanistan.

After the Soviet retreat, the next phase was resistance against the Moscow-installed Najibullah regime till Apr 28, 1992. The mujahideen government which followed failed to establish its writ beyond Kabul and a few major cities as a result of which local commanders established themselves in their respective areas. The conflict that ensued transformed itself from a heroic war of liberation to an ugly contest for power among the leaders of the factions who had previously constituted the Afghan resistance against the Soviet occupation forces.

The reaction to the prevalent anarchy was the emergence and rise of the Pashtun-dominated Taliban, who by Sept 27 1996 had captured Kabul and established their control over 75 percent of the country. The first formal American pronouncement on the Taliban was on Nov. 18, 1996 during a UN conference in New York. The US delegate stated that the Taliban were purely an indigenous movement whose success had little to do with military prowess and though some of their policies were extreme these could be moderated by engaging with them. The last element in this statement was particularly important. Had there been engagement with, rather than isolation of, the Taliban despite their reprehensible human rights record, al Qaeda and other terrorist outfits might not have been able to establish themselves in Afghanistan and 9/11 may never have occurred.

The post-9/11 US-led invasion of Afghanistan merely ousted the Taliban from the major cities but did not diminish their influence in the countryside. The Soviet-installed PDPA rulers as well as the Najibullah and Rabbani regimes also controlled only the urban centres but could not withstand the insurgencies that sprang from the Pushtun-dominated rural heartland of Afghanistan. The Karzai government finds itself in a similar predicament. Its inability to establish its writ in the countryside has resulted in a Taliban surge and extremist violence which has transformed Afghanistan and the tribal areas of Pakistan into the epicentre of regional and global terrorism.

Instead of strengthening the police and the regular army, a Public Protection Force consisting of local militias to be armed, trained and financed by the US was announced by the Afghan Interior Minister on Jan 31. Exclusively Pashtun, the force has already been vehemently criticized by minority ethnic groups. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that the weapons will not fall into the hands of the Taliban and al Qaeda. According to the Government Accountability Office, a nonpartisan

---

investigative arm of Congress, an estimated 87,000 weapons or one-third of 242,000 shipped by the US between Dec 2004 and June 2008 are unaccounted for and could have been siphoned off by corrupt Afghan officials to the Taliban.

As at the time of the Soviet occupation, the US-led troops in Afghanistan face an enemy that resorts to decentralized hit-and-run guerrilla tactics and has the advantage of operating in known terrain with a network of supporters who provide them superior intelligence about American and NATO troops. Though the latter possess enormous force and firepower, they rely excessively on technical intelligence from unmanned aerial vehicles and satellites which are not as reliable as the human intelligence available to the Taliban and their supporters. There is an urgent need to share intelligence and a good starting point is the establishment of a mechanism consisting of the six countries with contiguous borders with Afghanistan plus the US, Russia and Britain. Such a mechanism will facilitate precision targeting of terrorist groups and minimize collateral damage. This has to be accompanied by a concerted effort to win hearts and minds through mega-doses of economic assistance.

S Iftikhar Murshed, *News*, March 9, 2009  
[http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily\\_detail.asp?id=166404](http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=166404)

---

## INTERNATIONAL

### FROM GREAT GAME TO GRAND BARGAIN

The Great Game is no fun anymore. The term "Great Game" was used by nineteenth-century British imperialists to describe the British-Russian struggle for position on the chessboard of Afghanistan and Central Asia -- a contest with a few players, mostly limited to intelligence forays and short wars fought on horseback with rifles, and with those living on the chessboard largely bystanders or victims. More than a century later, the game continues. But now, the number of players has exploded, those living on the chessboard have become involved, and the intensity of the violence and the threats it produces affect the entire globe. The Great Game can no longer be treated as a sporting event for distant spectators. It is time to agree on some new rules.

Seven years after the U.S.-led coalition and the Afghan commanders it supported pushed the leaderships of the Taliban and al Qaeda out of Afghanistan and into Pakistan, an insurgency that includes these and other groups is gaining ground on both the Afghan and the Pakistani sides of the border. Four years after Afghanistan's first-ever presidential election, the increasingly besieged government of Hamid Karzai is losing credibility at home and abroad. Al Qaeda has established a new safe haven in the tribal agencies of Pakistan, where it is defended by a new organization, the Taliban Movement of Pakistan. The government of Pakistan, beset by one political crisis after another and split between a traditionally autonomous military and assertive but fractious elected leaders, has been unable to retain control of its own territory and population. Its intelligence agency stands accused of supporting terrorism in Afghanistan, which in many ways has replaced Kashmir as the main arena of the still-unresolved struggle between Pakistan and India.

For years, critics of U.S. and NATO strategies have been warning that the region was headed in this direction. Many of the policies such critics have long proposed are now being widely embraced. The Bush administration and both presidential campaigns are proposing to send more troops to Afghanistan and to undertake other policies to sustain the military gains made there. These include accelerating training of the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police; disbursing more money, more effectively for reconstruction and development and to

support better governance; increasing pressure on and cooperation with Pakistan, and launching cross-border attacks without Pakistani agreement to eliminate cross-border safe havens for insurgents and to uproot al Qaeda; supporting democracy in Pakistan and bringing its Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) under civilian political control; and implementing more effective policies to curb Afghanistan's drug industry, which produces opiates equal in export value to half of the rest of the Afghan economy.

Cross-border attacks into Pakistan may produce an "October surprise" or provide material for apologists hoping to salvage George W. Bush's legacy, but they will not provide security. Advancing reconstruction, development, good governance, and counternarcotics efforts and building effective police and justice systems in Afghanistan will require many years of relative peace and security. Neither neglecting these tasks, as the Bush administration did initially, nor rushing them on a timetable determined by political objectives, can succeed. Afghanistan requires far larger and more effective security forces, international or national, but support for U.S. and NATO deployments is plummeting in troop-contributing countries, in the wider region, and in Afghanistan itself. Afghanistan, the poorest country in the world but for a handful in Africa and with the weakest government in the world (except Somalia, which has no government), will never be able to sustain national security forces sufficient to confront current -- let alone escalating -- threats, yet permanent foreign subsidies for Afghanistan's security forces cannot be guaranteed and will have destabilizing consequences. Moreover, measures aimed at Afghanistan will not address the deteriorating situation in Pakistan or the escalation of international conflicts connected to the Afghan-Pakistani war. More aid to Pakistan -- military or civilian -- will not diminish the perception among Pakistan's national security elite that the country is surrounded by enemies determined to dismember it, especially as cross-border raids into areas long claimed by Afghanistan intensify that perception. Until that sense of siege is gone, it will be difficult to strengthen civilian institutions in Pakistan.

U.S. diplomacy has been paralyzed by the rhetoric of "the war on terror" -- a struggle against "evil," in which other actors are "with us or with the terrorists." Such rhetoric thwarts sound strategic thinking by assimilating opponents into a homogenous "terrorist" enemy. Only a political and diplomatic initiative that distinguishes political opponents of the United States -- including violent ones -- from global terrorists such as al Qaeda can reduce the threat faced by the Afghan and Pakistani states

and secure the rest of the international community from the international terrorist groups based there. Such an initiative would have two elements. It would seek a political solution with as much of the Afghan and Pakistani insurgencies as possible, offering political inclusion, the integration of Pakistan's indirectly ruled Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) into the mainstream political and administrative institutions of Pakistan, and an end to hostile action by international troops in return for cooperation against al Qaeda. And it would include a major diplomatic and development initiative addressing the vast array of regional and global issues that have become intertwined with the crisis -- and that serve to stimulate, intensify, and prolong conflict in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Afghanistan has been at war for three decades -- a period longer than the one that started with World War I and ended with the Normandy landings on D-day in World War II -- and now that war is spreading to Pakistan and beyond. This war and the attendant terrorism could well continue and spread, even to other continents -- as on 9/11 -- or lead to the collapse of a nuclear-armed state. The regional crisis is of that magnitude, and yet so far there is no international framework to address it other than the under resourced and poorly coordinated operations in Afghanistan and some attacks in the FATA. The next U.S. administration should launch an effort, initially based on a contact group authorized by the UN Security Council, to put an end to the increasingly destructive dynamics of the Great Game in the region. The game has become too deadly and has attracted too many players; it now resembles less a chess match than the Afghan game of buzkashi, with Afghanistan playing the role of the goat carcass fought over by innumerable teams. Washington must seize the opportunity now to replace this Great Game with a new grand bargain for the region.

### **The Security Gap**

The Afghan and Pakistani security forces lack the numbers, skills, equipment, and motivation to confront the growing insurgencies in the two countries or to uproot al Qaeda from its new base in the FATA, along the Afghan-Pakistani border. Proposals for improving the security situation focus on sending additional international forces, building larger national security forces in Afghanistan, and training and equipping Pakistan's security forces, which are organized for conflict with India, for domestic counterinsurgency. But none of these proposals is sufficient to

meet the current, let alone future, threats.

Some additional troops in Afghanistan could protect local populations while the police and the administration develop. They also might enable U.S. and NATO forces to reduce or eliminate their reliance on the use of air strikes, which cause civilian casualties that recruit fighters and supporters to the insurgency. U.S. General Barry McCaffrey, among others, has therefore supported a "generational commitment" to Afghanistan, such as the United States made to Germany and South Korea. Unfortunately, no government in the region around Afghanistan supports a long-term U.S. or NATO presence there. Pakistan sees even the current deployment as strengthening an India-allied regime in Kabul; Iran is concerned that the United States will use Afghanistan as a base for launching "regime change" in Tehran; and China, India, and Russia all have reservations about a NATO base within their spheres of influence and believe they must balance the threats from al Qaeda and the Taliban against those posed by the United States and NATO. Securing Afghanistan and its region will require an international presence for many years, but only a regional diplomatic initiative that creates a consensus to place stabilizing Afghanistan ahead of other objectives could make a long-term international deployment possible.

Afghanistan needs larger and more effective security forces, but it also needs to be able to sustain those security forces. A decree signed by President Karzai in December 2002 would have capped the Afghan National Army at 70,000 troops (it had reached 66,000 by mid-2008). U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has since announced a plan to increase that number to 122,000, as well as add 82,000 police, for a total of 204,000 in the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Such increases, however, would require additional international trainers and mentors -- which are, quite simply, not available in the foreseeable future -- and maintaining such a force would far exceed the means of such a destitute country. Current estimates of the annual cost are around \$2.5 billion for the army and \$1 billion for the police. Last year, the Afghan government collected about 7 percent of a licit GDP estimated at \$9.6 billion in revenue -- about \$670 million. Thus, even if Afghanistan's economy experienced uninterrupted real growth of 9 percent per year, and if revenue extraction nearly doubled, to 12 percent (both unrealistic forecasts), in ten years the total domestic revenue of the Afghan government would be about \$2.5 billion a year. Projected pipelines and mines might add \$500 million toward the end of this period. In short, the army and the police alone

would cost significantly more than Afghanistan's total revenue.

Many have, therefore, proposed long-term international financing of the ANSF; after all, even \$5 billion a year is much less than the cost of an international force deployment. But sustaining, as opposed to training or equipping, security forces through foreign grants would pose political problems. It would be impossible to build Afghan institutions on the basis of U.S. supplemental appropriations, which is how the training and equipping of the ANSF are mostly funded. Sustaining a national army or national police force requires multiyear planning, impossible without a recurrent appropriation -- which would mean integrating ANSF planning into that of the United States' and other NATO members' budgets, even if the funds were disbursed through a single trust fund. And an ANSF funded from those budgets would have to meet international or other national, rather than Afghan, legal requirements. Decisions on funding would be taken by the U.S. Congress and other foreign bodies, not the Afghan National Assembly. The ANSF would take actions that foreign taxpayers might be reluctant to fund. Such long-term international involvement is simply not tenable.

If Afghanistan cannot support its security forces at the currently proposed levels on its own, even under the most optimistic economic scenario, and long-term international support or a long-term international presence is not viable, there is only one way that the ANSF can approach sustainability: the conditions in the region must be changed so that Afghanistan no longer needs such large and expensive security forces. Changing those conditions, however, will require changing the behavior of actors not only inside but also outside of the country -- and that has led many observers to embrace putting pressure on, and even launching attacks into, Pakistan as another *deus ex machina* for the increasingly dire situation within Afghanistan.

### **Borderline Insecurity Disorder**

After the first phase of the war in Afghanistan ended with the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001 (and as the United States prepared to invade Iraq), Washington's limited agenda in the region was to press the Pakistani military to go after al Qaeda; meanwhile, Washington largely ignored the broader insurgency, which remained marginal until 2005. This suited the Pakistani military's strategy, which was to assist the United States against al Qaeda but to retain the Afghan Taliban as a potential source of pressure on Afghanistan. But the summer of 2006 saw a major escalation

of the insurgency, as Pakistan and the Taliban interpreted the United States' decision to transfer command of coalition forces to NATO (plus U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's announcement of a troop drawdown, which in fact never took place) as a sign of its intention to withdraw. They also saw non-U.S. troop contributors as more vulnerable to political pressure generated by casualties.

The Pakistani military does not control the insurgency, but it can affect its intensity. Putting pressure on Pakistan to curb the militants will likely remain ineffective, however, without a strategic realignment by the United States. The region is rife with conspiracy theories trying to find a rational explanation for the United States' apparently irrational strategic posture of supporting a "major non-NATO ally" that is doing more to undermine the U.S. position in Afghanistan than any other state. Many Afghans believe that Washington secretly supports the Taliban as a way to keep a war going to justify a troop presence that is actually aimed at securing the energy resources of Central Asia and countering China. Many in Pakistan believe that the United States has deceived Pakistan into conniving with Washington to bring about its own destruction: India and U.S.-supported Afghanistan will form a pincer around Pakistan to dismember the world's only Muslim nuclear power. And some Iranians speculate that in preparation for the coming of the Mahdi, God has blinded the Great Satan to its own interests so that it would eliminate both of Iran's Sunni-ruled regional rivals, Afghanistan and Iraq, thus unwittingly paving the way for the long-awaited Shiite restoration.

The true answer is much simpler: the Bush administration never reevaluated its strategic priorities in the region after September 11. Institutional inertia and ideology jointly assured that Pakistan would be treated as an ally, Iran as an enemy, and Iraq as the main threat, thereby granting Pakistan a monopoly on U.S. logistics and, to a significant extent, on the intelligence the United States has on Afghanistan. Eighty-four percent of the materiel for U.S. forces in Afghanistan goes through Pakistan, and the ISI remains nearly the sole source of intelligence about international terrorist acts prepared by al Qaeda and its affiliates in Pakistan.

More fundamentally, the concept of "pressuring" Pakistan is flawed. No state can be successfully pressured into acts it considers suicidal. The Pakistani security establishment believes that it faces both a U.S.-Indian-Afghan alliance and a separate Iranian-Russian alliance, each aimed at undermining Pakistani influence in Afghanistan and even dismembering

the Pakistani state. Some (but not all) in the establishment see armed militants within Pakistan as a threat -- but they largely consider it one that is ultimately controllable, and in any case secondary to the threat posed by their nuclear-armed enemies.

Pakistan's military command, which makes and implements the country's national security policies, shares a commitment to a vision of Pakistan as the homeland for South Asian Muslims and therefore to the incorporation of Kashmir into Pakistan. It considers Afghanistan as within Pakistan's security perimeter. Add to this that Pakistan does not have border agreements with either India, into which Islamabad contests the incorporation of Kashmir, or Afghanistan, which has never explicitly recognized the Durand Line, which separates the two countries, as an interstate border.

That border is more than a line. The frontier between Pakistan and Afghanistan was structured as part of the defenses of British India. On the Pakistani side of the Durand Line, the British and their Pakistani successors turned the difficulty of governing the tribes to their advantage by establishing what are now the FATA. Within the FATA, these tribes, not the government, are responsible for security. The area is kept underdeveloped and over armed as a barrier against invaders. (That is also why any ground intervention there by the United States or NATO will fail.) Now, the Pakistani military has turned the FATA into a staging area for militants who can be used to conduct asymmetric warfare in both Afghanistan and Kashmir, since the region's special status provides for (decreasingly) plausible deniability. This use of the FATA has eroded state control, especially in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province, which abuts the FATA. The Swat Valley, where Pakistani Taliban fighters have been battling the government for several years, links Afghanistan and the FATA to Kashmir. Pakistan's strategy for external security has thus undermined its internal security.

On September 19, 2001, when then Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf announced to the nation his decision to support the U.S.-led intervention against the Taliban in Afghanistan, he stated that the overriding reason was to save Pakistan by preventing the United States from allying with India. In return, he wanted concessions to Pakistan on its security interests. Subsequent events, however, have only exacerbated Pakistan's sense of insecurity. Musharraf asked for time to form a "moderate Taliban" government in Afghanistan but failed to produce one. When that failed, he asked that the United States prevent the

Northern Alliance (part of the anti-Taliban resistance in Afghanistan), which had been supported by India, Iran, and Russia, from occupying Kabul; that appeal failed. Now, Pakistan claims that the Northern Alliance is working with India from inside Afghanistan's security services. Meanwhile, India has reestablished its consulates in Afghan cities, including some near the Pakistani border. India has genuine consular interests there (Hindu and Sikh populations, commercial travel, aid programs), but it may also in fact be using the consulates against Pakistan, as Islamabad claims. India has also, in cooperation with Iran, completed a highway linking Afghanistan's ring road (which connects its major cities) to Iranian ports on the Persian Gulf, potentially eliminating Afghanistan's dependence on Pakistan for access to the sea and marginalizing Pakistan's new Arabian Sea port of Gwadar, which was built with hundreds of millions of dollars of Chinese aid. And the new U.S.-Indian nuclear deal effectively recognizes New Delhi's legitimacy as a nuclear power while continuing to treat Islamabad, with its record of proliferation, as a pariah. In this context, pressuring or giving aid to Pakistan, without any effort to address the sources of its insecurity, cannot yield a sustainable positive outcome.

### **Big Hat, No Cattle**

Rethinking U.S. and global objectives in the region will require acknowledging two distinctions: first, between ultimate goals and reasons to fight a war; and, second, among the time frames for different objectives. Preventing al Qaeda from regrouping so that it can organize terrorist attacks is an immediate goal that can justify war, to the extent that such war is proportionate and effective. Strengthening the state and the economy of Afghanistan is a medium- to long-term objective that cannot justify war except insofar as Afghanistan's weakness provides a haven for security threats.

This medium- to long-term objective would require reducing the level of armed conflict, including by seeking a political settlement with current insurgents. In discussions about the terms of such a settlement, leaders linked to both the Taliban and other parts of the insurgency have asked, What are the goals for which the United States and the international community are waging war in Afghanistan? Do they want to guarantee that Afghanistan's territory will not be used to attack them, impose a particular government in Kabul, or use the conflict to establish permanent military bases? These interlocutors oppose many U.S. policies

toward the Muslim world, but they acknowledge that the United States and others have a legitimate interest in preventing Afghan territory from being used to launch attacks against them. They claim to be willing to support an Afghan government that would guarantee that its territory would not be used to launch terrorist attacks in the future -- in return, they say, for the withdrawal of foreign troops.

The guarantees these interlocutors now envisage are far from those required, and Afghanistan will need international forces for security assistance even if the current war subsides. But such questions can provide a framework for discussion. To make such discussions credible, the United States must redefine its counterterrorist goals. It should seek to separate those Islamist movements with local or national objectives from those that, like al Qaeda, seek to attack the United States or its allies directly -- instead of lumping them all together. Two Taliban spokespeople separately told *The New York Times* that their movement had broken with al Qaeda since 9/11. (Others linked to the insurgency have told us the same thing.) Such statements cannot simply be taken at face value, but that does not mean that they should not be explored further. An agreement in principle to prohibit the use of Afghan (or Pakistani) territory for international terrorism, plus an agreement from the United States and NATO that such a guarantee could be sufficient to end their hostile military action, could constitute a framework for negotiation. Any agreement in which the Taliban or other insurgents disavowed al Qaeda would constitute a strategic defeat for al Qaeda.

Political negotiations are the responsibility of the Afghan government, but to make such negotiations possible, the United States would have to alter its detention policy. Senior officials of the Afghan government say that at least through 2004 they repeatedly received overtures from senior Taliban leaders but that they could never guarantee that these leaders would not be captured by U.S. forces and detained at Guantánamo Bay or the U.S. air base at Bagram, in Afghanistan. Talking with Taliban fighters or other insurgents does not mean replacing Afghanistan's constitution with the Taliban's Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, closing girls' schools, or accepting other retrograde social policies. Whatever weaknesses the Afghan government and security forces may have, Afghan society -- which has gone through two Loya Jirgas and two elections, possesses over five million cell phones, and has access to an explosion of new media -- is incomparably stronger than it was seven years ago, and the Taliban know it. These potential

interlocutors are most concerned with the presence of foreign troops, and some have advocated strengthening the current ANSF as a way to facilitate those troops' departure. In November 2006, one of the Taliban's leading supporters in Pakistan, Maulana Fazlur Rahman, publicly stated in Peshawar that the Taliban could participate as a party in elections in Afghanistan, just as his party did in Pakistan (where it recently lost overwhelmingly), so long as they were not labeled as terrorists.

### **The End of the Game**

There is no more a political solution in Afghanistan alone than there is a military solution in Afghanistan alone. Unless the decision-makers in Pakistan decide to make stabilizing the Afghan government a higher priority than countering the Indian threat, the insurgency conducted from bases in Pakistan will continue. Pakistan's strategic goals in Afghanistan place Pakistan at odds not just with Afghanistan and India, and with U.S. objectives in the region, but with the entire international community. Yet there is no multilateral framework for confronting this challenge, and the U.S.-Afghan bilateral framework has relied excessively on the military-supply relationship. NATO, whose troops in Afghanistan are daily losing their lives to Pakistan-based insurgents, has no Pakistan policy. The UN Security Council has hardly discussed Pakistan's role in Afghanistan, even though three of the permanent members (France, the United Kingdom, and the United States) have troops in Afghanistan, the other two are threatened by movements (in the North Caucasus and in Xinjiang) with links to the FATA, and China, Pakistan's largest investor, is poised to become the largest investor in Afghanistan as well, with a \$3.5 billion stake in the Aynak copper mine, south of Kabul.

The alternative is not to place Pakistan in a revised "axis of evil." It is to pursue a high-level diplomatic initiative designed to build a genuine consensus on the goal of achieving Afghan stability by addressing the legitimate sources of Pakistan's insecurity while increasing the opposition to its disruptive actions. China, both an ally of Pakistan and potentially the largest investor in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, could play a particularly significant role, as could Saudi Arabia, a serious investor in and ally of Pakistan, former supporter of the Taliban, and custodian of the two holiest Islamic shrines.

A first step could be the establishment of a contact group on the region authorized by the UN Security Council. This contact group, including the five permanent members and perhaps others (NATO, Saudi

Arabia), could promote dialogue between India and Pakistan about their respective interests in Afghanistan and about finding a solution to the Kashmir dispute; seek a long-term political vision for the future of the FATA from the Pakistani government, perhaps one involving integrating the FATA into Pakistan's provinces, as proposed by several Pakistani political parties; move Afghanistan and Pakistan toward discussions on the Durand Line and other frontier issues; involve Moscow in the region's stabilization so that Afghanistan does not become a test of wills between the United States and Russia, as Georgia has become; provide guarantees to Tehran that the U.S.-NATO commitment to Afghanistan is not a threat to Iran; and ensure that China's interests and role are brought to bear in international discussions on Afghanistan. Such a dialogue would have to be backed by the pledge of a multiyear international development aid package for regional economic integration, including aid to the most affected regions in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia, particularly the border regions. (At present, the United States is proposing to provide \$750 million in aid to the FATA but without having any political framework to deliver the aid.)

A central purpose of the contact group would be to assure Pakistan that the international community is committed to its territorial integrity - and to help resolve the Afghan and Kashmir border issues so as to better define Pakistan's territory. The international community would have to provide transparent reassurances and aid to Pakistan, pledge that no state is interested in its dismemberment, and guarantee open borders between Pakistan and both Afghanistan and India. The United States and the European Union would have to open up their markets to Pakistan's critical exports, especially textiles, and to Afghan products. And the United States would need to offer a road map to Pakistan to achieving the same kind of nuclear deal that was reached with India, once Pakistan has transparent and internationally monitored guarantees about the nonproliferation of its nuclear weapons technology.

Reassurances by the contact group that addressed Pakistan's security concerns might encourage Pakistan to promote, rather than hinder, an internationally and nationally acceptable political settlement in Afghanistan. Backing up the contact group's influence and clout must be the threat that any breaking of agreements or support for terrorism originating in the FATA would be taken to the UN Security Council. Pakistan, the largest troop contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, sees itself as a legitimate international power, rather than a spoiler;

confronted with the potential loss of that status, it would compromise.

India would also need to become more transparent about its activities in Afghanistan, especially regarding the role of its intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing. Perhaps the ISI and the RAW could be persuaded to enter a dialogue to explore whether the covert war they have waged against each other for the past 60 years could spare the territory of Afghanistan. The contact group could help establish a permanent Indian-Pakistani body at the intelligence and military levels, where complaints could be lodged and discussed. The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank could also help set up joint reconstruction programs in Afghanistan. A series of regional conferences on economic cooperation for the reconstruction of Afghanistan have already created a partial framework for such programs.

Then there is Iran. The Bush administration responded to Iranian cooperation in Afghanistan in 2001 by placing Tehran in the "axis of evil" and by promising to keep "all options on the table," which is understood as a code for not ruling out a military attack. Iran has reacted in part by aiding insurgents in Afghanistan to signal how much damage it could do in response. Some Iranian officials, however, continue to seek cooperation with the United States against al Qaeda and the Taliban. The next U.S. administration can and should open direct dialogue with Tehran around the two countries' common concerns in Afghanistan. An opening to Iran would show that the United States need not depend solely on Pakistan for access to Afghanistan. And in fact, Washington and Tehran had such a dialogue until around 2004. In May 2005, when the United States and Afghanistan signed a "declaration of strategic partnership," Iran signaled that it would not object as long as the partnership was not directed against Iran. Iran would have to be reassured by the contact group that Afghan territory would not be used as a staging area for activities meant to undermine Iran and that all U.S. covert activities taking place from there would be stopped.

Russia's main concern -- that the United States and NATO are seeking a permanent U.S.-NATO military presence in Afghanistan and Central Asia -- will also need to be assuaged. Russia should be assured that U.S. and NATO forces can help defend, rather than threaten, legitimate Russian interests in Central Asia, including through cooperation with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Russia and the Central Asian states should be informed of the results of legitimate interrogations of militants who came from the former Soviet space and were captured in

Afghanistan or Pakistan.

To overcome the zero-sum competition taking place between states, ethnic groups, and factions, the region needs to discover a source of mutual benefit derived from cooperation. China -- with its development of mineral resources and access roads in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the financial support it gave to build the port of Gwadar, and its expansion of the Karakoram Highway, which links China to northern Pakistan -- may be that source. China is also a major supplier of arms and nuclear equipment to Pakistan. China has a major interest in peace and development in the region because it desires a north-south energy and trade corridor so that its goods can travel from Xinjiang to the Arabian Sea ports of Pakistan and so that oil and gas pipelines can carry energy from the Persian Gulf and Iran to western China. In return for such a corridor, China could help deliver much-needed electricity and even water to both countries. Such a corridor would also help revive the economies of both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

### **More than Troops**

Both U.S. presidential candidates are committed to sending more troops to Afghanistan, but this would be insufficient to reverse the collapse of security there. A major diplomatic initiative involving all the regional stakeholders in problem-solving talks and setting out road maps for local stabilization efforts is more important. Such an initiative would serve to reaffirm that the West is indeed committed to the long-term rehabilitation of Afghanistan and the region. A contact group, meanwhile, would reassure Afghanistan's neighbors that the West is determined to address not just extremism in the region but also economic development, job creation, the drug trade, and border disputes.

Lowering the level of violence in the region and moving the global community toward genuine agreement on the long-term goals there would provide the space for Afghan leaders to create jobs and markets, provide better governance, do more to curb corruption and drug trafficking, and overcome their countries' widening ethnic divisions. Lowering regional tensions would allow the Afghan government to have a more meaningful dialogue with those insurgents who are willing to disavow al Qaeda and take part in the political process. The key to this would be the series of security measures the contact group should offer Pakistan, thereby encouraging the Pakistani army to press -- or at least allow -- Taliban and other insurgent leaders on their soil to talk to Kabul.

The goal of the next U.S. president must be to put aside the past, Washington's keenness for "victory" as the solution to all problems, and the United States' reluctance to involve competitors, opponents, or enemies in diplomacy. A successful initiative will require exploratory talks and an evolving road map. Today, such suggestions may seem audacious, naive, or impossible, but without such audacity there is little hope for Afghanistan, for Pakistan, or for the region as a whole.

Barnett R. Rubin and Ahmed Rashid, *Foreign Affairs*,  
November/December, 2008

<http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20081001faessay87603/barnett-r-rubin-ahmed-rashid/from-great-game-to-grand-bargain.html>

## FEARING ANOTHER QUAGMIRE IN AFGHANISTAN

Can President Obama succeed in that long-lamented “graveyard of empires” — a place that has crushed foreign occupiers for more than 2,000 years? Ever since the Bush administration diverted its attention — and resources — to the war in Iraq from the war in Afghanistan, military planners and foreign policy experts have bemoaned the dearth of troops to keep that country from sliding back into Taliban control. And in that time, the insurgency blossomed, as Taliban militants took advantage of huge swaths of territory, particularly in the south, that NATO troops weren't able to fill.

Enter Mr. Obama. During the campaign he promised to send two additional brigades — 7,000 troops — to Afghanistan. During the transition, military planners started talking about adding as many as 30,000 troops. And within days of taking office, Mr. Obama announced the appointment of Richard Holbrooke, architect of the Balkan peace accords, to execute a new Afghanistan policy.

But even as Mr. Obama's military planners prepare for the first wave of the new Afghanistan “surge,” there is growing debate, including among those who agree with the plan to send more troops, about whether — or how — the troops can accomplish their mission, and just what the mission is. Afghanistan has, after all, stymied would-be conquerors since Alexander the Great. It's always the same story; the invaders — British, Soviets — control the cities, but not the countryside. And eventually, the invaders don't even control the cities, and are sent packing. Think Iraq was hard? Afghanistan, former Secretary of State Colin Powell argues, will be “much, much harder.” “Iraq had a middle class,” Mr. Powell

pointed out on MSNBC's "Morning Joe" a couple of hours before Mr. Obama was sworn in last Tuesday. "It was a fairly advanced country before Saddam Hussein drove it in the ground." Afghanistan, on the other hand, "is still basically a tribal society, a lot of corruption; drugs are going to destroy that country if something isn't done about it."

For Mr. Obama, Afghanistan is the signal foreign policy crisis that he must address quickly. Some 34,000 American troops are already fighting an insurgency that grows stronger by the month, making this a dynamically deteriorating situation in a region fraught with consequence for American security aims. Coupled with nuclear-armed Pakistan, with which it shares a border zone that has become a haven for al Qaeda, Afghanistan could quickly come to define the Obama presidency. Mr. Obama's extra troops will largely be battling a Taliban insurgency fed by an opium trade estimated at \$300 million a year. And that insurgency is dispersed among a largely rural population living in villages scattered across 78,000 square miles of southern Afghanistan.

One question for Mr. Obama is whether 30,000 more troops are enough. "I think that this is more of a psychological surge than a practical surge," said Karin von Hippel, an Afghanistan expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. She said she favored the troop increase, but only as a precursor to getting the Europeans to contribute more, and to changing America's policy so it focuses more on the countryside, as opposed to the capital.

"In Afghanistan, the number of troops, if you combine NATO, American and Afghan troops, is 200,000 forces versus 600,000 in Iraq," Ms. von Hippel said. "Those numbers are so low that an extra 30,000 isn't going to get you to where you need to be. It's more of a stop-gap measure." "But something," she said, "is better than nothing." That last assertion, however, is also open to debate. Some foreign policy experts argue that Mr. Obama's decision to send additional troops to Afghanistan is simply an extension of Bush administration policy in the region, with the difference being that Mr. Obama could be putting more American lives at risk to pursue a failed policy.

While more American troops can help to stabilize southern Afghanistan, that argument goes, they cannot turn the situation around in the country unless there are major changes in overall policy. Afghanistan's president, Hamid Karzai, the darling of the Bush administration, has begun to lose his luster; American and European officials now express private frustration over his refusal to arrest drug

lords who have been running the opium trade.

Mr. Karzai has also been widely criticized for not cracking down enough on corruption. And diplomats say his distaste for venturing far beyond his fortified presidential palace in Kabul reinforces the divide between Afghanistan's central government and its largely rural population, giving the Taliban free rein in the countryside. Before sending in more American troops, argues Andrew Bacevich, an international relations professor at Boston University, Mr. Obama should figure out if he is going to change an underlying American policy that has shrunk from putting pressure on Mr. Karzai. "It seems there's a rush to send in more reinforcements absent the careful analysis that's most needed here," said Mr. Bacevich, author of "The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism."

"There's clearly a consensus that things are heading in the wrong direction," Mr. Bacevich said. "What's not clear to me is why sending 30,000 more troops is the essential step to changing that. My understanding of the larger objective of the allied enterprise in Afghanistan is to bring into existence something that looks like a modern cohesive Afghan state. Well, it could be that that's an unrealistic objective. It could be that sending 30,000 more troops is throwing money and lives down a rat hole."

Putting aside the question of whether a modern cohesive Afghan state is a realistic objective, United States policy makers would like, at the very least, to get to a point in Afghanistan where the country is no longer a launching pad for terrorist attacks like what happened on Sept. 11, 2001. Beating back the Taliban in southern Afghanistan, and rooting out Qaeda training camps on the Pakistani border in eastern Afghanistan with the goal of finding Osama bin Laden, are all central parts of American policy, even absent a modern cohesive Afghan state. Can 30,000 more troops help with that objective?

J. Alexander Their, an Afghanistan expert at the United States Institute of Peace, argues that additional troops can form a basis for stability, but that their presence will be for naught unless there is also government reform. "The Afghan population, particularly in the rural areas, has a strong degree of ambivalence toward the government," he said. "People expect very little from government, or expect bad things. Yet we've ignored government reform and rule of law as part of our strategy."

The appointment of Mr. Holbrooke as special representative to

Afghanistan and Pakistan may signal the direction that the Obama administration will take there. In the past, Mr. Holbrooke has written — as he did in a column in *The Washington Post* last spring — that in Afghanistan, “massive, officially sanctioned corruption and the drug trade are the most serious problems the country faces, and they offer the Taliban its only exploitable opportunity to gain support.” And during her confirmation hearing, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called Afghanistan a “narco-state” with a government “plagued by limited capacity and widespread corruption.” So an Obama administration may, indeed, look for ways to press Mr. Karzai to crack down on corruption and drug trafficking.

But Mr. Their, of the peace institute, says that for a troop increase to produce anything but the limited securing of a few areas, Mr. Obama and NATO may have to go further. “There has to be increasing recognition that what is most important is some form of accountable government,” he said. “If they’re willing to contemplate a world without Karzai, they’ll be more open to a fair process and more open to the idea that there may be others out there.”

Helene Cooper, *New York Times*, January 24, 2009  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/25/weekinreview/25cooper.html>

## GATES PREDICTS 'SLOG' IN AFGHANISTAN

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates yesterday signaled sharply lower expectations for the war in Afghanistan, warning the conflict will be “a long slog” and that U.S. and allied military forces, even at higher levels, can achieve limited goals. Gates said the U.S. military expects to be able to send three additional combat brigades -- between 10,000 and 12,000 troops -- to Afghanistan between late spring and midsummer to address a security vacuum “that increasingly has been filled by the Taliban.”

Still, he warned that he would be “deeply skeptical” of any further U.S. troop increases, saying that Afghan soldiers and police must take the lead, in part so that the Afghan public does not turn against U.S. forces as it has against foreign troops throughout history. The U.S. force in Afghanistan numbers about 36,000, and commanders there have asked for as many as 30,000 more combat and support troops.

“There is little doubt that our greatest military challenge right now is Afghanistan,” Gates said, marking the formal shift in priorities away from Iraq in his first congressional testimony as Pentagon chief under

President Obama. Still, Gates said, U.S. goals in Afghanistan must be "modest" and "realistic."

"This is going to be a long slog, and frankly, my view is that we need to be very careful about the nature of the goals we set for ourselves in Afghanistan," he said. "If we set ourselves the objective of creating some sort of central Asian Valhalla over there, we will lose, because nobody in the world has that kind of time, patience and money," Gates testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee. (Valhalla is used as a synonym for heaven, but in Norse mythology it is a great hall where heroes slain in battle are received.)

Civilian casualties resulting from U.S. combat and air strikes have been particularly harmful to progress in Afghanistan and must be avoided, Gates stressed. "My worry is that the Afghans come to see us as part of their problem rather than part of their solution, and then we are lost," he said. Moreover, the U.S. military must immediately voice regret for any civilian casualties, rather than waiting to investigate the details, Gates said in separate testimony before the House Armed Services Committee yesterday afternoon.

Gates said this is necessary to counter Taliban insurgents, who he said hide among the population and then report civilian deaths in coalition military operations quickly and widely on the Internet. "The instant we believe there may have been civilian casualties, we have to be out there" expressing condolences, rather than arguing over the numbers, he said. Gates also warned of Iranian interference in Afghanistan, pointing to a slightly increased flow of weapons including components of lethal munitions known as "explosively formed projectiles." He said Iran wants to "have it both ways," seeking economic and diplomatic benefits of relations with Kabul while still attempting to impose "the highest possible costs" on U.S. and coalition troops.

Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Michael Mullen said at a news conference late yesterday that roadside bomb and suicide attacks in Afghanistan have increased an estimated 40 percent over last year. Iranian activities have been troubling in other parts of the world, Gates said, including Latin America, where Iran is setting up "a lot of offices and a lot of fronts."

On Iraq, Gates said Pentagon and military leaders are working on several timetables for U.S. troops to move from a combat to an advisory role beginning as early as 16 months from now and extending until the end of 2011. The options for and risks of withdrawing the 142,000 U.S.

troops now in Iraq are being presented to Obama, who will meet with the Joint Chiefs at the Pentagon today, Gates said. At the Pentagon, Gates made it clear that in a time of financial austerity his priority will be to reform the Pentagon's cumbersome acquisition process while crafting "a unified defense strategy that determines our budget priorities." "The spigot of defense spending that opened on 9/11 is closing. With two major campaigns ongoing, the economic crisis and resulting budget pressures will force hard choices on this department," he said.

In particular, he criticized "entrenched attitudes throughout the government" that he said "are particularly pronounced in the area of acquisition: a risk-averse culture, a litigious process, parochial interests, excessive and changing requirements, budget churn and instability, and sometimes adversarial relationships" between the Pentagon and other parts of government. Gates gave few details about the upcoming defense budget but offered a glimpse of how he will approach his pledge to take a hard look at Pentagon spending on weapons systems. New weapons systems should be able to address a "hybrid" threat from enemies who combine high technology with insurgent tactics. "I want us to look for systems that have the maximum possible flexibility across the broadest possible range of conflict," he said in the House testimony.

On detainees, Gates said he agrees with the deadline of closing the U.S. detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, within a year. He said about 70 detainees can return home for rehabilitation, while others will face trial in military courts or military commissions. The "toughest issue" will be dealing with "the relatively small number" who "cannot be brought to trial and yet are quite open about saying that if they're released, they will find ways to kill Americans," he said.

Ann Scott Tyson, *Washington Post*, January 28, 2009  
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/27/AR2009012700472.html>

## DEBUNKING FIVE FALLACIES ON AFGHANISTAN

The discussion on NATO's presence in Afghanistan is defined by a dangerous gap between theory, however well intentioned, and the realities of the situation on the ground. This has kept the international coalition from asking difficult questions about the effectiveness of their strategy; especially in defining a strategic balance between available resources and attainable goals. In this presentation at a roundtable co-

---

hosted by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the European Council on Foreign Relations, Fabrice Pothier debunks five fallacies that obscure the discussion on strategy in Afghanistan.

**Fallacy I: We need a comprehensive strategy combining military and civilian reconstruction to create political stability.**

In their declarations, speeches and reports, all parties agree – including NATO and the EU – on the need for comprehensiveness. But there is little evidence so far that this concept has been put into operation on the ground. Firstly, how do you develop a comprehensive approach when the security and civilian actions are territorialised under 27 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) throughout Afghanistan? The word "comprehensive" has a different meaning when you are in Mons at SHAPE than in Schumann at the EU Commission HQ.

Secondly, there is still no strategic and operational coordination between NATO and the EU headquarters, nor their operational centres in Afghanistan.

Thirdly, the military and the aid community are still irreconcilable in terms of strategic and operational cultures – while the military seeks immediate results in high-risk environments, aid agencies and NGOs look for long-term improvement in low-risk environments. International partners still need to resolve the strategic and operational gaps if they want to deliver a comprehensive strategy on the ground. Only then will they be able to ask themselves what elements of security and civilian reconstruction should fall under a comprehensive approach.

The last few years have shown that too many priorities results in no priorities and no change on the ground. For example, should 'comprehensive' include education and health? A more realistic way forward might be for the main players, especially NATO and EU, to agree on the few priorities comprehensive should integrate, and develop concrete, articulated ways to operationalise those priorities in the close future.

**Fallacy II: Drugs and Taliban are so intertwined that they should be targeted as one threat.**

The maths are simple: 98% of Afghan opium is produced in 7 provinces – including Helmand – where the insurgency is most active. Geographic

correlation is used to argue the existence of a symbiotic relationship: drugs finance the insurgency – between \$50 to \$150 million a year - whilst insurgents facilitate and even manage the trade from production to processing and smuggling. The policy conclusions are simple: attacking the drug trade will weaken the Taliban insurgency.

Under a new directive agreed by defense ministers in Budapest in October 2008, NATO – ISAF troops have the mandate to conduct interdiction operations against drugs facilities and facilitators. NATO is officially involved in the war on drugs, but the effectiveness this policy is highly disputable - how can restricted NATO interdiction operations put a dent in a US\$3.5 billion industry? More importantly, the rationale behind the directive is flawed: historic precedents, including the ruthlessly effective ban on opium cultivation in 2000, have shown that the Taliban have an opportunistic approach to opium.

Undoubtedly, drugs constitute one of the Taliban's many sources of revenue, mostly by levying a tax on cultivation called Usher. The Taliban also use the lure of protection for growing opium poppies as a psychological weapon against impoverished rural communities. But there is no clear evidence to date that proves that targeting the drugs business will weaken the Taliban insurgency.

This flawed rationale fails to understand that opium represents the most competitive commodity in a conflict environment like southern Afghanistan, where resources, capital and access to markets are seriously limited. The real drivers to the opium industry are economic: the price of wheat, access to water, market, credit and land. Because the driving forces are different, there is a need to de-couple insurgency from the drug problem. Repression, especially through military forces, only has marginal effect.

Drugs represent a structural threat, especially to Afghan governance through systemic corruption, but can only be addressed on the long-run as part of development and governance efforts. The threat will be contained and reduced by building the fundamentals for a working rural economy – especially access to credit and to markets- not by militarising our way out of it.

### **Fallacy III: A 'Great Regional Bargain' is the solution to Afghanistan's instability**

There is a broad consensus that Afghanistan is in the eye of a complex

regional storm, and that stability might emerge from a new regional Compact. On its southern and eastern border, Pakistan's tribal borders areas have become the main hub for the Taliban and al Qaeda leadership, and their command and supply lines. Looking to the west, Iran is a key trading partner but also provides a high-traffic smuggling route for goods and people, especially illegal heroin. The seldom reported conflicts between customs guards and drug smugglers have cost thousands of lives over the last few years. In the north, Central Asian republics are also major smuggling routes for heroin and illegal goods. Further away, India has proven to play an active though ambiguous role in reconstruction, whilst China's has busy trade relations but a low diplomatic and aid role.

Clearly, there is a need for major diplomatic offensive at a regional level with a coordinated approach between regional and international partners, which means the need for more incentives for regional powers to control their borders, lower tensions and contribute to stabilization. The appointment of a US special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan is a clear step in this direction.

However, we should be realistic. A 'grand bargain' may come too late for Afghanistan. More concrete, operational actions should be taken. For instance, border management is uncoordinated - still fragmented between too many actors (the German government, UNODC, NATO, the US and the EU) with their own projects. Central Asia expert George Gravilis proposes the establishment of a border management coordination centre ideally led by the EU along the model of the successful EU Border Management Programme for Central Asia.

#### **Fallacy IV: Karzai is the problem; 'Afghanisation' is the Solution**

There is widespread criticism of President Karzai. He is viewed as a symbol and source of failing Afghan institutions, growing gap between the people and those new institutions, and poor governance. But the lack of strong leadership should not hide the more serious problem of weak Afghan institutions. And this is where the blame goes to the international community.

Of the 12 billion USD in aid disbursed since 2001 by the international community, 90% is channelled to donor countries through NGOs, aid agencies, and each country's own development programmes. By the summer of 2008, EUPOL Afghanistan had provided less than two

hundred police trainers, even though the ANP required the deployment of 2,300 trainers/mentors. Those examples signal gross under investment in Afghan capacity and institutions.

Furthermore, we have undermined 'Afghanistan' with our own tactical mistakes and strategic confusion: civilian casualties by over reliance on aerial bombing, or the US implementing its own counter narcotic strategy which bypassed the one of the Afghan government.

Afghanistan is the new buzz word, but it will require a sustained financial commitment by the international community for decades to come – Afghanistan's meager USD2.5 billion budget will not allow the achievement of the goal of 135,000 Afghan National Army troops by 2013, for example. The international community will have to continue to support capacity-building in a large and sustained way, and accept a certain level of risk and waste through Afghan institutions, which is always better than pursuing our own mistakes.

### **Fallacy V: Talking to the Taliban to Divide the Insurgency**

Not very long ago, the idea of talking to the Taliban was viewed as heresy - now it is a widely accepted policy tenant. The idea is to encourage talk by and with Afghan authorities. There is some ambiguity among the international partners on what role they should play.

The problem is that this notion is based on the shaky rationale that talking to the Taliban is a way to divide them. It is thought that the Afghan authorities will be able to lure the so-called 'economic warriors' and opportunistic criminal actors, and dissatisfied tribal fighters away from the core Taliban, thereby isolating the central leadership and senior commanders. This is based on the understanding that there is a loose insurgency, made of different groups across southern Afghanistan with different types of insurgents – the impoverished foot-soldiers, the local commanders, and the hard-core Taliban led by Mullah Omar and Taliban-allied groups like those of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

If the insurgency does operate as a loose network of local commanders and groups, it has shown a surprising capacity for well-coordinated attacks – like that against French troops in the Surobi District near Kabul in August and left 10 troops dead and 21 injured.

More importantly, the decentralised nature of Taliban operations, which was already the case in the 1990s, even when they were in power, should not preclude the fact that they are unified in their political aims: toppling the Afghan government and ousting the international presence.

Under the current context where the Taliban see themselves as winning the political momentum – the recent postponing of the presidential elections representing a symbolic victory – it is hard to see what incentive they have in entering into serious power sharing talks with the Karzai admin whom they see as failing.

In this context, the best political card available to the US and its partners is to strengthen Afghan institutions and security apparatus to the extent where they will be treated as a credible opponent by the insurgents.

### **Realistic Hope for Stabilisation**

There is a need for a realistic and focused stabilisation and reconstruction agenda that takes into account the limited military and aid resources available, the shrinking political capital for the Karzai administration and the mission in Europe, and building time pressures.

Such an agenda was proposed by Carnegie Visiting Scholar Gilles Dorronsoro, who argued that the effort should follow two-pronged path:

1. Concentrate the international troop efforts on securing strategic areas like the main urban centres, the key roads, which constitute the backbone of a more stable Afghanistan;
2. Concentrate civilian investment in building core Afghan institutions like National Police, National Army and centre government.

European partners will not be able to match in proportional number the likely 30,000-US combat troops surge in 2009. They should, however, show their readiness to share the risks by loosening some of the caveats restricting troops action and providing more logistic support especially to aerial mobility by filling the helicopter gap. The political room for manoeuvre in Europe, especially in Parliamentary democracies like Germany, Italy and the Netherlands is far too narrow to lead to any significant change. The core of Europe's own surge should be in building institutions and infrastructure, especially civilian security through a relatively functional policy forces. The latter is where Europe can make a credible and long-lasting difference.

Finally, European governments should lessen rhetoric on the mission in Afghanistan, stop the empty promises of 'success', 'victory' and of eradication of the Taliban and the drugs scourge, and instead adopt a more realistic narrative. Europe is engaged in Afghanistan for different

reasons: out of solidarity with its US ally; out of humanitarian concerns for the oppressed Afghans; and to prevent terrorist safe-heavens for its own security. However grounded, this rationale has fallen short of creating a sense among the European public that Afghanistan represents a deep and long-term strategic interest comparable to the Middle East. They might be right, and it is unlikely that any new narrative will manage to change this fundamental reality.

Fabrice Pothier, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, February 3, 2009  
<http://carnegieeurope.eu/publications/?fa=22695>

## AFGHANISTAN WILL BE A QUAGMIRE FOR AL QAEDA

Although President Barack Obama and all of us in Congress are understandably focused on the economic crisis, we also face multiple crises in the rest of the world -- beginning with the war in Afghanistan. Security there has been deteriorating as the insurgents have grown in strength, size and sophistication, expanding their influence over an increasing swath of territory.

Reversing the downward spiral will not be easy. But as Gen. David Petraeus once said of another war, "Hard is not hopeless." And we possess considerable strengths in this fight. The biggest strength is the American military, which through the crucible of Iraq has transformed itself into the most effective counterinsurgency force in history. Although Iraq and Afghanistan are very different, many of the guiding principles of counterinsurgency do apply to both theaters -- most importantly, the need to provide security for the population. Moreover, our troops will be redeploying from Iraq to Afghanistan with the momentum, experience and morale that comes with success.

We also have an ally in the Afghan people -- a proud people with a proud history. Although their frustration with our coalition is growing, Afghans are not eager to return to the tyranny and poverty of the Taliban. That is why the insurgents have not won their support and must resort to self-defeating tactics of cruelty and coercion.

The other critical strength, and reason for hope, is the broad support for success in Afghanistan in the new administration and Congress. Mr. Obama has made clear this is a war he intends to win. He has pledged to deploy more troops and appointed one of our most talented diplomats, Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, as special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. The combination of Mr. Holbrooke and Gen. Petraeus led by

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates is not a team to bet against.

That, then, is the good news. The bad news is that, even if we do everything right, conditions are likely to get worse before they get better, and the path ahead will still be long, costly and hard. The president's pledge to send more troops to Afghanistan is absolutely necessary and right -- but turning the tide will take more than additional troops. In fact, we must match the coming surge in troop strength with at least five other "surges" equally important to success.

- First and most importantly, we need a surge in the strategic coherence of the war effort. As we learned in Iraq, success in counterinsurgency requires integrating military and civilian operations into a seamless and unified strategy. In Afghanistan, we do not have in place a nationwide, civil-military campaign plan to defeat the insurgency.

This is an unacceptable failure. It is also the predictable product of a balkanized military command structure, in which different countries are left to pursue different strategies in different places. The international civilian effort in Afghanistan is even more disorganized, as well as unsynchronized with the military.

Unquestionably, it is a good thing so many countries are contributing to the fight in Afghanistan, and we owe a great debt of gratitude to our allies for their sacrifices. But we also owe them success, and that demands an integrated campaign plan and stronger American leadership.

- Second, we need a surge in civilian capacity. The U.S. Embassy in Kabul needs to be transformed and expanded, with the necessary resources and the explicit direction to work side by side with the military at every level. In particular, the civilian presence must be ramped up outside our embassy -- at the provincial, district and village levels, embedding nonmilitary experts with new military units as they move in.
- Third, we need to help surge the Afghan war effort. This means expanding the Afghan army to 200,000 or more, and ensuring they are properly equipped, paid and mentored.

The U.S. needs to take tough action to combat the pervasive corruption that is destroying the Afghan government and fueling the insurgency. This requires a systemic response, not just threatening specific leaders on an ad hoc basis. Specifically, we must invest comprehensively in Afghan institutions, both from top-down and

bottom-up.

In doing so, the U.S. should embrace a policy of "more for more" -- specifically, by offering the Afghan government a large-scale, 10-year package of governance and development aid in exchange for specific benchmarks on performance and progress.

- Fourth, we need a surge in our regional strategy. As many have observed, almost all of Afghanistan's neighbors are active in some way inside that country. Some of this activity is positive -- for instance, aid and investment -- but much of it is malign, providing support to insurgent groups. We must help "harden" Afghanistan by strengthening its institutions at both the national and local levels, empowering Afghans to stop their neighbors from using their country as a geopolitical chessboard.

The U.S. can help by beginning to explore the possibility of a bilateral defense pact with Kabul, which would include explicit security guarantees.

Some neighbors are hedging their bets today because they fear what happens "the day after" America grows tired and disengages from the region, as we did once before, after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. Nothing will discourage this destabilizing behavior better than a long-term American commitment to Afghanistan.

- Fifth, success in Afghanistan requires a sustained surge of American political commitment to the mission. Fortunately, and unlike Iraq, the Afghan war still commands bipartisan support in Congress and among the American people. But as more troops are deployed to Afghanistan and casualties rise, this consensus will be tested.

Indeed, there are already whispers on both the left and the right that Afghanistan is the graveyard of empires, that we should abandon any hope of nation-building there, additional forces sent there will only get bogged down in a quagmire.

Why are these whisperings wrong? Why is this war necessary? The most direct answer is that Afghanistan is where the attacks of 9/11 were plotted, where al Qaeda made its sanctuary under the Taliban, and where they will do so again if given the chance. We have a vital national interest in preventing that from happening.

It is also important to recognize that, although we face many problems in Afghanistan today, none are because we have made it possible for five million Afghan children -- girls and boys -- to go to

school; or because child mortality has dropped 25% since we overthrew the Taliban in 2001; or because Afghan men and women have been able to vote in their first free and fair elections in history.

On the contrary, the reason we have not lost in Afghanistan -- despite our missteps -- is because America still inspires hope of a better life for millions of ordinary Afghans and has worked mightily to deliver it. And the reason we can defeat the extremists is because they do not.

This, ultimately, is how the war on terror will end: not when we capture or kill Osama bin Laden or Mullah Omar -- though we must do that too -- but when we have empowered and expanded the mainstream Muslim majority to stand up and defeat the extremist minority.

That is the opportunity we have in Afghanistan today: to make that country into a quagmire, not for America but for al Qaeda, the Taliban and their fellow Islamist extremists, and into a graveyard in which their dreams of an Islamist empire are finally buried.

*Mr. Lieberman is an Independent Democratic senator from Connecticut. This op-ed is adapted from a speech he delivered last week at the Brookings Institution.*

Joseph Lieberman, *Wall Street Journal*, February 6, 2009  
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123388747399555397.html>

## BIDEN ADDRESSES MUNICH CONFERENCE

Vice President Biden spoke to the 45th Munich Conference on Security Policy this morning during his first overseas trip since taking office. Below are his comments as released by the White House:

Mr. Ambassador, thank you very much. Ladies and gentleman, it's an honor to be back in Munich. I've attended this conference many times as a United States senator, and three of my congressional colleagues are here with me today. But I am honored to be back here, as well, as the Vice President of the United States, representing a new administration and, hopefully, a new day.

Today I am especially honored to represent this administration. And we've gone through the oldest of our traditions: that is the peaceful transfer of power. And now, I bring the regrets of two friends who are usually here. But because we are still grappling with legislation relating to our so-called stimulus package to deal with our economic issues -- both Senators John McCain and John Kerry were hoping to join my three

House colleagues here today, they are usually here, but they send their regrets.

I come to Europe on behalf of a new administration, and an administration that's determined to set a new tone not only in Washington, but in America's relations around the world. That new tone is rooted in a strong bipartisanship to meet these common challenges. And we recognize that these challenges, the need to meet them, is not an opportunity -- not a luxury, but it's an absolute necessity. While every new beginning is a moment of hope, this moment -- for America and the countries represented in this room -- it is fraught with some considerable concern and peril.

In this moment, our obligation to our fellow citizens is to -- in our view -- put aside the petty and political notion that -- to reject the zero sum mentalities and rigid ideologies, and to listen to and learn from one another, and to work together for a common prosperity and security of all of us assembled in this room. That's what, in our view, this moment demands. And that's what this new administration is determined to do.

For 45 years, this conference has brought together Americans and Europeans -- and, in recent years, leaders from beyond the Transatlantic community -- to think through matters of our physical security. But this year, more than ever before, we know that our physical security and our economic security are indivisible. We are all confronting a serious threat to our economic security that could further spread instability and erode the progress we've made in improving the lives of all our citizens.

In the United States -- like many of you -- we're taking aggressive action to stabilize our financial systems, to jumpstart our economy, and, hopefully, lay a new foundation for growth in the 21st century. Working with the Congress, we'll make strategic investments that create and save we believe 3 to 4 million jobs, and in the process, boost our competitiveness in the long run.

Our plan includes doubling the production of alternative energy over the next three years; computerizing our citizens' medical records to drive down cost; equipping tens of thousands of our schools and colleges with 21st century classrooms, laboratories and libraries; expanding the broadband across America; and investing once again in science, research, technology -- all the things that spur innovation. We're looking -- we're also working to stabilize our financial institutions by injecting considerable amounts of capital, purchasing some assets and guaranteeing others. These remedies are going to have an impact, as you all know, far

beyond our shores, just as the measures all of you are taking will be felt beyond your borders, as well.

And because of that, to the greatest extent possible, we're going to have to cooperate to make sure that our actions are complementary, and to do our utmost to combat this global crisis. The United States is trying to do its part. And President Obama looks forward to taking our message to the G20 meeting in London in April.

And even as we grapple with an economic crisis, we're also -- have to contend with a war in Afghanistan now in its eighth year, and a war in Iraq well into its sixth year. And we have to recognize, as mentioned by both the Chancellor and President Sarkozy earlier today, that there are other forces that are shaping this new century: The spread of weapons of mass destruction and dangerous diseases, endemic disease; a growing gap between the rich and poor; ethnic animosity in failed states; and a rapidly warming planet and uncertain supplies of energy, food, water. The challenges to freedom and security from radical fundamentalism must be added to that list, as well.

In meeting these challenges, the United States will be guided by this principle -- and the principle is: There is no conflict between our security and our ideals. We believe they are mutually reinforcing. The force of arms won our independence, and throughout our history the force of arms has protected our freedom. That will not change. But the very moment we declared our war of independence, at that moment we laid out to the world the values behind our revolution and the conviction that our policies must be informed, as we said at the time, by a "decent respect for the opinions of mankind."

Our Founders understood then, and the United States believes now, that the example of our power must be matched by the power of our example. And that is why our administration rejects a false choice between our safety and our ideals. America will vigorously defend our security and our values, and in doing so we believe we'll all be more secure.

As hard as we try, I know -- I know -- that we're likely to fall short of our ideals in the future, just as we have in the past. But I commit to you, this administration will strive every day -- every day -- to honor the values that animate American democracy and, I might add, that bind us to all of you in this room.

America will not torture. We will uphold the rights of those who we bring to justice. And we will close the detention facility at Guantanamo

Bay. But tough choices lie ahead. As we seek a lasting framework for our common struggle against extremism, we'll have to work cooperatively with nations around the world -- and we'll need your help. We'll need your help. For example, we will ask others to take responsibility for some of those now in Guantanamo, as we determine to close it. Our security is shared. And so, too, I respectfully suggest, is our responsibility to defend it.

That's the basis upon which we want to build a new approach to the challenges of this century. America will do more, but America will -- that's the good news. The bad news is America will ask for more from our partners, as well. Here's what we'll do, and what we hope our partners will consider. First, we'll work in a partnership whenever we can, and alone only when we must. The threats we face have no respect for borders. No single country, no matter how powerful, can best meet these threats alone. We believe international alliances and organizations do not diminish America's power -- we believe they help advance our collective security, economic interests and our values.

So we'll engage. We'll listen. We'll consult. America needs the world, just as I believe the world needs America. But we say to our friends that the alliances, treaties and international organizations we build must be credible and they must be effective. That requires a common commitment not only to listen and live by the rules, but to enforce the rules when they are, in fact, clearly violated.

Such a bargain is the bargain we seek. Such a bargain can be at the heart of our collective efforts to convince Iran, for example, to forego the development of nuclear weapons. The Iranian people are a great people; the Persian civilization is a great civilization. But Iran has acted in ways that are not conducive to peace in the region or to the prosperity of its own people. Its illicit nuclear program is but one of those manifestations.

Our administration is reviewing our policy toward Iran, but this much is clear: We will be willing to talk. We'll be willing to talk to Iran and to offer a very clear choice: Continue down the current course and there will be continued pressure and isolation; abandon the illicit nuclear program and your support for terrorism, and there will be meaningful incentives.

Second, we'll strive to act preventively, not preemptively, to avoid whenever possible, or wherever possible the choice of last resort between the risks of war and the dangers of inaction. We'll draw upon all the elements of our power -- military and diplomatic, intelligence and law

enforcement, economic and cultural -- to stop crises from occurring before they are in front of us. In short, we're going to attempt to recapture the totality of America's strength, starting with diplomacy.

On his second full day in office, President Obama, went to our State Department, where he stressed the centrality of diplomacy in our national security. The commitment can be seen in his appointments, starting with the Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton. It can be seen in the President's decision to name two of America's most tenacious diplomats - - Senator George Mitchell and Ambassador Richard Holbrooke -- to contend with two of the world's most urgent and vexing and complex challenges: the need for a secure, just, and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians, and the imperative of stopping the mountains between Afghanistan and Pakistan from providing a haven for terrorists. In both these efforts, America seeks your partnership.

Senator Mitchell just completed his first trip to the Middle East. Above all, he went to listen. In the near term, we must consolidate the cease-fire in Gaza by working with Egypt and others to stop smuggling, and developing an international relief and reconstruction effort that strengthens the Palestinian Authority, and not Hamas. Neither of these goals can be accomplished without close collaboration among the United States, Europe, and our Arab partners.

Then, we must lay the foundation for a broader peacemaking effort. In the past -- well, look at it this way -- it's long time passed for us to secure a just, two-state solution. We will work to achieve it. And we'll work to defeat extremists who perpetuate the conflict. And in building on positive elements of the Arab Peace Initiative put forward by Saudi Arabia, we'll work toward a broader regional peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors, and we'll responsibly draw down our forces that are in Iraq in the process.

The United States will continue to work for a stable Afghanistan that's not a haven for terrorists. We look forward -- we look forward to sharing that commitment with the government and the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and with all of our allies and partners, because a deteriorating situation in the region poses a security threat not just to the United States, but I would suggest somewhat presumptuously, to every one of you assembled in this room.

President Obama has ordered a strategic review of our policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan to make sure that our goals are clear, and that they are achievable. As we undertake that review, we seek ideas and input

from you and all of our partners. And we genuinely seek those ideas. I've already had bilateral meetings. I'll have the opportunity to meet with the President of France and others this afternoon. I had an opportunity to meet with the Chancellor this morning. We are sincere in seeking your counsel.

As we undertake this review, there's a lot at stake. The result must be a comprehensive strategy for which we all take responsibility -- that brings together our civilian and military resources, that prevents terrorists a safe haven, that helps the Afghan people develop the capacity to secure their own future. But no strategy for Afghanistan, in my humble opinion, can succeed without Pakistan. We must all strengthen our cooperation with the people and government of Pakistan, help them stabilize their Tribal Areas, promote economic development and opportunity throughout their country. In the case of my government, we feel it's urgent to move from a relationship that was transactional to one that is based upon a long-term relationship.

Thirdly, America will extend a hand to those who, as the President said, will unclench their fist. The United States of America does not believe, our administration does not believe, in a clash of civilizations; there is nothing inevitable about that. We do see a shared struggle against extremism -- and we'll do everything in our collective power to help the forces of tolerance prevail.

In the Muslim world, a small -- and I believe a very small -- number of violent extremists are beyond the call of reason. We will, and we must, defeat them. But hundreds of millions of hearts and minds in the Muslim world share the values we hold dearly. We must reach them. President Obama has made clear that he will seek a new way forward based on mutual interest and mutual respect. It was not an accident that he gave his very first interview as President of the United States to Al Arabiya. That was not an accident.

To meet the challenges of this new century, defense and diplomacy are necessary. But quite frankly, ladies and gentlemen, they are not sufficient. We also need to wield development and democracy, two of the most powerful weapons in our collective arsenals. Poor societies and dysfunctional states, as you know as well as I do, can become breeding grounds for extremism, conflict and disease. Non-democratic nations frustrate the rightful aspirations of their citizens and fuel resentment.

Our administration has set an ambitious goal to increase foreign assistance, to cut extreme poverty in half by 2015, to help eliminate the

global educational deficit, and to cancel the debt of the world's poorest countries; to launch a new Green Revolution that produces sustainable supplies of food, and to advance democracy not through the imposition of force from the outside, but by working with moderates in government and civil society to build those institutions that will protect that freedom -- quite frankly, the only thing that will guarantee that freedom.

We also are determined to build a sustainable future for our planet. We are prepared to once again begin to lead by example. America will act aggressively against climate change and in pursuit of energy security with like-minded nations.

Our administration's economic stimulus package, for example, includes long-term investments in renewable energy. And we believe that's merely a down payment. The President has directed our Environmental Protection Agency to review how we regulate emissions, start a process to raise fuel efficiency, appoint a climate envoy -- and all in his first week in office, to demonstrate his commitment.

As America renews our emphasis on diplomacy, development and democracy, and preserving our planet, we will ask our allies to rethink some of their own approaches -- including their willingness to use force when all else fails. When it comes to radical groups that use terror as a tool, radical states who harbor extremists, undermine peace and seek or spread weapons of mass destruction, and regimes that systematically kill or ethnically cleanse their own people, we must stand united and use every means at our disposal to end the threat that they pose. None of us can deny or escape the new threats of the 21st century. Nor can we escape the responsibility to meet them.

And we are not unmindful in the United States how difficult it is to communicate these notions to our public who don't want to hear much of what needs to be said. Two months from now, the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization will gather to celebrate the 60th year of this Alliance. This Alliance has been the cornerstone of our common security since the end of World War II. It has anchored the United States in Europe and helped forge a Europe whole and free. Together we made a pact, a pact to safeguard the freedom of our people founded on the principles and the documents referring to democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law. We made a commitment to cooperate, to consult, to act with resolve when the principles we defended are challenged.

There is much to celebrate. But there's much more to be done. We must recommit our shared security and renew NATO, so that its

success in the 20th century is matched in the 21st century. NATO's core purpose remains the collective defense of its members. But faced with new threats, new realities, we need a new resolve to meet them and new capabilities to succeed. Our Alliance must be better equipped to help stop the spread of the world's most dangerous weapons, to tackle terrorism and cyber-security, to expand the writ of energy security, and to act in and out of area more effectively. We continue to develop -- we will continue to develop missile defense to counter the growing Iranian capability, provided the technology is proven and it is cost-effective. We'll do so in consultation with you, our NATO allies, and with Russia.

As we embark on this renewal project -- as we like to think of it -- the United States, like other allies, would warmly welcome, and we do warmly welcome, the decision by France to fully cooperate in NATO structures. That's the main reason the President got our speech. (Laughter) You were supposed to say nicer things about me when you got the speech, Mr. President. (Laughter) That's a joke. (Laughter)

In a recent discussion with President Sarkozy, President Obama underscored his strong support for France's full participation in NATO, should France wish it. France is a founding member of NATO and a major contributor to its operation. We would expect France's new responsibilities to reflect the significance of its contributions throughout NATO's history, and to strengthen the European role within the Alliance.

We also support the further strengthening of European defense, an increased role for the European Union in preserving peace and security, a fundamentally stronger NATO-EU partnership, and a deeper cooperation with countries outside the Alliance who share our common goals and principles.

The United States rejects the notion that NATO's gain is Russia's loss, or that Russia's strength is NATO's weakness. The last few years have seen a dangerous drift in relations between Russia and the members of our Alliance. It is time -- to paraphrase President Obama -- it's time to press the reset button and to revisit the many areas where we can and should be working together with Russia.

Our Russian colleagues long ago warned about the rising threat of the Taliban and al Qaeda in Afghanistan. Today, NATO and Russia can, and should, cooperate to defeat this common enemy. We can and should cooperate to secure loose nuclear weapons and materials to prevent their spread, to renew the verification procedures in the START Treaty, and

then go beyond existing treaties to negotiate deeper cuts in both our arsenals. The United States and Russia have a special obligation to lead the international effort to reduce the number of nuclear weapons in the world.

We will not agree with Russia on everything. For example, the United States will not -- will not recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states. We will not recognize any nation having a sphere of influence. It will remain our view that sovereign states have the right to make their own decisions and choose their own alliances. But the United States and Russia can disagree and still work together where our interests coincide. And they coincide in many places.

This conference started in the shadow of the Cold War. Now it takes place in a new century with new threats. As one great poet, an Irish poet, once wrote about another circumstance, he said: "All is changed, changed utterly: a terrible beauty has been born." Well, all changed, changed utterly. And we must change, too, while remaining true to the principles upon which this Alliance was founded. And we must have the common courage and commitment of those who came before us to work together, to build together, to stand together. In sharing ideals and searching for partners in a more complex world, America and Europeans still look to one another before they look to anyone else. Our partnership has benefitted us all. It's time -- it's time to renew it. And President Obama and I look forward to doing just that.

*Washington Post*, February 7, 2009

[http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2009/02/07/biden\\_addresses\\_munich\\_confere.html](http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2009/02/07/biden_addresses_munich_confere.html)

## OBAMA TEAM OUTLINES 'NEW REALISM' FOR AFGHANISTAN

The Obama administration today outlined a new campaign strategy for the war in Afghanistan, scaling back the ambitions of George Bush in a shift which senior officials and diplomats described as a "new realism".

Richard Holbrooke, Barack Obama's new envoy for Afghanistan, General James Jones, the new White House national security adviser, and General David Petraeus, the new commander of the Afghan campaign, all stressed that the US president's policy on the Taliban and al-Qaeda would be governed by "attainable goals" matched by "adequate resources". In the first major foreign policy speech from the new administration, the vice-president, Joe Biden, told a security conference in Munich that the

strategic review on Afghanistan under way in Washington would "make sure that our goals are clear and achievable".

Notable by its absence in any of the speeches from the American team was any mention of building democracy in Afghanistan. Instead, the emphasis was on creating sustainable security to try to prevent the Taliban from extending their grip on the country. "Obama's objectives will be much more moderate," said a senior European policy-maker involved in discussions with the Obama team. A senior NATO official said Washington's emphasis on Afghanistan was shifting to "being much more realistic", adding: "It doesn't need to be a democracy, just secure."

"The new policy will be not just winning hearts and minds, but winning hearts, minds, and stomachs," said another senior diplomat working in Kabul. "It's realistic. Realism is good." The Obama team and NATO leaders are due to finalise a "comprehensive" review of the Afghan strategy by April when the US president arrives in Europe for a NATO summit in France and Germany.

"Barack Obama is a pragmatist. He knows we must deal with the world as it is," said Jones. He added that there had been a "failure to harmonise" the various strands of the campaign in Afghanistan. The new policy would place greater emphasis on "going beyond military capacity" to dealing with good governance, judicial reform, a focus on the police, and the "war on drugs".

General John Craddock, the NATO commander, said alliance forces in Afghanistan would launch attacks on opium and heroin cartels "within a few days", a decision that has triggered some dispute among some European NATO allies. Petraeus made it plain that the Americans expected the Europeans to contribute more troops to the campaign in Afghanistan, although there were no troop pledges made over the weekend.

John Hutton, the British defence secretary, was the sole European voice today calling for more troops to be dispatched. "It is better to volunteer than to be asked," he said, denouncing the European habit in NATO of "looking to the Americans to do all the heavy lifting". Hutton delivered an unusually robust attack on NATO's bureaucracy, arguing that the operations to counter the Taliban represented the alliance's future. "This is not an aberration. This is the pattern of future conflicts. I do not believe we are properly preparing for it," he said. NATO should show a "wartime mentality" over the campaign in Afghanistan, but instead it possessed a "peacetime culture obsessed with process", he added.

Hutton's attack on NATO's indecision was welcomed by Petraeus, who described the remarks as "a terrific message". The US is expected to almost double its contingent in Afghanistan to about 60,000 troops. Holbrooke signalled a sharp change of tack on Afghanistan, saying: "We've inherited a situation of grand rhetoric and inadequate resources, both military and civilian. We need to understand what our goal is in Afghanistan."

Ian Traynor, *Guardian*, February 8, 2009  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/feb/08/obama-afghanistan-us-foreign-policy>

## A TURNAROUND STRATEGY

In May 2006 a unit of American soldiers in Afghanistan's Uruzgan valley were engulfed in a ferocious fire fight with the Taliban. Only after six hours, and supporting air strikes, could they extricate themselves from the valley. But what was most revealing about the battle was the fact that many local farmers spontaneously joined in, rushing home to get their weapons. Asked later why they'd done so, the villagers claimed they didn't support the Taliban's ideological agenda, nor were they particularly hostile toward the Americans. But this battle was the most momentous thing that had happened in their valley for years. If as virile young men they had stood by and just watched, they would have been dishonored in their communities. And, of course, if they were going to fight, they could not fight alongside the foreigners.

In describing this battle, the Australian counterinsurgency expert David Kilcullen coins a term, "accidental guerilla," to describe the villagers. They had no grand transnational agenda, no dreams of global jihad. If anything, those young men were defending their local ways and customs from encroachment from outside. But a global terrorist group—with local ties—can find ways to turn these villagers into allies of a kind. And foreign forces, if they are not very careful, can easily turn them into enemies.

Reduced to its simplest level, the goal of American policy in Afghanistan should be to stop creating accidental guerrillas. It should make those villagers see U.S. forces as acting in their interests. That would mark a fundamental turnaround. Let's be clear. The war in Afghanistan is not going well; almost all trends are moving in the wrong direction. But I don't believe it is a quagmire—yet. We still have time to

focus our goals, improve our strategy, calibrate our means. The two men in charge now, Gen. David Petraeus and Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, are extraordinarily talented. But what should they do? We need to overhaul U.S. policy in four steps, each more complicated than the last.

Do counterinsurgency right. Despite Petraeus's demonstrable success in Iraq, U.S. forces have to this point largely relied on more old-fashioned tactics—raids, search-and-destroy missions, air attacks. Partly this is because the U.S. military has deployed too few troops to hold territory that's been cleared. "In Afghanistan, we do what we can. In Iraq we do what we must," Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Adm. Mike Mullen explained in 2007. It is also because many American troops believe that they are chasing global terrorists who must be captured or killed urgently. Instead of aggressive and punitive—in military parlance, "kinetic"—operations, Petraeus's counterinsurgency approach emphasizes the need to make local populations feel secure. Troops are meant to live among the people, use less force, gain trust, not overreact to every provocation and be seen as a positive force within the community. Above all, the priority is to get local forces—in this case, the Afghan National Army and the police—to do as much as possible, even when the job might not be done as well as by foreign troops.

The number of additional U.S. troops needed is not large. Afghanistan is predominantly rural, and the large population centers that truly need protection are limited. U.S. forces would also need to control the key roads and transit points. In fact, the commander in Afghanistan, Gen. David McKiernan, has begun to focus his efforts on this approach. Between the addition of two to four more American brigades and a ramp-up of the Afghan Army, there should be enough troops to execute the strategy.

Strengthen the Afghan government. The central government is widely seen as weak, dysfunctional and utterly corrupt. Disgust with its performance has reopened the door for the Taliban, who are unpopular almost everywhere but who promise justice—albeit very rough justice—rather than the chaos of the Karzai reign. The international community should have considerable influence on this matter because the Kabul government, unlike in Iraq, has virtually no revenue sources other than foreign aid. Unfortunately, so far many of the most corrupt elements in government are allies of the West and have gained a kind of immunity as a result. The most immediate way to enhance the legitimacy of the

Afghan government would be to ensure that both presidential and local elections take place this year without disruption, and that viable alternative candidates are free to campaign. But elections are only one form of political legitimacy in a country like Afghanistan. There should be a much more broad-based effort to reach out to tribal leaders, hold local councils and build a more-diverse base of support. The goal in Afghanistan should not be a strong central government—the country is decentralized in its DNA—but a legitimate government with credibility and local allies throughout the country. This is how Afghanistan was ruled before the wars that have consumed it since the 1980s.

Talk to the Taliban. The single most important consequence of the surge in Iraq was the fact that large parts of the Sunni community—including insurgents who had been attacking U.S. troops for years—reconciled with America and, provisionally, the Baghdad government. "The challenge in Afghanistan," Petraeus said in a recent interview with *Foreign Policy*, "is figuring out how to create conditions that enable reconciliation, recognizing that these will likely be different somewhat from those created in Iraq."

Timing is important. Petraeus argues that in Iraq, reconciliation became easier once the United States had regained a position of strength, having killed or captured many Sunni fighters. (And after many more were savagely killed by Shiite militias.) But the basic idea is obvious—to divide the enemy and thereby reduce the number of diehard opponents arrayed against you. The process of political bargaining goes on in every society during such conflicts. The goal in Afghanistan must be to separate, as often as possible, the global jihadist from the accidental guerrilla.

In America, this has turned into a somewhat ideological debate about "talking to the Taliban." Critics rage that this would be doing business with evil people. But in a country like Afghanistan—one of the poorest in the world—politics is often less about ideology and more about a share of the spoils. While some members of the Taliban are hard-core Islamic extremists, others are concerned with gaining a measure of local power—of access to money and clout.

The most important departure from current thinking would be to make a distinction between al Qaeda and the Taliban. The United States is properly and unalterably opposed to al Qaeda—on strategic, political and moral grounds—because its *raison d'être* is to inflict brutality on the civilized world. We have significant differences with the Taliban on many

issues—democracy and the treatment of women being the most serious. But we do not wage war on other Islamist groups with which we similarly disagree (the Saudi monarchy, for example). Were elements of the Taliban to abandon al Qaeda, we would not have a pressing national-security interest in waging war against them.

In fact, there is a powerful military advantage to moving in this direction. Al Qaeda is a stateless organization that controls no territory of its own. It can survive and thrive only with a host community. Our objective should be to cut off al Qaeda, as far as possible, from its allies in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Deprived of local support, al Qaeda would be a much diminished threat. Now, it is certainly true that some elements of the Taliban might be closely wedded to al Qaeda. But others are not. Even the most hard-line Taliban—the so-called Quetta Shura led by Mullah Omar—have at various points made overtures to the Afghan government, always asking that they be distinguished from al Qaeda. In Guantánamo, for example, Afghans who had played minor roles as drivers and servants for Qaeda officials have been treated just the same as 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.

Given that the United States is in its seventh year of war in Afghanistan, it might surprise many Americans to recognize that not one Afghan was involved at any significant level in the 9/11 attacks. Barnett Rubin, who has studied the region for decades and is chairing an Asia Society report on Afghanistan, makes the point more forcefully: "Afghans have played no significant role in any major terrorist attack before or after 9/11." This is true. All the plots that have been traced back to the region lead not to Afghanistan but to Pakistan, where U.S. officials acknowledge the top leadership of both the Taliban and al Qaeda now reside.

Pressure Pakistan. When the United States invaded Afghanistan, it did not defeat al Qaeda and its supporters among the Taliban. They simply fled to Pakistan, their original home. The story is by now familiar. During the 1980s, the Pakistani military—through its Inter-Services Intelligence agency—helped form militant Islamic groups to wage asymmetrical war against Soviet-occupied Afghanistan and against India in Kashmir. This strategy was financed by Saudi Arabia and the United States. It gave birth to the Taliban and helped provide al Qaeda with a home when Osama bin Laden was expelled from Sudan.

It is crucial to recognize that the Pakistani military achieved substantial success with these militias. They bled India at very low cost,

neutralizing New Delhi's much larger army, and chased the Soviet Union out of Afghanistan. These represent the only two significant strategic successes for the Pakistani military in decades, perhaps in its history. The American debate on the need to "press" Pakistan to dismantle these militias misses this point. Pakistan has long viewed its clients as having given the country "strategic depth"—keeping its historic foes, India and Afghanistan, off balance. For Islamabad to genuinely renounce these groups would require a fundamental strategic rethinking within the Pakistani military.

This is hard but not impossible. The civilian government in Pakistan, weak and ineffective though it may be, is allied with the international community on these issues. It too wants a Pakistani military that knows its boundaries, does not run militant groups and conceives of the country's national interests in less-confrontational terms. The United States has enormous influence with the Pakistani Army, though it has not always used it well. (When we cut off military-to-military relations in the 1990s, because of congressional sanctions against Pakistan's nuclear tests, we lost a generation of officers who felt betrayed by America.) If the military agrees to dismantle these jihadist networks—demonstrably—Afghanistan and India should respond with concessions to ease regional tensions. I don't want to make this sound easy. Of all the tasks that Petraeus and Holbrooke have, this one is the hardest. And yet, if the problem with Pakistan cannot be solved, the war in Afghanistan cannot be won.

Afghanistan is a complex problem, and progress will be slow and limited. But we need to stabilize the situation, not magically transform one of the poorest, most war-torn countries in the world in the next few years. It will help immeasurably if we keep in mind the basic objective of U.S. policy there. "My own personal view is that our primary goal is to prevent Afghanistan from being used as a base for terrorists and extremists to attack the United States and its allies," said Secretary of Defense Robert Gates last week. That is an admirably clear statement.

It is not that we don't have other goals—education, female literacy, centralized control of government services, drug eradication, liberal democracy. But many of them are objectives that will be realized over very long stretches of time, and should not be measured as part of military campaigns or political cycles. They are also goals that are not best achieved by military force. The U.S. Army is being asked to do enough as it is in Afghanistan. Helping it stay focused on a core mission

---

is neither cramped nor defeatist. It is a realistic plan for success.

Fareed Zakaria, *Newsweek*, February 9, 2009  
<http://www.newsweek.com/id/182651>

## OUR MAN IN KABUL

There is a special, overflowing corner of hell reserved for the policies and practices of just-departed American presidents, and the Obama administration has rushed to toss democracy promotion in Afghanistan onto that sulfurous heap of political oblivion. But Afghan President Hamid Karzai is making it perfectly clear that he does not intend to go along for the ride, quietly or otherwise.

In interviews, statements to Congress and speeches, President Obama and his chief foreign policy aides have distanced themselves from Karzai so effectively that he might as well be on the moon. They do not mince words in accusing him of letting Afghanistan become a "narco-state" rampant with corruption while allowing the Taliban to retake growing swaths of the countryside.

Three things need to be said:

- (1) The analysis by Obama & Co. is accurate and is shared by U.S. allies, particularly Britain, which has effectively given up on Karzai. NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer recently published an op-ed in *The Post* blasting Karzai after checking its tone and content with the Obama White House.
- (2) The administration is tactically shrewd to dial down public expectations for U.S. involvement in Afghanistan. It has instead shifted the focus to halting the country's slide into ever-greater violence and instability -- the modest goal that Gen. David Petraeus has now enunciated for himself as Central Command boss.
- (3) But the Obama team has yet to develop a persuasive, overarching strategy for handling one of the most vexing problems great nations confront when they take on distant wars in fractious, outside-of-history locales: What to do with once-useful indigenous allies who gradually become more of a problem than a solution as war aims shift and public support ebbs in the bigger power?

Obama now runs the classic risk of trying to beat something with nothing -- of completely undercutting Karzai, democratically elected in

2004, before a credible alternative can be developed and put in place.

The brazen attacks on central Kabul last week did not enhance Karzai's standing in Washington. They formed a grim welcome for special envoy Richard Holbrooke -- and were perhaps conceived as a mini-Tet Offensive, Taliban-style, to dent U.S. and European morale.

Holbrooke would not have missed the echo from 1968 Vietnam. He earned his young diplomat's stripes in Saigon in the U.S. pacification program of the early 1960s. Nor will he have forgotten the disasters that engulfed U.S. policy there as Washington maneuvered its Vietnamese favorites in and out of office in a search for a "Third Force" that either did not exist or could not be sustained.

At an international conference in Germany last weekend attended by Holbrooke, Vice President Biden and national security adviser James L. Jones, Karzai rope-a-doped American officials and did not argue about their statements. But in other conversations in Munich, the Afghan repeatedly criticized the United States and its allies for inflicting "numerous, needless" civilian casualties and thus being responsible for the resurgence of the Taliban. He served notice that he is prepared to run a "Yankee Go Home" campaign for reelection this year, even if he has to pull the house down around himself.

The administration does not seem to have thought through the double-edged political effect of its promise to send up to 30,000 more U.S. troops to Afghanistan. That rapid influx can only have the effect of "Americanizing" both the war and the Afghan casualty figures even more, at least in the short run.

As initially conceived, this surge seems to have everything to do with Obama's campaign pledges to win the right war in the right place and to make the United States safe from al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden -- and relatively little to do with Afghanistan's own political struggle. That outcome is one consequence of changing goals so abruptly -- of moving from George W. Bush's ideological campaign of democracy promotion in Afghanistan and Iraq to Team Obama's coolly pragmatic effort to force Karzai to change or quit. It is an approach that can be applied anywhere, at any time.

Yes, desperate times require desperate moves, and Obama's surge may yet bear fruit. Let us hope so. But the new president would do well to reflect on the miscalculations of Lyndon Johnson in Vietnam and Bush 43 in Iraq in seeking to manipulate the politics of a client state. Both experiences point to perils that Obama may be unleashing for himself.

---

Jim Hoagland, *Washington Post*, February 15, 2009  
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/13/AR2009021302512.html>

## OBAMA SEES AFGHAN SITUATION DETERIORATING

The situation in Afghanistan seems to be getting worse and a solution will require more than just military force, U.S. President Barack Obama said on Tuesday. "There are a lot of concerns about a conflict that has lasted quite a long time now and actually appears to be deteriorating at this point," he told CBC television in an interview ahead of his visit to Canada on Thursday.

Obama voiced appreciation for Canada's military engagement in Afghanistan and gave no hint that he would ask Prime Minister Stephen Harper to extend the combat mission there beyond the mid-2011 date agreed by Parliament.

"Very soon we will be releasing some initial plans in terms of how we are going to approach the military side of the equation in Afghanistan," he said.

"But I'm absolutely convinced that you cannot solve the problem of Afghanistan, the Taliban, the spread of extremism in that region, solely through military means," he added.

"We're going to have use diplomacy, we're going to have to use development, and my hope is that in conversations that I have with Prime Minister Harper that he and I end up seeing the importance of a comprehensive strategy."

*Reuters*, February 17, 2009  
<http://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSN1737512420090217?feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews>

## OBAMA OKS 17,000 MORE TROOPS FOR AFGHANISTAN

US President Barack Obama approved adding some 17,000 US troops for the flagging war in Afghanistan, his first significant move to change the course of a conflict that his closest military advisers have warned the United States is not winning. "This increase is necessary to stabilize a deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, which has not received the strategic attention, direction and resources it urgently requires," Obama said in a statement. That was an implicit slap at his predecessor, George

W. Bush, whom Obama has accused of slighting urgent national security needs in Afghanistan in favor of war in Iraq.

The White House said the new commander in chief would send a Marine brigade and one additional Army brigade to Afghanistan this spring and summer. About 8,000 Marines are expected to go first, followed by about 9,000 Army troops. The United States has slightly more than 30,000 troops in the country now.

The new troops represent the first installment on a larger influx of US forces widely expected this year. Obama's move would put several thousand troops in place in time for the increase in fighting that usually occurs with warmer weather and ahead of national elections in August. The additional forces partly answer a standing request from the US commander in Afghanistan, Gen. David McKiernan, who has sought as many as 30,000 additional US troops to counter the resurgence of the Taliban militants and protect Afghan civilians.

"There is no more solemn duty as president than the decision to deploy our armed forces into harm's way," Obama said. "I do it today mindful that the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan demands urgent attention and swift action." The new units are a Marine Expeditionary Brigade unit from Camp Lejeune, N.C., and the 5th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, an Army Stryker brigade from Fort Lewis in Washington state. Defense officials said they are still working out final numbers of Marines who will deploy with the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade. A Marine Expeditionary Brigade can vary in size and makeup.

Among the forces recently notified of deployment is a Marine unit of infantry and ground troops from Camp Pendleton in southern California, said Kurt Bardella, a spokesman for Rep. Darrell Issa, a Republican who represents the congressional district where the base is located. He said a full Marine brigade that also includes air assault forces, electronic warfare and reconnaissance will leave for Afghanistan on May 30.

The withdrawal of troops from Iraq allows Obama to increase the numbers in Afghanistan. Last fall, the Pentagon announced that the Fort Lewis brigade was being ordered to go to Iraq. Ahead of his first foreign trip this week, Obama told a Canadian news organization that the United States will seek a more comprehensive, diplomatic approach to Afghanistan, where the US has been engaged in war since 2001.

"I am absolutely convinced that you cannot solve the problem of Afghanistan, the Taliban, the spread of extremism in that region solely

through military means," the president said in a White House interview with Toronto-based Canadian Broadcasting Corp. Obama is scheduled to make a quick day trip to Ottawa on Thursday. Obama agreed to a troop recommendation from Defense Secretary Robert Gates, the lone holdover from the Bush administration. Pentagon officials had been expecting a similar announcement for weeks, but the new Obama team took about a month choosing how and when to add forces to a war that has been sliding backward.

The president made his decision Tuesday, a senior White House official said. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity ahead of the announcement, said Obama informed congressional leaders and Afghan President Hamid Karzai by phone. The planned troop deployment does not preclude sending more forces in the future, the official said. Any others, however, would come as part of a broader strategic review of the entire policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan, not as a stand-alone troop decision, the official said.

That review should be completed sometime around the end of March, which coincides with a NATO summit in Europe. The strategy review for the Iraq war is expected to be completed in about two weeks or so, with announcements expected then on troop draw downs, the White House official said. US commanders have said they want to beef up the expeditionary units and trainers in Afghanistan's southern region with enough new troops to stem the violence without becoming an occupying force that would alienate the population.

McKiernan has asked for more mobile forces and believes having a Stryker brigade will allow soldiers to move more easily along the rugged trails to the widely dispersed tribal enclaves. Stryker brigades come outfitted with several hundred eight-wheeled, 19-ton Stryker vehicles, which offer greater protection than a Humvee and are more maneuverable than the heavily armored mine-resistant vehicles that are being used across Iraq.

*China Daily*, February 18, 2009

[http://www.chinadaily.cn/world/2009-02/18/content\\_7486109.htm](http://www.chinadaily.cn/world/2009-02/18/content_7486109.htm)

## STRATEGIES FOR AFGHANISTAN

The appointment of a new British Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, and U.S. Special Representative Ambassador Richard Holbrooke's recent tour of the region, demonstrates a new transatlantic

commitment to stability in South Asia. However, there remains a need for thoughtful analysis on the specific political, military and diplomatic steps that the United States and its European allies will need to take to create the conditions for long term stability in the region.

Carnegie's Ashley J. Tellis outlined those steps at a discussion with senior policy makers, journalists, and experts, co-hosted with the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) in London.

Tellis explained that the United States now faces three strategic options for Afghanistan:

1. Pursue only counter-terrorism operations
2. Engage in state building where necessary to facilitate counter-terrorism
3. Create a viable nation state in Afghanistan.

Tellis advocated the third option, while providing insight into the reasoning behind each of the choices.

### **Counter Terrorism**

This goal has recently gained some supporters in the United States, and is based on the belief that state building will be too difficult and too costly – especially considering the current economic crisis. Proponents argue that U.S. partners should abandon state building objectives and instead focus purely on counter-terrorism. The reason the United States went in to Afghanistan in the first place was to destroy al Qaeda, and it should not be side tracked from that goal.

### **Minimal State Building**

In the middle of the spectrum are those who agree that the United States should pursue a strategy focused on counterterrorism, but see limited state building as an important means to that end. Their primary aim is to successfully exit Afghanistan as soon as possible. This would mean leaving the minimal amount of infrastructure necessary to allow Afghanistan to combat the resurgence of terrorist activity without major U.S. intervention.

### **A Real Commitment to State Building**

Creating a functioning state will be costly – both in terms of time and resources. But it will prove to be the most cost-effective goal because it is

the only one that will guarantee long-term security. Any strategy whose primary objective is to hasten a U.S. exit will fail to create the institutions necessary for Afghanistan to handle the terrorist threat.

The non-strategic reasoning behind this goal is simple. After having disengaged from Afghanistan following the retreat of the Soviet Army, the United States needs to redeem itself. It owes the Afghan people a future.

The strategic reasoning is that the international allies need to create a situation whereby, even after withdrawal of combat troops, Afghanistan will have the infrastructure and security forces necessary to quell the threat of terrorist organizations emanating from its territory and borders.

Terrorism and regional instability pose significant threats to both Afghanistan and the West. The new U.S. strategy can overcome the shortcomings of the last seven years by following a two-fold approach: greater investment in both military and non-military resources, including state-building, and targeting terrorist sanctuaries in Pakistan.

Tellis provided three possible strategies for achieving these goals.

### **Fixing India-Pakistan to fix Afghanistan**

Stopping terrorists once they have crossed the border from Pakistan into Afghanistan is not an effective counterterrorism strategy. The accessibility of training camps and safe havens in Pakistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) means that the terrorist threat to the Afghan people, to the Afghan state, and to the rest of the world will remain.

Improving Pakistan's cooperation in counterterrorism activities will require addressing its deep rooted insecurities regarding India, particularly with regards to Kashmir. It is thought that the Pakistani military, with whom a great deal of power rests, are using terrorist organizations to meet their own strategic ends by exacerbating the tensions between India and the Pakistani civilian government.

If the United States and its international allies want a more cooperative Pakistan, they will need to engineer an Indo-Pakistan reconciliation that helps liberate Islamabad from its concerns and insecurities.

Tellis acknowledged that the idea the West can fix Afghanistan by taking on the decades-old conflict between India and Pakistan is optimistic. India sees its relationship with Pakistan as purely bilateral. It

will be impossible to United States to intercede without willingness from both India and Pakistan.

### **Fixing Pakistan to fix Afghanistan**

Within Pakistan, the natural allies of the West are its civilians. Unfortunately, civilian power is weak; power lies with the military. The military has a vested interest in maintaining good relationships with terrorist organizations in order to advance its quest for power within Pakistan. The international community will need to ask itself if it has the capacity to fix a fragmented political system in a sovereign state such as Pakistan.

### **Fixing Afghanistan to fix Afghanistan**

Tellis argued that focusing primarily on fixing Afghanistan from within is the easiest option. At the very least, it has the advantage of being manageable. Pursuing this strategy would not entail giving up on efforts to eradicate safe havens and to strengthen the relationship with Pakistan.

But it does recognize that corruption and incapacity have delegitimized the Afghan government in the eyes of its people, strengthening the Taliban. The Afghan people are currently faced with the choice of either supporting a corrupt and ineffective government or stepping in line with the Taliban so as to avoid further abuse. Often, the second option is better for the Afghans than the first. The terrorist threat will be a perennial one unless the government is given credibility through a system checks and balances.

### **Europe-U.S. Split on State Building and Security**

Tellis argued that the United States should not rely on its allies to commit more troops in Afghanistan as it considers next steps. A significant troop commitment from Europe is unlikely. Instead, the United States should pursue a strategy that matches the resources that are currently available.

The European allies are more likely to commit resources to state building. Both Tellis and the audience were concerned that this might lead to a Euro-U.S. split whereby Europe takes care of state building and the United States takes care of security. This would lead to an incoherent and uncoordinated strategy. Tellis argued that taking such a risk is

necessary because the only other option is to do nothing.

### **Basic Elements to any Strategy**

Whichever strategy the United States and its international partners choose to follow will need to incorporate three basic elements: the continuation of classic counter insurgency with tighter border control as a central focus; strengthening the legitimacy of the Afghan state by making sure that democratic institutions work without corruption; empowering the Afghan army to independently deal with the terrorist threat emanating from across the Pakistani border.

Ashley J. Tellis, Alexander Neill, Fabrice Pothier, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, February 26, 2009  
<http://carnegieeurope.eu/events/?fa=1260>

### **TALIBAN STRATEGY IN AFGHANISTAN IS SMART POLITICS, SO U.S. NEEDS TO WISE UP**

Afghanistan's Logar province, just south of the capital Kabul, has seen relatively little fighting between coalition forces and the Taliban. Criminal activities there have decreased in recent months, so one could conclude that it makes more sense for President Barack Obama to deploy the 17,000 additional U.S. troops he has called for into the more restive southern and eastern territories. But the truth is that the military map in Afghanistan was never as important as the political map. The real story of Logar is more telling—and more worrying—about the trajectory of the war.

Criminal activities have declined in Logar because the Taliban are actually in control of the population, and are building a parallel judiciary which is more efficient than the corrupt administration that is officially in charge. As in other provinces, a low level of violence often shows only that the insurgency is in power. The Taliban has no need to fight in these places because the Afghan government and international coalition forces don't even operate in them.

A better indicator of the real state of a region is the ability or inability to travel freely in it. Employees of the Afghan government limit their private travels to Logar, which widens the growing political gap between Kabul and the surrounding areas. The Taliban have been circulating in the villages of Logar for three years, speaking with the

population, and capitalizing on resentment for the coalition and the government. So there is naturally a lapse between the Taliban's political infiltrations and its military activities. At best, the military map is yesterday's map: it indicates the expansion of the insurgency after the Taliban have already become entrenched in local communities.

U.S. strategic planners must recognize that the places where the Taliban are in control, but not fighting, are essential logistical bases for the insurgency. Logar enables insurgents to enter the country from Pakistan, and conduct intelligence and strike preparations against targets in Kabul. The political map in Afghanistan indicates that the Taliban strategy is much better planned and more homogenous than is generally thought. The insurgents are more than local groups fighting for economic interests. They have strategic aims: to pressure Kabul and its surroundings, and perhaps bomb the capital.

This analysis suggests general guidance in deciding where the United States should send reinforcements. A major argument for sending more troops south and east has been the fact that most of the fighting happens there, in 10 percent of the districts (the military map). The presumptive U.S. strategy would be to secure these areas with added troops on the ground, to marginalize the Taliban progressively, and ideally to split the insurgency.

A more realistic political assessment shows that this strategy will suffer from two major flaws. First, since the social and political base of the Taliban is much larger than the fighting indicates, securing some districts might lead only to a shift of fighting to neighboring districts: a game of whack-a-mole. Since the coalition doesn't (and won't) have enough troops to secure large areas, the net result will not be positive. Like certain opium eradication programs in Afghanistan, which succeed at a local level but fail nationwide, it will just move the problem somewhere else.

Second, if U.S. reinforcements are sent south and east, the Taliban will be able to deepen their political penetration in the north and west, increasing pressure on the coalition, which cannot fight on all fronts. This introduces the risk of losing the strategic initiative to the Taliban or, more to the point, not regaining it from them.

As they decide where to concentrate their efforts in the next few years, American policymakers must think in political terms rather than strictly military ones. The political progress of the insurgency is just as important if not more so than the actual level of fighting in a province.

As U.N. maps show, a large part of Afghanistan is increasingly off-limits to foreigners and Afghan government employees alike. This trend cannot simply be explained by banditry or local grievances. It reflects the spreading momentum of the insurgency, and the Taliban's steady approach to the capital. For both the coalition and the insurgents, there is no greater political trophy than the capital. In spite of American hopes, the Afghan National Army is not yet able to secure Kabul, so President Obama and his team must commit to reversing the degradation of the situation there and in the surrounding provinces.

In the southern and eastern regions of Afghanistan, American troops could win every battle and still fail to hold the ground. But if the U.S. focuses in and around Kabul, it can provide security for the Afghan people, and win a peace it can pass on to them.

*This article originally appeared in U.S. News & World Report on February 20, 2009.*

Gilles Dorronsoro, *U.S. News & World Report*, February 20, 2009  
<http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=22763&prog=zgp&proj=zsa,zusr>

## THE WAY FORWARD

In its first weeks in office, the Obama administration has made two major decisions regarding Afghanistan. American combat forces have been increased by 50 percent, and a distinguished ambassador, Richard Holbrooke, has been appointed as presidential representative to what has been designated as the AFGPAK region (implying that Afghanistan and Pakistan are being treated as a single geopolitical unit).

But the outcome will depend on the strategy with which we will face the inevitable complexities. The central Islamist challenge has moved to the mountainous Pashtun tribal area along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, where sanctuaries on the Pakistan side of the border supply and train the assault on Afghanistan and the allied forces assisting it.

No guerrilla war has ever been won in the face of sanctuaries immune to attack. The administration is therefore right in dealing with it as a single problem. But it is also the case that the sanctuaries exist less by the design of the Pakistan government than by its political and military inability to control the territory along the Afghan border, which has never been under civil administration - even during British rule. The Obama administration faces dilemmas familiar to several of its

predecessors. America cannot withdraw now, but neither can it sustain the strategy that brought us to this point.

Heretofore America has pursued traditional anti-insurgency tactics: to create a central government, help it extend its authority over the entire country, and in the process bring about a modern bureaucratic and democratic society. That strategy cannot succeed in Afghanistan - especially not as an essentially solitary effort. The country is too large for it, the territory too forbidding, the ethnic composition too varied, the population too heavily armed. No foreign conqueror has ever succeeded in occupying Afghanistan. Even attempts to establish centralized Afghan control have rarely succeeded and then not for long. Afghans seem to define their country in terms of a common dedication to independence but not to unitary or centralized self-government. Once free of foreign forces, the various ethnic and regional groups would resume their autonomies, only reluctantly submitting to central authority and only in a limited way.

Many of President Hamid Karzai's difficulties are structural. I am uneasy about the ostentatious dissociation from a leader in the middle of a civil war and one whom we helped put into office. Without an obvious replacement, our previous such enterprises usually backfired. The truism that the war is in effect a battle for the hearts and minds of the Afghan population is valid enough in concept. The low standard of living of much of the population has been exacerbated by 30 years of civil war. The economy is on the verge of sustaining itself by the sale of narcotics. There is no significant democratic tradition.

Reform is a moral necessity. But the timescale for reform is out of phase with the imperatives of anti-guerrilla warfare. It will require decades; it should occur as a result of, and even side-by-side with, the attainment of security but cannot be the precondition for it. The military effort will inevitably unfold at a pace different from the political evolution of the country. But what we are able to accomplish immediately is to make sure that our aid efforts, now diffuse and inefficient, are coherent and relevant to popular needs. And much greater emphasis should be given to local and regional entities.

Military strategy should concentrate on preventing the emergence of a coherent, contiguous state within the state controlled by jihadists. In practice, this means control of Kabul and the Pashtun area. A jihadist base area on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistani border would become a permanent threat to the hopes of a moderate evolution and to all of

Afghanistan's neighbors. General David Petraeus has argued that, reinforced by the numbers of American forces he has recommended, he should be able to control the 10 percent of Afghan territory where, in his words, 80 percent of the military threat originates. This is the region where the clear hold-and-build strategy that had success in Iraq is particularly applicable.

In the rest of the country, our military strategy should be more fluid, aimed at forestalling the emergence of any terrorist strong points. It should be based on close cooperation with local chiefs and coordination with their militias to be trained by U.S. forces - the kind of strategy that proved so successful in Anbar Province, the Sunni stronghold in Iraq. This is a plausible strategy, though it seems improbable that the 17,000 reinforcements are enough. In the end, the fundamental issue is not so much how the war will be conducted but how it will be ended.

Afghanistan is almost the archetypal international problem requiring a multilateral solution for the emergence of a political framework. In the 19th century, formal neutrality was sometimes negotiated to impose a standstill on interventions in and from strategically located countries. This did not always survive, but it provided a framework for defusing day-to-day international relations. (Belgian neutrality, for example, was not challenged for nearly 100 years.) Is it possible to devise a modern equivalent? In Afghanistan, such an outcome is achievable only if Afghanistan's principal neighbors agree on a policy of restraint and opposition to terrorism. Their recent conduct would argue against such prospects. Yet history should teach them that unilateral efforts at dominance are likely to fail in the face of countervailing intervention by other outside actors.

To explore such a vision, the United States should propose a working group composed of Afghanistan's neighbors, India and the permanent members of the Security Council. It should be charged with assisting in the reconstruction and reform of Afghanistan and establishing principles for the country's international status and obligations to oppose terrorist activities.

Over time the unilateral military efforts of America can merge with the diplomatic efforts of this group. As the strategy envisaged by Petraeus succeeds, the prospects for a political solution along these lines grow correspondingly. The precondition for such a policy is cooperation with Russia and Pakistan. With Russia, it requires a clear definition of priorities, especially a choice between partnership or adversarial conduct

insofar as it depends on us.

The conduct of Pakistan will be crucial. Pakistan's leaders must face the fact that continued toleration of the sanctuaries - or continued impotence with respect to them - must draw their country ever deeper into an international maelstrom. If the jihadists were to prevail, Pakistan would surely be the next target - as is observable already along the existing borders and even in the Swat valley close to Islamabad. If that were to happen, the affected countries would need to begin to consult with each other about the implications for them of the nuclear arsenal of a Pakistan in the process of being engulfed or even threatened by jihadists. Like every country engaged in Afghanistan, Pakistan has decisions to make that will affect its international position for decades.

Other countries face comparable choices - especially our NATO allies. Symbolically the participation of NATO partners is significant. But save for some notable exceptions, public support for military operations is negligible in almost all NATO countries. It is possible of course that Obama's popularity in Europe can modify these attitudes, but in all likelihood to only a very limited extent. The president will then have to decide how far he will carry the inevitable differences and face the reality that disagreements concern fundamental questions of NATO's future and reach.

Improved consultation will ease the process. It is likely to turn out, however, that the differences are not procedural. We may then conclude that an enhanced NATO contribution to Afghanistan's reconstruction is more useful than a marginal military effort constrained by caveats. But if NATO turns into an alliance à la carte in this manner, a precedent is set that can cut both ways. Those who tempt an American withdrawal by their indifference or irresolution evade the prospect that it will be the prelude to a long series of accelerating and escalating crises.

The new team for Afghanistan faces daunting choices. Whatever strategy they select needs to be pursued with determination. It is not possible to hedge against failure by half-hearted execution.

Henry A. Kissinger, *International Herald Tribune*, February 26, 2009  
<http://www.iht.com/articles/2009/02/26/opinion/edkissinger.php>

## OUR MUST-WIN WAR

Later this month, the Obama administration will unveil a new strategy for the war in Afghanistan. This comes as most important indicators in

Afghanistan are pointing in the wrong direction. President Obama's decision last month to deploy an additional 17,000 U.S. troops was an important step in the right direction, but a comprehensive overhaul of our war plan is needed, and quickly.

As the administration finalizes its policy review, we are troubled by calls in some quarters for the president to adopt a "minimalist" approach toward Afghanistan. Supporters of this course caution that the American people are tired of war and that an ambitious, long-term commitment to Afghanistan may be politically unfeasible. They warn that Afghanistan has always been a "graveyard of empires" and has never been governable. Instead, they suggest, we can protect our vital national interests in Afghanistan even while lowering our objectives and accepting more "realistic" goals there -- for instance, by scaling back our long-term commitment to helping the Afghan people build a better future in favor of a short-term focus on fighting terrorists.

The political allure of such a reductionist approach is obvious. But it is also dangerously and fundamentally wrong, and the president should unambiguously reject it. Let there be no doubt: The war in Afghanistan can be won. Success -- a stable, secure, self-governing Afghanistan that is not a terrorist sanctuary -- can be achieved. Just as in Iraq, there is no shortcut to success, no clever "middle way" that allows us to achieve more by doing less. A minimalist approach in Afghanistan is a recipe not for winning smarter but for losing slowly at tremendous cost in American lives, treasure and security.

Yes, our vital national interest in Afghanistan is to prevent it from once again becoming a haven for terrorists to plan attacks against America and U.S. allies. But achieving this narrow counterterrorism objective requires us to carry out a far broader set of tasks, the foremost of which are protecting the population, nurturing legitimate and effective governance, and fostering development. In short, we need a comprehensive civil-military counterinsurgency approach backed by greatly increased resources and an unambiguous U.S. political commitment to success in Afghanistan over the long haul.

A narrow, short-term focus on counterterrorism, by contrast, would repeat the mistakes made for years in Iraq before the troop surge, with the same catastrophic consequences. Before 2007 in Iraq, U.S. Special Forces had complete freedom of action to strike at terrorist leaders, backed by more than 120,000 conventional American forces and overwhelming air power. Although we succeeded in killing countless

terrorists -- including the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi -- the insurgency continued to grow in strength and violence. It was not until we changed course and applied a new approach -- a counterinsurgency strategy focused on providing basic security for the people and improving their lives -- that the cycle of violence was at last broken.

Those who argue for simply conducting targeted counterterrorist strikes in Afghanistan also fail to grasp that by far the best way to generate the intelligence necessary for such strikes is from Afghan civilians, who will risk their lives to help us only if they believe we are committed to staying and protecting them from the insurgents and helping to improve their lives.

Loose rhetoric about a minimal commitment in Afghanistan is counterproductive for another reason: It exacerbates suspicions, already widespread in South Asia, that the United States will tire of this war and retreat. These doubts about our staying power deter ordinary Afghans from siding with our coalition against the insurgency. Also important is that these suspicions are a major reason some in Pakistan are reluctant to break decisively with insurgent groups, which, in a hedging strategy, they view as integral to positioning Pakistan for influence "the day after" the United States gives up and leaves Afghanistan. That is why it is so important for the president to reject the temptations of minimalism in Afghanistan and instead adopt a fully resourced, comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy, backed by an unambiguous American commitment to success over the long term. In doing so, he must invest the political capital to remind Americans why this fight is necessary for our national security, speak openly and frankly to our nation about the difficult path ahead, and -- most of all -- explain clearly to our fellow citizens why he is confident that we can prevail.

As a presidential candidate, Barack Obama called Afghanistan "the war we must win." He was absolutely right. Now it is time to win it -- and we and many other members of both political parties stand ready to give him our full support in this crucial fight.

John McCain and Joseph Lieberman, *Washington Post*, March 19, 2009  
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/18/AR2009031802932.html?hpid=opinionsbox1>

---

## SURGING TOWARD FAILURE IN AFGHANISTAN

President Barack Obama is soon expected to make a final decision on whether to approve a civilian "surge" of hundreds of additional US officials for the war in Afghanistan. This new strategy, which would narrowly focus on development, rule-of-law issues and combating the narcotics trade, comes less than a week after Said Jawad, Afghanistan's ambassador to the United States, accused western forces of "total negligence" in building the Afghan police force and judicial system and of providing "meagre resources" in helping his government deliver basic services to its people. The United States and its NATO allies do not have the responsibility, the qualifications or the capital to be Afghanistan's caretaker. But what the coalition does need, yet unfortunately still lacks, is a clearly stated objective of what they hope to achieve in Afghanistan. Bringing stability is an obvious goal in the short term. But the long-term prospect of defeating the Taliban and rebuilding the country is an issue that needs to be addressed, yet is seldom raised. Only months after the initial invasion of Afghanistan, the Northern Alliance and a very small number of US special forces achieved their original goal. The Taliban was ousted from power and al-Qaeda lost its sanctuary. Nevertheless, the Bonn Agreement of December 2001 - which called for a commission to reconstitute the country's judicial system in accordance with its 1964 constitution - put Washington on a perilous course of building infrastructure, establishing a rule of law and engaging in counternarcotics. These more ambitious and less achievable goals diverted attention from ensuring the Taliban would not come back to power, and provided the group the opportunity to stage their comeback. Since 2007 and steadily through 2008, improvised explosive devices, suicide bombs and roadside ambushes have increased across the country, particularly in the Pashtun-dominated east and south. In Logar province - a Taliban and Haqqani network stronghold just south of the capital, Kabul - militants have created a parallel judiciary. Ambassador Jawad's larger point of promises made long ago that today remain unfulfilled is correct. Yet the complex nature of the region and its people - many of whom have a stronger allegiance to proximate tribes and warlords than to far-away leaders in Kabul - make assisting this destitute and war-ravaged country next to impossible. Indeed, rather than re-building, the United States and NATO would be building much of the country, such as erecting infrastructure, tailoring a judicial system to make it compatible with local customs and

undertaking such a monumental enterprise in a country awash with weapons, notoriously suspicious of outsiders, and largely absent of central authority. These were conditions not fully considered under the previous administration. Afghanistan under the tutelage of the Taliban was the clearest case of a foreign threat emanating from a categorical failed state. Its leaders provided shelter to the al-Qaeda organisation directly responsible for the 9/11 attack. What is less clear is why waging a war against today's Taliban advances US national security and whether pouring in billions of taxpayer dollars for years to come, given the global financial crisis, is what's best for the citizens of the US and NATO countries. There's a reason why Afghanistan has been described as the "graveyard of empires". Throughout its long and turbulent history, the country has looked more like a tribal confederacy than a cohesive nation-state. Nine-tenths of Afghanistan's population lives outside of cities and towns. The situation is exacerbated by low literacy levels and poor-to-nonexistent infrastructure. At least on foreign policy, President Obama sees himself as a pragmatist, as someone prepared to listen to ideas from anybody and willing to consider anything he thinks might work. Therefore, rather than "surge" into this volatile region, the president should consider the strategic and political significance of Afghanistan's surrounding neighbours and engage in regional efforts to broker dialogue among Saudi Arabia, Iran, India, Pakistan and the members of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and, most important, Russia. Throughout the 1990s, Iran, Russia, India, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan supported Afghanistan's Tajik-dominated Northern Alliance against the pro-Wahhabist Pashtun-dominated Taliban backed by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. These dynamics have changed. For example, Saudi Arabia broke ties with the Taliban shortly after 9/11. However, many of these countries still have lingering historical rivalries that are influencing Afghanistan's present trajectory. US intelligence officials suspect Pakistan and India are engaged in a deadly proxy struggle playing out in Afghanistan. In the weeks leading up to this April's NATO summit meeting, the Obama administration must make some tough choices in potential direct talks with the Taliban. Is NATO ready to let them share power if they agree not to shelter al-Qaida? What if some elements want to keep their fringe beliefs and draconian practices? Bringing stability to Afghanistan, especially on the local and provincial levels, is an obvious goal in the short term. But from a wider strategic and

economic perspective, no tangible gains will outweigh the risky and costly strategy of a prolonged military presence in this dangerous part of the world. The US and NATO cannot afford to view Afghanistan within a vacuum. Its leaders must do their best to improve conflicting regional alliances. Most importantly, the coalition should accept that eliminating threats to its interests should not be conflated with fixing state failure.

Malou Innocent, *Guardian*, 20 March 2009  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2009/mar/20/afghanista-n-nato-obama-civilian-surge>

## WHAT'S NEW IN THE STRATEGY FOR AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

*"As President, my greatest responsibility is to protect the American people...We are in Afghanistan to confront a common enemy that threatens the United States, our friends and allies, and the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan who have suffered the most at the hands of violent extremists. So I want the American people to understand that we have a clear and focused goal: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future...To achieve our goals, we need a stronger, smarter and comprehensive strategy."*

--President Barack Obama  
March 27, 2009

### **An Attainable Objective**

On March 27, 2009, the President announced a comprehensive, new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan that is the culmination of a careful 60-day, interagency strategic review. During the review process, we consulted with the Afghan and Pakistani governments, partners and NATO allies, other donors, international organizations and members of Congress. The strategy starts with a clear, concise, attainable goal: disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda and its safe havens. The President's new approach will be flexible and adoptive and include frequent evaluations of the progress being made.

### **A Regional Approach**

For the first time the President will treat Afghanistan and Pakistan as two

countries but one challenge. Our strategy focuses more intensively on Pakistan than in the past, calling for more significant increases in U.S. and international support, both economic and military, linked to Pakistani performance against terror. We will pursue intensive regional diplomacy involving all key players in South Asia and engage both countries in a new trilateral framework at the highest levels. Together in this trilateral format, we will work to enhance intelligence sharing and military cooperation along the border and address common issues like trade, energy, and economic development.

### **Building Capacity and More Training**

For three years, the resources that our commanders need for training have been denied because of the war in Iraq. Now, this will change. The 17,000 additional troops that the President decided in February to deploy have already increased our training capacity. Later this spring we will deploy approximately 4,000 more U.S. troops to train the Afghan National Security Forces so that they can increasingly take responsibility for the security of the Afghan people.

In the President's strategy, for the first time we will fully resource our effort to train and support the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police. Every American unit in Afghanistan will be partnered with an Afghan unit, and we will seek additional trainers from our NATO allies to ensure that every Afghan unit has a coalition partner.

### **Using All Elements of National Power**

As the President said, a "campaign against extremism will not succeed with bullets or bombs alone." As a part of this strategy, we will devote significantly more resources to the civilian efforts in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. The President will submit a budget that includes indispensable investments in our State Department and foreign assistance programs. These investments relieve the burden on our troops and contribute directly to our safety and security.

The Administration consulted with the Congress during our review and is committed to working closely together to provide the resources needed to carry out the strategy. The President supports the bipartisan bill co-sponsored by Senators Kerry and Lugar to authorize \$1.5 billion a year in direct support to the Pakistani people over the next five years. He also calls on Congress to pass the bipartisan bill creating Reconstruction

Opportunity Zones in Afghanistan and the border regions of Pakistan to develop the economy and bring hope to places plagued by violence.

### **Bringing New International Elements to the Effort**

The President believes we need to provide more resources for the civilian aspects of the mission, working with the Afghan Government and all of our partners in NATO and the United Nations. As America does more, we will ask others to do join us in doing their part. Together with the United Nations, the Administration will forge a new Contact Group for Afghanistan and Pakistan that brings together all who should have a stake in the security of the region – our NATO allies and other partners, the Central Asian states, Gulf nations, Iran, Russia, India and China. All have a stake in the promise of lasting peace and security and development in the region.

[http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Whats-New-in-the-Strategy-for-Afghanistan-and-Pakistan/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Whats-New-in-the-Strategy-for-Afghanistan-and-Pakistan/)