

CONTOURS
OF
U.S. 'AFPAK' STRATEGY

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CONTENTS

Preface	v
1. AfPak	1
2. White Paper of the Interagency Policy Group's Report	2
3. Text of Obama's Speech on a New Strategy	10
4. What's New in the AfPak Strategy	18
5. Three Problems with AfPak Strategy	20
6. Policy Options Paper: From AfPak to PakAf	22
7. 100 Days of AfPak	40
8. General James Jones' Press Briefing on U.S. President's Meetings with Presidents of Afghanistan and Pakistan	43
9. Making AfPak Work	49
10. Zardari Rejects Obama's AfPak Strategy	52
11. U.S. Engagement in Afghanistan	53
12. Strategy for Success in Afghanistan	56
13. Senator John F. Kerry's Interview: Defining the Possibilities	60
14. Obama's AfPak Dilemma	72
15. AfPak Policy a Mistake	75
16. The New Strategy	77
17. Text of Obama's AfPak Speech at West Point	80
18. U.S. Afghanistan Strategy	90
19. Pakistan Fears Paying Price of U.S. Afghan Surge	91
20. A Workable Strategy?	93
21. Obama's Grand Strategy	94
22. Obama's Afghan Endgame	99
23. Pakistan and not Afghanistan Worries USA	102
24. Obama's Latest AfPak War Strategy	105
25. New Afghan Policy and Pakistan	107
IPRI Publications	111

PREFACE

For the first time the two sovereign countries – Afghanistan and Pakistan – will be treated as a combined challenge to the United States. Earlier, the former U.S President, George W. Bush, had de-linked Pakistan from India before signing the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal but now President Barak H. Obama has coined a neologism ‘AfPak’ to describe Afghanistan and Pakistan, or at least Pakistan’s border areas adjacent to Afghanistan, as one theatre of military operation. According to him “this border region has become the most dangerous place in the world.”¹ The U.S. “cannot tolerate a safe haven for terrorists whose location is known” and thus the U.S. strategy that works on both sides of the border.² President Asif Ali Zardari has objected to the ‘AfPak’ strategy.³ Earlier, the former President, Pervez Musharraf, had criticized the term ‘AfPak’ for two reasons: first, “the strategy puts Pakistan on the same level as Afghanistan”, which is a completely destabilized state; second, “there is an Indian element in the whole game. We have the Kashmir struggle, without which extremist elements like Lashkar-e-Taiba would not exist.”⁴

Pakistan is facing challenges both on its eastern and western borders. On its eastern border there is the Kashmir conflict and incidents of firing keep on occurring there on the Line of Control. “A resolution of the Kashmir issue is fundamental to long-term peace and security in the region”.⁵ On its western border, the national and international terrorists are operating mainly because of insurgency in Afghanistan, besides, there is “concrete evidence of Indian interference in Pakistan”.⁶ In addition to militancy, there is an apprehension that with the “surge” of reinforcements of the U.S. and allied troops in Afghanistan and launching of offensive against Al Qaeda and Taliban, a number of Afghan refugees

¹ President Barak Obama, April 27, 2009.

² Editorial, *Business Recorder* (Karachi), December 4, 2009.

³ *Dawn* (Islamabad), September 10, 2009.

⁴ "SPIEGEL Interview with Pervez Musharraf: Obama 'Is Aiming at the Right Things'",. 2009-06-07.
<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,628960,00.html>, retrieved from Wikipedia.

⁵ Editorial, *Dawn* (Islamabad), December 10, 2009.

⁶ Interior Minister of Pakistan, Rehman Malik, statement, *Dawn* (Islamabad), December 8, 2009.

and insurgent Taliban forces might move into Pakistan, adding to the millions of Afghan refugees already living in the country. The 'AfPak' strategy also envisages likelihood of escalation in U.S. drone attacks and possible surgical strikes inside Pakistan's territory, causing collateral civilian casualties, that militants use to earn public sympathy. As such, the strategy could be counterproductive. Yet, an encouraging factor in the strategy is that, unlike the past U.S. conduct, President Obama has declared: "America will remain a strong supporter of Pakistan's security and prosperity long after the guns have fallen silent".⁷

The *IPRI Factfile* provides documents which spell out U.S. 'AfPak' strategy and some selected articles on the subject appearing in the media from March 27 till December 6, 2009.

December 6, 2009.

Noor ul Haq

⁷ Obama's address at West Point, December 1, 2009.

AF-PAK

AfPak (or Af-Pak) is a neologism used within US foreign policy circles to designate Afghanistan and Pakistan as a single theater of operations. Michael Quinion writes that the term began appearing in newspaper articles in February 2009. The term was popularized, and possibly coined, by Richard Holbrooke, the Obama administration's Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. In March 2008 (a year before he assumed that post) Holbrooke explained the motivation behind the term:

First of all, we often call the problem AfPak, as in Afghanistan Pakistan. This is not just an effort to save eight syllables. It is an attempt to indicate and imprint in our DNA the fact that there is one theater of war, straddling an ill-defined border, the Durand Line, and that on the western side of that border, NATO and other forces are able to operate. On the eastern side, it's the sovereign territory of Pakistan. But it is on the eastern side of this ill-defined border that the international terrorist movement is located.

Amir Taheri writes that Holbrooke's use of the term has been resented by many Pakistanis, who see Pakistan as "in a different league than the much smaller and devastated Afghanistan," while Clifford May writes that it is disliked by both Afghans and Pakistanis. In June 2009 former Pakistani ruler Pervez Musharraf criticized the term in an interview with *Der Spiegel*:

I am totally against the term AfPak. I do not support the word itself for two reasons: First, the strategy puts Pakistan on the same level as Afghanistan. We are not. Afghanistan has no government and the country is completely destabilized. Pakistan is not. Second, and this is much more important, is that there is an Indian element in the whole game. We have the Kashmir struggle, without which extremist elements like Lashkar-e-Taiba would not exist.

Answering questions at a June 2009 press conference in Islamabad, Holbrooke "said the term 'Afpak' was not meant to demean Pakistan, but was 'bureaucratic shorthand' intended to convey that the situation in the border areas on both sides was linked and one side could not be resolved without the other."

Official use of the term within the Obama administration has been echoed by the media, as in *The Washington Post* series *The AfPak War*

and The Af-Pak Channel, a joint project of the New America Foundation and Foreign Policy magazine launched in August 2009.

www.wikipedia.org

WHITE PAPER OF THE INTERAGENCY POLICY GROUP'S REPORT ON U.S. POLICY TOWARD AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

Introduction

The United States has a vital national security interest in addressing the current and potential security threats posed by extremists in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In Pakistan, al Qaeda and other groups of jihadist terrorists are planning new terror attacks. Their targets remain the U.S. homeland, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Europe, Australia, our allies in the Middle East, and other targets of opportunity. The growing size of the space in which they are operating is a direct result of the terrorist/insurgent activities of the Taliban and related organizations. At the same time, this group seeks to reestablish their old sanctuaries in Afghanistan.

Therefore, the core goal of the U.S. must be to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda and its safe havens in Pakistan, and to prevent their return to Pakistan or Afghanistan. The ability of extremists in Pakistan to undermine Afghanistan is proven, while insurgency in Afghanistan feeds instability in Pakistan. The threat that al Qaeda poses to the United States and our allies in Pakistan - including the possibility of extremists obtaining fissile material - is all too real. Without more effective action against these groups in Pakistan, Afghanistan will face continuing instability.

Objectives

Achieving our core goal is vital to U.S. national security. It requires, first of all, realistic and achievable objectives.

These include:

- Disrupting terrorist networks in Afghanistan and especially Pakistan to degrade any ability they have to plan and launch international terrorist attacks.
- Promoting a more capable, accountable, and effective government in Afghanistan that serves the Afghan people and can eventually

function, especially regarding internal security, with limited international support.

- Developing increasingly self-reliant Afghan security forces that can lead the counterinsurgency and counterterrorism fight with reduced U.S. assistance.
- Assisting efforts to enhance civilian control and stable constitutional government in Pakistan and a vibrant economy that provides opportunity for the people of Pakistan.
- Involving the international community to actively assist in addressing these objectives for Afghanistan and Pakistan, with an important leadership role for the UN.

A New Way Forward

These are daunting tasks. They require a new way of thinking about the challenges, a wide ranging diplomatic strategy to build support for our efforts, enhanced engagement with the publics in the region and at home, and a realization that all elements of international power – diplomatic, informational, military and economic - must be brought to bear. They will also require a significant change in the management, resources, and focus of our foreign assistance.

Our diplomatic effort should be based on building a clear consensus behind the common core goal and supporting objectives. To this end, we will explore creating new diplomatic mechanisms, including establishing a “Contact Group” and a regional security and economic cooperation forum. The trilateral U.S.-Pakistan-Afghanistan effort of February 24-26, 2009 will be continued and broadened, into the next meeting planned for early May, in Washington. The United States must overcome the 'trust deficit' it faces in Afghanistan and Pakistan, where many believe that we are not a reliable long-term partner. We must engage the Afghan people in ways that demonstrate our commitment to promoting a legitimate and capable Afghan government with economic progress. We must engage the Pakistani people based on our long-term commitment to helping them build a stable economy, a stronger democracy, and a vibrant civil society.

A strategic communications program must be created, made more effective, and resourced. This new strategy will have no chance of success without better civil-military coordination by U.S. agencies, a significant increase of civilian resources, and a new model of how we allocate and use these resources. For too long, U.S. and international assistance efforts in

Afghanistan and Pakistan have suffered from being ill-organized and significantly under-resourced in some areas. A large portion of development assistance ends up being spent on international consultants and overhead, and virtually no impact assessments have yet been done on our assistance programs. We must ensure that our assistance to both Afghanistan and Pakistan is aligned with our core goals and objectives.

This will involve assistance that is geared to strengthening government capacity and the message that assistance will be limited without the achievement of results. Additional assistance to Afghanistan must be accompanied by concrete mechanisms to ensure greater government accountability. In a country that is 70 percent rural, and where the Taliban recruiting base is primarily among under-employed youths, a complete overhaul of our civilian assistance strategy is necessary; agricultural sector job creation is an essential first step to undercutting the appeal of al Qaeda and its allies. Increased assistance to Pakistan will be limited without a greater willingness to cooperate with us to eliminate the sanctuary enjoyed by al Qaeda and other extremist groups, as well as a greater commitment to economic reforms that will raise the living standard of ordinary Pakistanis, including in the border regions of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, the North West Frontier Province, and Baluchistan.

Summary of Recommendations for Afghanistan and Pakistan

The following steps must be done in concert to produce the desired end state: the removal of al-Qaeda's sanctuary, effective democratic government control in Pakistan, and a self-reliant Afghanistan that will enable a withdrawal of combat forces while sustaining our commitment to political and economic development.

- Executing and resourcing an integrated civilian-military counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan. Our military forces in Afghanistan, including those recently approved by the President, should be utilized for two priority missions:
 - 1) Securing Afghanistan's south and east against a return of al Qaeda and its allies, to provide a space for the Afghan government to establish effective government control and
 - 2) Providing the Afghan security forces with the mentoring needed to expand rapidly, take the lead in effective counterinsurgency operations, and allow us and our partners to wind down our combat operations.

- 3) Our counter-insurgency strategy must integrate population security with building effective local governance and economic development. We will establish the security needed to provide space and time for stabilization and reconstruction activities.

To prevent future attacks on the U.S. and its allies - including the local populace - the development of a strategic communications strategy to counter the terror information campaign is urgent. This has proved successful in Iraq (where the U.S. military has made a significant effort in this area) and should be developed in Afghanistan as a top priority to improve the image of the United States and its allies. The strategic communications plan -- including electronic media, telecom, and radio -- shall include options on how best to counter the propaganda that is key to the enemy's terror campaign.

- Resourcing and prioritizing civilian assistance in Afghanistan by increasing civilian capacity we will strengthen the relationship between the Afghan people and their government. A dramatic increase in Afghan civilian expertise is needed to facilitate the development of systems and institutions particularly at the provincial and local levels, provide basic infrastructure, and create economic alternatives to the insurgency at all levels of Afghan society, particularly in agriculture. The United States should play an important part in providing that expertise, but responding effectively to Afghanistan's needs will require that allies, partners, the UN and other international organizations, and non-governmental organizations significantly increase their involvement in Afghanistan.
- Expanding the Afghan National Security Forces: Army and Police to be capable of assuming the security mission from U.S. forces in Afghanistan's south and east, the Afghan National Security Forces must substantially increase its size and capability. Initially this will require a more rapid build-up of the Afghan Army and police up to 134,000 and 82,000 over the next two years, with additional enlargements as circumstances and resources warrant. The international community must assume responsibility for funding this significantly enhanced Afghan security force for an extended period. We will also have to provide support for other Afghan security forces such as the Afghan Public Protection Force. Salaries paid to Afghan National

Army and Afghan National Police must become more competitive with those paid by the insurgents. Over time, as security conditions change, we should continue to reassess Afghan National Security Forces size, as it will be affected by such factors as: the overall security situation, the capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces, and the rate at which we can grow local security forces and integrate them into the overall ANSF structure.

- Engaging the Afghan government and bolstering its legitimacy International support for the election will be necessary for a successful outcome. We should do everything necessary to ensure the security and legitimacy of voter registration, elections, and vote counting. The international military presence should help the Afghan security forces provide security before, during and after the election. International monitoring will also be required to ensure legitimacy and oversee Afghanistan's polling sites. The overall legitimacy of the Afghan government is also undermined by rampant corruption and a failure to provide basic services to much of the population over the past 7 years. Where Afghan systems and institutions have benefited from high quality technical assistance and mentoring, they have made great progress. Making such support more consistent with qualified mentors to advise and monitor officials, pushing such efforts to the provincial and district levels, and channeling more assistance through Afghan institutions benefiting from this high quality support will help restore and maintain the legitimacy of the Afghan government.
- Encouraging Afghan government efforts to integrate reconcilable insurgents .While Mullah Omar and the Taliban's hard core that have aligned themselves with al Qaeda are not reconcilable and we cannot make a deal that includes them, the war in Afghanistan cannot be won without convincing non-ideologically committed insurgents to lay down their arms, reject al Qaeda, and accept the Afghan Constitution. Practical integration must not become a mechanism for instituting medieval social policies that give up the quest for gender equality and human rights. We can help this process along by exploiting differences among the insurgents to divide the Taliban's true believers from less committed fighters.

Integration must be Afghan-led. An office should be created in every province and we should support efforts by the Independent Directorate of Local Governance to develop a reconciliation effort targeting mid-to-low level insurgents to be led by provincial governors. We should also explore ways to rehabilitate captured insurgents drawing on lessons learned from similar programs in Iraq and other countries.

- *Including Provincial and Local Governments in our Capacity Building Efforts :*

We need to work with the Afghan government to refocus civilian assistance and capacity-building programs on building up competent provincial and local governments where they can more directly serve the people and connect them to their government

- *Breaking the Link between Narcotics and the Insurgency:*

Besides the global consequences of the drug trade, the Afghan narcotics problem causes great concern due to its ties to the insurgency, the fact that it is the major driver of corruption in Afghanistan, and distorts the legal economy. The NATO/International Security Assistance Forces and U.S. forces should use their authorities to directly support Afghan counter narcotics units during the interdiction of narco-traffickers. The new authorities permit the destruction of labs, drug storage facilities, drug processing equipment, and drug caches and should contribute to breaking the drug-insurgency funding nexus and the corruption associated with the opium/heroin trade.

Crop substitution and alternative livelihood programs that are a key pillar of effectively countering narcotics have been disastrously underdeveloped and under-resourced, however, and the narcotics trade will persist until such programs allow Afghans to reclaim their land for licit agriculture. Targeting those who grow the poppy will continue, but the focus will shift to higher level drug lords.

- *Mobilizing Greater International Political Support of our Objectives in Afghanistan:*

We need to do more to build a shared understanding of what is at stake in Afghanistan, while engaging other actors and offering them the opportunity to advance our mutual interests by cooperating with us.

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- *Bolstering Afghanistan-Pakistan Cooperation:*
We need to institutionalize stronger mechanisms for bilateral and trilateral cooperation. During the process of this review, inter-agency teams from Afghanistan and Pakistan came to Washington, DC for trilateral meetings. This new forum should continue and serve as the basis for enhanced bilateral and trilateral cooperation.
 - *Engaging and Focusing Islamabad on the Common Threat:*
Successfully shutting down the Pakistani safe haven for extremists will also require consistent and intensive strategic engagement with Pakistani leadership in both the civilian and military spheres. The engagement must be conducted in a way that respects, and indeed enhances, democratic civilian authority
 - *Assisting Pakistan's Capability to Fight Extremists:*
It is vital to strengthen our efforts to both develop and operationally enable Pakistani security forces so they are capable of succeeding in sustained counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations. In part this will include increased U.S. military assistance for helicopters to provide air mobility, night vision equipment, and training and equipment specifically for Pakistani Special Operation Forces and their Frontier Corps.
 - *Increasing and Broadening Assistance in Pakistan:*
Increasing economic assistance to Pakistan - to include direct budget support, development assistance, infrastructure investment, and technical advice on making sound economic policy adjustments - and strengthening trade relations will maximize support for our policy aims; it should also help to provide longer-term economic stability. Our assistance should focus on long-term capacity building, on agricultural sector job creation, education and training, and on infrastructure requirements. Assistance should also support Pakistani efforts to 'hold and build' in western Pakistan as a part of its counterinsurgency efforts.
 - *Exploring other Areas of Economic Cooperation with Pakistan:*
We need to enhance bilateral and regional trade possibilities, in part through implementing Reconstruction Opportunity Zones (which were recently re-introduced in Congress) and encouraging foreign investment in key sectors, such as energy. In addition, assisting Islamabad with developing a concrete strategy for

utilizing donor aid would increase Islamabad's chances for garnering additional support from the international community.

- *Strengthening Pakistani Government Capacity:*

Strengthening the civilian, democratic government must be a centerpiece of our overall effort. Key efforts should include fostering the reform of provincial and local governance in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and the North West Frontier Province. We need to help Islamabad enhance the services and support in areas cleared of insurgents so that they have a real chance in preventing insurgents from returning to those areas. With international partners, we should also promote the development of regional organizations that focus on economic and security cooperation, as well as fostering productive political dialogue.

- *Asking for Assistance from Allies for Afghanistan and Pakistan.*

Our efforts are a struggle against forces that pose a direct threat to the entire international community. While reaching out to allies and partners for their political support, we should also ask them to provide the necessary resources to accomplish our shared objectives. They have the same interest in denying terrorists and extremists sanctuaries in Pakistan and Afghanistan that we do. In approaching allies we should emphasize that our new approach is integrated between civilian and military elements and in looking at Afghanistan and Pakistan as one theater for diplomacy.

For the mission in Afghanistan, we should continue to seek contributions for combat forces, trainers and mentors, strategic lift, and equipment from our friends and allies. The U.S. will also pursue major international funding and experts for civilian reconstruction and Afghan government capacity building at the national and especially the provincial and local levels.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan should take the lead in exploring ways that donors could systematically share the burden of building Afghan capacity and providing civilian expertise. As part of its coordination role for civilian assistance, the UN should consolidate requests and identify gaps.

In Pakistan, the U.S. will urge allies to work closely with us both bilaterally and through the 'Friends of Democratic Pakistan' to coordinate economic and development assistance including additional direct budget support, development assistance, infrastructure investment

and technical advice on making sound economic policy adjustments. Similarly, we should ask them to provide technical advice and assistance in strengthening government capacity, such as improving Pakistani institutions.

Conclusion

There are no quick fixes to achieve U.S. national security interests in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The danger of failure is real and the implications are grave. In 2009-2010 the Taliban's momentum must be reversed in Afghanistan and the international community must work with Pakistan to disrupt the threats to security along Pakistan's western border.

This new strategy of focusing on our core goal - to disrupt, dismantle, and eventually destroy extremists and their safe havens within both nations, although with different tactics - will require immediate action, sustained commitment, and substantial resources. The United States is committed to working with our partners in the region and the international community to address this challenging but essential security goal.

March 27, 2009

http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/afghanistan_pakistan_white_paper_final.pdf

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT ON A NEW STRATEGY FOR AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

Room 450

Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. Please be seated.

Before I begin today, let me acknowledge, first of all, Your Excellencies, all the ambassadors who are in attendance. I also want to acknowledge both the civilians and our military personnel that are about to be deployed to the region. And I am very grateful to all of you for your extraordinary work.

I want to acknowledge General David Petraeus, who's here, and has been doing an outstanding job at CENTCOM, and we appreciate him. I want to thank Bruce Reidel -- Bruce is down at the end here -- who has worked extensively on our strategic review. I want to acknowledge Karl

Eikenberry, who's here, and is our Ambassador-designate to Afghanistan. And to my national security team; thanks for their outstanding work. Today, I'm announcing a comprehensive, new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. And this marks the conclusion of a careful policy review, led by Bruce that I ordered as soon as I took office. My administration has heard from our military commanders, as well as our diplomats. We've consulted with the Afghan and Pakistani governments, with our partners and our NATO allies, and with other donors and international organizations. We've also worked closely with members of Congress here at home. And now I'd like to speak clearly and candidly to the American people.

The situation is increasingly perilous. It's been more than seven years since the Taliban was removed from power, yet war rages on, and insurgents control parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Attacks against our troops, our NATO allies, and the Afghan government have risen steadily. And most painfully, 2008 was the deadliest year of the war for American forces.

Many people in the United States -- and many in partner countries that have sacrificed so much -- have a simple question: What is our purpose in Afghanistan? After so many years, they ask why do our men and women still fight and die there. And they deserve a straightforward answer.

So let me be clear: Al Qaeda and its allies -- the terrorists who planned and supported the 9/11 attacks -- are in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Multiple intelligence estimates have warned that al Qaeda is actively planning attacks on the United States homeland from its safe haven in Pakistan. And if the Afghan government falls to the Taliban -- or allows al Qaeda to go unchallenged -- that country will again be a base for terrorists who want to kill as many of our people as they possibly can.

The future of Afghanistan is inextricably linked to the future of its neighbor, Pakistan. In the nearly eight years since 9/11, al Qaeda and its extremist allies have moved across the border to the remote areas of the Pakistani frontier. This almost certainly includes al Qaeda's leadership: Osama bin Laden and Ayman-al-Zawahiri. They have used this mountainous terrain as a safe haven to hide, to train terrorists, to communicate with followers, to plot attacks, and to send fighters to support the insurgency in Afghanistan. For the American people, this border region has become the most dangerous place in the world.

But this is not simply an American problem -- far from it. It is, instead, an international security challenge of the highest order. Terrorist attacks in London and Bali were tied to al Qaeda and its allies in Pakistan, as were attacks in North Africa and the Middle East, in Islamabad and in Kabul. If there is a major attack on an Asian, European, or African city, it, too, is likely to have ties to al Qaeda's leadership in Pakistan. The safety of people around the world is at stake.

For the Afghan people, a return to Taliban rule would condemn their country to brutal governance, international isolation, a paralyzed economy, and the denial of basic human rights to the Afghan people -- especially women and girls. The return in force of al Qaeda terrorists who would accompany the core Taliban leadership would cast Afghanistan under the shadow of perpetual violence.

As President, my greatest responsibility is to protect the American people. We are not in Afghanistan to control that country or to dictate its future. We are in Afghanistan to confront a common enemy that threatens the United States, our friends and our 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. That's the goal that must be achieved. That is a cause that could not be more just. And to the terrorists who oppose us, my message is the same: We will defeat you.

To achieve our goals, we need a stronger, smarter and comprehensive strategy. To focus on the greatest threat to our people, America must no longer deny resources to Afghanistan because of the war in Iraq. To enhance the military, governance and economic capacity of Afghanistan and Pakistan, we have to marshal international support. And to defeat an enemy that heeds no borders or laws of war, we must recognize the fundamental connection between the future of Afghanistan and Pakistan -- which is why I've appointed Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, who is here, to serve as Special Representative for both countries, and to work closely with General Petraeus to integrate our civilian and military efforts.

Let me start by addressing the way forward in Pakistan.

The United States has great respect for the Pakistani people. They have a rich history and have struggled against long odds to sustain their

democracy. The people of Pakistan want the same things that we want: an end to terror, access to basic services, the opportunity to live their dreams, and the security that can only come with the rule of law. The single greatest threat to that future comes from al Qaeda and their extremist allies, and that is why we must stand together.

The terrorists within Pakistan's borders are not simply enemies of America or Afghanistan -- they are a grave and urgent danger to the people of Pakistan. Al Qaeda and other violent extremists have killed several thousand Pakistanis since 9/11. They've killed many Pakistani soldiers and police. They assassinated Benazir Bhutto. They've blown up buildings, derailed foreign investment, and threatened the stability of the state. So make no mistake: al Qaeda and its extremist allies are a cancer that risks killing Pakistan from within.

It's important for the American people to understand that Pakistan needs our help in going after al Qaeda. This is no simple task. The tribal regions are vast, they are rugged, and they are often ungoverned. And that's why we must focus our military assistance on the tools, training and support that Pakistan needs to root out the terrorists. And after years of mixed results, we will not, and cannot, provide a blank check. Pakistan must demonstrate its commitment to rooting out al Qaeda and the violent extremists within its borders. And we will insist that action be taken -- one way or another -- when we have intelligence about high-level terrorist targets.

The government's ability to destroy these safe havens is tied to its own strength and security. To help Pakistan weather the economic crisis, we must continue to work with the IMF, the World Bank and other international partners. To lessen tensions between two nuclear-armed nations that too often teeter on the edge of escalation and confrontation, we must pursue constructive diplomacy with both India and Pakistan. To avoid the mistakes of the past, we must make clear that our relationship with Pakistan is grounded in support for Pakistan's democratic institutions and the Pakistani people. And to demonstrate through deeds as well as words a commitment that is enduring, we must stand for lasting opportunity.

A campaign against extremism will not succeed with bullets or bombs alone. Al Qaeda offers the people of Pakistan nothing but destruction. We stand for something different. So today, I am calling upon Congress to pass a bipartisan bill co-sponsored by John Kerry and Richard Lugar that authorizes \$1.5 billion in direct support to the

Pakistani people every year over the next five years -- resources that will build schools and roads and hospitals, and strengthen Pakistan's democracy. I'm also calling on Congress to pass a bipartisan bill co-sponsored by Maria Cantwell, Chris Van Hollen and Peter Hoekstra that creates opportunity zones in the border regions to develop the economy and bring hope to places plagued with violence. And we will ask our friends and allies to do their part -- including at the donors conference in Tokyo next month.

I don't ask for this support lightly. These are challenging times. Resources are stretched. But the American people must understand that this is a down payment on our own future -- because the security of America and Pakistan is shared. Pakistan's government must be a stronger partner in destroying these safe havens, and we must isolate al Qaeda from the Pakistani people. And these steps in Pakistan are also indispensable to our efforts in Afghanistan, which will see no end to violence if insurgents move freely back and forth across the border.

Security demands a new sense of shared responsibility. And that's why we will launch a standing, trilateral dialogue among the United States, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Our nations will meet regularly, with Secretaries Clinton and Secretary Gates leading our effort. Together, we must enhance intelligence sharing and military cooperation along the border, while addressing issues of common concern like trade, energy, and economic development.

This is just one part of a comprehensive strategy to prevent Afghanistan from becoming the al Qaeda safe haven that it was before 9/11. To succeed, we and our friends and allies must reverse the Taliban's gains, and promote a more capable and accountable Afghan government.

Our troops have fought bravely against a ruthless enemy. Our civilians have made great sacrifices. Our allies have borne a heavy burden. Afghans have suffered and sacrificed for their future. But for six years, Afghanistan has been denied the resources that it demands because of the war in Iraq. Now, we must make a commitment that can accomplish our goals.

I've already ordered the deployment of 17,000 troops that had been requested by General McKiernan for many months. These soldiers and Marines will take the fight to the Taliban in the south and the east, and give us a greater capacity to partner with Afghan security forces and to go after insurgents along the border. This push will also help provide

security in advance of the important presidential elections in Afghanistan in August.

At the same time, we will shift the emphasis of our mission to training and increasing the size of Afghan security forces, so that they can eventually take the lead in securing their country. That's how we will prepare Afghans to take responsibility for their security, and how we will ultimately be able to bring our own troops home.

For three years, our commanders have been clear about the resources they need for training. And those resources have been denied because of the war in Iraq. Now, that will change. The additional troops that we deployed have already increased our training capacity. And later this spring we will deploy approximately 4,000 U.S. troops to train Afghan security forces. For the first time, this will truly resource our effort to train and support the Afghan army and 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. We will accelerate our efforts to build an Afghan army of 134,000 and a police force of 82,000 so that we can meet these goals by 2011 -- and increases in Afghan forces may very well be needed as our plans to turn over security responsibility to the Afghans go forward.

This push must be joined by a dramatic increase in our civilian effort. Afghanistan has an elected government, but it is undermined by corruption and has difficulty delivering basic services to its people. The economy is undercut by a booming narcotics trade that encourages criminality and funds the insurgency. The people of Afghanistan seek the promise of a better future. Yet once again, we've seen the hope of a new day darkened by violence and uncertainty.

So to advance security, opportunity and justice -- not just in Kabul, but from the bottom up in the provinces -- we need agricultural specialists and educators, engineers and lawyers. That's how we can help the Afghan government serve its people and develop an economy that isn't dominated by illicit drugs. And that's why I'm ordering a substantial increase in our civilians on the ground. That's also why we must seek civilian support from our partners and allies, from the United Nations and international aid organizations -- an effort that Secretary Clinton will carry forward next week in The Hague.

At a time of economic crisis, it's tempting to believe that we can shortchange this civilian effort. But make no mistake: Our efforts will

fail in Afghanistan and Pakistan if we don't invest in their future. And that's why my budget includes indispensable investments in our State Department and foreign assistance programs. These investments relieve the burden on our troops. They contribute directly to security. They make the American people safer. And they save us an enormous amount of money in the long run -- because it's far cheaper to train a policeman to secure his or her own village than to help a farmer seed a crop -- or to help a farmer seed a crop than it is to send our troops to fight tour after tour of duty with no transition to Afghan responsibility.

As we provide these resources, the days of unaccountable spending, no-bid contracts, and wasteful reconstruction must end. So my budget will increase funding for a strong Inspector General at both the State Department and USAID, and include robust funding for the special inspector generals for Afghan Reconstruction.

And I want to be clear: We cannot turn a blind eye to the corruption that causes Afghans to lose faith in their own leaders. Instead, we will seek a new compact with the Afghan government that cracks down on corrupt behavior, and sets clear benchmarks, clear metrics for international assistance so that it is used to provide for the needs of the Afghan people.

In a country with extreme poverty that's been at war for decades, there will also be no peace without reconciliation among former enemies. Now, I have no illusion that this will be easy. In Iraq, we had success in reaching out to former adversaries to isolate and target al Qaeda in Iraq. We must pursue a similar process in Afghanistan, while understanding that it is a very different country.

There is an uncompromising core of the Taliban. They must be met with force, and they must be defeated. But there are also those who've taken up arms because of coercion, or simply for a price. These Afghans must have the option to choose a different course. And that's why we will work with local leaders, the Afghan government, and international partners to have a reconciliation process in every province. As their ranks dwindle, an enemy that has nothing to offer the Afghan people but terror and repression must be further isolated. And we will continue to support the basic human rights of all Afghans -- including women and girls.

Going forward, we will not blindly stay the course. Instead, we will set clear metrics to measure progress and hold ourselves accountable. We'll consistently assess our efforts to train Afghan security forces and

our progress in combating insurgents. We will measure the growth of Afghanistan's economy, and its illicit narcotics production. And we will review whether we are using the right tools and tactics to make progress towards accomplishing our goals.

None of the steps that I've outlined will be easy; none should be taken by America alone. The world cannot afford the price that will come due if Afghanistan slides back into chaos or al Qaeda operates unchecked. We have a shared responsibility to act -- not because we seek to project power for its own sake, but because our own peace and security depends on it. And what's at stake at this time is not just our own security -- it's the very idea that free nations can come together on behalf of our common security. That was the founding cause of NATO six decades ago, and that must be our common purpose today.

My administration is committed to strengthening international organizations and collective action, and that will be my message next week in Europe. As America does more, we will ask others to join us in doing their part. From our partners and NATO allies, we will seek not simply troops, but rather clearly defined capabilities: supporting the Afghan elections, training Afghan security forces, a greater civilian commitment to the Afghan people. For the United Nations, we seek greater progress for its mandate to coordinate international action and assistance, and to strengthen Afghan institutions.

And finally, together with the United Nations, we 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, but also the Central Asian states, the Gulf nations and Iran; Russia, India and China. None of these nations benefit from a base for al Qaeda terrorists, and a region that descends into chaos. All have a stake in the promise of lasting peace and security and development.

That is true, above all, for the coalition that has fought together in Afghanistan, side by side with Afghans. The sacrifices have been enormous. Nearly 700 Americans have lost their lives. Troops from over 20 countries have also paid the ultimate price. All Americans honor the service and cherish the friendship of those who have fought, and worked, and bled by our side. And all Americans are awed by the service of our own men and women in uniform, who've borne a burden as great as any other generation's. They and their families embody the example of selfless sacrifice.

I remind everybody, the United States of America did not choose to fight a war in Afghanistan. Nearly 3,000 of our people were killed on September 11, 2001, for doing nothing more than going about their daily lives. Al Qaeda and its allies have since killed thousands of people in many countries. Most of the blood on their hands is the blood of Muslims, who al Qaeda has killed and maimed in far greater number than any other people. That is the future that al Qaeda is offering to the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan -- a future without hope or opportunity; a future without justice or peace.

So understand, the road ahead will be long and there will be difficult days ahead. But we will seek lasting partnerships with Afghanistan and Pakistan that promise a new day for their people. And we will use all elements of our national power to defeat al Qaeda, and to defend America, our allies, and all who seek a better future. Because the United States of America stands for peace and security, justice and opportunity. That is who we are, and that is what history calls on us to do once more.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

March 27, 2009
www.whitehouse.gov

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..

March 27, 2009

http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Whats-New-in-the-Strategy-for-Afghanistan-and-Pakistan/

THREE PROBLEMS WITH OBAMA'S AF-PAK STRATEGY

President Obama's plan for Afghanistan is first rate. In fact, it sounds an awful lot like John McCain's strategy for Afghanistan announced last summer, which is all to the good. And Obama outlined the resources necessary to carry it out: additional troops; greater participation by non-military departments; focus on training Afghan security forces; strengthening Afghan and Pakistani institutions of government; 5-year assistance packages for both countries; routine, high-level trilateral consultations with Afghanistan and Pakistan; creation of a Contact

Group of neighbors and contributors; and trying to separate reconcilables from irreconcilables among the bad guys. Obama said he will set clear metrics to gauge progress, which is important and should be gotten underway fast.

There are, however, three serious problems with the strategy outlined yesterday:

First, Obama set unrealistic expectations of the speed at which Afghanistan can improve to his standards and timeline.

He hit one jarring note by saying that "we are not in Afghanistan to control that country or to dictate its future." We are in Afghanistan precisely to control that country, which had surrendered to Taliban control, to dictate a future that is democratic and not a haven for threats to us, and to help those outcomes become self-sustaining. I understand the president is trying not to sound imperial, but this confusion of purpose -- or, rather, this ideological unwillingness to look directly at the lack of capacity in Afghanistan and Pakistan to indigenously produce the outcomes we need -- is reminiscent of the Bush administration rushing Iraq's return to elections and self-governance in 2005. Afghanistan will struggle for years to produce capable military and police forces in the numbers Obama described (134,000 troops, 82,000 police); the president's plan optimistically calls for this to be achieved by 2011.

Second, Obama offered no concrete civilian component and no design for producing the essential U.S. civilian contribution.

The president was discouragingly vague on this important counterpart to the increase in military effort. He said "we need agricultural specialists and educators; engineers and lawyers," but he did not say how many or from where they will materialize. When President Bush tried to have a "civilian surge" to match the military part of his 2007 strategy in Iraq, the Department of Defense had to provide nearly all of the "civilians." Secretary Clinton, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Justice Department, the Education Department, and even the Treasury Department should have been tasked to undertake analysis and develop plans with the same kind of rigor that Defense has. That Secretary Clinton has only now been tasked to get this underway sadly suggests we will see yet another reprise of the military doing all the civilian departments' work.

Finally, there's the absence of allies in this strategy's development and announcement.

What worried me most was that as Obama declared this to be an international threat of grave consequence against which "we must stand together," he stood without a single ally by his side. He did not have President Zardari or President Karzai with him to show their commitment to this common endeavor. No NATO head of state was present, and although nations have been consulted, the transatlantic alliance has not committed itself to this strategy or the non-American resources necessary to make it successful.

A week in advance of NATO's 50th anniversary summit, when the alliance has taken responsibility for much of the Afghan operation, the President made this look like an American war. He should not be surprised if it becomes one.

Kori Schake, *Foreign Policy* (Washington), March 28, 2009
http://shadow.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/03/28/three_problems_with_obamas_af_pak_strategy

POLICY OPTIONS PAPER

FROM AFPAK TO PAKAF A RESPONSE TO THE NEW U.S. STRATEGY FOR SOUTH ASIA

Introduction

President Barack Obama publicly unveiled his administration's so-called AfPak (Afghanistan-Pakistan) strategy on March 27, 2009. Over the subsequent weeks, the White House has also briefed relevant congressional leaders and committees, the media, NATO allies, and other regional and international partners. The U.S. House of Representatives has moved ahead with its own legislative debate (the PEACE bill)¹, and the administration recently submitted a 2009 supplemental budget request consistent with its new strategy.

While the broad contours are in place, clearly Washington's approach to South Asia remains a work in progress. The strategy's authors insist that it is intended to provide a framework, not a strait-jacket, for U.S. policy. Questions remain about the correct prioritization of U.S. objectives; the level of and manner in which U.S. diplomatic, military, intelligence, and economic resources should be deployed; and the appropriate sequencing and duration of U.S. efforts.

Context

Over the past two years, the security environment in Afghanistan and Pakistan has taken a significant turn for the worse. The spread of militancy, whether by terrorists connected with al-Qaeda, the Taliban of Mullah Omar or Baitullah Mehsud, criminal gangs, narco-traffickers, or sectarian extremists, among others, has destabilized the Pashtun belt in southern and eastern Afghanistan as well as western Pakistan. At the same time, a range of other violent actors—from Punjabi anti-Indian extremists to Central Asian warlords—operates in the non-Pashtun areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan and Afghanistan offer these groups an unusually hospitable environment, one that complicates and magnifies the danger. Well-worn smuggling routes link the region's notoriously remote and difficult terrain to globally interconnected megacities, creating nearly ideal conditions for al-Qaeda operatives and their sympathizers. The geographic proximity of Pakistan's nuclear program to these sophisticated terrorists and the recent history of illicit transfers of material and know-how also pose a unique threat.

Fragile state institutions, weak leadership, and inadequate resources limit the ability of Islamabad and Kabul to fight militancy in the near term or to foster moderation over the long run. Finally, a trust deficit burdens the United States; anti-Americanism is widespread, and many of Washington's closest partners in the region express deep skepticism about U.S. intentions and commitment. Many of Washington's challenges in Pakistan and Afghanistan are linked, and so it is correct—and overdue—that the United States should formulate a strategy to address the region as a whole. But the specific threats and policy options across and within these two states range widely. Moreover, the diplomatic, military, and development tools available to the United States vary from one side of the border to the other.

The Obama Strategy

President Obama's remarks on March 27, 2009, and an administration white paper released the same day outline the basic elements of the administration's approach. Rooted in an assessment of persistent terrorist threat, the new AfPak strategy attempts to walk a middle path between a narrow counter terror mission and a much more ambitious nation-building agenda. According to the White House, the fundamental objective for U.S. policy in Pakistan and Afghanistan should be to turn

the tide against regional militants, who offer safe haven to global terrorists, and to build indigenous security structures capable of prosecuting effective counter terror and counter insurgency missions. A timely and generous injection of U.S. resources should be used to demonstrate the fundamental weakness of the Taliban, thereby offering breathing space to governments in Islamabad and Kabul.

As a U.S. senator and presidential candidate, President Obama stressed that the deterioration of security conditions in the region should be attributed to inadequate U.S. resources and attention since 2003 Al-Qaeda leaders eluded capture and the Taliban regrouped in Pakistan and Afghanistan while much of America's military, intelligence, and foreign policy machinery was dedicated to the war in Iraq. The sympathy and credibility the United States enjoyed in the region shortly after 9/11 have since evaporated, but the Taliban and al-Qaeda are by no means invincible. The ongoing draw-down in Iraq will—belatedly—offer significant new military and intelligence tools to commanders in the Pakistan-Afghanistan theater.

The basic counterinsurgency lessons from Iraq also appear to inform U.S. plans for Afghanistan and Pakistan. Washington will begin with a rapid expansion of military force to confront decisively the Afghan Taliban's offensive during the spring and summer fighting seasons. At the same time, the United States appears to be accelerating the use of Predator (unmanned aerial drone) strikes against Taliban leadership in Pakistan, while encouraging the Pakistani military to pursue offensive operations against militants based in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas along the Afghan border.

With these offensive operations underway, the United States plans to start a major expansion of the Afghan National Security Forces. The United States has already achieved significant success in building the Afghan National Army, while existing programs—such as Focused District Development, which takes entire district police forces off-site for an eight-week training course, then returns them with embedded trainers—appear to have the potential to improve the capacity of the Afghan police. In Pakistan, the Pentagon has already allocated roughly \$400 million to train and equip the paramilitary Pakistani Frontier Corps and recently proposed a Pakistani Counterinsurgency Capability Fund, which would allocate \$3 billion over the next five years to train and equip Pakistan's army and paramilitary forces for a counterinsurgency mission. All of these efforts are likely to be accelerated and expanded within

several years, provided Washington can supply more trainers, build new training facilities, and work closely with Pakistani and Afghan counterparts.

In addition, aid to Pakistan's army will be carefully tailored to improving its counterinsurgency capacity (rather than boosting defenses against India) and conditioned upon effective action against militants along the border with Afghanistan. When possible, the United States and its partners (Afghanistan, Pakistan, NATO, and others) will seek to translate battlefield successes into political settlements with local populations, negotiating from a position of strength to win support against the most extreme militants and to eliminate sanctuaries available to global terrorists. Intelligence leads from newly pacified areas will, in time, help U.S. forces find and destroy al-Qaeda's senior leadership. Quick-hitting economic assistance is also to be used to support counterinsurgency efforts on both sides of the border. U.S. forces will have access to flexible emergency funds so they can rush humanitarian, development, and reconstruction programs into areas immediately after offensive operations. This rapid-response programming is designed to win compliance from local populations and avoid swelling the ranks of the insurgency. Vastly expanded nonmilitary assistance to Pakistan, along the lines of the Senate's soon-to-be-introduced Kerry-Lugar legislation (an updated version of the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2008, which was introduced by Senator Joe Biden and Senator Richard Lugar in July 2008 but did not pass before the end of the session) and the House's PEACE Act of 2009, will help to build the state's capacity to deliver basic services and to improve law and order. Nonmilitary assistance will also provide a tangible, popular demonstration of the benefits of a U.S.-Pakistan partnership.

The Obama administration is prepared to foot a hefty bill for maintaining indigenous security forces in Afghanistan over at least the next decade or so. But compared to U.S. and NATO operations, the cost to U.S. taxpayers will be greatly reduced. By helping to stifle the Taliban-led insurgency and root out al-Qaeda's leaders while building and maintaining more effective indigenous security institutions, the White House hopes to reduce the footprint of American (and NATO) operations within several years and still achieve its vital security interests in the region.

An Emerging Debate

As a political statement, the AfPak strategy has been well received, perhaps in part because it leaves unresolved a number of contentious policy questions. In the public debates that will accompany congressional decisions on AfPak funding, as well as the Obama administration's internal debates on policy implementation, a middle-path strategy will face challenges from at least two competing alternatives.

Some critics will argue that the strategy correctly diagnoses the urgent threat posed by al-Qaeda and global jihadists, but that the administration's policy prescriptions are too costly and wide-ranging to meet that narrowly defined challenge. Others will argue that the administration has astutely situated the problem of global terrorism within a regional political-economic context, but that important elements of the strategy are still too narrowly conceived or inadequate toward the enormous task of achieving U.S. national security interests in Afghanistan, and even more so, in Pakistan.

These two alternative strategies are explored at greater length in the following sections.

Alternative 1: Focus Goals and Limit Costs

One alternative to the Obama administration's approach would be to limit U.S. costs by strictly focusing on the counter terror mission in Afghanistan and Pakistan, rather than getting bogged down in a messy quagmire of state capacity building and long-term development issues. From this perspective, the Obama administration is correct in its understanding that the fundamental objective for U.S. policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan should be the reduction of the threat to U.S. national security posed by al-Qaeda. But a clear and sustained focus on al-Qaeda will protect U.S. interests best by limiting financial and human costs and by avoiding a wide range of exceedingly complicated challenges that Washington appears ill-equipped to manage. Building moderate, stable, and more effective governments in Islamabad and Kabul and tackling long-standing regional tensions may be admirable causes, but they will require expensive, long-term U.S. investments that pay—at best—limited, uncertain dividends. The United States has relatively few essential interests in this region; even a stable and economically viable Pakistan and Afghanistan would remain distant and poor, and would play

virtually no positive role in Washington's long-term political, military, or economic considerations.

Realistically, even a narrow focus on the threat posed by al-Qaeda will require a far more extensive U.S. presence in the region than existed prior to 9/11. But that presence should not primarily take the form of U.S. armed forces, diplomats, or U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) officials. The expansion of these personnel in Afghanistan, as advocated by the White House, is therefore ill-advised. An effective counter terror strategy should instead demand sustained investments in surveillance and human intelligence capabilities as well as the means to strike individuals engaged in the training, planning, and managing of terror attacks against the United States or its interests.

High-tech platforms, from next-generation unmanned aerial vehicles to satellites, will help the United States manage counter terror operations without a heavy ground presence in Pakistan or Afghanistan. The U.S. military presence in Afghanistan should be phased out over the next several years, providing just enough time and security for U.S. intelligence operatives and Special Operations Forces to cultivate a sustainable network of local partners engaged in human intelligence collection.

The focus of U.S. partnerships with Afghan and Pakistani intelligence services (as well as with other intelligence actors in the region) should narrow and intensify on terrorist groups, such as al-Qaeda, that have global aspirations. In Pakistan, the United States should transfer technologies and other assistance that will help to protect Islamabad's nuclear warheads, facilities, and scientists from attack or infiltration by al-Qaeda or its sympathizers. U.S. assistance to Pakistani and Afghan security forces should continue, but it should be employed primarily as a means for inducing cooperation against al-Qaeda. The United States should avoid investments in regional security forces — such as the massive expansion of the Afghan National Army or the transformation of Pakistan's Frontier Corps — that are unlikely to be sustained by Kabul and Islamabad without permanent external assistance. Washington should instead encourage Pakistan and Afghanistan to seek alternative funding streams or redirect existing national resources in order to build those security institutions considered most vital to state stability.

The United States should also recognize that its own extensive presence in Afghanistan since 2002 has altered regional calculations — and not for the better. An open-ended U.S. commitment has created

incentives for “free riding,” encouraged the pursuit of parochial interests, and raised fears that the United States has ulterior motives for maintaining its presence in the region. U.S. diplomats should therefore clarify Washington’s intention to rededicate itself to the fight against al-Qaeda, to find common cause with all actors who support that effort, and to accept regionally generated solutions as long as they do not directly undermine counter terror goals. In addition to existing partners, the United States should reach out to China, Iran, and Russia.

In sum, the United States should focus and intensify its efforts to finish the fight that al-Qaeda started and avoid conflating that specific threat with a much more diffuse set of regional challenges. A dire economic crisis at home and a world full of urgent and looming dangers require Washington to pick its battles carefully in order to win them. In its history, the United States has rarely demonstrated a capacity to rebuild broken states like Afghanistan or to transform enormous developing nations like Pakistan. In a region where American involvement is already unpopular, the Obama administration must understand that expanding U.S. engagement and investment is at least as likely to prove counterproductive as it is to yield the types of gains sought by the White House.

Alternative 2: Expand U.S. Effort, Focus on Pakistan

A second alternative to the Obama administration’s approach would emphasize publicly just how long, difficult, and costly Washington’s effort is likely to be and would focus on the hardest and most critical problem of the region — Pakistan — where relatively few resources have been spent compared to Afghanistan, U.S. policy tools are all too limited, and mutual distrust between Washington and Islamabad often proves debilitating.

The Obama strategy clearly recognizes that a fractured or incapacitated Pakistan would threaten core U.S. interests, not least because its nuclear weapons would be vulnerable to al-Qaeda or similar terrorist groups. Today, al-Qaeda’s top leadership is most likely based in Pakistan, along with top Taliban leaders, both Afghan and Pakistani. In addition, the “Talibanization” of Pakistan’s Pashtun belt is gradually moving eastward into settled districts, creating new terrorist safe havens in once-tranquil locales such as the Swat valley. Pakistan’s non-Pashtun extremist and sectarian groups, some of which were historically nurtured by the state as a means to project influence into India and Afghanistan,

also have the potential to prove deeply destabilizing. Organizations like the banned Jaish-e-Mohammed or Jamaat-ud-Dawa are well resourced and globally interconnected. Some appear to retain significant influence within state institutions and enjoy public sympathy, in certain cases because of the social services they provide. If present trends persist, the next generation of the world's most sophisticated terrorists will be born, indoctrinated, and trained in a nuclear-armed Pakistan.

But the Obama administration's strategy does not establish that securing Islamabad's political stability and partnership should be Washington's primary regional objective. The White House's intensified focus on counter terror and counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan and the Pakistani tribal belt is not misplaced, but it will prove entirely insufficient to overcoming these deeper challenges. The United States should therefore make broad and ample investments beyond the Pashtun tribal belt and in Pakistan's civilian and military institutions as a means to improve their capacity and to create incentives for sustainable bilateral cooperation in the fight against extremism and militancy over the long run.

In some ways, the Obama AfPak strategy makes a good start along precisely these lines, but critical gaps remain. While the president's remarks prioritized Pakistan as a U.S. national security concern, U.S. resources and attention are far more heavily engaged in Afghanistan. Since 9/11, the United States has spent (or requested for fiscal year 2009) roughly \$170 billion on Operation Enduring Freedom and just over \$15 billion in assistance and reimbursements to Pakistan.³ Of course, achieving greater stability in Afghanistan would mitigate some of the political and military pressures now faced by the Pakistani state. A comprehensive strategy for Pakistan should therefore include major counterinsurgency and counter terror operations in Afghanistan. But it must also be recognized that a victory against the Taliban in Afghanistan will be hollow and illusory if it yields a destabilized or adversarial regime in Pakistan. Tactics that flush militants out from Afghanistan and into Pakistan will prove counterproductive unless Pakistan's own security forces are ready to mount an adequate response. Today they are not. Similarly, the use of drone strikes in Pakistan's tribal belt must be weighed against the political costs they impose on U.S.-Pakistan cooperation, not least the role they play in amplifying popular anti-Americanism in parts of Pakistan well beyond the areas bordering Afghanistan.

The United States has relatively few direct policy tools for fighting extremism and improving state capacity inside Pakistan. Widespread anti-Americanism, official distrust and poor security conditions now impose severe limits on U.S. military, intelligence, and even economic development efforts. The centerpiece of U.S. efforts should therefore be to win trust among partners within Pakistan's military, intelligence, and civilian institutions and to empower these partners to undertake the daunting task of fighting terrorism and militancy. A policy of inducement—through financial, technical, and diplomatic assistance—is the best means to shift the strategic calculations of influential Pakistanis and bolster moderates who share basic U.S. interests. Fortunately, although Pakistan's extremists are all-too-numerous and vocal, the overwhelming majority of the country's population abhors terrorist tactics and has no desire to live in a Taliban-like state.

Still, winning influential partners will not be easy. Pakistan's army and intelligence services have been frustrating and internally conflicted allies since 9/11. Many within their ranks doubt that close partnership with Washington will serve Pakistan's security interests; they prefer to hedge their bets by retaining ties to militant groups with violent anti-Indian and anti-Western agendas. But these security institutions are complicated, many-layered bureaucracies, not unitary actors. Washington should work to influence internal debates and transform mindsets among the rising classes of Pakistani officers. As President Obama has stated, Washington should not be in the business of writing blank checks to Islamabad, whether for civilian or military purposes. That said, the United States should also resist the temptation to impose inflexible conditions on its military assistance as a means of ensuring Pakistan's cooperation. U.S. threats of this sort may be cathartic, but they are also counterproductive; they offer easy ammunition to America's skeptics in Pakistan while discouraging real and potential allies.

Instead, Washington should maintain a baseline of generous defense assistance while seeking every opportunity to enhance COIN and CT training, bilateral engagement, and joint operations with Pakistani security and intelligence forces. To help stem the tide of extremism and militancy within Pakistani civil society, the United States should implement vastly expanded assistance programs to improve state governance capacity (especially law and order), meet basic humanitarian needs, influence public opinion, and promote long-term development. The United States should set clear measures of success. But initial failures

to achieve these benchmarks should prompt new implementation strategies, not threats to reduce or revoke resources.

In order to have any chance of effectively formulating, implementing, and monitoring these new and improved assistance programs, Washington must also invest in its own institutions. USAID and the Department of State will need expanded personnel and security to operate throughout Pakistan and to enable improved cooperation with public and private organizations.

The United States should also coordinate with regional and global partners in its effort to build and transform Pakistani institutions and to deal effectively with the full spectrum of Pakistan's political leaders and parties. China and Saudi Arabia have particular influence over Pakistan's military and political leaders, and other major donors including Japan and the UK offer valuable resources, leverage, and experience.

A comprehensive approach to countering extremism in Pakistan will demand expensive and in-tense U.S. engagement over at least a decade, possibly much longer. But because smart, sustained investments ultimately represent the most cost-effective way for the United States to avoid a far more dangerous future, the Obama administration would be well advised not to narrow its ambitions from the outset or to understate the enormity of the challenge.

Recommendation

Shift from AfPak to PakAf

The Obama administration should recalibrate its strategy to emphasize the priority of the mission in Pakistan and to prepare domestic and international audiences for expanded, sustained U.S. engagement in South Asia. The present approach — professing narrow counter terror goals while seeking expanded state-building resources in Afghanistan and Pakistan—may be a politically astute means to garner early support, but runs the risk of confusing the American public (as well as U.S. allies and adversaries) down the road about Washington's true intentions. That confusion is likely to make a costly commitment to the region harder to justify and sustain over the long run. A wide array of global and domestic considerations undoubtedly influenced the Obama administration's AfPak strategy. The costs — political, economic, and military — of a lengthy commitment to South Asia will invariably require real compromises on other issues and in other regions. At a time of severe economic distress, U.S. foreign assistance programming must contend

with urgent domestic expenditures. And any strategy of long-term investment requires some confidence that resources and attention will manage to survive subsequent budget battles and future elections.

That said, if the United States takes seriously the enormity and complexity of the threat posed by extremism in South and Central Asia, only a comprehensive, Pakistan-centered strategy will serve U.S. security requirements today and into the future. Narrowing America's ambition to attacking al-Qaeda and its close associates may placate some budget hawks at home, but it will do little to address the serious, entrenched threats posed by instability and weak state capacity in Pakistan.

Turning Strategy into Policy

Much of the Obama team's strategy is already fairly consistent with a long-term, Pakistan-centered approach to the region. In order to be more specific about how a PakAf approach should be implemented over time, and where it would deviate from the administration's apparent plans, the following section offers policy guidelines as well as a limited number of detailed recommendations. It is intended to suggest the way ahead, not to serve as an all-inclusive policy agenda.

Near Term (Six Months): A Military, Political, Economic, and Diplomatic Surge

Over the next six months, the United States should surge resources into South Asia and work to eliminate the greatest immediate stumbling blocks to better cooperation with Pakistan and Afghanistan. President Obama assumed power at a time of morale-sapping turmoil within both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Strong and cooperative political partners are in short supply, and security conditions have deteriorated to the point that U.S. civilian personnel face risky operating environments throughout the region. The Obama administration's efforts have been calibrated to begin to address this situation. By devoting sufficient military resources to stem Taliban offensives in Afghanistan, Washington can help to secure greater geographic and political space for national elections and development programs. In Pakistan, the United States should continue with efforts to navigate ongoing partisan power struggles, capitalize on the opportunity presented by the restoration of the chief justice of the Supreme Court, and advance multilateral efforts to shore up Pakistan's economic

situation, all while building closer working relationships with military and intelligence officials.

To enhance security across the region, the United States should take the following steps over the next six months, consistent with the administration's new strategy:- Increase the mass of military power available to U.S. and NATO commanders in Afghanistan, starting — but not ending — with 17,000 additional U.S. troops;- Practice a “population-centered” counterinsurgency approach in Afghanistan, with an emphasis on improving Afghan public confidence in U.S./NATO operations, in part by reducing civilian casualties through a more selective use of coalition airpower;- Expand the frequency and intensity of senior-level U.S.-Pakistan dialogue and, where appropriate, intelligence-sharing and focused discussions about militant networks in Pakistan, including the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani network, and Lashkar-e-Taiba. At the same time, recognizing the centrality of its emerging partnership with Pakistan to achieving success in the region, the Obama administration should shift its approach in the following ways:

- Restrict attacks by unmanned aerial vehicles (such as Predators and Reapers) in Pakistan to counter terror targets (such as al-Qaeda leadership) to limit collateral damage and reduce an unpopular irritant in relations with Pakistan's political and military leadership;- Follow through on existing assistance commitments to the Pakistani military, including the F-16 program, as a means to retain the confidence of officers who have bought into partnership with the United States;- Work with the U.S. Congress to avoid new legislation that includes inflexible and potentially punitive “conditionality” on military assistance to Pakistan. To strengthen the foundations for political partnership in Afghanistan and Pakistan, over the next six months the United States should also take the following diplomatic steps, consistent with the administration's new strategy:- Apply diplomatic pressure on the Karzai government and provide security and technical assistance to enhance the likelihood that Afghanistan's presidential election is perceived as legitimate both by the Afghan public and international observers;
- In Pakistan, retain flexibility in the midst of intense partisan political competition by engaging in regular, active

dialogue with leaders and second-tier officials from the full range of political parties.

Over the same time frame, the Obama administration should undertake the following overtures in order to clarify or shift Washington's political intentions:- Refrain from official U.S. involvement in negotiations with the Afghan Taliban to avoid undercutting the legitimacy conferred by Afghanistan's electoral process or appearing too eager for an easy exit from the region;

- Delineate redlines with respect to future Pakistani negotiations with the Taliban to clarify that terrorist safe havens and the shrinking writ of the Pakistani state, not the implementation of traditional, or sharia, laws, are Washington's primary reasons for concern;
- Engage Pakistan's political leadership in discussions about the security and logistical procedures planned for Afghanistan's election as a means to encourage Islamabad's support for the process and acceptance of the outcome;
- Work with groups, including Pakistani and international nongovernmental organizations, academic institutions, and the legal community, to depoliticize Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry's reinstatement and turn it into an opportunity for meaningful judicial reform in Pakistan. To stabilize regional economic conditions, set a new tone for development assistance, and jumpstart more constructive international engagement in the region, over the next six months the United States should do the following, all consistent with, if not necessarily dictated by, the administration's new strategy:
- Mount a review of USAID's Afghanistan mission to identify programming and personnel gaps, and, in particular, to craft new mechanisms for community-oriented aid disbursement and reduced dependence on non-Afghan implementing partners;
- Coordinate closely with the International Monetary Fund and major donors to Pakistan (through the Friends of Pakistan forum or an alternative grouping) to stabilize — where necessary — and boost — where possible — economic growth;

- Announce U.S. plans for major new nonmilitary assistance expenditures in Pakistan (\$1.5 billion a year, consistent with the imminent Kerry-Lugar legislation) and begin discussions with Pakistan's government, business leaders, and civil society to identify creative new mechanisms to oversee and manage a significant portion of these funds through demand-driven block grants, a trust fund, or other widely accepted means;
- Mobilize USAID to assist — in whatever forms acceptable — the Pakistani army and Frontier Corps in delivering reconstruction assistance to post conflict zones of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, especially the devastated civilian communities of Bajaur Agency;
- Raise Pakistan and Afghanistan to the top of Washington's diplomatic agenda with regional and global partners, including China, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the European Union, and others;
- Regularize Pakistan-Afghanistan-U. S. trilateral summits;
- Quietly encourage India's new government (shortly after its own national elections in April and May) to reinvigorate dialogue with Pakistan. Facilitate early interactions if necessary.

Medium Term (One to Four Years): Identify and Empower Partners Over President Obama's first term in office, success in Pakistan and Afghanistan should not be measured solely by whether top al-Qaeda terrorists are eliminated or the Taliban is dealt a military setback in Afghanistan.

Washington must also identify a range of partners among Afghan and Pakistani civilian and military institutions and empower them to assume moderating and stabilizing roles over the long haul.

By the end of this four-year period, Afghanistan's national security forces should be ready to assume a primary role in counterinsurgency operations. Over the same time frame, Washington should aim to develop far closer cooperation with the Pakistani military and intelligence services, including more extensive training and, where mutually acceptable, regular joint operations and extensive intelligence sharing. The United States should create the

conditions for effective, long-term regional development programming and political outreach by investing in new U.S. personnel and facilities.

To shift Afghan counterinsurgency operations to an indigenous lead, and to enable intense, regular cooperation with the Pakistani security and intelligence services, over the next four years the United States should undertake the following steps, most of which are consistent with, if not dictated by, the Obama AfPak strategy:

- Accelerate and expand the training and equipping of Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police to create a force capable of bearing the bulk of national combat and policing duties;
- Revamp mechanisms for U.S. military assistance to Pakistan to improve transparency and to eliminate regular points of mutual irritation, such as the Coalition Support Funds program, while maintaining a U.S. commitment to generous budgetary support as a means to build trust;
- Expand educational opportunities for Pakistani officers in U.S.-based programs, especially those geared toward counterinsurgency and counterterrorism;
- Build on existing “train the trainer” programs for the Pakistani Frontier Corps;
- Seek opportunities for joint U.S.-Pakistan military and intelligence training missions outside Pakistan as a means to improve specialized counter terror skills and win trust (and with an eye toward joint operations down the road);
- Offer training and assistance to Pakistan’s provincial police forces, starting with major urban centers, to promote reforms, reduce corruption, and improve law and order;
- Engage in a quiet, high-level nuclear dialogue with Pakistan to build bilateral trust and seek new ways to safeguard its nuclear program.

To enable better cooperation with civilian political leaders in the region, over the next four years the United States should also undertake the following steps:

- Use the occasion of Afghanistan’s post-presidential election transition and subsequent parliamentary elections in 2010 to encourage political reforms that delegate greater

authority to cabinet ministers, parliamentarians, and provincial officials relative to the presidency as one means of increasing the number and quality of potential U.S. partners throughout the Afghan state;

- Create additional civil-military units in Afghanistan similar to Provincial Reconstruction Teams to facilitate community and tribal outreach efforts (as part of a national reconciliation effort) and to improve the quality of sub national governance, especially the judiciary;
- Increase diplomatic staffing levels in Pakistan and establish new sub-consular offices (and requisite security procedures) to facilitate political outreach within and beyond Pakistan's major cities;
- Launch a cooperative initiative with Pakistan's military and civilian leadership to improve Islamabad's national security decision-making process, starting with a dedicated exchange program and training curriculum for a small group of rising mid-career Pakistani army, intelligence, and foreign policy officers.

To promote sustainable economic development in Afghanistan and Pakistan, over the next four years the United States should do the following:

- Build a more substantial USAID presence dedicated to long-term development assistance in Afghanistan, with the capacity and mandate to support and expand local, community-based development projects similar to the National Solidarity Program;
- Increase USAID staffing and secure facilities in Pakistan to support local development initiatives in coordination with provincial and local authorities throughout the country, including the Frontier Corps and political agents in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas;
- Follow through on pledges to provide Pakistan with sustained access to nonmilitary assistance, disbursed through mechanisms that are transparent and accountable to the Pakistani public;
- Identify and implement a major, high-profile infrastructure project in Pakistan to demonstrate to Pakistan's populace the tangible benefits of U.S.-Pakistan partnership.

In its diplomatic efforts within and outside the region, over the next four years the United States should do the following:

- Institute a regular, senior-level dialogue with China on Pakistan and Afghanistan as a means to leverage collective U.S.-China political, military, and economic influence in the region;
- Accept a de facto two-tiered NATO involvement in Afghanistan as a means to improve the alliance's efficiency in military operations while encouraging financial and other contributions from member states that cannot sustain military commitments;
- Reconvene the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference (RECC) for Afghanistan (or a successor forum) to promote trade opportunities linking Central Asia to South and East Asia, and encourage buy-in by other major regional actors, including Russia and China, as well as the private sector and international organizations such as the World Bank Long Term (Five to Ten Years or More): Build and Sustain

Effective Institutions

Over the long run, the United States should anticipate continued involvement in Afghanistan and Pakistan, but Washington's allocation of resources should also look far different than it does today. The United States will succeed only if more effective Pakistani and Afghan state institutions are built and sustained to counterbalance forces of extremism and militancy. During the next five to ten years, Washington should draw down U.S. combat forces in Afghanistan while continuing to provide military assistance, training, and logistical support along with close political partnership and extensive development programming. Over a similar time frame, the United States should aim to achieve broader and deeper cooperation with Pakistan's defense, security, and intelligence services, enabling extensive and sophisticated counter terror and counterinsurgency training, planning, and, where mutually agreeable, joint operations. In addition, the United States should be fully engaged in political outreach and economic development throughout Pakistan, helping to strengthen the state and civil society.

The Obama administration should move quickly to declare its long-term commitment to the region as a means to shift expectations and strategic calculations in Kabul, Islamabad, and neighboring capitals. A new, transparent bilateral agreement for defense and cooperation should be negotiated with Kabul after Afghanistan's national elections. Washington should use this negotiation process to signal that, while it has every intention to end the Taliban-led insurgency, it does not seek any permanent military presence in the region.

In addition, over the five-to-ten-year time horizon, the United States should undertake the following steps:

- Address the daunting challenge of the narcotics industry in Afghanistan by focusing on lasting solutions (alternative livelihoods, law enforcement and prosecutorial capacity, and the targeting and interdiction of traffickers), all of which must be built upon the foundations of effective state institutions;
- Approach deep and seemingly intractable challenges to stability in Pakistan—such as the imbalance between civilian and military power, the dynastic nature of major political parties, and deep social and economic inequality—through serious, sustained U.S. support for a wide variety of educational, social mobilization and reform efforts that will, at best, pay dividends only over a decade or longer;
- Engage in a dialogue with top Pakistani military and civilian leaders about prospects and avenues for normalizing the nuclear program in ways that are not perceived to threaten Pakistan's security with respect to India;
- Encourage rapprochement between India and Pakistan through quiet overtures and reiterate Washington's longstanding commitment to support or facilitate when and if necessary.

A Daunting Challenge

In its present formulation, the Obama administration's AfPak strategy is framed flexibly enough to permit a long-term, Pakistan-centered commitment to the region. But the White House's approach is now burdened by an Afghanistan-oriented military strategy, a rhetorical nod to tightly focused counter terror objectives, and tough-minded but potentially counterproductive plans for conditioning assistance to

Pakistan. To preclude ambiguity and build sustainable domestic support for its agenda, the Obama administration should clarify that it will pursue sustained, comprehensive engagement in South Asia, with a heavy emphasis on improving cooperation with Pakistan through intense interaction and assistance, because this strategy offers the best prospect for long-term American security and regional stability.

Implementing such an ambitious program will be tremendously difficult. It may ultimately overtax Washington's diplomatic, financial, and military resources. Nor can there be any guarantee that even such a costly program will stave off the worst threats it is intended to address. Indeed, many critical dynamics in the region are to a significant degree outside America's capacity to control, no matter how hard it tries. That said, alternative strategies that focus more narrowly on the threats posed by al-Qaeda or by Afghanistan's Taliban insurgency may also fail to achieve their goals. More troubling, they may inspire policies that undermine stability in Pakistan or fail to direct adequate attention to the many sources of Pakistani instability situated outside the tribal areas bordering Afghanistan. Under these difficult conditions, narrowing Washington's strategic ambition would represent a false economy, saving marginal U.S. resources in the near term but creating even greater long-term threats to U.S. interests as well as to regional and global security. Since 9/11, the United States has lurched from crisis to crisis in South Asia, putting out fires without investing in the future. The time has come to readjust the balance, to recognize that entrenched threats of this sort demand enduring and costly U.S. investments, and to commit forthrightly to meeting the daunting challenge in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Policy Options Paper, Daniel Markey, *Council of Foreign Relations*, April 2009
www.cfr.org.

100 DAYS OF AFPAK

In the absence of ideology as the basis for selling the war to the American public, the Obama administration is likely to turn to cost-effectiveness as a marketing tool. The paltry aid commitments currently being promised to achieve the task of saving the flailing Pakistani state and revamping the Afghan army both lend credence to this argument

A recent report suggests that a deputy of Richard Holbrooke, President Obama's special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, met with a

special emissary of Hizb-e-Islami chief Gulbedin Hekmatyar. If this is true, it is very significant, given that Hekmatyar has long been declared a terrorist by US authorities and there is a USD21 million bounty for his capture.

This change of modus operandi from castigating enemies to figuring out which ones can be co-opted is indeed the most visible change in US policy since the Obama administration took over a hundred days ago. While this meeting was taking place, Bruce Reidel, another key strategist at the centre of the Obama Administration's AfPak policy, was making statements of a similar tenor to media outlets.

In an interview to the German newspaper *Der Spiegel*, Mr. Reidel, a former CIA expert on Al Qaeda, said of the Taliban, said: "a considerable number of the Taliban are not hard-core committed jihadists; they are in it for the money. If their momentum is broken, we will start to see a change in the cohesion of the Taliban by the end of the year. Those willing to renounce the jihadists can be assimilated into the new Afghan order."

The message is clear: if the Bush administration was about ideological warfare, waxing endlessly on the virtues of nation-building and the spread of liberal democracy in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, the Obama administration is about the bare-bones strategic pragmatism of counter-insurgency.

From a blanket denunciation of all groups perceived to be hostile to the United States, Washington has turned to finding any and every one who can possibly be co-opted. The story about Holbrooke's deputy and statements by Reidel are now visible manifestations of this turn. With the gaping US deficit still getting bigger by continuing wars, the Obama team has now outlined a path for war where goals are limited, aspirations contained and ideology shelved.

This turn in US rhetoric is cause for celebration for many strategists who could have predicted quite early during the tenure of the Bush Administration that nation building would prove too costly and ideology too unpalatable. The celebration of a return to pragmatism, however, should not be allowed to mask the caveats that extreme turns can produce.

One early casualty of the turn to pragmatic counter-insurgency over costly national building is its evisceration of the moral argument that asks Pakistan's intelligence apparatus to curb its relations with the Taliban as a necessary condition of co-operation on the war on terror.

Even as Holbrooke's and Hekmatyar's emissaries were meeting in Afghanistan, a top US official in the Obama administration issued a statement saying it wanted a "serious response" from the ISI regarding its connections with terrorist groups. The statement was echoed by Reidel in his interview to *Der Spiegel* where he reiterated that "these were serious issues" that were being raised with the Pakistanis and that the ISI has previously used terror groups to "gain leverage against India in Afghanistan".

While American officials may be reiterating this demand during every single interaction with Pakistan, the US turn from ideology to counter-insurgency has destroyed the rhetoric that would support it and obviates the logic of making the demand that Pakistani intelligence authorities break their ties with groups like the Taliban since it suggests quite openly that while the US has the right to pursue its strategic interests, other countries, namely Pakistan do not have that right.

In wanting to pursue this strategy and reaching out to leaders such as Hekmatyar, the US cannot demand that it alone has the monopoly on deciding who the good and bad Taliban are based on its strategic interests. If America has the right to decide which of these are good and bad, based on its concerns in the region, it follows that the Pakistani security apparatus can do the same.

There is little to praise about the pretence at nation-building engaged in by the Bush administration. Few would argue that little or no infrastructure or institutions have been built in Afghanistan. Yet this complete about-turn that seeks to abandon all basis of discerning between enemies and friends beyond those which can be bought versus those that cannot does not seem to augur a very bright future for either Afghanistan or Pakistan.

In the absence of ideology as the basis for selling the war to the American public, the Obama administration is likely to turn to cost-effectiveness as a marketing tool. The paltry aid commitments currently being promised to achieve the task of saving the flailing Pakistani state and revamping the Afghan army both lend credence to this argument.

In the words of Bruce Reidel, "It is ten times cheaper to train an Afghan soldier, equip him and take care of him than it is to send an American or German there." This may well be so, but cost-effectiveness and strategic gains do not always go hand in hand and the very basis required to sell the war domestically may end up eliminating the strategic

victories that US officials insist necessitated it in the first place.

Rafia Zakaria, *Daily Times* (Lahore), April 11, 2009

**PRESS BRIEFING BY
NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR GENERAL JAMES JONES
ON THE PRESIDENT'S MEETINGS WITH PRESIDENT KARZAI
OF AFGHANISTAN AND PRESIDENT ZARDARI OF PAKISTAN**

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

MR. GIBBS: Here for the p.m. edition of the White House briefing.

Q Make this a habit.

MR. GIBBS: Yes -- keep you guys busy.

The President has obviously concluded the meetings with President Karzai and President Zardari. And as promised, we'll give a -- get a readout from General Jones, the President's National Security Advisor.

GENERAL JONES: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I'm pleased to be here to talk a little bit about the meetings that were held this afternoon that you've already heard quite a bit about. I'd just like to add a couple of points to those that have been already been made.

The President started out his meeting with President Karzai by commenting with great sympathy on the tragedies that have happened out in western Afghanistan, and indicating that we regret the loss of life, particularly of innocent people, and that the investigations underway will be pursued aggressively with full intent to discover what, in fact, did happen, how it happened, and how we can make sure that things like that do not happen again. And it was clear that President Karzai was moved by that -- by the President's statement, and he thanked the President for starting off the meeting with that expression of condolence.

The President also continued to offer considerable support to Afghanistan, emphasizing the fact that the U.S. would be supporting in as many ways as possible, stressing the fact that the upcoming elections in Afghanistan should be as fair and open as possible, and certainly as much as possible, beyond any question that they're not honest elections.

He also commented on the new strategy that we're implementing in Afghanistan as a result of the strategic review; emphasizing that it's not just about military options, that despite the fact that we're going to contribute 21,000 U.S. troops to help stabilize the southern part of the country; but also emphasizing that the role of reconstruction, the role of

governance and rule of law are all things that have to be undertaken in concert with the security efforts, so that the security-economic development and governance and rule of law -- and especially good governance at the local, regional, and national levels -- has to be put in evidence. So the emphasis on civilian and military efforts is a cornerstone of the new strategy, as is the more accelerated development of the Afghan army and the Afghan police capabilities.

He also made reference to judicial reform and encouraged the President to do whatever he could to stamp out corruption wherever he found it, or the perception of corruption, and asked that we see concrete results in that regard.

He also commented to the President he was very encouraged, as we all are, by the new relationship with Pakistan. It's obvious that the two Presidents get along well and it's obvious that both governments have pledged to work together to cross a wide range of potential areas of cooperation to include security measures, but also economic measures and the like. We'll continue to work on things like cross-border trade, for example.

And finally, the President emphasized that Afghanistan should be encouraged to continue to develop civil liberties and human rights. And the Afghan President responded that one of the great pleasures of his administration was seeing the rise in education and the number of Afghan students participating in higher education. He quoted the figure of 4,000 students in 2002, and 75,000 Afghan students, men and women, participating at the university level, and emphasized the fact that in 2002 there were no female students at all in the university system. So he was extremely proud of that.

President Karzai responded that in addition to his appreciation for the President's gesture on the casualties, that he supports the new strategy fully and that -- asked for more focused assistance on not only military training but civilian training for young people.

And I might say that throughout the discussion the President had with both heads of state, that the idea of doing things for the young people came up time and time again -- with some emotion, I might add, on some of the participants -- that this is about the future of two new, young democracies and within those democracies we are talking really about the future of the next generation. And so this was said several times.

President Karzai also indicated that he wanted to do whatever he could to restore an Afghan economy. He wanted to develop its export business; wanted focused help on agriculture; and wanted to do things where people would notice the change in their lives. If they're surrounded by good governance, if they have secure living conditions, if they have the applied and focused help that they need in order to develop their economies, they will do better.

He recognized that they need to do more with regard to judicial reform and pledged to go after corruption wherever it existed. And he closed by saying that above all, whether he's reelected or not, he would like to make sure that he contributes to institutionalizing democratic ideals in Afghanistan.

With President Zardari, the President started out by declaring that he wanted to be of help to the people of Pakistan not just in a military way, but to help Pakistan with a new beginning; to again help the government institutionalize democracy and make progress, recognizing that these are difficult times, and the threat of extremists to Pakistan requires a concerted action. And on that score, he emphasized that this is a regional problem and this is why getting together with both Presidents and our government for these few days of very intensive conferences are going to be very important, because we're going to approach this as a regional problem.

As you know, the AFPAK strategy review emphasized the fact that we have several countries but we have one theater. And this is the way we're looking at it. It's important to occasionally remind ourselves that this is a common struggle, and we're approaching it that way.

So the central goal here is to make sure that all parties understand that this is a united front, not only among the Presidents, but among the Ministers of Defense, the Foreign Ministers, and the various echelons of government involved with economic reconstruction, judicial reform, and all of those things that go into stabilizing a situation.

The President pledged to do whatever we could, to do as quickly -- to do what we can as quickly as possible to help the Pakistani government, and said this type of aid would not just be restricted to military, but we would aid in any ways we can to help with health and education, institution-building, advisors, whatever we can do to help the government and the military resist this very serious threat. Miracles will not happen, so this won't happen quickly. But with a common focus, we can make strides hopefully in the near future.

President Zardari responded by affirming his commitment to work within this regional context to preserve democracy in Pakistan; to want to do more economically for the people -- he spoke of building schools and hospitals -- but underlying all of his remarks was a pledge to meet the threat and to be successful, and assured the President that they were properly focused on it; was thankful for the assistance that the President offered, and looked forward to working with us in a concerted in the weeks and months ahead.

I think it was a very warm meeting between the three Presidents. They have embraced common themes, an intent to work together, and I think was a very good start. And we will have more meetings the next couple of days at the ministers' levels to continue to develop these issues.

And I'll be happy to take any questions.

Q General Jones, if I'm reading between the lines, forgive me here, but it sounds like in the first meeting with President Karzai, there was more telling him that he should be more -- do more on human rights and corruption, whereas, with President Zardari, there wasn't that tone. Am I reading that correctly?

GENERAL JONES: Oh, I don't know. I think the -- the tone of both meetings was pretty much the same. We have a longer history with Afghanistan in terms of understanding and having the ability to do more things because of that relationship having taken a number of years now.

I think with Pakistan we are learning about the things that we can do. But I think the balance of tone was just about the same and I wouldn't say that he was more directed one way or the other.

Q General Jones, you said that President Zardari -- underlying all of his remarks with a pledge to meet the threat and to be successful. Is there anything specific we can point to as far as what the Pakistani army or the Pakistani government is going to do on meeting the threat of the Taliban insurgency in the eastern part of the country?

GENERAL JONES: Well, I'd characterize it by saying that it's clear that he and his fellow Presidents have come to an agreement that this is not a individual national belong that belongs to either Afghanistan or Pakistan; that this is in fact a regional problem. We have adopted that as our centerpiece of our strategy.

And so the dialogue between the three about not only doing things militarily to correct the situation, but politically between the two principal countries in the region, Afghanistan and Pakistan, to work on economic issues, and to do those things that show their respective

populations that there is an alternative, there is a better way and there is greater hope for their children in the future. And as I said, this was a common theme.

I think this was a pretty powerful expression, a recognition of what the right attitude and the right approach has to be. The details will be worked out over time, but I think all three were focused on the seriousness of the threat and I think, in Pakistan's case, he made a number of points to illustrate that he was focused on it and that they had every intention to do something about that in very real time. And I think there's some evidence that they've started doing that, which is encouraging.

Q As part of President Obama's message of condolence about the airstrike, did President Karzai ask that they be suspended pending the end of this investigation, or reduced in intensity? And also, did President Zardari bring up the idea that -- the Predator strikes in those areas?

GENERAL JONES: The answer is no to both questions. The President was genuine in his acceptance. I think he deeply appreciated the President's words. And the issue of -- operational issues did not come up with President Zardari.

Q In the past the Presidents of Afghanistan and Pakistan have come to Washington and said, okay, we're going to do this, we're going to fight together against extremism. What specific steps would you seek in the next few weeks, few months so that people who aren't privy to intelligence or defense information can judge that this time it's actually going to be different?

GENERAL JONES: Well, as you know, in developing our strategic review concerning Afghanistan and Pakistan, we did this in concert with both countries. Both countries had teams here; they participated with us in the development of a strategy. We also extended a wider hand to our NATO allies, as well, and brought in, probably in an unparalleled way, just an awful lot of countries to make sure that we had the benefit of their thinking collectively, so that we could develop a document that other people could buy into.

And so this was accomplished. And one of the characteristics, I think the telling characteristics of the document and the agreement was that it does focus on things beyond simply military capacity. It focuses a lot on reconstruction.

In Afghanistan, of course, this is going to be a particularly important part of the strategy. It focuses a lot on rule of law and good

governance. And as we continue to develop our relationship with Pakistan, which as you know is somewhat embryonic in some terms because we've had no mil-to-mil relations -- military-to-military relations - - with Pakistan for almost a decade, and so we're trying to build these relationships up in very real time to face a very real threat.

So the fact that people recognize that this is a regional problem -- that's relatively new I think, within the last six months -- the fact that we have a written strategy to address this regional problem which requires regional solutions, the fact that we're going beyond military solutions and stimulating economic development -- trade, bringing in other countries -- we have a regional representative, Richard Holbrooke; we have a new ambassador in Kabul; we have a new deputy to the U.N.'s special representative in Kabul -- we have a lot of things in place now that allow us to take a regional approach and a regional focus to implementing the strategy.

Q General, the President mentioned al Qaeda repeatedly, but he never said the Taliban in his remarks, and I was wondering if that was purposeful. Also is General Kayani mobilizing and deploying the 11th Corps? And if not, why should we take his efforts seriously?

GENERAL JONES: I'm sorry, why should you take General Kayani's effort seriously?

Q No, the Pakistani President, I mean his word that he's serious about this. Is the 11th Corps crucial to that and what commitment have you got on that?

GENERAL JONES: I think those issues will be discussed in follow-on meetings, so I don't have an answer for you on that as of today because we didn't get down to that level of specificity.

The President -- of course, his focus -- we are focused on al Qaeda, but we're also focused on extremism of any form, especially those extremists that want to strike outside of their borders and destabilize democratically elected governments. And that's what we're there to defeat. And I think this meeting was an affirmation that we will be successful.

Thank you very much. Thank you.

MR. GIBBS: Thanks, guys.

May 6, 2009
www.whitehouse.gov

MAKING AFPAK WORK

The double-speak will need to end for Americans to convince all those in the know on their real objectives for sustainable peace and security in the region. There are gaps that need to be filled right away for AfPak to deliver. Serious re-work is required on Barack Obama's AfPak strategy. For starters, it does not have a clearly defined end-state; next, it is not inclusive enough to forge a consensual stability paradigm in the geopolitical context for the region.

First, the end-state. Obama's strategy does not state what shape does the US wants to leave Afghanistan in. Ideally, though, a democratic, progressive country with stable institutions, and a sustainable economy minus the narco-production and trafficking; a place where the US could return every now and then to respond to its interests in the region.

These may well be valid interests for the US, but are they achievable? At least the strategy does not seem to indicate any of this; it remains more of a wish and a prayer without its implementing elements. Now, what does it not factor in? While it targets Al Qaeda, it does not mention the Taliban. What does the US hope to achieve with the Taliban?

They come in two varieties. The original Afghan Taliban, who were dethroned after 9/11, are Pashtuns and have been engaged in a bloody war with the foreign forces in Afghanistan. The Pashtuns comprise 56 percent of the Afghan population, and are estranged with the ruling dispensation because of disproportionately low political representation and the presence of foreign troops. Killing the 15 million or so Afghan Pashtuns may not be feasible; also it might take an entire generation of war to achieve so — a difficult proposition for the US war machine, which is more used to achieving quick, clearly-stated objectives; else they descend into Vietnam mode.

If the US is pinning hopes on the Pakistani military to do them the favour, they may be in for a surprise — the first category of the Taliban inspired the formation of the second, the Pakistani Taliban. These are more ferocious, and dangerously committed to their cause, i.e. capturing space and power in Pakistan to carve out an Islamic emirate of their own. The Pakistani military is engaged in a full-scale conflict now to prevent this nuclear nation from falling to the Pakistani version of the Taliban.

There is sufficient redemption though. First, the Pakistani Taliban are a small minority; the larger Pakistani populace does not relate to their

brand of Islam or governance. Also, they do not carry the popular support of their Pashtun kin. But this fight will still be a long haul what with the coalescing of the two strands of the Taliban, suitably splattered with Al Qaeda elements of Arab, Tajik and Uzbek origins.

The Pakistani military is more than likely to dominate this struggle now that it has set its heart to it, but will need to stay the course for a long, long time. A lack of support from the people, the politicians, or the world community will only encourage it to throw in the towel and let things be. The consequence of the military by-standing the issue can only be horrendous, and most politely stated, non-salutary to American geopolitical objectives.

That is the worst case scenario, hopefully avoided through rectifying processes to cleanse Pakistan's tribal regions, but what to do with the Afghan Taliban, assuming of course that Al Qaeda, being the centre of gravity of the American effort, does finally stand dismantled, defeated and destroyed?

The absence of the anvil in a typical hammer-and-anvil manoeuvre is nowhere to be seen. Else, if and when the Pakistani military was to continue the sweep from north to south, it shall entail pushing the Afghan Taliban back to their original residence, backtracking through Tora Bora and the adjoining areas of Afghanistan. It would serve us well to remember that southern Afghanistan, from Helmand east to Kandahar and all along the eastern border till Kunar, is predominantly Pashtun and is hence the Taliban belt of influence. It may end up a welcome homecoming.

In another twist, the new US commander in Afghanistan, General McChrystal, is a green beret special operations commander, who is more likely to get to business on the other end, pushing the Afghan Taliban, from the south in particular, into the tribal regions of Pakistan, earning temporary relief and justifying the addition of 21,000 troops to the US ORBAT in Afghanistan. What that will do to the Pakistani military designs can only be speculated. Even the worst killing fields of 'The (great) Charge of the Lightning Brigade' in the mid-west may stand to shame before the butchery that might take place in this counter-flow of militants.

This reinforces the question: what is the US trying to achieve in Afghanistan? And if these plans don't complement Pakistan's designs, God save Pakistan from the ensuing complexity. If it ever came to that — which is more than likely given the absolute absence of a joint military

strategy between Pakistan and the US, and an absence of shared objectives in the real sense, not the superficial identification of shared concerns — what safety route do the Americans have to avoid the nightmare of a nuclear-armed Taliban state?

One reason why General McKiernan, the previous US commander in Afghanistan, needed to be replaced was that he was losing the urge for the fight, having been stationed in Afghanistan for over two years and having possibly judged the futility in the American cause, as indeed in the strategy. He is known to have opined that one could only lose from where the Americans were placed; remember General Petraeus voicing the same, that the war is neither won nor lost? McKiernan firmly believed in engaging with the Afghan Taliban and finding a way to make place for the Pashtuns in the government. McChrystal will defy that natural logic and rational thought for some time, and then become victim to the reality of what he will be forced to face: Afghanistan cannot be a stable state without the Pashtun getting his share of power. Hamid Karzai, or his band of Pashtun cohorts, are but only a band-aid on the festering wound of non-representation and exclusion.

As part of the complementary policy process, there is also an overly keen interest in replacing poppy as a cash crop in the predominantly Pashtun belt of Afghanistan with another crop. Cotton has been tried in Helmand with very limited success. Here, the capitalist notion of profit efficiency will hinder any effort. There is no other crop hardy enough to withstand the extreme climes of the area, as indeed nothing that pays as well within a procurement, refinement and distribution system that has been established and streamlined over decades. The bigger issue is: is such an established economy replaceable en bloc?

Superimpose that with another means of economic sustenance: more to the point in the current morass when operations are on in Swat to counter Talibanisation, the Nawai Pass from the neighbouring Kunar province of Afghanistan into Bajaur is as active as in any economic boom. The transit-trade agreement might just see the light of the day by the end of the year, but routes are agog with merchandise of the most precious variety making its way into Bajaur and onwards to Swat, Dir and Chitral. Non-custom paid vehicles, Talibs on their 4x4s with weapons of all varieties ply their trade without check. Why have the Americans or the Afghans not closed entry and smuggling into Pakistan?

The double-speak will need to end for Americans to convince all those in the know on their real objectives for sustainable peace and

security in the region. There are gaps that need to be filled right away for AfPak to deliver. A point that Karzai made repeatedly in Washington on his recent visit needs recounting: money will not make the Americans buy love. But are they really looking for love?

Shahzad Chaudhry, *Daily Times*, (Lahore) May 18, 2009

ZARDARI REJECTS OBAMA'S AF-PAK STRATEGY

President Asif Ali Zardari has rejected the Obama administration's strategy of linking the policy on Pakistan and Afghanistan in an effort to end a Taliban insurgency and bring stability to the region. US President Barack Obama earlier this year appointed senior diplomat Richard Holbrooke as his special representative to Pakistan and Afghanistan in a move intended to address these two states as a single arena of conflict.

'Afghanistan and Pakistan are distinctly different countries and cannot be lumped together for any reason,' Mr. Zardari said in an interview with the Financial Times on the anniversary of his first year in office. Mr. Zardari's comments reflect Pakistan's unwillingness to be aligned in a joint policy framework with neighbouring Afghanistan, an approach referred to as 'AfPak'. The president and his senior officials draw a distinction between a Pakistan with functioning institutions, diversified economy and a powerful national army, and Afghanistan, a state shattered by decades of conflict and ethnic divisions.

Ending the Taliban insurgency raging on both sides of the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan is only likely to be achieved by concerted military action by Nato forces fighting in Helmand and Kandahar and Pakistan's army in Waziristan and other tribal areas along the border. Military experts say Taliban leaders travel across the Durand Line, the colonial era border, to avoid military pursuit.

Mr. Holbrooke's two-country mandate was also recognition of Pakistan's historic role in supporting the Taliban regime ousted from Kabul in 2001, and Islamabad's former doctrine of 'strategic depth' into Afghanistan in case of a conflict with arch-rival India. Mr. Zardari said Mr. Holbrooke had brought a 'unique focus on relations with Pakistan' and acknowledged the emphasis President Obama had put on Pakistan's economic and energy needs.

The appeal by the husband of slain former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto for individual, rather than joint, focus comes ahead of a high profile meeting with President Obama and Gordon Brown, the UK's

prime minister, in New York later this month and a visit next month to Islamabad by Hillary Clinton, the US secretary of state.

At these meetings, Mr. Zardari is expected to appeal for more financial assistance to Pakistan, which he says is essential to ending the menace of terrorism. 'Pakistan does not have the luxury of time. Given the severity of the internal security challenge the country is facing, it is critical that the economy is provided a strong stimulus as quickly as possible so that the maximum number of jobs are created in the shortest time,' he said. 'If international aid flows are delayed beyond the next few months, the country will be forced to cut development spending as well as the provision of critical social services. You can then imagine how big a setback that could be for the global war on terror.' Many analysts say Pakistan and Afghanistan have a shared history and were badly affected by geopolitical shifts in the 20th Century.

Dawn (Islamabad), September 10, 2009

<http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/13+zardari+rejects+obama+afpak+strategy-za-02>

US ENGAGEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

American forces, aided in small measure by troops from other countries, have been fighting Al Qaeda and the Taliban since a few weeks after the attacks on New York and Washington D.C. on Sept 11, 2001.

Some reports have it that this operation costs the United States more than \$60bn a year plus the lives of those of its men and women who get killed in combat. Its objective is to eradicate Al Qaeda and the Taliban.

In compliance with America's demand Pakistan has been aiding its mission in Afghanistan for the past eight years. It has been trying to chase away or wipe out the Al Qaeda and Taliban agents who may be living or hiding in its tribal areas and other places on its territory.

The head of the police force in the NWFP told an interviewer on a private TV channel that Al Qaeda — consisting of volunteers from several nations — is in no position to set up independently its residential quarters and operational bases. It must rely on the Taliban's assistance for these purposes. Moreover, it is the Taliban who guide Al Qaeda's choice of operations and their targets. It follows that the American and Pakistani campaign is in fact directed primarily against the Taliban, even though Al Qaeda has been made out to be its main concern.

The anti-Taliban campaign in Pakistan has seen some measure of success, but it is not going well in Afghanistan. There they have enhanced their presence, influence and combat capabilities. They control a large part of that country's territory. It is apparent that the American strategy in Afghanistan is not working. Its cost in blood and finances has caused the majority of the American people to be tired out. They want their government to get out of Afghanistan, which is beginning to look like a bottomless pit, and leave it to its own devices.

It is easy to get into messy situations but it is exceedingly difficult to get out of them. Several issues arise. There are, for instance, those, including many Pakistani politicians and opinion makers, who caution against a repeat of American withdrawal from the scene after the Afghans, with US assistance, had expelled the Soviet army from their country.

The American withdrawal at that time left Afghanistan to its own devices, which resulted in chaos after the Soviets left, while Taliban rule followed soon after. This argument does not address the fact that the Taliban have become stronger, instead of falling apart, after eight years of American military operations against them.

No wonder then that few, if any, know what the US should do about Afghanistan. Dr Maliha Lodhi, an eminent diplomat and scholar, recently advised the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations that America should neither entirely withdraw from Afghanistan nor get too deeply involved with its affairs, as it had done with those of Vietnam. This is neither here nor there.

Steven Coll, president of the New America Foundation, believes the United States should leave the rural areas in Afghanistan to the Taliban but keep them out of the major population centres. This is the strategy America adopted in the last stages of its engagement in Vietnam, and we know that it did not work. President Barack Obama says he is in the process of devising a new strategy that his administration will follow in Afghanistan, but that seems to have run into problems.

As a student of world politics and as an American taxpayer, I would advise President Obama to terminate the American military operation in Afghanistan, bring the 'boys' back home, and leave that country to fare as it might. It may well be that as a result of this move the Taliban will install themselves as its rulers. This would not necessarily be a calamitous development.

The Taliban are an ideologically severe and exclusivist lot. So were the communists. The US did not recognise the Soviet Union for nearly 15 years but then it did business with Stalin's regime and its successors. It remained aloof from communist China until the early 1970s, but it has been doing business — at times brisk business — with the country since then. The Communist Party of China continues to be the ruling party, even though its zeal for communism may have mellowed to a degree. American officials are getting along with its leaders and managers reasonably well.

After an initial period of aggressive violence most revolutionaries mellow. They make compromises when they see that the ground realities are much too stubborn to change and conform to their doctrinal assumptions. As the Taliban begin to rule Afghanistan, they will find that they have to work within a given context of domestic and international realities, much of which they cannot change. They will see that they must change their own ways to some degree if they are to make things work. Thus they too will mellow.

I think the likelihood is that the United States will, in time, find ways of doing business with the Taliban, to the extent necessary. That extent need not be large. If America 'loses' Afghanistan, the loss will not be worth lamenting. It should be kept in mind also that the Taliban regime in Afghanistan (if it does come into being) will have to find a modus vivendi with the non-Pakhtun in the country. These people have no use for the Taliban's mission and ways. Next, this regime will be surrounded by neighbours who also reject its objectives and operational style. It cannot exist and function in isolation from the rest of the world. It will have to interact with its neighbours and other nations, which it cannot do exclusively on its own terms. It will have to bend to them to some degree.

In my view President Obama can safely leave it to Afghanistan's domestic political forces and the regional powers to contain the Taliban within acceptable bounds.

Anwar Syed, *Dawn* (Islamabad), October 11, 2009
<http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/editorial/us-engagement-in-afghanistan-109>

STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS IN AFGHANISTAN

Currently the US government is reviewing its policy to achieve success in Afghanistan. For simplicity this area has been designated as AfPak region. In fact for any success other regional players such as Iran, India, China and Russia must also be included in the process.

General McChrystal is asking for more troops in Afghanistan. He believes the situation in Afghanistan is heading for failure if more American troops are not sent to Afghanistan. American public believes in instant success and then get back home. The use of more troops may work on a short term basis but will certainly fail in the long run.

In my opinion the use of force alone is fundamentally flawed policy. Iraq and Afghanistan are two completely different countries. The strategy that worked in Iraq may be wide off the mark in AfPak region. The success for me means peaceful and stable Afghanistan where all ethnic groups such as Pashtun, Hazara, Tajiks and Uzbeks can live in relative peace. For that America needs to stay in the region for at least next fifteen years. America simply cannot afford unending war without any signs of success. I recommend broad policy with gradual reduction of American forces and slow increase of civilian experts in various fields.

Based on my first hand knowledge of AfPak region, I believe the Afghan people in general and Pashtuns in particular will never accept a solution forced on them. The following elements must be included for long term success in Afghanistan.

Respect for Religion

This is perhaps the most important element for any strategy to succeed. The Taliban have framed their struggle in terms of religious war against foreign occupation. The common Pashtun or other ethnic groups can be easily persuaded if any Afghan police insults the religious leaders, destroy the Mosques or show disrespect for religious rituals. In the past, Afghan police has entered Mosques with their shoes on and turned the whole area population against the Afghan government. America has to clearly redefine its role as a catalyst of peace and progress in the region. There are many people available in Pakistan to help change this perception.

Respect for Elders and Women

People in North America or Europe simply cannot understand the deep rooted traditions of Afghan people. These people are willing to lay down their lives if their elders are insulted or their women are violated in any respect.

Pashtuns will follow the perpetrator of such crimes for years to take revenge for insult to their elders or women. A large presence of foreign nationals and military will certainly cause more incidents like the past. Taliban have staged a comeback in many places because elder people and Imams have been arrested and insulted in many small village communities.

Rebuilding of Governing System in Tribal Area

There was tribal system of local governance in the border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan before invasion by Soviet Union. Pakistan retained the system of political agents in seven tribal agencies. In the aftermath of war and subsequent fighting among various factions, the tribal system has been destroyed.

America and Europe have been trying to bring democracy to the people of the region. People of this region are not used to modern democratic system. The tribal system may have been destroyed but its roots still remain alive due to centuries of evolution. The tribes such as Afridi, Mehsud, Mohmand, Mahsud, Orakzai, Yusufzai and many others still adhere to their old traditions.

The American policy should let these people evolve their own system and help them in protecting their own people. These people are fully capable of fighting Al-Qaida and other foreign elements that have infiltrated the region in the name of religion. However the key is to give them internal freedom to run their own affairs.

I understand that this cannot be done in short span of time. This will require the knowledge of local conditions and persistent efforts. In the long run this will be the most cost effective policy. American troops and related expenses will not be required to bring peace and stability. This will also control the insurgency into Afghanistan as these tribes live on both sides of Durand line.

Separation of Taliban from Al-Qaida

Taliban are the local people and belong to the ethnic group of Pashtuns. Total population of Pashtun people in AfPak region is 42 million. Pakistan has 28 million Pashtun people while Afghanistan has remaining 14 million. Most of the Pashtun live in the border area between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Taliban or Afghan people had no involvement in any anti American or European terrorist actions. Al-Qaida has been identified by US government as the main hub of such activities. So any policy for success has to consider the separation of Al-Qaida from Taliban. In fact many Pashtuns do not like Al-Qaida people living in Afghanistan.

The success in AfPak region will depend on a policy of dialogue and reconciliation with Taliban who represent Pashtun nationalism. Main reason for Taliban insurgency is the gradual radicalization of Pashtun population who joined Taliban movement.

Creation of Positive Image in Pakistan

According to International Republican Institute (IRI) public opinion survey, majority (80%) of Pakistani people do not support co-operation with United States against its war on terror.

For American public it must be a big surprise as they see the aid provided to Pakistan for many years. However it is difficult to create a positive image when drone attacks within Pakistan occur on a regular basis. The so called collateral damage killing innocent civilians is a major cause of this negative image.

We need to go back to Eisenhower era to look for positive feeling among Pakistani people in favour of United States. I believe this image can be reversed if America helps in overcoming the shortages of essential items. For example the shortage of electricity can be easily addressed through joint venture enterprises. Similarly transfer of technology in solar power and wind energy can create a positive image.

Another very important resource that has been completely neglected is Pakistani American community in the USA. There are close to half million immigrants of Pakistani origin living all across the United States. These people believe in the ideals of American democracy and fairness.

These people are connected to Pakistan on a daily basis. There are about ten Pakistani TV channels available in the USA. A simple look at

these communication media shows a great discontentment with American policies.

So far the American policy makers have depended on officials of Pakistani Embassy. Pakistani Americans carry a very negative image of Pakistani officials in Embassy. This is based on their first hand experience in simple dealings with these officials.

American policy makers can reach out to Pakistani Americans and let them create a positive image of America. There are many Pakistani American organizations spread all across USA. There are learned people among them who can come on Pakistani media and counter false impression.

Pakistan People a key to Success

People of Pakistan have suffered a great deal over many years of ongoing regional conflict. There is a deep mistrust of American policies due to past experience when America pulled out while Pakistan still had millions of Afghan refugees. Pakistanis have not seen any benefit of siding with America. They believe and rightly so, this war on terrorism was thrust on them.

Pakistani army has successfully contained the Taliban insurgency in Malakand and Swat region of Pakistan. This could not be done without the majority of people backing this operation. Pakistani army knows the local culture, traditions and religious values of the region. They never committed the mistakes made by the American/NATO forces in Afghanistan.

Pakistan has a large number of people who have life time experience of dealing with the tribal areas. These people can be directly employed to administer tribal areas without direct intervention from American army. Americans should monitor the progress like British in the early 20th century.

If any American effort has to succeed, it will require help from Pakistani people. This perception can be reversed if American policy makers reach out to solve the common problem facing Pakistanis on a daily basis.

Pakistanis believe that while Pakistan has suffered a great deal in this war on terror but India has been the main beneficiary. This perception need to be corrected. At the end of the day, it is Pakistani people themselves who have to solve their own problems.

Conclusion

I believe the US should develop a long term strategy instead of short term military escalation. It will take years of consistent efforts instead of troop surge recommended by many officials. Therefore reduction in American troops will reduce overall cost that can spread out over longer time frame. There is no instant solution.

The peace can be achieved by gradual reduction of military forces with steady increase of civilian aid. In addition the United Nation should be included in the overall peace keeping mission. Military should be used only to provide security. I look forward to a peaceful Afghanistan where common people can live a decent life after so many years continuous suffering.

Nasim Hassan, October 12, 2009
www.ipcs.org

AFGHANISTAN: DEFINING THE POSSIBILITIES

Presiders: John F. Kerry, Senator (D-MA)
David E. Sanger, Chief Washington Correspondent,

DAVID SANGER: Good afternoon. I'm David Sanger of The New York Times. And welcome to this Council on Foreign Relations event on Afghanistan. Thank you all very much for being here.

Before we begin; a few quick notes. This session for the Council is on the record, something reporters are always happy to say. We ask you to turn your cell phones off so it doesn't interfere with the sound system or, at a minimum, pass them to your neighbor so somebody else is embarrassed when they go off. And after Senator Kerry delivers his remarks, I'll get the discussion rolling with just a few questions and then open it up to all of you.

Our speaker today requires no introduction at all, so I'll be very brief. John Kerry is the senior senator from Massachusetts and, of course, was the Democratic Party's nominee for president in 2004. He is chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which he first encountered quite famously in 1971 when he testified against continued American participation in Vietnam and asked that question that still resounds in debates over war strategy, "How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?"

Last month he wrote in *The Wall Street Journal* that in Afghanistan today, time is running out and troops are dying without a sustainable strategy for victory. In the case of Afghanistan, of course, there have been many Vietnam analogies thrown around, and Senator Kerry has been among those cautioning that at moments we overuse those analogies and sometimes apply them wrongly.

We'll be asking him about that after his comments today, and also about his recent trip to Afghanistan, where he was asked by the Obama administration to stay a few days and help push President Karzai to accept a runoff election. When President Karzai did so -- reluctantly, to say the least -- Senator Kerry was standing next to him.

Senator Kerry, the floor is yours, and we look forward to hearing your comments. Thank you. (Applause.)

SENATOR JOHN F. KERRY (D-MA): Thank you, David, very much for your kind introduction, and more importantly for your terrific reporting over the years.

I think you would all agree, David's most recent book, "The Inheritance," makes the point that while President Obama took office with great promise, his predecessor left him with some very thorny problems and few good options. And nowhere is that inheritance more fraught than in Afghanistan.

On day one, this administration assumed responsibility for a war heading from strategic drift to a dangerous decline. Now it falls to all of us to get this right. I recently traveled, as David mentioned, to Afghanistan and Pakistan, the culmination of several months of asking tough questions and re-examining the assumptions that will drive decisions of enormous consequence.

I believe President Obama has been right to deliberate and take the time necessary in order to find the best policy. And Americans are right to be asking whether the objectives are achievable, and are they worth the sacrifice -- questions, incidentally, that were tragically underscored by the deaths of 14 American troops and civilians in two helicopter crashes today.

Many of us also know too well the price of sending troops into war, where the strategy hasn't been fully thought through. The responsibility to never put troops in that position lies not just with the president, though it is his principal decision, or with the generals. It also lies with all of us as Americans.

What began as a fact-finding trip did, as David mentioned, end with several days of talks with President Karzai to resolve a dispute over the Afghan elections. You may have read that it takes three cups of tea to make a deal in Afghanistan. Well, let me tell you, it took a lot more than that for us, but we got there.

I came home, though, also with a fresh reminder of the extraordinary challenges that we face, but also -- I want to emphasize this -- but also with a belief that there is a way forward. David Sanger mentioned that in 1971 I asked the Foreign Relations Committee, "How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?" Thirty-eight years later, chairing the committee, I keep that question very much in mind.

This journey, however, begins in a different place. In September 2001, mass murder was plotted against the United States from Afghan soil, and we needed to remove the threat. With certainty, we all know why we invaded Afghanistan. It was not a mistake to go in.

We now have to choose a smart way forward so that no one is ever compelled to ask whether we've made a mistake in staying. The easiest way to make a mistake, frankly, is to tolerate a debate that sells our country short.

In recent weeks, politics has reduced an extraordinarily complex country, an extraordinarily complex region and a difficult mission to a simple, headline-ready yes or no on troop numbers. That debate is completely at odds with reality. What we need above all and what we deserve above all, what the troops deserve above all, and what we haven't had, is a comprehensive strategy, military and civilian combined.

After eight years of neglecting Afghanistan as vice president, Dick Cheney has now come out of retirement to criticize President Obama for taking time to examine assumptions before sending troops into war; this from the man who, in 2002, told America, quote, "The Taliban regime is out of business permanently." I think this is one time I wish Dick Cheney had been right. But tragically, he wasn't, and he isn't today. And that's why we have to make the tough choices about Afghanistan now.

Make no mistake. Because of the gross mishandling of this war by past civilian leadership, there are no great options for its handling today. One American officer captured well our lack of a strategy when he said, "We haven't been fighting in Afghanistan for eight years. We've been fighting in Afghanistan for one year, eight times in a row." That is our inheritance.

President Obama began his strategic re-evaluation only in March of this year, folks, after he did what he promised to do and sent an additional 21,000 troops to Afghanistan. Most of them have now just arrived in country. Now he's wrestling with what comes next, with the knowledge that all options involve real costs and significant risks.

I believe that if we redefine our strategy and objectives in order to focus on what is achievable, as well as critical, and empower the Afghans to take control of their own future, we will give all of us the best chance to succeed.

Yes, legitimate questions remain about just what it takes to achieve our goals in Afghanistan. Yes, Afghanistan is but one of a pressing number of national threats, challenges and priorities. The \$243 billion price tag to date is staggering. And, yes, many of our stakes there are indirect. But make no mistake, the costs of failure are very real.

In 2001, al Qaeda maneuvered with impunity in Afghanistan. Today we've killed or captured many top leaders, and a few remain there. As a result -- very few, actually, remain in Afghanistan. And as Jim Jones said recently publicly, at any time in one year there may have been a maximum of perhaps some 50 operatives, but at the lower level.

So as a result of this reality that most of them are in the northwest part of Pakistan or elsewhere in the world, many Americans are legitimately asking, why commit our soldiers and tens of billions of dollars to prevent al Qaeda from returning to Afghanistan when they could organize the next attack from Somalia, Yemen, Frankfurt, or even from an Internet chat room? People want to know, why stay in Afghanistan? And especially people want to know why increase in troops.

Well, first, we start from the premise that al Qaeda remains at the center of our mission. They still want to attack us. They are still trying to attack us. And we have interrupted plots globally over the last few years. But it's an awful lot harder to plan attacks when you're boxed in, harassed and living in fear.

We are, as we ought to be, committed to hunt al Qaeda wherever they go. Bin Laden and his deputies in northwest Pakistan haven't gone far. And to keep them on the run, I believe -- and I think others share this belief -- that you have to keep the Taliban, with longstanding ties to al Qaeda, from once again providing terrorists with an unfettered Afghan safe haven just to cross a border that most people view as a mere abstraction.

We also need to remember that our Afghan mission takes place in the context of a global counterinsurgency.

If we, the United States and our allies, are perceived as incapable of doing the job, I think it would help recruit extremists and raise doubt, not just in the region, but globally, about our resolve and our effectiveness.

And I can only imagine -- as chairman of the Foreign Relations committee, but as a senator, from the many conversations I have with leaders around the world, when you sit there and they look at you, and you say we got to do this or we got to do that, and they'll ask you, well, what are you committed to doing? And why should we believe that you are if you move, every moment, to a new place?

Second, what happens in Afghanistan -- and this is critical, what happens in Afghanistan has an impact on Pakistan. Pakistan is not only the headquarters of al Qaeda today, but it could easily become the epicenter of extremism in the world. We have enormous strategic interest in the outcome of the struggle in Pakistan.

It is a fragile democracy that is fighting a determined insurgency. It has a full nuclear arsenal and a longstanding, sometimes violent rivalry with its neighbor, India. While stabilizing Afghanistan is not going to solve all of our problems in Afghanistan, I understand that -- in Pakistan, I mean -- instability in Afghanistan only increases the risk of conflagration where the world can least afford it, next door in Pakistan.

Given the balance of our strategic interests, it should give serious pause to military and civilian strategists alike that the current balance of our expenditure -- between Afghanistan, where there is virtually no al Qaeda, and Pakistan, where there is -- tallies 30 to 1. That's why, regardless of what happens in Afghanistan, and especially if we want to reduce the needs for additional boots on the ground over the long-haul, it is vitally important that we support, that we intensify even, our support and improve our cooperation with Pakistan.

But these are the stakes: Preventing Afghanistan from becoming a sanctuary for al Qaeda, and destabilizing Pakistan and the region. And the challenge is to establish realistic goals about how to do that. That starts, I think, with a clear definition of success. I define success as the ability to empower and transfer responsibly to Afghans as rapidly as possible, and achieve a sufficient level of stability to ensure that we can leave behind an Afghanistan that is not controlled by al Qaeda or the Taliban.

Absent any truly good choices, we have to ask ourselves the question, what is doable, what is possible, and not set some impossible, far out of reach, or hole-digging strategy. Achieving our goals, my friends, does not require us to build a flawless democracy. It doesn't require us to defeat the Taliban in every corner of the country, or create a modern economy. What we're talking about is "good enough" governance, basic sustainable development and Afghan security forces capable enough that we can draw down our forces.

The truth is, we do need to maintain a sustained, long-term commitment to the Afghan people, and that is something that we do in many countries around the world as a matter of furthering America's national security interests. Doing so gives them assurance -- the assurance that they need to be able to reject the Taliban, whom most, incidentally, already despise.

But the nature of our commitment has to evolve away from a U.S. military dominated effort, toward support for Afghan institutions and Afghan answers. And it only makes sense to continue moving forward if our commitment is reciprocated by Afghans themselves in the form of improved governance and increased Afghan capacity, civilian and military, something that President Karzai, and his cabinet and I discussed at great length, and for which I believe there is now an ability to move to a new relationship.

That's why the cornerstone of our strategy has to be to empower and transfer responsibility to the Afghans. That's the whole ball game. Which means that we need to ask ourselves at every turn: Will what we do -- will this help the Afghan people take responsibility for their country? And where the answer is no, we probably shouldn't be doing it.

So how do we get there? Our strategy, I think, has to be informed by two basic truths on either sides of the pole: First of all, we can't draw down large numbers of troops today, as many would like, in order to shift to a narrow counterterrorism mission. Secondly, we simply don't have enough troops or resources to launch a broad, nation-wide counterinsurgency campaign -- but, importantly, nor do we need to.

We all see the appeal of a limited counterterrorism mission, and no doubt it is part of the end game, but I don't think we're there yet. A narrow mission that cedes half the country to the Taliban could lead to civil war -- there's no doubt in my mind, and put Pakistan at risk.

Moreover, the hardest part of counterterrorism operations isn't killing the terrorists, it's finding them. Developing intelligence assets and

capabilities needs to be an even stronger priority for us, because it lets us transition to a more limited presence that still safeguards our interests. And I believe there are ways to set up various platforms and capacities to achieve that far more effectively than we are today. But for now, we need the boots on the ground to get that kind of information and protect our interests.

On the other hand, we cannot and we should not undertake a manpower-intensive counterinsurgency operation on a national scale in Afghanistan. Most experts say it would take 400,000 to 600,000 effective international and Afghan troops for a fully resourced point effort. Now, I acknowledge that is not what General McChrystal is saying he wants to do specifically, but it is encompassed in the larger vision of many people's thoughts about what has to be done in Afghanistan.

Fortunately, achieving our defined mission does not require that kind of commitment, folks. We don't have to control every hamlet and village, particularly when non-Pashtun sections of the country are already hostile to the Taliban. Our allies, together with the populations of these non-Pashtun areas -- which incidentally make up about 60 percent of the country, the Tajik, Uzbek, Turkmen, Hazara, all of whom have learned what the Taliban are like, these folks can help to reduce America's principal effort to the Southern and Eastern theaters, and limit it to major population centers.

Now, we've already begun implementing something of a counterinsurgency strategy, but I believe that right now it needs to be as narrowly focused as possible. We need to be extraordinarily wary of overextension, and I am particularly concerned about the potential for us ultimately to be viewed -- no matter how good our intentions and no matter what efforts we make, as foreign occupiers.

Riding around in an armored personnel carrier just the other day, as I did when I was there, and seeing the faces through the window, of Afghans watching these monster vehicles go by, you get a sense of the disconnect that Afghans must experience. It was an image that I recognized very well from 40 years ago -- a look, a stare, if you will that I came to know and understand.

Look, we're not the Soviets. We're not there to colonize, to conquer, to remake Afghanistan in our image or to impose ideology on its people. But it is just too easy for our well-intentioned presence to be misread, and for civilian casualties to stoke resentment and resistance.

The administration is right to be deeply concerned by the reality that, as our footprint has increased, so have the number of insurgents. I am convinced, from my conversations with General Stanley McChrystal - - and I'm grateful to him for the time he gave me there, and even on the telephone since, he understands the necessity of conducting a smart counterinsurgency in a limited geographic area -- but I believe his current plan reaches too far too fast.

We do not yet have the critical guarantees of governance and of development capacity -- the other two legs of counterinsurgency. And I have serious concerns about the ability to produce effective Afghan forces to partner with, at the rate that we need to, so that we can ensure that when our troops make heroic sacrifices, the benefits to the Afghans are actually clear and sustainable.

With that in mind, decisions about additional troops should be informed by an assessment that takes into account the following three conditions:

First, are there enough reliable Afghan forces to partner with American troops; at what rate; and eventually take over responsibility for security? The quickest way out of Afghanistan for our troops is to speed up the training and mentoring of the Afghan national army and police so they can defend their own country. The current goal is to increase the number of trained Afghan national army troops from 92,000 to 134,000 by December of 2011. And General McChrystal is reportedly trying to complete that within the next year.

Despite the 92,000 number, I will tell you that most of the assessments I got told me that we're really considerably lower -- that today, at 50,000, maybe even less range of those who can actually work in the way that we desire.

And I think key to our ability to develop them in the way that they need to develop for their own confidence and their own sense of possibility is giving them as much on-the-job training as soon as possible.

Partnering with Afghans is also a crucial way to relieve the palpable strain of having foreign troops on foreign soil -- Afghan, in this case, obviously.

The second question to ask is are there local leaders that we can partner with? The importance of that cannot be overstated. We have to be able to identify and cooperate with tribal, district, and provincial leaders who command the authority to help deliver services and restore Afghans' faith in their government.

Third is the civilian side, which must be ready to follow swiftly with the development aid that brings tangible benefits to the local population. When they support our troops and take the risks of, in a sense, coming over to our side, they must see their lives improve.

General McChrystal himself has made clear that there is no purely military solution, and the number of troops, this discussion we've had, misses the point entirely.

His now-famous assessment that we're all referring to also said, and I quote it, "There's an urgent need for a significant change to our strategy and the way we think and operate.

Ladies and gentlemen, I think General McChrystal's words hit the nail on the head. And the key now, the bottom line, is for us to make sure that the civilian leadership guarantees that.

The bottom line is that deploying additional troops won't result in sustainable gains if the Afghan security, civilian, and governance capacity isn't there. And right now, as our generals will tell you, in many places, too many places, it isn't.

Several generals were very frank that they were confident about the security side, but they also said their work will fail without an effective civilian strategy.

Progress on this front is expected to be coming in the months ahead, with a significant influx of U.S. civilians and efforts to work with the Afghan government in order to implement reforms.

And that's why the right debate isn't simply about how and why and when to deploy troops. It's not how many troops that matters most; it's what they do.

The debate ought to be about how best to create the conditions that foster progress in Afghanistan. And you can't have a serious discussion about the numbers until you have answered the critical questions that I've laid out.

Under the right circumstances, if we can be confident that military efforts can be sustained and built on, then I would support the president, should he decide to send some additional troops to regain the initiative.

Let me be clear: Absent an urgent, strategic imperative, we need a valid assessment by the president and other appropriate civilian authorities, not just the military, that those three conditions I stated will be met before we consider sending more soldiers and Marines to clear new areas.

There's a distinction between that and, obviously, deploying.

It is important to remember that even if President Obama gives the green light for more troops, as of now the military can only deploy one brigade, roughly, every three months.

According to our senior military leadership, by the end of 2010 we will have a good idea whether our strategy is working or not. So it is important to remember we will have ample opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy as we go forward.

Progress on governance will be key, and we will have an opportunity to measure that.

When I arrived in Afghanistan, there was a real worry that the electoral deadlock would drift into an extended period of chaos that benefited the Taliban.

Over several days of talks with President Karzai, I got to know him a lot better. We spoke about our families, about history, about the history of Afghanistan, about his own journey from Pakistan and back into the country, about his tribe and his background and his father's assassination.

We discussed his aspirations for the country and his concerns about the U.S.-Afghan relationship. He voiced his worry that Afghan Pashtuns were being treated unfairly. And yes, we even vented over the frustrations of presidential elections...

These actual successes tell us that we need to seek out good Afghan leadership and invest in it, embrace a standardized national approach for international donors to work together, and invest in Afghan-led programs like the National Solidarity Program.

Our international allies also have a more crucial role to play and we need to continue to press them to do that. The decision by NATO defense ministers to affirm an increase in military and civilian contributions is commendable and important and long overdue. NATO ministers must now back up these words with a solid commitment including new troops, trainers, and development support. Better integrating individual NATO countries' efforts into a national and unified command structure would also help enormously. The UN must also do more to better coordinate civilian efforts.

So here's the bottom line. The United States cannot do it alone and there is something wrong with the fact that today we're borrowing money from China to provide security for Afghanistan so that China can go there and mine their copper. We want all nations to trade and invest in

Afghanistan but we also want all nations to help with stabilizing the country.

What happens inside Afghanistan is important to our strategic interests, my friends. But our goals and our mission do not end at Afghanistan's borders. No front is more important in our fight against international terrorism than nuclear-armed Pakistan, and the chaos next door in Afghanistan would have enormous repercussions there.

We have a real stake in supporting allies in Pakistan and improving our relationship with the people. That's why we're committed to providing the Pakistani people with \$1.5 billion a year for each of the next five years to build schools, hospitals, and roads. We need to make it clear that we respect their sovereignty as we give Pakistan vital breathing space in order to deal with its difficult domestic problems.

These are serious challenges for Pakistan's civilian, military, and intelligence leaders. Historically, Pakistani intelligence services have used the Taliban as a hedge, and there is a real concern that that continues. If we falter in Afghanistan, factions within Pakistan may well determine that it's in their interest to strengthen their dealings with extremists. The good news is that right now many Pakistanis recognize that they face an existential challenge from within their borders.

The Pakistani military has demonstrated firm resolve with its current offensive against the Pakistani Taliban in Waziristan and they deserve great credit for that. We need to be doing as much as we can do, and that involves Afghanistan as well as Pakistan, in order to assist the Pakistani military as they go after domestic extremists. And nothing will do more to help tighten the vise on the remnants of al Qaeda than to do that in a coordinated way. America and the international community must reassure Pakistanis that tackling this challenge will lead to a lasting relationship with real economic and security benefits.

We should be reaching out regionally and globally to Moscow, Beijing, Delhi, and Central Asia, and also to Tehran. We should explore ways to cooperate with each of them because each of them has direct interests in Afghanistan. None of this will be easy, but there is a path forward if we focus on what is achievable. We can't build a modern nation from scratch but we can create policies that shift responsibility and resources to Afghans to build their own country at their own pace.

And you know, in your own trip -- and you were just speaking about the fact that you need to get rid of certain ministers and stuff -- how do you walk that balance? And what kind of -- if you could be a

little bit more specific about the benchmarks that you have in mind on the civilian and military side that, if (you ?) are not met, you can't see adding those -

KERRY: Well, let me go to that last question last. Let me do the first two. I'll start with the drones.

On the drones, I've had a number of discussions -- I mean, can't help but not have them, because they bring it up. But in truth, there is a distinction -- I hate to say this, but there really is a distinction between what you sometimes hear publicly and what you also hear privately. And the drone program has -- I asked last year for a briefing on it, because I was hearing enough about it; I really wanted to understand the targeting and the targeting process and so forth.

I am convinced that it is highly circumscribed now, very carefully controlled within a hierarchy of decision-making, significantly limited in its collateral damage, and profoundly successful in the impact it has had in putting al Qaeda on the run. It is why we can now say that perhaps 14 of the top 20 al Qaeda leaders have been eliminated. And it is why al Qaeda is, to some degree, on the run and defensive. And I think it's important for people to know that they are.

That doesn't mean they're not dangerous and that they're not plotting. As I said earlier, we know we interrupted a plot right on the eve of September 11th of this year, and it's why Yemen and Somalia and other parts of the world are still going to require our vigilance and our diligence.

But this, as I said, can become the epicenter: the Hakkani network, Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Islamic Jihad -- the various groups that are there, and the hedges that still take place because of the India and Pakistan relationship that has not yet transformed to modernity. There are realities that we have to continue to deal with.

So I think we just have to be judicious and careful, and we are trying to be.

Here's what would help it the most, is if the -- if we help even more effectively. Look at the resource disparity I talked about: \$243 billion have gone to Afghanistan; and many people have talked about the multiples of importance to Pakistan, and we're haggling over \$1.5 billion of civilian assistance. It just doesn't make sense, folks.

And if we were to put much more effort into their ability to transition to make Waziristan a success, Swat Valley a success and, ultimately, to actually incorporate the western part of their country more

formally into the nation than it has been at any time in the nation's existence, then we have a better chance of limiting al Qaeda and protecting our interests.

So I see a path there, and I think it's a very important path for us to pursue in this strategy.

John Kerry's Interview by David F Sanger, *Council of Foreign Relations*,
October 26, 2009
<http://www.cfr.org/publication/20532/afghanistan.html>

OBAMA'S AFPAK DILEMMA

When President Barack Obama took office he commissioned an inter-agency review of US policy towards Afghanistan and Pakistan. The recommendations emerging from this review were issued in a white paper.

The paper reflected opinions held by disparate groups in the highly saturated think-tank world of Washington, yet it lacked consistency and proposed contradictory policies, thus leading to more confusion rather than bringing clarity to the policy debate. After the publication of the white paper, US policy in the region is in disarray.

Despite several high-visibility visits by US special envoy Richard Holbrooke to the region and his discussions with the leadership both in Afghanistan and Pakistan, no major improvement has occurred in the US war against the Taliban in Afghanistan. On the contrary, the Taliban have become more aggressive and are in far better shape now than in March when the white paper was issued. Pakistan, on the other hand, has begun aggressive counter-terrorism operations.

The deterioration in Afghanistan has also been noted by the US commander in Afghanistan Gen Stanley McChrystal, who in August gave his views to the Washington Post, which in many ways critiqued his government's policies. According to his analysis an additional 40,000 troops are needed in Afghanistan immediately to stop the Taliban resurgence. His report is now under consideration by Mr Obama.

The issue of Afghanistan has been confounded due to the existence of contradictory policy prescriptions. Thus to clear the mess the first step that President Obama must take is to simplify the argument and ask himself what the core goal of the US is in Afghanistan. Is it nation-building or is it to win the war against Al Qaeda to prevent a threat to the US mainland?

Both options call for a different approach and their mixing in the short term adds to the confusion and makes building a successful strategy impossible. Thus President Obama must find answers to some basic questions before a clear path can emerge in the policy quagmire of Afghanistan.

Mr Obama's problems began with the publication of the white paper because it advocated contradictory prescriptions as objectives. For instance, its first recommendation was to disrupt terrorist networks in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This meant undertaking counter-terrorism operations against the Taliban. However in the context of Afghanistan, where the state and the army are weak, the US has so far relied on indigenous strongmen or warlords.

Such a policy, instead of being part of the solution, is in fact the problem. The warlords' power flows from the narcotics trade and their interests can thus never be aligned with those of the state. If the warlords are assisting the state then the link of these men with the state will be that of a lord with his vassals. Such a situation at the community level weakens the state by corrupting its processes and informing villagers that their problems can be solved if they kept the warlord rather than the official satisfied.

For instance, Ahmed Wali Karzai, Afghan President Hamid Karzai's brother, is the warlord in Kandahar. He is the strongman in southern Afghanistan on whom the US relies heavily for controlling the region and ensuring the transit of fuel and supplies to its troops. Similarly, in the Tajik and Uzbek areas the US and Afghan governments rely on Marshal Mohammad Qasim Fahim, Karim Khalili and Abdul Rashid Dostum, who are said to be involved in the narcotics trade.

If the US has to rely on such shady characters for its counter-terrorism effort, how could it ever hope to achieve the second objective of the white paper, which is 'promoting a more capable, acceptable and effective government in Afghanistan....' It can't be done! Simply stated, no country can be made cohesive and strong if it is built on the mercies of criminals and corrupt warlords.

It is thus no wonder that the goal of creating a strong Afghan state seems impossible. It becomes even clearer to comprehend when one notes that the Afghan National Army is recruited mostly from amongst the followers of the warlords. A similar situation prevails with the recruitment of the Afghan police.

Yet one of the core requirements of a successful counter-insurgency strategy calls for establishing the credibility and legitimacy of government operations. If the government's security forces are the vassals of drug barons how can they compete successfully against the Taliban, who base their appeal on the rectitude of their leaders?

It appears that winning the battle for hearts and minds in Afghanistan is out of the question. If nation-building in Afghanistan is not possible then the only option left for the US would be to undertake a counter-terrorism strategy till other options become available. Such a decision will entail the deployment of US forces at strategic points like Kandahar in the south, Herat in the west, Kunduz in the north and Jalalabad and Kunar in the east.

Under this option, the countryside will be policed by the military on land and by the drones in the air. Unfortunately, the main power players on the ground with whom the US will be forced to cooperate will be the warlords.

Afghanistan, because of the lack of indigenous means of wealth creation, has historically remained a loosely administered state dependent upon renter incomes derived from abroad and where the central government's influence was dependent upon the distribution of money amongst regional strongmen. Thus the Bonn Accord advocating the creation of a strong central authority ruling the provinces from Kabul was against this basic premise of Afghan history.

Therefore Gen McChrystal's proposal of using more troops to stabilise Afghanistan is flawed and the escalation of war that will clearly follow such a prescription will increase US losses and escalate the ongoing insurgency. Secondly, the pressure of additional US troops may push the Afghan war into Balochistan and further inside Pakistan.

At a minimum, the Pakistani military will be forced to launch more operations in Fata and the NWFP as well as new operations in Balochistan. Thus the McChrystal recommendation threatens the security of Pakistan.

Mr Obama must also be looking at the Afghan war from the perspective of his re-election in 2012. If he gets bogged down in an escalating Afghan conflict with rising casualties, he will surely lose. No politician can favour such an unpalatable outcome. Clearly, the pointers are for a reduced US role in Afghanistan in the future and concomitantly a larger policing role for Pakistan.

If Pakistan is able to properly handle its current military operations and economic issues, it is likely to come out stronger from the current crises. However, before that happens it will need to effectively neuter the various militant organisations that are challenging the state as it begins to reassert itself.

Khalid Aziz, *Dawn* (Islamabad), November 4, 2009
<http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/world/04-Obama-AfPak-dilemma-qs-05>

AFPAK POLICY A MISTAKE

French, Afghan troops push into hostile valley French, Afghan troops push into hostile valley PAKISTAN is not Afghanistan. By coupling the two countries together and calling it 'AfPak,' the United States' intention was to make policymaking simpler. It may have had the opposite effect. The idea was that by lumping Afghanistan and Pakistan into one analytical framework, Washington and its allies would be able to focus on one geographic entity and would be able to use the same strategy to counter the threat posed to the West by the rise of Islamic extremism.

Looking at the threat from the prism of 9/11, Washington and other western capitals worried about the launch of another attack perhaps even more lethal than that of Sept 11, 2001. But there are a number of flaws in the unfolding strategy aimed at the AfPak region. The first, of course, is the enormous difference between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Afghanistan was not colonised. This meant that it did not develop what the West knows as the 'state.' It did not develop a strong central authority that could manage disparate regions within the country and the people that reside in them. There was relative peace when Kabul, ruled mostly by monarchs but most recently by presidents, left local chieftains and warlords alone.

The latter allowed a small portion of the resources collected from the people over whom they ruled to go to Kabul to provide the central authority some funds to pay for its basic needs — the running of the king's or the president's palaces, funding of a small federal bureaucracy, and the upkeep of a small army. Until the Cold War contestants developed some interest in the country, the few urban centres; Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Jalalabad and Mazar-i-Sharif — were poorly connected. The Afghans were not a mobile people. They mostly stayed in their villages and insularity became their defining characteristic. All this

changed when the US built all-weather modern highways in the south and the Soviet Union followed with roads in the north. The state made little investment in human development and not much in anything else. Afghanistan, consequently, was one of the most backward societies when the Soviet Union sent its troops in 1979 in an attempt to create a vassal state.

Moscow's aging leadership — once again — got the wrong message from history. The Soviet leaders believed that what had worked in other Muslim states in Central Asia could also work in Afghanistan. But Moscow did not succeed and a loosely knit alliance of warlords, aided by the US and Saudi Arabia, with Pakistan providing essentially logistical support, was able to expel them from the country. Afghanistan would have reverted to its traditional but stable state had the Taliban administration in Kabul not granted sanctuary to Al Qaida. That led to a chain of events that included the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States and the American counter-attack. In the post-Soviet era the country would have been carved into a number of fiefdoms each controlled by the Mujahideen warlords who had collaborated with the West to push the Soviets out. That is not the way the country went. Led by the US, the West attempted to force a system of government and economic management that is totally foreign to Afghanistan.

Thirty years of instability and a stagnating economy have left the country enormously polarised. A small class of enormously rich people, drawing income and wealth from corruption and the production of poppies and the associated drug trade, are attempting to establish their control with the help of private armies — the lashkars — that are loyal only to them. They don't have an interest in creating an Afghan state that would work for bringing economic development or improving the welfare of the common man. Women in particular remain suppressed. The few that have benefited from some openings in the system that accompanied the overthrow of the Taliban regime once again fear for their lives and their social status.

But Pakistan is different. When it emerged as an independent state in 1947 it already had a functioning state with functioning institutions put in place during the long British rule. Although there is not much resemblance between the Pakistan of today and the one at the time of independence, it has the makings of a modern state. Two things set it apart from Afghanistan: it has a large, well-organised and disciplined military with 650,000 men and women in uniform and a large and

growing middle class. The latter is particularly important for Pakistan's economic and political future. Numbering about 50 to 60 million and with per capita income two-and-a-half times the national average of \$1,000, it has a great deal at stake in the direction the country takes. This class has already shown its political muscle in support of the judiciary. An impressive campaign that lasted for two years forced former president Pervez Musharraf out of office and also persuaded Asif Ali Zardari to reinstate the judges fired by his predecessor from the provincial high courts and the Supreme Court. The middle class also has a strong presence in the armed forces.

It appears that the campaign the army has launched in the hills of South Waziristan has the full backing of the powerful middle class. It has now recognised that the war being fought in that inhospitable territory is their war; it is not a proxy war being waged on behalf of the US. This suggests that the West needs to work with this class of people and help it gain a firmer footing in Pakistan's fertile economic but troubled political soil.

Treating Pakistan in the context of an AfPak strategy would be a colossal mistake. The West under the leadership of President Barack Obama needs two different strategies, one for Pakistan and the other for Afghanistan.

Shahid Javed Burki, *Dawn* (Islamabad), November 17, 2009.
<http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/11-afpak-policy-a-mistake-il-01>

THE 'NEW' STRATEGY

The Washington Post of November 30, 09 let the cat out of the bag. In an article by Karen de Young the Post revealed the details of a letter delivered to President Zardari from President Obama by the US National Security Adviser, General Jones. The article also gave details of what General Jones personally told his Pakistani hosts to reinforce and spell out the implications of President Obama's message. Pakistan has not officially released any information on this matter so far nor has it confirmed if a reply has been sent. The Washington Post article comes ahead of President Obama's speech scheduled for Tuesday at West Point.

According to the Washington Post the US has offered Pakistan an expanded strategic partnership with a blunt warning to stop using insurgent groups for policy goals. The clear message being that

Washington believes that Pakistan is using such groups and that this is against the interests of the US. The message includes assurances of increased military and economic aid and states that there will be no US withdrawal from Afghanistan—a major Pakistani concern. President Obama, in his letter, is said to have mentioned –Al Qaeda, Afghan Taliban, the ‘Haqqani Group’, Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Tehrik Taliban Pakistan and stated that ambiguity by Pakistan in dealing with these can no longer be ignored by the US. Again the clear implication is that the US believes that there is ambiguity in Pakistan’s current policy. General Jones is reported to have interpreted the Obama message by spelling out that ‘certain things have to happen in Pakistan to ensure Afghanistan’s security’ and that ‘if Pakistan cannot deliver then the US may be impelled to use any means at its disposal to rout insurgents based along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan’. This really means that the US is determined to have its way one way or the other. This has its own implications. The British Prime Minister has also said that Pakistan must convince everyone that it is doing everything it can.

So far it is not clear if there is any mention of the interconnection between the unresolved issues in the region, the growing imbalance in conventional power between India and Pakistan, the perception in Pakistan of India’s inordinately large footprint in Afghanistan (something understood and mentioned by General McChrystal) and India’s policy of destabilizing Pakistan with the connivance of the Afghan government. Pakistanis cannot help noticing that the latest US demands were preceded by the Indian Prime Minister expressing his doubts on the security of Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal and the Indian Army Chief’s view that a limited war (between India and Pakistan) was possible under a ‘nuclear overhang’! Even if not specifically mentioned these are concerns that the US is aware of—perhaps what is not fully understood is the centrality of the need to resolve regional disputes before the environment can change.

In the context of President Obama’s letter it is important to know the details of the ‘new’ US strategy in Afghanistan and the time frame in which changes can start taking place in Afghanistan. The speculation is that US is likely to increase US troop strength by 35000 and expects NATO to pitch in with another 10000. How these troops are to be used is not quite clear yet. The earliest that these could be effective is mid 2010 given weather and other constraints. The Pakistan military is just completing operations in South Waziristan, Malakand, Swat, Mohmand, Orakzai and Khyber agencies. Pakistan is facing reprisal bomb attacks in

urban areas and has lately identified Indian support of destabilization support operations. Putting all this together in what time frame is Pakistan expected to do what the US is asking it to do if it agrees to do so? Will it be within the capacity of Pakistan's civilian law enforcing agencies to cope with the internal security situation that will be the consequence of actions against all the factions identified by the US? Reportedly the US is stepping up the pace of developing capacity in the Afghan National Army and Police. Will this expansion be inclusive because so far these forces lack any capacity and are dominated by northern factions like the Tajiks. If the pace is increased under the present circumstances then Pashtun representation is unlikely—therefore, besides other serious repercussions within Afghanistan, Pakistan will be faced by hostile Afghan Forces eventually. However, this process of Afghan capacity development is likely to take between 5-10 years going by the present post election environment in Afghanistan.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that the Obama letter can be the beginning of a dialogue between the US and Pakistan to move the relationship towards true strategic status. There can be agreement and a meeting of minds to stress the convergence between the US and Pakistan on the objectives of US-Pakistan cooperation in the war on terror in Afghanistan but each will have its own strategy. The real challenge is coordinating the strategies within a realistic mutually agreed time frame. The ambiguity being seen by the US in Pakistan's policies is not ambiguity at all—it is a pragmatic appraisal of Pakistan's environment and the possibilities with present capacity. If there is a perception of ambiguity then Pakistan should be helped to remove this and not pressured into hasty actions.

Both the Washington Post and the New York Times have commented on the fragility of Pakistan's political environment, the slow move towards confrontation and a divide between institutions—all this may not be true but political stability is critically important for decision making that can set correct strategic directions. Equally important is an improvement in the India-Pakistan relationship.

The Afghan situation also needs review because an intra Afghan dialogue between factions is important and the north-south ethnic divide within Afghanistan is becoming a driving force for violence—this is being exploited by Al Qaeda. Pakistan remains central to any positive traction in the Afghan conundrum and Pakistan's stability is the most important

factor in the evolving scenario--this is a reality that cannot be wished away.

November 30, 2009
www.spearheadresearch.org

TEXT OF OBAMA'S AFPAK SPEECH

United States Military Academy at West Point

Good evening. To the United States Corps of Cadets, to the men and women of our armed services, and to my fellow Americans: I want to speak to you tonight about our effort in Afghanistan – the nature of our commitment there, the scope of our interests, and the strategy that my Administration will pursue to bring this war to a successful conclusion. It is an honor for me to do so here – at West Point – where so many men and women have prepared to stand up for our security, and to represent what is finest about our country.

To address these issues, it is important to recall why America and our allies were compelled to fight a war in Afghanistan in the first place. We did not ask for this fight. On September 11, 2001, nineteen men hijacked four airplanes and used them to murder nearly 3,000 people. They struck at our military and economic nerve centers. They took the lives of innocent men, women, and children without regard to their faith or race or station. Were it not for the heroic actions of the passengers on board one of those flights, they could have also struck at one of the great symbols of our democracy in Washington, and killed many more.

As we know, these men belonged to al Qaeda – a group of extremists who have distorted and defiled Islam, one of the world's great religions, to justify the slaughter of innocents. Al Qaeda's base of operations was in Afghanistan, where they were harbored by the Taliban – a ruthless, repressive and radical movement that seized control of that country after it was ravaged by years of Soviet occupation and civil war, and after the attention of America and our friends had turned elsewhere. Just days after 9/11, Congress authorized the use of force against al Qaeda and those who harbored them – an authorization that continues to this day. The vote in the Senate was 98 to 0. The vote in the House was 420 to 1. For the first time in its history, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization invoked Article 5 – the commitment that says an attack on one member nation is an attack on all. And the United Nations Security Council endorsed the use of all necessary steps to respond to the 9/11

attacks. America, our allies and the world were acting as one to destroy al Qaeda's terrorist network, and to protect our common security.

Under the banner of this domestic unity and international legitimacy – and only after the Taliban refused to turn over Osama bin Laden – we sent our troops into Afghanistan. Within a matter of months, al Qaeda was scattered and many of its operatives were killed. The Taliban was driven from power and pushed back on its heels. A place that had known decades of fear now had reason to hope. At a conference convened by the UN, a provisional government was established under President Hamid Karzai. And an International Security Assistance Force was established to help bring a lasting peace to a war-torn country.

Then, in early 2003, the decision was made to wage a second war in Iraq. The wrenching debate over the Iraq War is well-known and need not be repeated here. It is enough to say that for the next six years, the Iraq War drew the dominant share of our troops, our resources, our diplomacy, and our national attention – and that the decision to go into Iraq caused substantial rifts between America and much of the world.

Today, after extraordinary costs, we are bringing the Iraq war to a responsible end. We will remove our combat brigades from Iraq by the end of next summer, and all of our troops by the end of 2011. That we are doing so is a testament to the character of our men and women in uniform. Thanks to their courage, grit and perseverance, we have given Iraqis a chance to shape their future, and we are successfully leaving Iraq to its people.

But while we have achieved hard-earned milestones in Iraq, the situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated. After escaping across the border into Pakistan in 2001 and 2002, al Qaeda's leadership established a safe-haven there. Although a legitimate government was elected by the Afghan people, it has been hampered by corruption, the drug trade, an under-developed economy, and insufficient Security Forces. Over the last several years, the Taliban has maintained common cause with al Qaeda, as they both seek an overthrow of the Afghan government. Gradually, the Taliban has begun to take control over swaths of Afghanistan, while engaging in increasingly brazen and devastating acts of terrorism against the Pakistani people.

Throughout this period, our troop levels in Afghanistan remained a fraction of what they were in Iraq. When I took office, we had just over 32,000 Americans serving in Afghanistan, compared to 160,000 in Iraq at the peak of the war. Commanders in Afghanistan repeatedly asked for

support to deal with the reemergence of the Taliban, but these reinforcements did not arrive. That's why, shortly after taking office, I approved a long-standing request for more troops. After consultations with our allies, I then announced a strategy recognizing the fundamental connection between our war effort in Afghanistan, and the extremist safe-havens in Pakistan. I set a goal that was narrowly defined as disrupting, dismantling, and defeating al Qaeda and its extremist allies, and pledged to better coordinate our military and civilian effort.

Since then, we have made progress on some important objectives. High-ranking al Qaeda and Taliban leaders have been killed, and we have stepped up the pressure on al Qaeda world-wide. In Pakistan, that nation's Army has gone on its largest offensive in years. In Afghanistan, we and our allies prevented the Taliban from stopping a presidential election, and – although it was marred by fraud – that election produced a government that is consistent with Afghanistan's laws and Constitution. Yet huge challenges remain. Afghanistan is not lost, but for several years it has moved backwards. There is no imminent threat of the government being overthrown, but the Taliban has gained momentum. Al Qaeda has not reemerged in Afghanistan in the same numbers as before 9/11, but they retain their safe-havens along the border. And our forces lack the full support they need to effectively train and partner with Afghan Security Forces and better secure the population. Our new Commander in Afghanistan – General McChrystal – has reported that the security situation is more serious than he anticipated. In short: the status quo is not sustainable.

As cadets, you volunteered for service during this time of danger. Some of you have fought in Afghanistan. Many will deploy there. As your Commander-in-Chief, I owe you a mission that is clearly defined, and worthy of your service. That is why, after the Afghan voting was completed, I insisted on a thorough review of our strategy. Let me be clear: there has never been an option before me that called for troop deployments before 2010, so there has been no delay or denial of resources necessary for the conduct of the war. Instead, the review has allowed me ask the hard questions, and to explore all of the different options along with my national security team, our military and civilian leadership in Afghanistan, and with our key partners. Given the stakes involved, I owed the American people – and our troops – no less.

This review is now complete. And as Commander-in-Chief, I have determined that it is in our vital national interest to send an additional

30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan. After 18 months, our troops will begin to come home. These are the resources that we need to seize the initiative, while building the Afghan capacity that can allow for a responsible transition of our forces out of Afghanistan.

I do not make this decision lightly. I opposed the war in Iraq precisely because I believe that we must exercise restraint in the use of military force, and always consider the long-term consequences of our actions. We have been at war for eight years, at enormous cost in lives and resources. Years of debate over Iraq and terrorism have left our unity on national security issues in tatters, and created a highly polarized and partisan backdrop for this effort. And having just experienced the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, the American people are understandably focused on rebuilding our economy and putting people to work here at home.

Most of all, I know that this decision asks even more of you – a military that, along with your families, has already borne the heaviest of all burdens. As President, I have signed a letter of condolence to the family of each American who gives their life in these wars. I have read the letters from the parents and spouses of those who deployed. I have visited our courageous wounded warriors at Walter Reed. I have travelled to Dover to meet the flag-draped caskets of 18 Americans returning home to their final resting place. I see firsthand the terrible wages of war. If I did not think that the security of the United States and the safety of the American people were at stake in Afghanistan, I would gladly order every single one of our troops home tomorrow.

So no – I do not make this decision lightly. I make this decision because I am convinced that our security is at stake in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This is the epicenter of the violent extremism practiced by al Qaeda. It is from here that we were attacked on 9/11, and it is from here that new attacks are being plotted as I speak. This is no idle danger; no hypothetical threat. In the last few months alone, we have apprehended extremists within our borders who [that] were sent here from the border region of Afghanistan and Pakistan to commit new acts of terror. This danger will only grow if the region slides backwards and al Qaeda can operate with impunity. We must keep the pressure on al Qaeda, and to do that, we must increase the stability and capacity of our partners in the region.

Of course, this burden is not ours alone to bear. This is not just America's war. Since 9/11, al Qaeda's safe-havens have been the source of

attacks against London and Amman and Bali. The people and governments of both Afghanistan and Pakistan are endangered. And the stakes are even higher within a nuclear-armed Pakistan, because we know that al Qaeda and other extremists seek nuclear weapons, and we have every reason to believe that they would use them.

These facts compel us to act along with our friends and allies. Our overarching goal remains the same: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to prevent its capacity to threaten America and our allies in the future.

To meet that goal, we will pursue the following objectives within Afghanistan. We must deny al Qaeda a safe-haven. We must reverse the Taliban's momentum and deny it the ability to overthrow the government. And we must strengthen the capacity of Afghanistan's Security Forces and government, so that they can take lead responsibility for Afghanistan's future.

We will meet these objectives in three ways. First, we will pursue a military strategy that will break the Taliban's momentum and increase Afghanistan's capacity over the next 18 months.

The 30,000 additional troops that I am announcing tonight will deploy in the first part of 2010 – the fastest pace possible – so that they can target the insurgency and secure key population centers. They will increase our ability to train competent Afghan Security Forces, and to partner with them so that more Afghans can get into the fight. And they will help create the conditions for the United States to transfer responsibility to the Afghans.

Because this is an international effort, I have asked that our commitment be joined by contributions from our allies. Some have already provided additional troops, and we are confident that there will be further contributions in the days and weeks ahead. Our friends have fought and bled and died alongside us in Afghanistan. Now, we must come together to end this war successfully. For what's at stake is not simply a test of NATO's credibility – what's at stake is the security of our Allies, and the common security of the world.

Taken together, these additional American and international troops will allow us to accelerate handing over responsibility to Afghan forces, and allow us to begin the transfer of our forces out of Afghanistan in July of 2011. Just as we have done in Iraq, we will execute this transition responsibly, taking into account conditions on the ground. We will continue to advise [advice] and assist Afghanistan's Security Forces to

ensure that they can succeed over the long haul. But it will be clear to the Afghan government – and, more importantly, to the Afghan people – that they will ultimately be responsible for their own country.

Second, we will work with our partners, the UN, and the Afghan people to pursue a more effective civilian strategy, so that the government can take advantage of improved security.

This effort must be based on performance. The days of providing a blank check are over. President Karzai's inauguration speech sent the right message about moving in a new direction. And going forward, we will be clear about what we expect from those who receive our assistance. We will support Afghan Ministries, Governors, and local leaders that combat corruption and deliver for the people. We expect those who are ineffective or corrupt to be held accountable. And we will also focus our assistance in areas – such as agriculture – that can make an immediate impact in the lives of the Afghan people.

The people of Afghanistan have endured violence for decades. They have been confronted with occupation – by the Soviet Union, and then by foreign al Qaeda fighters who used Afghan land for their own purposes. So tonight, I want the Afghan people to understand – America seeks an end to this era of war and suffering. We have no interest in occupying your country. We will support efforts by the Afghan government to open the door to those Taliban who abandon violence and respect the human rights of their fellow citizens. And we will seek a partnership with Afghanistan grounded in mutual respect – to isolate those who destroy; to strengthen those who build; to hasten the day when our troops will leave; and to forge a lasting friendship in which America is your partner, and never your patron.

Third, we will act with the full recognition that our success in Afghanistan is inextricably linked to our partnership with Pakistan.

We are in Afghanistan to prevent a cancer from once again spreading through that country. But this same cancer has also taken root in the border region of Pakistan. That is why we need a strategy that works on both sides of the border.

In the past, there have been those in Pakistan who have argued that the struggle against extremism is not their fight, and that Pakistan is better off doing little or seeking accommodation with those who use violence. But in recent years, as innocents have been killed from Karachi to Islamabad, it has become clear that it is the Pakistani people who are the most endangered by extremism. Public opinion has turned. The

Pakistani Army has waged an offensive in Swat and South Waziristan. And there is no doubt that the United States and Pakistan share a common enemy.

In the past, we too often defined our relationship with Pakistan narrowly. Those days are over. Moving forward, we are committed to a partnership with Pakistan that is built on a foundation of mutual interests, mutual respect, and mutual trust. We will strengthen Pakistan's capacity to target those groups that threaten our countries, and have made it clear that we cannot tolerate a safe-haven for terrorists whose location is known, and whose intentions are clear. America is also providing substantial resources to support Pakistan's democracy and development. We are the largest international supporter for those Pakistanis displaced by the fighting. And going forward, the Pakistani people must know: America will remain a strong supporter of Pakistan's security and prosperity long after the guns have fallen silent, so that the great potential of its people can be unleashed.

These are the three core elements of our strategy: a military effort to create the conditions for a transition; a civilian surge that reinforces positive action; and an effective partnership with Pakistan.

I recognize that there are a range of concerns about our approach. So let me briefly address a few of the prominent arguments that I have heard, and which I take very seriously.

First, there are those who suggest that Afghanistan is another Vietnam. They argue that it cannot be stabilized, and we are better off cutting our losses and rapidly withdrawing. Yet this argument depends upon a false reading of history. Unlike Vietnam, we are joined by a broad coalition of 43 nations that recognizes the legitimacy of our action. Unlike Vietnam, we are not facing a broad-based popular insurgency. And most importantly, unlike Vietnam, the American people were viciously attacked from Afghanistan, and remain a target for those same extremists who are plotting along its border. To abandon this area now – and to rely only on efforts against al Qaeda from a distance – would significantly hamper our ability to keep the pressure on al Qaeda, and create an unacceptable risk of additional attacks on our homeland and our allies.

Second, there are those who acknowledge that we cannot leave Afghanistan in its current state, but suggest that we go forward with the troops that we have. But this would simply maintain a status quo in which we muddle through, and permit a slow deterioration of conditions

there. It would ultimately prove more costly and prolong our stay in Afghanistan, because we would never be able to generate the conditions needed to train Afghan Security Forces and give them the space to take over.

Finally, there are those who oppose identifying a timeframe for our transition to Afghan responsibility. Indeed, some call for a more dramatic and open-ended escalation of our war effort – one that would commit us to a nation building project of up to a decade. I reject this course because it sets goals that are beyond what we can achieve at a reasonable cost, and what we need to achieve to secure our interests. Furthermore, the absence of a timeframe for transition would deny us any sense of urgency in working with the Afghan government. It must be clear that Afghans will have to take responsibility for their security, and that America has no interest in fighting an endless war in Afghanistan.

As President, I refuse to set goals that go beyond our responsibility, our means, our or interests. And I must weigh all of the challenges that our nation faces. I do not have the luxury of committing to just one. Indeed, I am mindful of the words of President Eisenhower, who – in discussing our national security – said, “Each proposal must be weighed in the light of a broader consideration: the need to maintain balance in and among national programs.”

Over the past several years, we have lost that balance, and failed to appreciate the connection between our national security and our economy. In the wake of an economic crisis, too many of our friends and neighbors are out of work and struggle to pay the bills, and too many Americans are worried about the future facing our children. Meanwhile, competition within the global economy has grown more fierce. So we simply cannot afford to ignore the price of these wars.

All told, by the time I took office the cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan approached a trillion dollars. Going forward, I am committed to addressing these costs openly and honestly. Our new approach in Afghanistan is likely to cost us roughly 30 billion dollars for the military this year, and I will work closely with Congress to address these costs as we work to bring down our deficit.

But as we end the war in Iraq and transition to Afghan responsibility, we must rebuild our strength here at home. Our prosperity provides a foundation for our power. It pays for our military. It underwrites our diplomacy. It taps the potential of our people, and allows investment in new industry. And it will allow us to compete in

this century as successfully as we did in the last. That is why our troop commitment in Afghanistan cannot be open-ended – because the nation that I am most interested in building is our own.

Let me be clear: none of this will be easy. The struggle against violent extremism will not be finished quickly, and it extends well beyond Afghanistan and Pakistan. It will be an enduring test of our free society, and our leadership in the world. And unlike the great power conflicts and clear lines of division that defined the 20th century, our effort will involve disorderly regions and diffuse enemies.

So as a result, America will have to show our strength in the way that we end wars and prevent conflict. We will have to be nimble and precise in our use of military power. Where al Qaeda and its allies attempt to establish a foothold – whether in Somalia or Yemen or elsewhere – they must be confronted by growing pressure and strong partnerships.

And we cannot count on military might alone. We have to invest in our homeland security, because we cannot capture or kill every violent extremist abroad. We have to improve and better coordinate our intelligence, so that we stay one step ahead of shadowy networks.

We will have to take away the tools of mass destruction. That is why I have made it a central pillar of my foreign policy to secure loose nuclear materials from terrorists; to stop the spread of nuclear weapons; and to pursue the goal of a world without them. Because every nation must understand that true security will never come from an endless race for ever-more destructive weapons – true security will come for those who reject them.

We will have to use diplomacy, because no one nation can meet the challenges of an interconnected world acting alone. I have spent this year renewing our alliances and forging new partnerships. And we have forged a new beginning between America and the Muslim World – one that recognizes our mutual interest in breaking a cycle of conflict, and that promises a future in which those who kill innocents are isolated by those who stand up for peace and prosperity and human dignity.

Finally, we must draw on the strength of our values – for the challenges that we face may have changed, but the things that we believe in must not. That is why we must promote our values by living them at home – which is why I have prohibited torture and will close the prison at Guantanamo Bay. And we must make it clear to every man, woman and child around the world who lives under the dark cloud of tyranny

that America will speak out on behalf of their human rights, and tend to the light of freedom, and justice, and opportunity, and respect for the dignity of all peoples. That is who we are. That is the moral source of America's authority.

Since the days of Franklin Roosevelt, and the service and sacrifice of our grandparents, our country has borne a special burden in global affairs. We have spilled American blood in many countries on multiple continents. We have spent our revenue to help others rebuild from rubble and develop their own economies. We have joined with others to develop an architecture of institutions – from the United Nations to NATO to the World Bank – that provide for the common security and prosperity of human beings.

We have not always been thanked for these efforts, and we have at times made mistakes. But more than any other nation, the United States of America has underwritten global security for over six decades – a time that, for all its problems, has seen walls come down, markets open, billions lifted from poverty, unparalleled scientific progress, and advancing frontiers of human liberty.

For unlike the great powers of old, we have not sought world domination. Our union was founded in resistance to oppression. We do not seek to occupy other nations. We will not claim another nation's resources or target other peoples because their faith or ethnicity is different from ours. What we have fought for – and what we continue to fight for – is a better future for our children and grandchildren, and we believe that their lives will be better if other peoples' children and grandchildren can live in freedom and access opportunity.

As a country, we are not as young – and perhaps not as innocent – as we were when Roosevelt was President. Yet we are still heirs to a noble struggle for freedom. Now we must summon all of our might and moral suasion to meet the challenges of a new age.

In the end, our security and leadership does not come solely from the strength of our arms. It derives from our people – from the workers and businesses who will rebuild our economy; from the entrepreneurs and researchers who will pioneer new industries; from the teachers that will educate our children, and the service of those who work in our communities at home; from the diplomats and Peace Corps volunteers who spread hope abroad; and from the men and women in uniform who are part of an unbroken line of sacrifice that has made government of the people, by the people, and for the people a reality on this Earth.

This vast and diverse citizenry will not always agree on every issue – nor should we. But I also know that we, as a country, cannot sustain our leadership nor navigate the momentous challenges of our time if we allow ourselves to be split asunder by the same rancor and cynicism and partisanship that has in recent times poisoned our national discourse.

It is easy to forget that when this war began, we were united – bound together by the fresh memory of a horrific attack, and by the determination to defend our homeland and the values we hold dear. I refuse to accept the notion that we cannot summon that unity again. I believe with every fiber of my being that we – as Americans – can still come together behind a common purpose. For our values are not simply words written into parchment – they are a creed that calls us together, and that has carried us through the darkest of storms as one nation, one people. America – we are passing through a time of great trial. And the message that we send in the midst of these storms must be clear: that our cause is just, our resolve unwavering. We will go forward with the confidence that right makes might, and with the commitment to forge an America that is safer, a world that is more secure, and a future that represents not the deepest of fears but the highest of hopes.

Thank you, God bless you, God Bless our troops, and may God Bless the United States of America.

December 1, 2009

www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president

U.S. AFGHANISTAN STRATEGY

PR. No. 440/2009

Pakistan has taken careful note of the important announcement by President Obama of the U.S. Afghanistan strategy.

President Obama has correctly mentioned that the struggle against violent extremism extends well beyond the region. Pakistan is committed to uprooting terrorism from our region and in advancing the cause of peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Pakistan looks forward to engaging closely with U.S. in understanding the full import of the new strategy and to ensure that there would be no adverse fallout on Pakistan .Pakistan and the U.S. need to closely coordinate their efforts to achieve shared objectives. There is certainly the need for clarity and coordination on all aspects of the implementation of the strategy.

We welcome President Obama's reaffirmation of partnership between the two countries built on a foundation of mutual interest, mutual respect and mutual trust. Also U.S. strong support for Pakistan's security and prosperity.

Press Release, December 2, 2009

http://www.mofa.gov.pk/Press_Releases/2009/Dec/PR_440_09.htm

PAKISTAN FEARS PAYING PRICE OF US AFGHAN SURGE

President Barack Obama's troop surge in Afghanistan has sparked fears in Pakistan it will lead to more US drone attacks and military involvement in its border areas, possibly further destabilising Washington's ally.

Many Pakistan analysts and security officials fear an emboldened Afghan Taliban could then capitalise on Obama's plans to start withdrawing troops in 18 months by waiting it out in Pakistan, which already faces militants on its own soil.

The Pakistan government has cautiously welcomed Obama's plans to send another 30,000 troops to battle a strengthening Taliban insurgency. But it came with a caveat - Islamabad warned Washington on Wednesday of the need to avoid 'adverse fallout.'

The concern for many is that when extra US troops land in south Afghanistan the Taliban will just make a tactical retreat across the porous border to Pakistan's lawless tribal regions.

That would up the stakes in Pakistan where its army has launched an offensive in the border region of South Waziristan.

The campaign has already sparked a backlash of suicide attacks in cities, raising fears for the country's stability.

With the Afghan winter traditionally making guerrilla warfare harder, there is effectively one fighting season left - the summer of 2010 - before US troops may start to scale down.

Pakistan analysts say that next summer US military planners primed for war may get increasingly frustrated they cannot bring the battle to a Taliban just sitting across the border.

'In that survival game, the Taliban may cross into Pakistan. Now there is a timetable, they might just avoid combat,' said Tanvir Ahmed Khan, a former Pakistani foreign secretary and now chairman of the Institute of Strategic Studies.

'If that comes true, the Americans would be really tempted to go after them at a scale we haven't seen before, mostly likely with drones and perhaps also with special operations.'

'We think giving the timeline of 2011 is not a wise decision because if the Taliban are wise enough they will stop fighting for now and they will wait for US, forces to withdraw and then play havoc,' a senior Pakistan government security official said.

US Frustration

There are signs of US frustration even before the surge is implemented. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said this week that Pakistan had to do more against militants.

But in a country where anti-American sentiment runs deep, increasing drone attacks is a risky tactic that could spark further popular opposition to US involvement in Pakistan just as unpopular President Asif Ali Zardari faces calls to quit.

The CIA-operated drones have already been increasingly used. Nearly 50 drone air strikes in northwestern border regions this year have killed about 415 people, including many foreign militants, according to officials and residents.

But it is not just a rise in drone attacks, but the widening of the war geographically that worries Pakistanis.

Talat Masood, former army general and Pakistani columnist, said the surge may force an influx of fighters and refugees into Baluchistan, widening the war against militants within Pakistan.

That could destabilise a province already hit by a low-level separatist insurgency.

The New York Times, quoting anonymous administration officials, said Obama planned to increase the number of drone attacks and US spies in Pakistan, including targeting Taliban leaders thought to be hiding in Baluchistan.

But Pakistan has not yet agreed to the plan, the report said.

'It looks that a case is being built that by raising troop level, they want to push militants to Pakistan and then withdraw and put the onus on Pakistan to catch Osama bin Laden and others,' said Mehmood Shah, former security chief of the tribal areas.

'I think they will intensify their covert operations.'

While analysts say it is unlikely U.S. Special Forces would enter Pakistan given nationalist sensitivities, it highlights the deep distrust felt for Washington.

'Pakistan may be the worst victim of the surge ... If things start to go wrong for Obama, Pakistan could easily be made into a scapegoat,' said Dr. Riffat Hussein, head of the department of defence and strategic studies at Quaid-e-Azam University in Islamabad.

'Pakistan will be now preparing for the end-game when the US withdraws,' he said. 'Then you are back to the old game.'

Dawn (Islamabad), December 3, 2009,

<http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/03-pakistan-fears-paying-price-of-us-afghan-surge-ss-05>

A WORKABLE STRATEGY?

Janus-like and potentially creating more uncertainty in an already difficult region is how we would describe US President Obama's speech on his new strategy for Afghanistan.

The face turned towards the militants and the Afghan government tried to send a stern message: a military surge to 'seize the initiative' and 'reverse the Taliban's momentum' is supposed to 'accelerate handing over responsibility to Afghan forces' and create space for 'a more effective civilian strategy'.

The face turned towards the US public and Congress tried to soothe anxiety over what is now the longest war in American history: the US will 'begin the transfer of our forces out of Afghanistan in July of 2011' and 'the days of providing a blank cheque [to the Afghan government] are over'.

While we understand the reasons President Obama must try and look in two directions at the same time, a fundamental question remains unanswered: can Afghanistan be 'saved' after eight years of a war that by all accounts is going very badly, when the US is thinking both of hunkering down and exiting?

As strategies go, the one laid out by Mr. Obama is not especially ambitious, at least in theory: 'the three core elements of our strategy [are]: a military effort to create the conditions for a transition; a civilian surge that reinforces positive action; and an effective partnership with Pakistan'.

But experience suggests that the war zone in Afghanistan does not lend itself to a 'civilian surge' in quick order.

The British discovered this in Helmand several years ago. And Mr. Obama should himself know this because he promised a similar civilian surge in his March speech on his 'first' AfPak strategy, but it did not materialise.

So even if there are military successes thanks to the additional troops that are to be injected into Afghanistan, it is not clear whether success on the civilian side is possible within the time frame that Mr. Obama has set.

Nothing in Tuesday's speech explained how the US intends to resolve that conundrum and at the moment the second prong of the new strategy seems little more than a triumph of hope over experience.

On the Pakistan front, though, Mr. Obama sent a more encouraging signal. Appreciating the Pakistani public's opposition to militancy and the security forces' operations in Swat and South Waziristan, the US president pledged: 'America will remain a strong supporter of Pakistan's security and prosperity long after the guns have fallen silent'.

A welcome change from the 'do more' line, Mr. Obama's words on Pakistan suggested an understanding of common interests rather than a focus on the differences.

Dawn (Islamabad), December 3, 2009

<http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/world/12-a+workable+strategy-bi-01>

OBAMA'S GRAND STRATEGY - AFGHANISTAN PLUS KARZAI AND OBAMA

President Obama's speech at West point on 1 December 2009,

Elegant in its style and delivery as we have come to expect, was also remarkably comprehensive. It went far beyond a statement, and in some aspects restatement, of policy towards Afghanistan and Pakistan and announcement of a surge in troop levels. It will be no accident that he chose West Point to present a grand strategy that systematically replaced all the tenets of the 'neoconservative' ideology of the previous Administration that Bush affirmed in his speech of 1 June 2002 at the same place. Instead of a unilateralist vision that emphasised the primacy of the military instrument in pre-emptive operations abroad, Obama

spoke of the importance of strengthening international institutions, of partnerships with friends and allies and with nations in regions of crisis towards common ends as the route to the security of the American nation. And he spoke of the historical continuity of America's record in this moral approach since the foundation of the nation with reference to both Eisenhower and F. D. Roosevelt.

He had the difficult challenge of speaking first to his own nation but in doing so in sending the right messages to the government of Afghanistan, to the Taliban and Al-Qa'ida, to Allies and other military contributors to the intervention, and to the world at large. To that end it will be important that subsequent rhetoric from the White House, officials and senior commanders -- and allies - will develop issues such as timelines for draw-down with all of these actors in mind.

Troop Numbers

The three elements of his grand strategy for the region are, first, a 'military effort to create the conditions for a transition' of responsibility for security to the government of Afghanistan and its own military and police security forces (which will be the focus of this analysis). Secondly, he proposed 'a civilian surge' to reinforce progress in developing Afghan security; and, thirdly, an effective partnership with Pakistan.

It was expected that Obama would announce an increase in 30,000 US troops to begin in early 2010. This number is somewhat less than the 40,000 asked for by General McChrystal, Commander of both NATO and US forces, in his assessment of 30 August 2009. However, Obama expects other nations to increase troop levels and the additional 10,000 is feasible. The Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, has spoken of 'at least 5,000 ... and possibly a few more thousand on top of it'. In the United Kingdom Brown has announced an additional 500 taking the UK total to 10,000 including the 500 Special Forces and their enablers already in theatre that he has revealed. The German government has indicated an additional 3,000 and leadership of this sort by the larger European nations could prompt smaller nations to bolster their stakes in the 'strategic bargain'. There is of course the problem of some nations' plans to withdraw forces, Canada and the Netherlands in particular bearing in mind that they have been prepared to contribute to the more violent southern provinces. And it bears mention that the US contribution which will reach 100,000 will be no more than the Soviet presence at the height of its occupation of Afghanistan which resulted in failure.

Of course troop numbers alone are not the answer to the problem as the Obama and McChrystal grand and military strategies acknowledge. There must be a surge in the civilian contribution. But 'boots on the ground' are a sine qua non in the perceptions of the Afghan people and Taliban antagonists; this is so in delivering the essential military missions that will enable civilian development and also in compensating in the short term for inadequacies in delivering civilian functions where threat levels restrict their mobility or where they have for other reasons been unfocused.

Indeed the total US and ISAF military presence will begin to approach some historical levels that have delivered progress for instance in the Malayan emergency of the 1950s.(It is naïve to draw lessons for counter-insurgency wholesale from history but illustrative benchmarks cannot be ignored when a counter-insurgency operation has been so patently under-resourced).In particular, armed forces must in the short term reverse the momentum of the Taliban in controlling territory and delivering ad hoc government. They must dominate further attempts at escalation while the Afghan military and police security forces can be grown and trained to the levels that Obama has demanded of President Karzai in his speech of March 2009. And quality of Afghan security forces is every bit as important as quantity.

Refocusing Alliances

Obama did not announce the detail of the composition of the 30,000 new US troops. However it is understood that the large proportion will be land combat forces, engineers and aviation. In particular US Marines will be deployed to Helmand alongside British forces in this particularly problematic province. What the command arrangements and precise missions will be are not yet known. However there is a clear pattern of greater integration between US and British forces which indicates more emphasis on US rather than NATO leadership in Afghanistan with the UK in a strong supporting role. The UK now provides the Commander of Regional Command (RC) South and with the Deputy Commander of ISAF as well as a senior retired general, Graeme Lamb, as adviser to McChrystal. Strong strategic leadership and direction which NATO is not well disposed to provide will be essential to progress. It is likely that Afghanistan will be seen increasingly as a US operation with multinational support through the NATO model rather than a NATO

'out of area' operation which will test the purpose and utility of the Alliance for the future.

Challenges to the Strategy

From a military viewpoint there are four problems that the Obama strategy presents. The first, needless to say, is whether the force levels are enough to turn the tide against the Taliban and win McChrystal's 'short fight' by July 2011 when Obama has announced that withdrawal of US forces will begin assuming transition and transfer of responsibility to Afghan forces take effect.

Secondly this very issue of a stated date for drawdown of July 2011 could play into the hands of Al-Qa'ida and the Taliban allowing them to wait their time before returning to the offensive. It is a common feature of insurgencies that they pursue strategies of cumulative effect over time with prolongation as a principal device to wear down the patience of democracies. A challenge for counter-insurgency is to be able to sequence and measure progress without talking up 'exit strategies' and timelines which can be used to demonstrate failure. Importantly Obama stated in his speech that the July 2011 date would take 'into account conditions on the ground'.

And it is this condition about the conditions at the time which must be reinforced by subsequent rhetoric and actions across the coalition but by the US in particular. If adequate levels of progress in achieving the transfer of security to Afghan security forces have not been achieved by July 2010, the drawdown should not begin. This is not an easy message to present to the Taliban because the expectations of Western electorates must also be fed.

Thirdly there is the matter of Karzai's commitment to change - to deal with corruption and criminality and to expand and improve Afghan security forces. And this uncertainty exposes the paradox of timelines. Unless he and his government have timelines to face, there is every possibility of a pattern and culture of dependency on the US and international support. There are examples of this challenge in Bosnia and Sierra Leone. There are roles for military intervention forces in addressing corruption, in particular in providing intelligence, in training and mentoring of Afghan security forces and in compensating and substituting for these Afghan forces in the short term. Also they must not be perceived to be complicit in corruption either in bargains struck with corrupt warlords or aggressor Taliban or in using local logistic services in

ways that connive in and stimulate corruption and criminality. Of course military counter-corruption activity requires resources and will stretch multinational forces in the short term when the priority should be reversing Taliban momentum and regaining military control.

The Battle of Kandahar?

A particular problem in RC South is Kandahar, the second largest city in Afghanistan and the Pushtun capital, where the Taliban have been particularly effective in gaining control. Clearly this will be a priority for US reinforcements bearing in mind the probable withdrawal of Canadian forces who currently have responsibility. One option might be a full scale attack along the lines of the Second Battle of Fallujah in Iraq. Decisive events of this kind can be very effective in reversing enemy momentum and convincing local populations of progress. However there could be large numbers of civilian casualties which could send the opposite message of an unwelcome victor and weaken support for the US in Europe and globally. Other options might be a more incremental approach with the accompanying challenge of the July 2011 timeline - or limiting of Taliban influence in the city and isolation from the surrounding region if this is realistic and feasible.

The UK Dividend

For the United Kingdom additional US troops in Helmand, and US Marines to boot, will be an absolute boon. Greater integration between the forces with less emphasis on national regional responsibility could allow British forces to deliver results that are within their capacity routinely and to make good use of US capability, as one should in a well-integrated coalition operation, without the stigma of inadequacy. Most importantly for the Prime Minister, he can present the British mission in Afghanistan to the British public as one of supporting the US as its closest ally in its purpose of completing its task begun in 2001 of removing Al-Qa'ida from the region. The UK made its bilateral commitment in that year in the context of NATO's Article V undertaking to support an Ally who had been viciously attacked. The US was distracted from its purpose by Iraq and the UK backfilled in 2006 nobly but in advisedly in the circumstances bearing in mind its own extraordinary commitment to Iraq. Obama has now presented a grand strategy for global security which the British electorate and all the major political parties should be able to

endorse heartily as that of the America the nation has supported and fought alongside throughout the last century. For the UK the present War is not first and foremost about keeping terrorism out of Britain but of supporting Obama's America in finishing its business -- something that should now be rather easier to explain.

Michael Codner, December 4, 2009
www.rusi.org

OBAMA'S AFGHAN ENDGAME THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL MAN, APPEARED LEAST POWERFUL

While explaining the New Afghan Strategy President Barack Obama, the world's most powerful man, appeared least powerful. He ordered a surge of 30,000 troops in Afghanistan, making a total of 100,000 supported by 45000 NATO troops. Obama came to this decision "through a series of deliberations and getting a strategy for how to go forward and finish the job in Afghanistan." The president admits: "There ought to be an exit strategy for Afghanistan." Therefore, the underlying idea is not to win the war, but to ensure a safe exit. It is in this context, we have to examine the new strategy, in words and deeds, which in fact, is meant to cover the shame of defeat, which is difficult for a superpower to admit.

If winning the war was so vital for the sake of American interests, then 30,000 were not enough. At least 300,000 troops were needed to gain a favourable balance of power against the resistance, which according to CIA reports, is organised as Shadow Army, with 17 divisions under command, each division having a number of lashkars. The Shadow Army comprises old mujahideen who fought against the Soviets and the Taliban, with a hardcore of young fighters born under the shadow of war, who hold the banner of freedom. The veterans from Iraq and the new fighters from around the world have joined the lot. The Al-Qaeda 005 Brigade, which fought against the Soviets, has also joined the Shadow Army. Thus, the resistance has grown into a formidable force - a diehard, committed force - fighting for freedom against the occupation forces, who have no ideological commitment as such.

USA is following a similar policy as in the 1990s: "Goal is to prevent the return of Taliban," because they think that "if Taliban come to power, they will over-run Pakistan and destabilise the region." It's totally fallacious because the Taliban ruled over most of Afghanistan

from 1996 to 2001. Did they create any problem for anyone beyond their borders? In fact they are the only ones, who can bring peace in Afghanistan. They are the winners, and the winners are "not prepared to talk to the losers unless the loser gives the exact timeframe."

Now the occupation forces are facing the Taliban resistance which no government in the world supports, yet they are growing in strength, as Gulbadeen Hikmatyar, takes the oath of allegiance at the hands of Mullah Omar, and together they are prepared to inflict "a bigger defeat, bigger the number of enemy troops." In 1985, Gorbachev followed a similar strategy by inducting more troops and about half a dozen Spitznaz Brigades (commandos), and gave his commanders "a year to win the war." Within a year, the Soviet army suffered badly and decided to withdraw. They approached the Pakistan government, to provide a safe exit. The army high command was also consulted and the Soviet army was provided a safe exit, and they withdrew unscathed.

So, the surge of 30,000 troops in Afghanistan poses no threat to Pakistan because these troops will be lost in the rocky wilderness of Afghanistan. The real threat is the consistent blame on Pakistan, by Obama, Manmohan Singh and Gordon Brown, for protecting Al-Qaeda safe havens, in our tribal areas, and the threat to strike them. The Government of Pakistan must tell them in very strong terms that there are no safe havens on the Pakistani soil, and if they dare take action, they themselves will be responsible for the consequences. If the Government of Pakistan does not pick up the courage to say so, let the armed forces of Pakistan, serve such a warning. And that warning must be served now.

The Soviets suffered about 15,000 deaths; however, the American deaths have not yet reached the figure of 900. The Soviets called their exit as "our bleeding wound." But for the Americans the situation is not that bad, yet they cannot win the war. The two centres of power, which can provide relief, are: The Taliban in Afghanistan and the Pakistan army. Both have won the war against their adversaries. As in 1989, 20 years later now, they both are in a position to grant a safe exit to the occupation forces. History repeats itself. The central issue for peace in Afghanistan is the issue of power sharing by the Taliban, who cannot be cheated as in the 1990. And they are the only one who can bring peace and establish a stable government as they did, during the period 1996-2001. The fall of Berlin Wall, appears a smaller event, compared to the fall of US, EU and India, in Afghanistan, at the hands of the rag tag freedom fighters.

The 'political mess' in Pakistan appears very frustrating on the surface, but from underneath, the 'institutional forces' have emerged to correct the course of national security interests, threatened by the machinations of our enemies. The nexus between CIA, RAW, Mossad and RAMA, have played havoc with the internal security and social peace in Pakistan. The political government has failed to arrest the deteriorating situation causing such deep distrust and dismay amongst the broad masses of Pakistan. In fact people have started losing faith in democracy, because Zardari has refused to grant sovereignty to Parliament, maintaining the façade of a civilian dictatorial rule. As the frustration grew, national institutions asserted themselves. The judiciary, supported by the lawyers, judges, media and the political opposition, regained its freedom and authority. The armed forces of Pakistan came forward to correct the course, where the political government failed to respond. It corrected the course on the issue of Kerry-Lugar Bill; Nuclear proliferation; secularization of Pakistan; CIA and RAW involvement in Pakistan and a strong message to the nation that "the armed forces of Pakistan are fully conscious of the threat posed to national security and have the resolve and the capability to defeat such threats." Thus, the job which a sovereign Parliament should have performed has been taken over by the armed forces of Pakistan which means "shifting of the centre of gravity from Islamabad to GHQ" - a situation which has exerted pressure on Zardari to abdicate his power and authority of the 17th Amendment and 58-2(b) in favour of Parliament. Ultimately, it would help Parliament to regain power and prestige and the shifting of the power base, back to Parliament. Thus, the 'Pakistani fulcrum', deriving strength from Parliament, would be able to play its due role, between Beijing, Kabul and Washington, leaving India behind "as one knotty strand in the Afghan tangle."

Furthermore, India failed to recognise this geo-strategic shift and opted to join hands with the American hegemony, to establish influence over Afghanistan and South Asia, which betrayed its colonial ambitions, which lie buried in the rocky mountains of Afghanistan. In fact, India is a retreating power. It has failed in Afghanistan, together with the Americans and NATO allies. Its military capabilities are also limited as it is passing through "the dangerous period of change and transformation" from the Russian to the American weapon systems, and is vulnerable and weak for at least the next decade. It poses no serious military threat to Pakistan.

Out of the depths of sorrow and sacrifices, blunders and betrayals, destiny has offered to Pakistan such opportunities, which demand dynamic policies and plans, supported by aggressive diplomatic and political initiatives, to lift the nation and its morale from the abyss where it lies today. National institutions, such as the judiciary, armed forces and the media have played very timely and forceful roles, to correct the course. Similarly, the foreign policy makers - the 'first line of defence', have the responsibility to play the historic role, destiny has offered.

General Mirza Aslam Beg, December 6, 2009

<http://www.opinion-maker.org/navigation.do?mode=showArticles&id=1131>

PAKISTAN AND NOT AFGHANISTAN WORRIES USA

Announcement of Af-Pak policy by Barack Obama last March led to shifting of centre of gravity of war on terror from Iraq to Afghanistan and resultant induction of 21000 US troops into Afghanistan from Iraqi theatre. With available extra forces the new commander Gen McChrystal, launched a well orchestrated operation in Helmand in July with a firm resolve to up stick the Taliban from this strong base and to then gradually roll down remaining strongholds in southern and eastern Afghanistan. Logically, in line with US policy of hammer and anvil, the US military should have launched operation either in Kunar or Pakistan or Pakistan provinces in coordination with Swat operation and impending operation in South Waziristan (SW). Purpose of selecting poppy rich Helmand was to deprive the Taliban drug business used as a source for funding resistance war. The other reason was to push the militants towards peaceful Pashtun belt of Baluchistan and make it restive. The military and FC in Baluchistan in anticipation to the possible spill over effect quickly deployed troops along the border and effectively prevented possible inflow.

To the utter shock and dismay of US-UK forces, the rag tag Taliban put up a stiff fight in Helmand and inflicted very heavy casualties. Nuristan district as a whole was also lost to the Taliban. Mounting casualties forced Chrystal to abandon forward positions and to take up a rearward posture, concentrating in major towns and cities. This happened at a time when Pak Army had launched its operation in South Waziristan on 17 October and direly needed sealing of Afghan border by US-NATO forces on its side. Not knowing how to stem the slide, Gen McChrystal

suddenly threw a bombshell that unless he was given additional 40,000 troops he could not guarantee security of Afghanistan, which in his view was slipping away due to Taliban resurgence. While the Republicans and a section of Democrats and Pentagon favoured further troop surge, part of Democrats opposed sending additional forces. The American public too is against war and troop surge and wants the soldiers to return home.

After deliberating upon it for considerable time due to conflicting opinions, Obama finally decided to send additional 30,000 troops to shore up the confidence of Chrystal. In his policy speech on revised Afghan policy, Pakistan remained his focus of concern. Obama reiterated what Hillary Clinton and Gordon Brown had said about presence of Al-Qaeda in Pakistan. He added that 9/11 was planned from there and another plan to attack US homeland is in offing. He expressed his deep anxiety over the possibility of Al-Qaeda based in Pakistan taking away nukes.

Like him, all power centres in USA are not greatly worried about Afghanistan. What bothers them is Pakistan. There is neither any inquest nor regret as to why the US military and its allies failed to achieve its singular mission of disrupting, dismantling and defeating Al-Qaeda when it was in a disorganized and very weak state and entirely based in Afghanistan till December 2001. Six intelligence agencies based in Kabul are not being quizzed as to why they have failed to spot and nab Osama bin Laden, Zawahiri, Mullah Omar and other top leaders of Al-Qaeda and Taliban for the last eight years. No questions are asked on the colossal expenditure being incurred on fruitless war on terror with zero sum results.

Instead of asking Chrystal as to how he intended recovering nearly 80% of lost space in Afghanistan and in what time frame, they are asking how he will deal with terrorist havens in Pakistan. They are not concerned about weak, corrupt, inept and unpopular Karzai led regime and pathetic state of affairs of non-Pashtun heavy Afghan national Army (ANA) and police suffering from discipline and desertion problems. Demoralisation and lack of resolve of US-NATO troops seems to be of no consequence to US policy makers. There is no debate as to why US soldiers receiving \$75000 per month salary are dispirited and depressed. Thriving drug-trade and arms selling in Afghanistan in which Karzai and his brother, Northern Alliance warlords, CIA, RAW, Mossad and US-NATO military are fully involved doesn't raise any eyebrows in Washington. Fiasco in Helmand and abandonment of forward areas along Afghan-Pak border which in their assessment houses Al-Qaeda leadership

is not being questioned. Adoption of faulty bunkered policy instead of boots on ground strategy and relying on disheartened ANA or on air power is not discussed.

The US is not troubled if Kabul regime is anti-Pakistan and pro-India and is allowing its soil to be used for cross border terrorism against Pakistan since 2002. It is not bothered if India is using all its resources to destabilise Pakistan. Patronage of Brahamdagh Bugti in Afghanistan and of Harbayer Marri and Sulaiman Daud in London pursuing separatist agenda in Baluchistan doesn't prick their conscience. Cultivation of Abdullah Mehsud, Baitullah Mehsud and Hakimullah Mehsud and creation of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) to destabilize FATA and NWFP doesn't bring any remorse to them. Growing anti-Americanism in Pakistan doesn't pinch them much as long as NRO cleansed leadership is in their pocket and they can have their dictates obeyed. However, anti-American militant groups in Pakistan and in the army and ISI do vex them. The US hypocritically calls Pakistan its strategic partner and a key ally in war on terror. It candidly admits that without Pakistan assistance the war cannot be won. Yet it mistrusts all its premier institutions and subjects them to slander.

The US doesn't feel ashamed in pursuing double standards.

On one hand the US is making concerted efforts to negotiate political settlement with Taliban to ensure safe exit of US forces, on the other it constantly reminds Pakistan not to have any truck with Afghan Taliban. In their view drone strikes on suspected targets in FATA are not enough and desire bringing Baluchistan within the purview of drones. That way it wants Pakistan to be alienated from all factions of Afghanistan. The US is least concerned about sufferings of Pakistanis and heavy price they are paying because of their support to US policies, but is more concerned how to extract its pound of flesh. It turns a deaf ear to venomous propaganda unleashed by government controlled media and think tanks in USA against Pakistan. Nuclear armed India on the verge of implosion from within due to dozens of separatist and insurgent movements doesn't create any ripples in Washington. While US leaders give passionate hearing to the mostly perceived grievances of India, they shut their eyes to genuine complaints made by Pakistan.

Till recent the US leaders were crying hoarse trying to convince Pakistan that TTP was the greatest threat to existence of Pakistan. All these years they had been bellowing and censuring that Pakistan Army is not tackling the militants firmly and is either linked with them or is

incapable of tackling them. They drummed up that Pakistan nukes had become vulnerable and liable to be stolen by extremists. They twisted Pakistan's arm and pressed it to go full hog against the militants who were vying to steal nukes and take over power. What they actually had desired was to compel Pakistan to commit maximum forces in the quagmires of restive regions and to get bogged down irretrievably. When Pakistan Army uprooted the main bastions of militants and disarranged TTP thereby giving a deathblow to the insidious plan chalked out by our adversaries, they have now taken up a new stance and are projecting Al-Qaeda as the chief threat to Pakistan, eyeing its nukes.

The TTP funded, trained and equipped by gang of five in Kabul doesn't interest them in the current time frame.

Adm. Mike Mullen squirmed that Al-Qaeda's pursuit of nukes and interest in Pakistan are extraordinarily dangerous. Robert Menendez moaned that Pakistan is the main problem.

He added, "Pakistan doesn't want strategic relationship but want money and equipment". What he implied was that Pakistan has been receiving US aid without giving anything in return. It was in this context that Obama said that the days of blank cheques are over. They are now cribbing that whereas Pakistan Army has chased Pakistani Taliban vigorously; it has failed to go after Afghan Taliban and their supporters including Al-Qaeda. India and UK have joined USA to collectively press Pakistan to do more.

Brig. Asif Haroon Raja, December 6, 2009

<http://www.opinion-maker.org/navigation.do?mode=showArticles&id=1129>

OBAMA'S LATEST AFPAK WAR STRATEGY

Only two months in office, President Barack Obama unveiled his first strategy on the Afghan war in a speech from the White House on March 27, 2009. He updated his strategy in ten months' time, on December 01, in a speech at the US Military Academy at West Point. In his first strategy statement, Obama said, "...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." Afghan war was thus expanded to include Pakistan into the war zone and came to be known by the acronym, AfPak war.

Obama in his December 01 speech has added military muscle to his strategic goal. He has ordered a surge of 30,000 additional soldiers to the

Afghan war theatre, raising the figure to about 100,000. He has combined this decision to dramatically increase the number of soldiers with an announcement that the American soldiers will start leaving Afghanistan by 2011. This surge-and-exit policy is the biggest novelty of Obama's new AfPak war strategy. By announcing this exit-deadline, Obama has addressed the worries of the Americans that they have committed themselves to an endless war in Afghanistan and has attempted to revive the original domestic unity behind the war [in 2001, when Bush began the Afghan war, the vote in the Senate was 98 to nothing and the vote in the House was 420 to 1]. At the same time, he has tried to send two messages to Afghanistan: first, the Afghan government must soon take responsibility of their own country; secondly, America will not follow the cut-and-run policy as they did in Vietnam.

However, the biggest thrust of Obama's December 01 strategic policy is not in Afghanistan, but in Pakistan. Obama himself explained the rationale of his new strategy. He said, "I make this decision because I am convinced that our security is at stake in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This is the epicentre of violent extremism practised by al Qaeda." He noted, "Al Qaeda has not re-emerged in Afghanistan in the same numbers as before 9/11, but they retain their safe havens along the border." He darkly warned, "...the stakes are even higher within a nuclear-armed Pakistan, because we know that al Qaeda and other extremists seek nuclear weapons, and we have every reason to believe that they would use them."

Though Obama has made Pakistan a theatre of his AfPak war, he is unable to send troops to Pakistan. In his December 01 speech he has re-emphasised the crucial role of Pakistan as America's partner in the fight against the al-Qaeda and Taliban. He has also taken a practical programme to keep Pakistan in line. As a corollary to the surge of troops in Afghanistan to bolster counter-insurgency campaign there, Obama, disclosed the New York Times, has authorised the CIA to expand its operation in Pakistan to ratchet up its counter-terrorism campaign against the al-Qaeda and Taliban.

Obama's December 01 strategic decisions will result in an unprecedented escalation in the Af-Pak war. This is Obama, a war president. Obama has also a moral as well as political stake to live up to the noble image of a Nobel Peace Prize winner. For this, his administration will need to accomplish four big tasks in 18 months' time: first, basically win a counter-insurgency war in Afghanistan; secondly,

demolish al-Qaeda and Taliban networks in Pakistan; thirdly, secure Pakistan's nuclear arsenal; last but not least, start withdrawing American troops from the AfPak war zones, signalling end of foreign occupation of Afghanistan. Obama has rightly said in his December 01 speech: "America -- we are passing through a time of great trial."

Editorial, *Financial Express* (Dhaka) Vol 8, No.372, December 7, 2009

NEW AFGHAN POLICY AND PAKISTAN

President Barack Obama's new Afghanistan policy builds on his first policy statement in the last week of March this year and represents continuity and change. It aims at effectively countering terrorism in and around Afghanistan, stabilising Afghanistan and setting the stage for a gradual US withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The continuity in the policy includes the reiteration of the determination to "disrupt, dismantle and defeat" al Qaeda and its affiliated Taliban. The induction of new troops implies a renewed emphasis on the use of coercion to push back the Taliban to reclaim the control of territory and assert the primacy of the US and NATO troops. The change in the policy has manifested in four ways. First, the addition of 30,000 combat troops means that the US would have over 90,000 combat troops in 2010. The NATO troops are in addition to this. The US plans to initiate the withdrawal of its troops in July 2011.

Second, the US wants to work toward building the governance capacity of the Karzai administration by controlling corruption, inefficiency and poor orientations. This is going to be coupled with greater attention to training the Afghan National Army and the Police at a faster pace. NATO has also got several training teams for strengthening the capacity of Afghanistan's security apparatus.

Third, the option of dialogue and accommodation with the dissident Taliban that are prepared to abandon violence is being kept open. Though the chief of the Taliban in Afghanistan, Mulla Omar, has rejected dialogue with the Karzai government or the US authorities in Afghanistan, the latter will continue to search for accommodation with some of the Taliban.

Fourth, the US has re-emphasised Pakistan's key position in its strategy for containing terrorism in the region and stabilisation of Afghanistan. While addressing the joint press conference with Indian Prime Minister in Washington DC in late November 2009, President

Obama said that Pakistan had “an enormously important role” in the security of the region. While announcing the new policy on Afghanistan President Obama said on December 1: “We will act with the full recognition that our success in Afghanistan is inextricably linked to our partnership with Pakistan.”

Many analysts are not sure if the US would be able to turn the tide in Afghanistan to such an extent that it would start withdrawal from July 2011. The track record of US troops in Afghanistan does not support optimism for the future.

Two other issues are expected to influence the outcome. What would be the new military strategy to dislodge the Taliban and hold onto the territory so that the Taliban do not return? Whether the military operation will be launched all over the Taliban-dominated southern parts of the country or the US military would first target some selected areas and then move to new areas after consolidating the position in the selected areas first?

The other issue pertains to capacity building of the Kabul administration. Given the abysmal performance of the Afghan government since Hamid Karzai assumed power (December 2001), one wonders if its governance capacity can be significantly improved in the next 18 months.

The greater challenge is to build a professional army out of the present army that includes a large number of loyalists of Tajik and Uzbek war lords and local leaders. Their professional capacity and identification with the Afghan nation-state are dubious. More attention will be required to improve the quality of police training. Further, there are serious complaints of absence of full determination to fight the Taliban because the elements within the Afghan Army are either sympathetic to or afraid of the Taliban.

The Pakistan government is favourably disposed towards the latest troops surge and the US determination to fight terrorism. Pakistan is expected to cooperate with the US but Pakistan and the US differ on the operational side of fighting terrorism. President Obama’s assertion about a ‘safe-haven’ for al Qaeda and its affiliated groups in Pakistan’s tribal areas and the ‘threats’ to Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal are bound to cause strains in their relations. Pakistan’s official circles feel that the US is overplaying these issues, which do not help problem solving. Capitalising on US statements, India uses these two issues for propaganda against

Pakistan. Afghanistan's Foreign Minister noted with satisfaction that Obama has raised the issue of safe havens in Pakistan's tribal areas.

Pakistan's security authorities are not convinced that they should change their counter-terrorism strategies as and when demanded by the US. Pakistan cannot afford to open all counter-terrorism fronts simultaneously at a time when the Indian military and diplomatic pressure is a genuine threat. Different terrorist fronts are: the militants based in Punjab, the Tehrik-i-Taliban in South Waziristan, other militant groups and the Taliban in other tribal agencies, the networks of Haqqani, Maulvi Nazir and Hafiz Gul Bahadar and some al Qaeda elements. Pakistan does not have capacity to simultaneously launch offensives against all of them. It is moving in a graduated manner, focusing first on the elements that directly threaten Pakistan.

The Pakistan military and the civilian government can no longer be accused of ambiguity on the Taliban and other terrorist groups. They have developed unanimity of views on coping with terrorism.

There is a strong feeling in Pakistan's official and non-official circles that the US does not pay adequate attention to Pakistan's perspective on the security issues of the region. Pakistan is perturbed by Indian campaign against Pakistan in connection with the Mumbai terrorist incident and its alleged use of Afghan territory for helping dissident elements in Balochistan and the Taliban in the tribal areas. Pakistan expects the US to help ease this pressure and show an understanding of how Pakistan is dealing with the terrorist threat in the tribal areas and mainland Pakistan.

The major Pakistani concern is the possible US response if Pakistan is unwilling or unable to satisfy the US on the safe haven issue and does not take action against the groups identified by the US. The lack of understanding of the Pakistani perspective on these issues is likely to cause serious strains in Pakistan-US relations.

In case Pakistan does not remove these safe havens to US satisfaction, will the US expand and intensify drone attacks? Will the US send its special forces into Pakistani tribal areas? These strategies, especially the use of ground forces in Pakistani territory, will be highly destabilising for Pakistan.

In case US troops are not able to tame the Taliban in Afghanistan, there will be a lot of domestic American pressure on the Obama Administration by those who have opposed the current surge. They will describe this as the failure of the Obama Administration, which will have

negative ramifications for Obama's political future. In such a situation, the US may deflect domestic pressure by resorting to military action in Pakistan's tribal areas for destroying the safe havens of al Qaeda and the Taliban.

Pakistan and the US need to evolve a shared approach to deal with each other's security concerns so that they can cooperate for implementation of new US policy in Afghanistan. Pakistan needs to be assured how US troops would behave in the coming months. Any unilateral attempt to coerce Pakistan to comply with the US agenda in the region is likely to threaten the internal political order and stability in Pakistan.

Dr Hasan-Askari Rizvi, *Daily Times* (Lahore), December 6, 2009