[H.A.S.C. No. 111–99]

AFGHANISTAN: GETTING THE STRATEGY RIGHT

HEARING

BEFORE THE

FULL COMMITTEE

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

HEARING HELD
OCTOBER 14, 2009

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

56–004 WASHINGTON : 2010

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Internet: bookstore.gpo.gov Phone: toll free (866) 512–1800; DC area (202) 512–1800
Fax: (202) 512–2104 Mail: Stop IDCC, Washington, DC 20402–0001

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AFGHANISTAN: GETTING THE STRATEGY RIGHT

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, Wednesday, October 14, 2009.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:05 a.m., in room HVC–210, Capitol Visitor Center, Hon. Ike Skelton (chairman of the committee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. IKE SKELTON, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM MISSOURI, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The CHAIRMAN. Good morning.

Today the House Armed Services Committee meets to receive testimony from outside experts on "Afghanistan: Getting the Strategy Right."

Our witnesses today are General Jack Keane, former Vice Chief of Staff of the United States Army.

We welcome you back, General.

Dr. Stephen Biddle, a noted expert on the strategy with the Council on Foreign Relations, who also served on General McChrystal's assessment.

And Dr. Paul Pillar of Georgetown University, who served as a National Intelligence Officer for the Near East and South Asia until 2005.

Starting in 2006, I began referring to Afghanistan as the forgotten war. We allowed ourselves to be distracted by a war of choice from the war I think that the President was right to call a war of necessity.

So I was greatly encouraged by the serious approach President Obama took in reviewing the conflict earlier this year. On March 27th, President Obama announced a new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, and in my opinion, it wasn't just a new strategy; it was our first strategy. The President underlined his serious approach by sending 21,000 additional troops and a new leadership to Kabul.

General McChrystal is simply the best we have got. And we are very fortunate to have him there. General McChrystal's recent assessment presents a serious view of the situation in Afghanistan and the challenges that we face. He also presents one possible way forward, a fully resourced population-centric counterinsurgency (COIN) campaign that would protect the population, build the Afghan security forces and work to improve the Afghan government.

As my colleagues know, I am a strong supporter of General McChrystal's approach. Others disagree. We can find serious people who advise that we risk getting bogged down in an unwinnable war

and that focusing on capturing and killing al Qa'ida leadership is the right approach. This suggests that our primary mission should be to train and equip more Afghan security forces, that we should not add U.S. troops to the 68,000 already there or on the way.

The President, again, thinks it is a momentous decision, charting a path forward in Afghanistan. He has undertaken a serious review of the strategy in Afghanistan, will make a decision as the Commander in Chief in the near future. I believe he feels the same sense of urgency we all feel and hope we can all support his desire to make sure that we get Afghanistan right.

Congress, however, will be ultimately involved in the decision to help us work through some of these issues. We are here today to hear three experts who will help us highlight the questions about each path forward and think through what is most likely to work.

And I thank each of them for their appearance here, and we appreciate it very much.

Now I turn to my good friend, the ranking member, Buck McKeon, for comments he might care to make.

Mr. McKeon.

STATEMENT OF HON. HOWARD P. "BUCK" MCKEON, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM CALIFORNIA, RANKING MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. MCKEON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for calling this hearing today.

Welcome to our witnesses.

General Keane, it is great to have you back before the committee.

Mr. Chairman, I commend you for holding this hearing.

In early September, General McChrystal provided the Secretary of Defense's 60-day assessment on the security situation in Afghanistan. With the release of the McChrystal assessment and the President's ensuing strategy review, our country finds itself in a debate over our future commitment to the conflict. The debate is largely taking place in the media, with the Congress and the White House as largely passive players. That is why today's hearing is so important.

A true national debate on the war cannot be packaged in made-for-TV 2-minute sound bites and 700-word op-ed columns crammed with rhetoric. But Congress is where national policy debates belong, in the Armed Services Committee as Congress's designated venue for addressing matters of war.

We must recall it is the President himself who called for public discussion of the war in Afghanistan. In the absence of the Commander in Chief leading the debate, I think the best way this Congress and the American people can evaluate our next steps in Afghanistan is to have General McChrystal testify.

Chairman Skelton and I sent letters to Secretary Gates requesting General McChrystal's testimony. We are still waiting for an answer.

So where are we in the debate? After nine months in office, President Obama's Afghanistan policy is in the same place where he found it in January: in a state of drift and lacking direction.

Six months after outlining a strategy which calls for executing and resourcing an integrated civilian-military counterinsurgency,

COIN, the President has once again called for a review of our strategy and now questions the underlying assumptions of that strategy.

The current strategy review has put into question the nature of the threat we face in Afghanistan and whether we have the right strategy to defeat the threat.

While the question of whether to send additional forces into Afghanistan may seem to be a detail of a larger debate, I think it is the correct place to begin the discussion. The President's response to General McChrystal's request for forces will reveal how he views the threat and what strategy he intends to pursue in Afghanistan.

As we have recently learned, words on a White House white paper are easily erased. It is the forces you put in the field that demonstrate the true nature of our commitment to our military, our country, the citizens of Afghanistan, and our enemies.

I am in agreement with Chairman Skelton on what must be done in Afghanistan. I believe that to prevent al Qa'ida from returning to Afghanistan, we need to leave that country in a stable position. I think the President's March strategy had it right; a fully resourced counterinsurgency strategy is the best way to ensure that the Taliban will not run a shadow government out of Kandahar and play host to al Qa'ida. A fully resourced COIN mission has a proven track record of defeating insurgencies, and it is General McChrystal's lowest-risk option.

Presently we find ourselves in a stalemate in Afghanistan, and the Taliban has the momentum. As General McChrystal stated in his assessment, failure to gain the initiative and reverse insurgent momentum in the near term, the next 12 months, risks an outcome where defeating the insurgency is no longer possible. In other words, time is of the essence. And he wrote those words over a month ago.

Our forces need a strategy that everyone in the chain of command supports in word and in deed. Given the urgency of the situation, I have a number of concerns about how the debate in Washington will affect the war in Afghanistan.

First, I am concerned about the continued drift of our Afghanistan strategy. It is unfair to our forces in theater to fight a war while the strategy remains in limbo. Last week, the President told Members of Congress that his decision will be timely. My hope and expectation is that the President will make a decision on resources in the coming week and stick with it. We cannot win if we conduct quarterly strategy changes. To be sure, nips and tucks are appropriate, but wholesale reconstructive surgery is a recipe for disaster.

My second concern is the looming intelligence hook. Proponents of a minimally resourced strategy, of which there are few, if any, who are military experts, question the nexus between the Taliban and al Qa'ida. If the intent is to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qa'ida, goes the argument, then defeating the Taliban is less of a concern. To date, I have not seen any intelligence that disaggregates al Qa'ida from the Taliban. I am worried that we are going to see a new analysis that justifies a more limited war strategy on the basis that we can now tolerate Mullah Omar's Taliban in Afghanistan. We all know the perils of driving intelligence analysis to fit preferred policy outcomes.

My last concern is that the debate is muddying the clear national security interest at stake in this war. If the conflict in Afghanistan is not worth the cost, then what conflict is worthy? In my view, Afghanistan is ground zero when it comes to the risk of a world where al Qa'ida, safe havens, narcotraffickers and nuclear weapons connect.

If there is a venue for a military that has been reoriented to fight irregular forces, then Afghanistan is the place. Our military has spent eight years refining how to execute this fight. Now that expertise risks being shelved. In my view, if the President departs from the March strategy, he will be rejecting key assumptions about the threats we face and strategies we need to prevent another 9/11.

A half-measure in Afghanistan is tantamount to a doctrinal shift away from all the lessons learned since al Qa'ida attacked our homeland over eight years ago. This will endanger our homeland and put our forces at risk. I look forward to a candid discussion on these important issues. Thank you again for being here this morning.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

And now to the witnesses.

General Jack Keane.

Thank you, each of you, for being with us today. General Keane.

STATEMENT OF GEN. JACK KEANE, USA (RET.), FORMER VICE CHIEF OF STAFF, U.S. ARMY

General KEANE. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Minority and Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me once again to testify before this distinguished committee and also I am happy to join Dr. Steve Biddle and Dr. Pillar here this morning. Let me say up front, while there are many options for the way ahead in Afghanistan, there is a single choice which offers the United States and the Afghan people the opportunity to succeed against the Taliban insurgency and thereby stabilize the country. That choice is General McChrystal's and General Petraeus' counterinsurgency strategy with the appropriate level of military forces, civilian personnel, and financial resources.

To understand that statement, we must know what has happened to Afghanistan since the invasion of 2001 and why this is the only remaining viable choice. It is a fact that Afghanistan, beginning in 2002 and increasingly so in 2003, became a secondary priority in the war in Iraq. Indeed, it remained as such until this year, 2009, when only now we are beginning to shift our priority effort from Iraq to Afghanistan. As such, as a secondary effort, despite the addition of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces and resources, Afghanistan has always been operating at the margin and, in most of those years, below what was required in forces and resources.

Not surprising, the Taliban advantaged this vulnerability and not only re-emerged but have been able to gain the initiative to the point the momentum is on their side, particularly in the south and east. Add to that a weak, ineffectual central government plagued by corruption, election fraud and legitimacy issues, Afghanistan has now become a major challenge.

It is appropriate to ask, is Afghanistan worth the continued sacrifice of U.S. lives and treasures? What should be our strategic goal? Is an adjustment in goals and resources appropriate?

Let me briefly answer those questions by stating our strategic goal in Afghanistan should be a secure, stable Afghanistan without an al Qa'ida sanctuary. And, yes, it is worth the continued sacrifice to achieve that goal. Not only because a stable Afghanistan is in our national interest, but its stability is inextricably linked to the stability in Pakistan. The al Qa'ida center of gravity is not Afghanistan; it is Pakistan. A loss of Afghanistan is a win for the Taliban and the al Qa'ida in Pakistan with potential serious consequences for Pakistan.

While there are few al Qa'ida in Afghanistan, it is clear they supported one another going back to pre-9/11 when the Taliban would not give up the al Qa'ida when the United States allied attack was imminent. Moreover, the Taliban is very current other than improvised explosive device (IED) technology and U.S. tactics. They evolved through the years from, first, in Iraq, into Afghanistan.

It is not about how many al Qa'ida fighters are in Afghanistan, but how the al Qa'ida network enables, trains and supports the Taliban. We cannot conveniently separate the two. If we lose in Afghanistan, the al Qa'ida will be right behind the Taliban as they take over. Make no mistake, Pakistan is a far more consequential country strategically, mostly because of nuclear weapons, but also because of the size and influence of the country. Therefore, it is appropriate to link the stability of both of these countries together as U.S. strategic goals and national interests.

One of our major challenges with the political and military leadership in Afghanistan and Pakistan is their skepticism surrounding the United States' commitment to their countries' stability and our resolve to stay the course. Given our track record in both countries, these doubts are well-founded, which clearly affect their attitudes and behavior.

Many leaders in Afghanistan are unwilling to commit to the government of Afghanistan because they are uncertain about the U.S. commitment. As we deliberate on the way ahead, this issue must be kept in mind. It is difficult to forecast a stable Southern Asia without the United States directly assisting in defeating the radical Islamists who are threatening that stability. Our resolve should not be limited to staying, but it should be defeating the Taliban and al Qa'ida.

Now, how can we do that? We must adopt a civil-military strategy with counterinsurgency as the centerpiece. In insurgencies, the center of gravity is not the enemy, as it is in conventional wars; it is the people. These are fundamentally people's wars; and as such, securing, protecting and freeing the people from intimidation, coercion and terror becomes job one. Our operations take on a different character and, in many cases, are largely non-kinetic because our focus is to free the people from insurgent malice and influence.

Of course, we must still kill and capture insurgents and hold their horrific behavior liable, and we do. It is critical that tribal insurgent leaders feel the burden of the loss of their tribal members and sense our commitment to see it through to the end.

War is always about breaking the will of your opponent. The ultimate solution in Afghanistan, as it is in Iraq, is for the Afghanistan security forces to provide a secure and stable environment. The problem we have in front of us, similar to 2006 in Iraq, is that the security situation has deteriorated well beyond the Afghan National Security Forces' (ANSF) capability to cope with it, even with U.S. and NATO force assistance. The Afghan National Security Forces are currently projected to grow to about 234,000 by 2010 and need to grow to about 400,000, which will take to 2013 or at best 2012.

Given the new counterinsurgency strategy and current force levels, what can we do to turn around the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan in the meantime? How do we mitigate the two to three years as we wait for the appropriate growth of the Afghan National Security Forces?

The only remaining answer to stop the bleeding and turn around the situation is the introduction of U.S. troops. It is not necessary to apply the counterinsurgency strategy to Afghanistan at large. The priority and focus is south and east. And we can achieve the appropriate counterinsurgency force levels combining NATO and Afghan forces.

I will leave to General McChrystal as to what the appropriate number is because only he and his staff have the fidelity to make that kind of analysis. What I am saying is we need multiple brigades of U.S. combat troops, U.S. support troops and trainers for the Afghan National Security Forces. It seems appropriate that while the NATO countries are unwilling to provide additional combat forces, they should be pressured to provide additional trainers and financial resources.

As the Afghan National Security Forces conduct side-by-side operations with U.S. NATO forces, as a matter of routine, similar to what we did in Iraq, their proficiency increases exponentially. One of the major lessons learned from Iraq, after three years with the wrong strategy and the favorable turnaround in 2007 and 2008, is that security is a necessary precondition for political progress and economic development. This applies directly to Afghanistan.

The military as part of the counterinsurgency strategy was key to assisting in executing government reform, attacking corruption and maligned behavior in Iraq, and it can have the same impact in Afghanistan. We cannot just execute the status quo on security or do more than the status quo but less than what is required and expect to make political governance and reconstruction progress without the appropriate level of security. It will not happen. We will fail.

What about other options? Why not a counterterrorism strategy, given the al Qa'ida are in Pakistan and not Afghanistan? And why not a diplomatic effort to seek political accommodation with the Taliban in Afghanistan? A counterterrorism strategy is essentially killing and capturing insurgent and terrorist leaders. To do so, we rely primarily on technology solutions, drones, missiles and precision bombs. This strategy is helpful in Pakistan and Afghanistan, as it was in Iraq. But it is not decisive. Nor has it been decisive for the Israelis in the many years of their struggle.

The reality is leaders are replaced. A setback to be sure for a particularly influential leader, but a movement based on ideas and determination is not defeated by killing leaders. It is only defeated by isolating the movement from its source of strength, the dependency on the people. Give the people a better alternative, and the insurgency is isolated. When the insurgents are isolated, they are very vulnerable to being killed and captured. Moreover, despite a very aggressive and successful counterterrorism operation in Iraq from 2003 to 2007, some almost four years, we were failing, and we nearly lost the country.

Similarly we have been using that counterterrorism strategy in Afghanistan for many years, and the situation has simply gotten worse. Are counterterrorism operations valuable? Yes, definitely. But they must complement a fully integrated civil-military counterinsurgency strategy.

Why not make a political accommodation with the Taliban in exchange for stopping the violence and possibly ensuring that no al Qa'ida sanctuary returns to Afghanistan?

This is the height of folly and naivety. The Taliban are winning from their perspective; believe that the United States will be leaving; and they will be back in control of Afghanistan. Why should they settle for less now when they can get it all later? In their minds, time is on their side, those leaders have been approached before, and there is no deal to be had.

And for the life of me, what part of Afghanistan do we surrender to the Taliban, forcing the Afghan people, whom we have supported for eight years, to live under the Taliban's sadistic rule?

Let me be clear, we can reach out to the lower level Taliban leaders who are reconcilable, particularly those who are motivated by being on the winning side. This can occur quite substantially when we turn around the deteriorating situation and begin to gain some momentum. Certainly General McChrystal understands this and has General Graeme Lamb from the United Kingdom (U.K.) assigned as his deputy to pursue and create these opportunities, who did the very same thing very successfully in Iraq for General Petraeus.

In conclusion, what is the way ahead? Not since 2001, when the decision to attack Afghanistan was made, have we had a more critical opportunity to make a decisive decision to stabilize Afghanistan. We can succeed. We can turn this around in two to three years.

Caution, if there is a sense of a lack of a U.S. commitment, NATO and Pakistan will hedge and pull back. Many tribal leaders and others in Afghanistan will do the same. And it will undermine the very objectives we are trying to achieve.

Next, put in play a counterinsurgency strategy with the appropriate military, civilian and financial resources.

A caution, again, do not be tempted to do the counterinsurgency strategy with less than the required troops because you will be doing more in other areas, such as an enhanced counterterrorism operation, aggressive governance to stomp out corruption, surging against poppy production and narco trafficking, enabling reconciliation and other worthy focus areas. Trying to do more with less will fail and fail miserably.

Next, get tough with Hamid Karzai about his known corruption, election fraud, and ineffectual government. Be specific and hold his government accountable. We should not be bashful. Our national interests are at stake and our sacrifice and promised future commitment is real and gives us the premise for tough mindedness. We need a political strategy to complement the counterinsurgency strategy by helping to establish a legitimate sovereign state of Afghanistan.

Major nation-building should not be our objective, but it is appropriate to establish the rule of law with a workable judiciary; improve the central government's effectiveness; strengthen governance at the local level, particularly at the district and provincial level; and assist with economic development.

Re-engage countries in the region in the stability of Afghanistan and Pakistan in particular; and in general, the radical Islamist threat to that stability. Their assistance is vital.

And make a strong commitment to the future stability of Afghanistan, which is enduring, but it is not open-ended in terms of our military forces. Our forces will begin to leave as the Afghan national security forces grow in size and capability, similar to what we have done in Iraq.

And we are blessed with some of the very best general officers we have had in our history to execute our strategy, in McChrystal, in Lamb, in Rodriguez and Petraeus, along with Ambassador Eikenberry. We should rely heavily on their judgment and experience.

And finally, there are no guarantees of success. But our troops who are sacrificing the most deserve the best winning hand possible. Their competence, extraordinary sacrifice, unprecedented resilience, their dogged determination to succeed may in fact be the finest chapter in the United States military history. Never before have we asked so much of so few for so long.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Keane can be found in the Appendix on page 53.]

The CHAIRMAN. General, thank you very much.

Dr. Stephen Biddle.

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

Dr. BIDDLE. I would like to start by thanking the committee for this chance to speak with you on an issue of obvious national importance.

The CHAIRMAN. Get your microphone a little closer.

Dr. BIDDLE. I would also like to emphasize, I am speaking for myself and not anybody in the headquarters in Kabul or indeed anybody in the government.

Afghanistan is a big collection of important issues—there are lots of different things we could talk about this morning, and then I am sure we will in question and answer (Q&A). I want focus, however, on what is arguably the most fundamental underlying question: Is the war worth waging and at what cost?

And it seems to me that the answer to that question in the short form is that the case for waging war in Afghanistan is a close call

in the analytical merits. We do have important interests at stake in Afghanistan. But they are not unlimited, and they are largely indirect. It is possible for us to succeed in Afghanistan, but it can't be guaranteed, and doing so at any reasonable probability will be an expensive undertaking.

In a situation in which, on the analytic merits, we have a close call with both benefits and costs on either side of the ledger, I think what the decision about waging war in Afghanistan boils down to is, at the end of the day, not an analytically resolvable, single, one right and true answer on the substantive merits, but rather as a judgment call on how much risk we are willing to accept and how much cost we are willing to pay in order to reduce the risk.

Now, that is a condition that is general to defense policymaking, but in situations like Afghanistan, where I think the analytic merits are a close call, it presents itself in an unusually salient way. For me, that judgment comes down as being a better case for paying the costs associated with pursuing a vigorous counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan as a means of reducing a potentially serious downstream consequence to the United States if a failure in Afghanistan destabilizes Pakistan and leads eventually to loss of control over its nuclear arsenal. But this is a situation in which reasonable people can differ, and value judgments will vary from individual to individual.

Now, my written statement presents the argumentation for that finding in a good more detail. What I want to do with the remainder of my time this morning is just speak to a couple of the key issues that underlie the conclusions that I just presented, and in particular, let me say a little bit more about the interests we have at stake and the whole question of the cost associated with pursuing them and especially the viability of various cheaper middle way options between the kind of large reinforcement that General McChrystal is said to have recommended and either keeping the force we have now or withdrawing altogether.

Let me begin with the question of interest. There are many things that we would like for Afghanistan, as we would like for any country in the international system. We would like Afghanistan to be ruled in accordance with the rule of the governed. We would like minority rights to be respected. We would like women to be educated. We would like the country to be prosperous, as we would for any nation and as we would seek to secure for any nation.

Normally, however, the means that we pursue in order to secure those objectives are things other than killing in the name of the state. When it comes down to the things that are normally thought to justify the waging of war, there is a smaller subset of the interests that we would normally have for anyone in the international system that loom especially large. And I think in the case of Afghanistan, our critical interests there are the two that the Administration has already identified: that the country not become a base for striking us and that the country not become a base for destabilizing its neighbors and especially Pakistan.

Of those two, the first is the one that has been the most talked about, whether al Qa'ida could again return to Afghanistan and use it as a base for attacking us. In many ways, the more important

of the two is the second, the potential effect of chaos in Afghanistan and destabilizing Pakistan. Pakistan is a country in which we obviously have vital national security interests at stake. It is where al Qa'ida is located now. It has a real, live, honest-to-goodness usable nuclear arsenal, and it is a country that is currently waging an insurgency against a variety of terrorists and insurgent groups active already within its own borders.

Should Pakistan collapse and risk the security of its nuclear arsenal, American security would be directly at threat. The problem is we have very little ability to deal with that threat directly. I would much rather that we were able to deploy the troops we are currently thinking about deploying for counterinsurgency in Afghanistan to assist the Pakistanis in prevailing in their insurgency, which is more important to us. I would like to be able to persuade the Pakistanis to shift their threat assessment from India to internal problems and transform their military from a conventional force to deal with a hostile state to a counterinsurgency force that could assist in defeating their internal insurgents.

We have very limited ability to do any of these things directly in large part because we are so unpopular within Pakistan. In a situation in which our ability to deal directly with the threat that matters to us the most is so limited, arguably the appropriate way forward is to invoke the Hippocratic Oath and at least do no harm. Don't make a situation that we have very little ability to fix directly any harder to deal with than it is already.

And it seems to me that one of the more important ways in which U.S. policy could, if we are not careful, make things importantly worse in Pakistan is if the counterinsurgency project in Afghanistan fails, the Karzai government falls, and we get either chaos and a renewed civil war within Afghanistan or a Taliban restoration with potential revanchist sympathies across the border.

Now, that, I think, suggests that we do indeed have important interests at stake in Afghanistan, but they are indirect, and they are also limited in nature. We could succeed in Afghanistan, and if the Pakistani government does not put its own house in order, they could fail in their counterinsurgency anyway. If Pakistan does put its house in order and if they devote the resources at their disposal to resolving their own insurgency, we could fail in Afghanistan and the central threat to U.S. national security, the stability of Pakistan, could be secured anyway.

We do have important interests here, but they are not unlimited, and the more important of them are indirect.

What, then, is it worth spending to secure important but limited and indirect interests in Afghanistan? In many ways, the natural intuitive response is, if we have limited interests in Afghanistan, let us pursue them with limited means. And a variety of limited means have become very popular in the public debate. There are perhaps a half-dozen or more that have been widely discussed, including but not limited to: shifting from a combat emphasis in Afghanistan to one that would put the primary stress on training and advising Afghan indigenous security forces; or switching from a large counterinsurgency effort in Afghanistan to a more counterterrorism-oriented strategy based on the use of drones in northwest Pakistan; and many others.

In the interest of time, I won't go through them all in substantial detail. My statement does that, and I would be happy to follow up in Q&A. What I want to do, however, is make an overarching characterization of many of these proposals and their analytic dynamics, and that is that most of the middle ways that have been proposed as ways of securing our interests in Afghanistan at lower costs than the kind of integrated multi-dimensional and very expensive counterinsurgency strategy that General McChrystal has proposed. The middle way is in important respects taking bits of that program, single elements, single dimensions, pulling them out of context and trying to do them alone without the rest. Leadership targeting, for example, is an orthodox part of integrated counterinsurgency. Training and advising an indigenous military is a central part of orthodox counterinsurgency.

Orthodox counterinsurgency theory, however, claims, and I believe soundly, that the pieces of a normal counterinsurgency strategy are mutually supportive and provide synergistic benefits when executed together. The ground forces that secure the indigenous population make possible governance improvements and economic development. Governance improvements and economic development enhance security. Governance in the form of a viable, supportive regime in the country of interest enables counterterrorism and leadership targeting by assisting us in providing the intelligence that we need to find the targets. The pieces all support one another.

If you take individual bits out of context and try to do them alone, what I think you get is, yes, a less expensive campaign, but one whose probability of success is lower than if we did the entire integrated package together. And that means that this problem of middle ways is a microcosm of the general problem of U.S. policy in Afghanistan, which is, we can invest more and reduce the risk to us; or we can invest less and increase the risk to us. The middle ways cost less, but they produce lower odds of success in exchange. And there is no way out of the vice grip of this dilemma for Afghanistan.

There is no magic silver-bullet middle way that can provide comparable odds of success at lower cost. This does not necessarily make them bad ideas, but what it does is throw you back into the same problem of having to make a value judgment between what are you willing to pay in order to reduce a risk to the security of the United States by giving them out? It would be nice if there were some way of getting the same reduction in risk at substantially lower cost, but unfortunately, I don't think that is available to us.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Biddle can be found in the Appendix on page 64.]

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Paul Pillar.

STATEMENT OF DR. PAUL R. PILLAR, DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES, SECURITY STUDIES PROGRAM, EDMUND A. WALSH SCHOOL OF FOREIGN SERVICE, GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Dr. PILLAR. Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you very much for the invitation to address this important issue.

The ultimate objective of U.S. endeavors involving Afghanistan is and should be to enhance the safety and security of the American people. Much public discourse about Afghanistan, unfortunately, has failed to distinguish clearly among that ultimate objective, certain missions that may or may not advance that objective, and specific strategies for accomplishing a particular mission.

Our theater commander has quite properly focused on strategies for accomplishing his assigned mission as he currently understands it, in which, to put it quite simply, is to stabilize Afghanistan or at least to prevent the government of Afghanistan from falling.

But policymakers in the executive branch and here in the Congress must confront a larger question, whether stabilizing Afghanistan through counterinsurgency would sufficiently enhance the safety and security of Americans enough that, given the cost entailed, it would be a mission worth pursuing.

We are in Afghanistan as a direct result of and a justified response to the terrorist attacks on the United States in September of 2001. The prime overriding purpose of our intervention there is counterterrorism. Although I hasten to point out military force is only one counterterrorist tool, South Asia is only one possible place to employ it.

Thus a more refined version of the overall question for policymakers is: Is the difference between the terrorist threat Americans would face if we wage counterinsurgency in Afghanistan and the threat we would face if we do not wage it sufficiently large and in the right direction, of course, to justify the costs and risks of the counterinsurgency itself? And my way of framing the issue is, in that respect, very similar to the way Stephen Biddle has phrased it.

The counterterrorist objective in Afghanistan we invariably hear is to prevent terrorist groups and especially al Qa'ida from establishing a safe haven there or reestablishing a safe haven there. Terrorist groups do make use of territorial havens when they have them, but the use by a terrorist group of such a haven does not imply that its operations would be significantly impeded if it did not have one. Most important activities that transnational terrorist groups have performed in safe havens also can be and are performed, often with comparable ease, elsewhere.

Even if al Qa'ida's friends and ideological soulmates in the Afghan Taliban were to offer it renewed hospitality inside Afghanistan, a location there would offer few attractions over its current haven in northwest Pakistan. In any event, it is not apparent to me how a move of al Qa'ida or parts of it from one side of the Durand Line to the other would substantially affect the threat the group poses to U.S. interests. Any such threat should be no less from Waziristan than it would be from Nuristan.

Regardless of whether a renewed haven inside Afghanistan were attractive and useful to al Qa'ida or any other terrorist group,

there is the further question of whether a counterinsurgency would preclude it. A haven would not require a patron with control over all of Afghanistan, but instead only a small slice of it. As described in General McChrystal's assessment, a properly resourced strategy—I am using the general's words—a properly resourced strategy would leave substantial portions of the country, those portions not deemed essential to the survival of the Afghan government, outside the control of that government or of U.S. forces. In short, even a properly resourced counterinsurgency that was successful in the sense of accomplishing the mission of bolstering the government in Kabul and stabilizing the portions of the country where most Afghans live still would leave ample room for a terrorist haven inside Afghanistan should a group seek to establish one.

A further question is whether a group seeking a haven would require either Afghanistan or Pakistan. Radical Islamists, including al Qa'ida, have other unstable places to which to turn. Somalia and Yemen are two that immediately come to mind. The terrorist threat to U.S. interests, even just the Sunni Jihadist portion of that threat, did not all emanate from Afghanistan or any other single place. One hears frequent mention of links back to Afghanistan or Pakistan, but links do not necessarily mean direction or instigation. In many cases, they mean much less.

Perceptions of what we do militarily in Afghanistan have other effects that are important to counterterrorism, and this gets under the heading of "do no harm," as Steve Biddle mentioned. These include resentment of Western troops occupying Muslim lands and anger over the civilian casualties and other collateral damage that are an inevitable byproduct of even the most carefully prepared and skillfully executed counterinsurgency operations. A reflection of this inside Afghanistan has been the increase over these past few years in the number of insurgents fighting against us and our allies, many of whom we place under the label of Taliban but have little or no identification with the extreme ideology of the principal Taliban leadership.

The Taliban are a loosely organized resistance concerned above all with their version of society, politics, and power inside Afghanistan. Despite the leaderships' clear ideological affinity to and proven cooperation with al Qa'ida, they are not driven by the transnational objectives associated with bin Laden and Zawahiri. Their interest in and antagonism towards the United States is almost entirely a function of what the U.S. does inside Afghanistan to thwart their aims there. The cause most likely to unite the Taliban is resistance to foreign occupation of Afghanistan. They will tend to be stronger to the extent that our military presence there is seen as an occupation.

Now the possible connection of events in Pakistan—in Afghanistan to Pakistan has, of course, become a major part of debate and has been stressed by both of my fellow witnesses. I would like to stress two key questions on this dimension of the problem. One is how much effect anything happening in Afghanistan is likely to have on the politics and stability of Pakistan. We have a tendency to think of such questions in spatial terms, with visions of malevolent influences somehow suffusing across international boundaries like a contagious disease.

But the future of Pakistan will be influenced far more by forces inside Pakistan itself. Those forces include the inclinations of the Pakistani population and the will and capabilities of the Pakistani military, which is by far the strongest, in several senses of that term, institution in Pakistan. Pakistan is more than five times the population of Afghanistan; its economy is ten times as large. Pakistani policymakers and the Pakistani military certainly have a very keen interest in Afghanistan, partly because of concerns about Pashtun nationalism and mostly as a side theater in their rivalry with India. But the events inside Afghanistan will not be the decisive or anything close to the decisive factor in shaping Pakistan's future.

The other question is exactly what sort of influence, even if marginal, events in Afghanistan are likely to have in Pakistan. And it is hard for me to see exactly how the vision of spreading instability would work in practice. Even if a ruling Afghan Taliban, that is an Afghan Taliban that had re-established a state or proto-state inside Afghanistan, decided to turn their attention away from consolidating domestic power to try to stoke an Islamist fire in Pakistan, and I don't believe they would, given that the Afghan Taliban have been beneficiaries rather than enemies of the Pakistani regime, they would have few additional resources to offer. And the Pakistani Taliban already have bases of operation in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), which appear as part of Pakistan on maps but which Islamabad has never effectively controlled.

In the meantime, an expanded U.S.-led counterinsurgency in Afghanistan would be more likely to complicate rather than to alleviate the task of Pakistani security forces insofar as it succeeded in pushing additional militants across the Durand Line. A larger U.S. military presence in the immediate region also would make it politically more difficult for the Pakistani government to cooperate openly with us on security matters in the face of widespread negative sentiment inside Pakistan regarding that presence.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, we must eschew absolute concepts such as victory versus defeat, successes versus failure, because this problem, like many others, offers no clear conception of victory. We must instead carefully weigh costs and benefits of each contemplated course of action, including the direct expenditure of resources and a counterinsurgency in Afghanistan, and what it would buy us in the form of lessened terrorist threat while recognizing that no course is sure of success and that every course entails risk.

My own weighing of these considerations leads to the conclusion that an expanded military effort in the cause of counterinsurgency in Afghanistan would be unwarranted. The benefits in terms of ultimately adding to the safety and security of the American people would be marginal and questionable. At best, the difference such an effort would make in the terrorist threat facing Americans would be slight. At worst, the effort would be counterproductive and would not reduce the threat at all. And even at its best, the benefit would be, in my judgment, outweighed by the probable costs of the counterinsurgency.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to the committee's questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Pillar can be found in the Appendix on page 82.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Dr. Pillar.

Let me mention that the elephant in the tent is the legitimacy of the Afghan government as a result of the flawed election. What is your advice on how we should approach the legitimacy of the Afghan government and the way ahead?

I ask each of you that, please.

General Keane.

General KEANE. Yes. Well, I don't believe that the problems associated with this government, as fraudulent as it is and as corrupt as it has been, in and of itself should trump what we are trying to achieve in terms of our national interests in Afghanistan.

All that said, what can we do about it? We still have an election crisis taking place, even though the election is over. Karzai is somewhat insecure about the results of all of that and his relationship with us. I think that gives us an opportunity to do a couple of things with him.

One is insist on what is in front of us is a transitional government as opposed to a permanent government with another election being held in a year or so. Have some say over who the members of that government should be. We know who the malign actors are, and I am not suggesting we go on a major anti-corruption campaign. I think the atmospherics with all of that would have some negative feedback.

I think we do this with precision, just as we did in Iraq. We knew who the bad actors were, and we dealt with it with precision, based on evidence and specifics, and we were able to move them, all away from media and other interest groups. So we should have some say about who is in the future of that government and then also a benchmark on how we are going to hold them accountable.

I would also convene members of the international community dealing with establishing the legitimacy and the sovereign state of Afghanistan in the future in terms of—this is not something we should do unilaterally. We have countries in the region and other interested countries to do that.

Make no mistake, I think we should lead the effort. And that should take place over the ensuing months as we proceed to establish a legitimate sovereign state, and we should, as part of that process, encourage others who want to seek leadership positions and run for office, encourage them to stay engaged and of course deal with Karzai in terms of any attempts that he would have to discourage them.

So I think there are some things that we can do, and this really in the realm of a political strategy for Afghanistan that we don't spend much time talking about because we are focused on the insurgency and how best to defeat it. But I do think you put your finger on a major issue and something that we can do some work with and truly make some progress with.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, General.

Dr. Biddle.

Dr. BIDDLE. The legitimacy of the Karzai government is absolutely critical and is very problematic, and this is the normal case in counterinsurgency.

As a general rule, if the United States is involved in a counterinsurgency, it is because there is an illegitimate local government that gave rise to an insurgency in the first place. And therefore, almost any time we do this, we are going to have to confront the problem of serious misgovernance on the part of the host government.

And I think it is interesting and important to note that the McChrystal report argues that governance and security are coequally important, and failure in either of these undertakings will produce a very high risk of mission failure overall.

And again, I think this is not an uncommon situation in counterinsurgency. The election results over the summer hurt. I tend not to think that they are a transformational moment, however, at least for Afghans. There were widespread expectations that the election would be legitimate and corrupt. The magnitude was larger than some had expected, but we have not yet seen the kind of legitimacy crisis in Afghanistan that we saw, for example, in Tehran over the course of the summer. Perhaps we will eventually; we have not yet.

As a result, I think what we have after the election in Afghanistan is a situation where a very serious underlying challenge, the legitimacy of the Afghan governance, has gotten worse, not better. But I don't think it is fundamentally transformed from a workable problem to an unworkable problem. What has happened—what has happened is a very difficult problem has gotten a bit worse.

Either way, to make any difference, we are going to have to start using the leverage at our disposal as a result of our presence in Afghanistan as a systematic means of changing governance, not to produce a Central Asian Valhalla as the Secretary of Defense famously put it, not to produce Switzerland in the Hindu Kush but to produce a degree of governance improvement that meets the minimum requirement of ordinary counterinsurgency theory which is only a stable preference on the part of the population for their own government over the insurgents.

This does not require that we eliminate corruption. It requires only that we produce a persistent preference for Karzai or his replacement over a Taliban that has never pulled above single digits in Afghanistan. I think this is a doable undertaking, but it is not going to be trivial or easy, and it will require that we much more systematically use our resources disposable to this end and that requires that the military side of the house in International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) see itself as a mechanism for governance improvement as well as security, which General McChrystal does, and that they cooperate very closely with diplomats and political specialists in the embassy in developing a program and a strategy for using the leverage we have to bring about the governance change that we need. It is hard, but I don't think it is impossible, and I don't think it is unique to Afghanistan.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Dr. Pillar.

Dr. PILLAR. Mr. Chairman, you are absolutely correct in putting your finger on this as a key issue. Not only is the problem of what is seen as an illegitimate government something common in coun-

terinsurgency, but establishing that legitimacy is essential to success in the counterinsurgency.

The one additional thought I would add to what my two co-panelists have said is, I think what we ought to encourage, in terms of what we do right now, is cooptation and incorporation of a range of interests and views in the Afghan body politic through the traditional Afghan way, which is negotiation and striking deals, and not depend or wait for the next election.

If we want to model on this—and I hasten to add it is not a very encouraging model, but this may be as well as we can do. You look at Zimbabwe, where there was a blatantly corrupt election engineered by Mugabe, and then the subsequent solution was to incorporate his opponent, Mr. Tsvangirai, into the government as prime minister. Now, they have had a lot of friction since then, but I think depending on the cooperation of Mr. Abdullah, the principal opponent of Hamid Karzai, something along those lines, a government of national unity, if you will, would be the best that can happen during the next few weeks.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. McKeon, I understand you yield to Mr. Bartlett.

Mr. MCKEON. Mr. Chairman, I will hold my questions until the end and let the other members have——

The CHAIRMAN. Fine. We will do that.

Mr. Bartlett.

Mr. BARTLETT. Thank you very much. Thank you for your testimony. I am going to ask a question that is being asked by millions of Americans. Why is not Afghanistan the ultimate exercise in futility? Even if we are able to accomplish there what no one else has ever accomplished—Alexander the Great failed there. The British Empire failed there, twice I believe. The Soviet Empire failed there. And even if we are successful where no one else has ever been successful, would it really matter because the bad guys, they are saying, would just go into Pakistan? And then would we assist Pakistan with additional huge investments of blood and capital? And if we are successful there, then the bad guys would go to Somalia or Yemen or some other place in that part of the world because many of the central governments there have little control of rural tribal areas.

And so they are asking, if we make the huge investment that would be necessary of blood and treasure to win in Afghanistan and Pakistan, in the words of the old farmer, would the juice be worth the squeezing?

Dr. BIDDLE. I guess I will start. There are two important dimensions, at least, in the question. One is, can we succeed at all? And the second is, would the problem simply go somewhere else even if we did succeed?

Let me start with the second and move to the first. Yes, the problem would go somewhere else. I mean, I absolutely agree with Paul Pillar on that point. One of the reasons why I think our primary interest in Afghanistan is indirect and involves Pakistan more than Afghanistan per se is that Afghanistan is not unique as a potential base for terrorism. There are many places around the world that would constitute at least secondary alternatives that al Qa'ida would surely move to.

Where Afghanistan is unique is its geographic proximity to a threatened unstable country that has a nuclear arsenal and where al Qa'ida is already operating. And it seems to me that where there are many potential bases for al Qa'ida to operate in, a Pakistan that collapsed and that as a result lost control of its nuclear arsenal is a unique threat to us geographically. That is a problem that is very, very different from Yemen; that is very, very different from Somalia. I would certainly not advocate for myself deploying 68,000 or more American soldiers to Somalia to try to deny al Qa'ida a haven there. I think the problem with Pakistan is of a very different order. And again, the problem with it is we have very little ability to secure our interests directly, and therefore, we are stuck trying to moderate the threat in the ways that are available to us, which prominently include Afghanistan.

Can we succeed in Afghanistan anyway? Is this a graveyard of empires in which success is impossible? I would begin by saying that the historical record is a bit more ambiguous than it is sometimes portrayed as being. The three Anglo-Afghan wars, for example, that are often cited as examples of how foreigners always fail in Afghanistan, with the exception of the first, in the second two, the British actually came out with a significant fraction of their interests at stake in the conflict. It wasn't an unambiguous, straightforward, simple, low-cost conquest to the foreign country. Neither was it a situation in which Britain was simply vanquished, left with nothing and had no ability to secure its interests through its influence on Afghanistan. It is like often is the case in South Asia, a muddy in-between case.

Let me speak to one of the more direct analogies that underlies the argument, however, of a graveyard of empires, and that is the Soviet experience in the country. In many ways, the Soviet experience is a very poor guide to our prospects today. To begin with, the Soviet Union was recognized by all Afghans within milliseconds of their arrival in the country as a hostile force that was pursuing its own interests and not Afghanistan's. The United States was much more popular among Afghans in 2001 than we are now, but we remain substantially popular among an important fraction of Afghans. We are much more welcome than the Soviets had been.

The Soviets had an extremely poorly trained, poorly motivated conscript military that was very poorly equipped for counterinsurgency. We have one of the best trained, best motivated, and increasingly best equipped counterinsurgent forces in the history of counterinsurgency. The Soviets were facing an opposition force that by the late 1980s numbered perhaps 150,000 Mujahideen. Estimates of Taliban strength today are uncertain, but they are nowhere near that, perhaps in the 20,000 to 40,000 range. Moreover, to pick another analogy that's popular, Vietnam, relative to Vietnam the Taliban coalition that we face in Afghanistan is much, much weaker. There are a deeply divided, very heterogeneous collection of actors with very different interests, very different motivations and very different stakes in the conflict that have substantial difficulty in coordinating their activities. They are also radically unpopular among Afghans, who unlike the South Vietnamese facing the Viet Cong know what they would get if the Taliban were to take over and have consistently said that they don't want it.

Finally, the Taliban coalition, although it is heterogeneous, is almost entirely Pashtun. Afghanistan, while importantly Pashtun, especially in the south and east, is not entirely, so that also tends to produce constraints and limits on the ability of the Taliban to expand.

All these things don't provide some sort of guarantee that if we just do "X," we will succeed in Afghanistan. This is a probabilistic world, and at best we are buying a chance of success, but I think it is an overstatement to say that success is impossible or the chances of success are negligible.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. Dr. Snyder.

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you gentlemen for being here.

General Keane, please remind me. I forget when you retired. What was your date of retirement?

General KEANE. December 2003.

Dr. SNYDER. December 2003. So your testimony today is very helpful to me. In September of 2001, we had the vote in the House on giving the President the authority to go over after the perpetrators of the events, and then I was really struck on the first page of your testimony. This was the strongest public statement I have seen here in which somebody acknowledged who is on the inside how underresourced we did in the war in Afghanistan, and I am just going to read it again.

"It is a fact that Afghanistan, beginning in 2002 and increasingly so in 2003, became a secondary priority to the war in Iraq. Indeed it remained as such till this year, 2009, when only now we are beginning to shift our priority effort from Iraq to Afghanistan. As such, as a secondary effort, despite the addition of NATO forces and resources, Afghanistan has always been operating at the margin and, in most of those years, below what was required in forces and resources." We had a new Administration come in, 17,000 troops increased, U.S. troops, General McChrystal brought in, in a change of leadership in May of this year, and now he has completed his reassessment, so we are going through this discussion.

The question I want to ask is this: You all have discussed this topic as we all should in terms of what is in the interest of the United States. I have also been struck, though, by the discussion that is going on now in contrast with our debate in 2001 about what kind of a commitment we would keep to the Afghan people and the people of Afghanistan. I have talked to two different House Members in the last couple of weeks who have met with Afghan legislators, women Afghan legislators, and the message they got from these meetings were very eloquent: Please don't abandon us again.

Now, that is not a U.S. national security interest. I believe it is an interest that we need to be cognizant of, and none of you discuss that in your statements. So my question is what impact, if any, on the decision-making process going on here and in the White House should our responsibility—perhaps you might describe it as a moral responsibility—to the Afghan people be? Dr. Pillar, when you talk about spreading instability, I almost—that almost seems to me as a euphemism, but we know what will happen, don't we, if the Taliban go back into an area where people have stepped forward

in leadership positions or women have stepped forward, so we ought to be sure what we are talking about when we talk spreading instability.

We are talking about people who had aligned themselves with the NATO forces being killed. So I would like you just to comment on the question how much of that sense of responsibility—and I am prepared for us to decide after eight years not much, but I am not sure I agree with that answer.

General KEANE. I will jump out there. I do believe after we deposed the Taliban back in 2001 for all the reasons we understand and then brought back in Karzai from an exiled position and established a government and began to put the threads of a country back together again under a new government, I do believe that there are some moral implications there for us as a Nation and given what our values are in terms of obligation to those people. And I did say in my statement in Afghanistan and Pakistan one of the real problems we have is their skepticism about us staying in those countries, our commitment and resolve, because of our past history in Afghanistan and in Pakistan. I do think——

Dr. SNYDER. The perception issue is a different issue than what I am asking about. I am asking what kind of moral obligation——

General KEANE. I do think there is a moral obligation. I do think that our national interests should be what drive us. But this is the United States and the values that we stand for are certainly at play here. And as I am trying to indicate that when we took the Taliban down and put rulers in, we still have some obligation there. Many of those people that we helped put in there are still there. And we gave the Afghan people certainly a considerable amount of hope in terms of what their future would be, and we have done some good things there. I don't want to diminish those. But, yes, it is there. But our national interest should drive us primarily.

Dr. PILLAR. I think it is quite proper for certainly Members of Congress to weigh that as a consideration and for our policymakers in the executive branch to do that as well. I would only say that as long as you do that, we should be clear that that is the reason or the rationale, or at least one of the reasons and rationales for doing what we are doing in Afghanistan rather than being a matter of protecting the security of the American people. It is legitimate, but let us be clear on what our objectives are.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. Mr. Thornberry.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Keane, would you respond to Dr. Pillar's two arguments. Number one, it doesn't matter which side of the Durand Line al Qa'ida sets up its bases, they are already here, so if they move over there it is not a significant difference. And secondly, as I understand the second argument is that what really matters is what happens in Pakistan, and that Afghanistan, even if it goes back to the Taliban is not going to destabilize Pakistan because, after all, there are relationships between the Taliban and elements in the Pakistani government that go back a long time. So it is not going to really matter in—where Pakistan goes.

General KEANE. Yes. Well, first of all, the al Qa'ida had a sanctuary in Afghanistan for a number of reasons as a major one be-

cause the terrain, the geography, the topography itself lent itself to shielding it much better than it does in Pakistan. In my judgment, certainly with Taliban protection as a host again, they would want to reestablish some element of that. And also we have them we are beginning to have them bottled up a little bit in Pakistan. Our intelligence has improved. We are using a lot of the infrastructure that we have in Afghanistan to assist with operations. Some of this gets into the classified arena, so we will keep this in a public forum here, but the reality of that is that the relationship in Afghanistan to stability and Pakistan to al Qa'ida is a real one. In my view, the al Qa'ida network and their training program and supporter program assists tangibly the Taliban, not only the Taliban in Pakistan but the Taliban in Afghanistan.

And why would we suppose anything else? I mean, this relationship existed before 9/11. It was a cooperative relationship based on mutual interests, and for them it was working. It is still working in Pakistan, and the cooperation in Afghanistan is a different nature.

So make no mistake. It would be much more reestablished than what it is now. And the—I don't know how we can hope to continue to make progress in Pakistan if we lose in Afghanistan. It makes absolutely no sense. It defies common sense to me to think that we would take that risk where the declared center of gravity for the al Qa'ida—it was the central front to kill Americans in Iraq. That is gone because they lost that war. It is, in fact, destabilizing Pakistan. Why is that? Why is that such a central front to them?

The reason is obvious. These are the same people who attacked us and the same people that want to break the moral spine of the Americans and collapse our economic system by having multiple weapons of mass destruction (WMD) events in our country. They have not given up on any of that. And they want that country and they want those weapons. And the relationship with Afghanistan and the Taliban to Pakistan I think is real. And if we lost Afghanistan, for the life of me I don't see how that wouldn't be a major, major impediment to what we are trying to do in assisting the Pakistanis to stabilize their country.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Thank you. Dr. Biddle, I want to get back to a discussion that you and Mr. Bartlett were having. Isn't it the case that Afghanistan was relatively stable from the 1930s to the 1970s under a king who was not a strong central power, of course, but still during that 40-, 50-year period, until you got into the assassinations that led to the Soviet invasion in 1979 that basically the place was pretty stable?

Dr. BIDDLE. Yes, that is correct. It didn't have a strong central form of government, but it was largely stable. It wasn't a failed country. People weren't worried about overflow into neighbors of the kind of instability that we are worried about today. Moreover, that model of relatively weak central government, imperfect administration, substantial poverty, but relative stability is not uncommon in the developing world.

Now, the debate over Afghanistan's political future at the moment is, in part, about whether or not the Afghan governing system of the Mazar Haban era under the king is replicable today given the kind of demographic change that we have seen in Af-

ghanistan and the effects of the civil war and its aftermath. So I think it is not trivially easy to simply reproduce that era today, but there is a model for how it has been done successfully in the past.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The gentleman from Texas, Mr. Reyes.

Mr. REYES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And gentlemen, thank you for being here this morning.

I agree that we have two major challenges as we try to work our way through this very critical part of the world. The first one is there are a lot—as I have talked to representatives of different governments urging them to support us in Afghanistan not so much with military but with reconstruction resources, their angst is they are afraid we are going to do the same thing we did previously and that is leave and they will be stuck holding the bag.

The second issue is how do we—what strategy do we use to convince them that not only we don't intend to do that but it is in everyone's best interest worldwide. All the different countries, even those that are neutral in this effort may be affected if Afghanistan fails, if the Taliban takes control and al Qa'ida or some other yet to be determined terrorist organization has a base of operation.

So if you three gentlemen would address those two points. How do we make the argument to them that we are not going to leave as we did the last time and how do we convince them that it is in everyone's best interest to help us there? Again not just with military resources but reconstruction resources as well.

General KEANE. I will start. The—well, I believe very strongly in what you just said because the skepticism, as I mentioned before, that is in Afghanistan and also in Pakistan is very real and in South Asia in general about the United States resolve. I mean, you know as well as I do, one of the things that Musharraf did which helped protract a war in Afghanistan was his hedging strategy because he wasn't certain that we were going to stay the course in Afghanistan and as a result of that his ISI organization and others assisted the Taliban to a certain degree because he felt he would have to live with them again.

So these issues are out there and they are very pregnant. And I would hope that one of the advantages that the President has as he is conducting this very deliberate review process is the opportunity for him to be very decisive about what his intent is in Afghanistan and very clear about it. And I think it is an opportunity for him to make the commitment to Afghanistan in terms of stabilizing this country with the appropriate resources, and I think an unequivocal statement along those lines and people will judge not just what he says certainly but what he does, what are the resources and what is the strategy that he is putting in play. And I think it is critical. I think you put your finger on something that is vital to our success in a counterinsurgency is the support of the people. Now, we do have that support. They do want us to stay. They want us to succeed. But they have every right to be skeptical about that.

The second point dealing with other help, look, we do need help. We shouldn't bear this financial burden by ourselves and there are

other countries in the region that can certainly help and other interested countries. Obviously NATO is involved and a lot of frustrations with NATO with 42 countries there and very few of them providing combat forces and we just sort of wave our hands and give up on it. But the fact of the matter is if they are not going to provide combat forces, then there should be some financial relationship to Afghanistan as a result of not providing those combat forces.

And I think we should be pretty tough about what our expectations are to bear that financial burden not by ourselves but with other countries in the region and also in NATO.

Dr. BIDDLE. I think the question of U.S. resolution and will is obviously important in lots and lots of ways in Afghanistan. We are laboring against the challenge that our observable history is not helping us here. South Asians know what we did with respect to Afghanistan the last time around. What that means is that, yes, I think it is important for the President and in particular the government at large to stake out a clear declaratory position once we have decided. But actions do indeed speak louder than words and credibility builds gradually over time through observed demonstrated actions on our part. There is no way to change people's perception of our willingness to stay overnight. It will only happen by, in fact, staying and by, in fact, turning the tide on the ground and demonstrating that we are willing to pay the costs if that is what we ultimately decide.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Forbes.

Mr. FORBES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to thank the three of you for being here and we only have five minutes; so I will try to keep my questions concise and ask you to do the same on your answers.

General Keane, we have appreciated so much your testimony over the years, and I know from the period from 1999 to 2003 you were the Vice Chief of Staff of the United States Army and we relied a lot on your testimony.

During that period of time when we were in Afghanistan, did we have a strategy? I am not saying it was the right strategy but did we commit troops to Afghanistan with no strategy at all while you were the Vice Chief of Staff?

General KEANE. We deposed the regime, if you can remember, with the assistance of the Northern Alliance and our special operations forces and air power and I thought that was fairly brilliant, frankly, and the Central Intelligence Agency conceptualized that, and I think it was a better plan than what we had in the Pentagon just to be honest about it.

But then very quickly, listen, in December of 2001 was the first time sitting together as a senior Four Star that I was told that they were thinking that we were going to go to war in Iraq. That was December of 2001. We dropped Afghanistan, the Taliban in November, if you can remember, of 2001. And then General Franks was given instructions to make plans, and his organization intellectually started to get its arms around a much larger problem of going to war in Iraq. And some of us argued at the time that I while I didn't—I could see Iraq in the future as to why something

like that may needed to be done if we were not able to get our hands on the WMD issue, what concerned us was the fact that we would take resources away from Afghanistan.

Mr. FORBES. General Keane, just because my time's almost up, my question is not whether you thought the strategy was right or wrong. Did you have a strategy at all for Afghanistan?

General KEANE. The strategy for Afghanistan after deposing the regime and bringing in a surrogate government under Karzai was a very minimalist strategy. I mean, the fact of the matter is the leadership at the time believed that—and you probably are aware of this, that the last thing that we wanted to do was nation build, and I think that was an overreaction to the previous administration. And what we wanted to do was stand up the host country, don't create an artificial dependency on us, and give them the minimal resources so they would bring their ministries and their services that they need to provide online much faster as opposed to the more robust model that was used in Bosnia which many of the people in the administration felt created this artificial dependency and protracted it. That was the strategy. And I think it was the wrong strategy to be quite frank about it, and I think time certainly has proved that to be the case.

Mr. FORBES. Dr. Biddle, let me ask you very quickly, you said that the analytical benefits of war in Afghanistan is a close call. In other words, I take it, depending on which side you chose in terms of the analysis you could make that decision as to whether or not we should be in the war or not be in the war; is that a fair assessment?

Dr. BIDDLE. There are serious counterarguments to either position.

Mr. FORBES. If that is the case, then how would you determine is this a war of necessity or a war of choice?

Dr. BIDDLE. I tend to think that that is a distinction of degree rather than in kind in most wars, but clearly we have alternatives to the policy we are now adopting in Afghanistan.

Mr. FORBES. Would you call it a war of necessity or a war of choice if you had to make the call?

Dr. BIDDLE. I suppose it is more a war of choice than a war of necessity, but I think most wars involve a degree of choice.

Mr. FORBES. Dr. Pillar, you retired I think in 2005 from the Intelligence Community. Since that time, have you had any access to classified information or anything like classified information that was going on about Afghanistan?

Dr. PILLAR. No, sir, I have not.

Mr. FORBES. Do you agree that General McChrystal is the best that we have to get that kind of information from as to what is going on in Afghanistan now?

Dr. PILLAR. I would presume we have multiple sources of information. He, as the theater military commander, would have one channel of information——

Mr. FORBES. Would you want to talk to him if you were developing a strategy?

Dr. PILLAR. Certainly.

Mr. FORBES. General Keane, do you agree that—you told us that we should rely on General McChrystal's judgment. Do you believe

that he is the best that we have right now as far as an assessment in Afghanistan?

General KEANE. Yes, I do. And let me just add something to that. I mean, look it, after we took the Iraqi military down, our military was very ill prepared for counterinsurgency intellectually and in any—in terms of doctrine lack of training, and it was true of our generals. No fault of theirs. The fault of people like myself who were running the military and didn't provide that kind of foundation. We have been at this now for a long time, and we are very good at this, and McChrystal is at the top of our game. He has been at this for five years. He has got a huge amount of experience, and he has the intellect to deal with, the judgment and the experience, and he also has a great mentor in Dave Petraeus. The two of them are the best probably that has ever been put together. So I value their judgment quite a bit in terms of what needs to be done, because I believe they have got a handle on it.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The gentlewoman from California, Mrs. Davis.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you to all of you for being here today. I wonder if you could focus more—and I am sorry, I had to be out of the room for a few minutes; so I might have missed some of your discussion about the Taliban. But to think about the discussion that is going on now and whether it is based on some assumptions that you believe are correct or in some cases may not necessarily be correct about the Taliban and the relationship of our strategy to Iraq and what we did there. Are we making some assumptions there that you don't think are necessarily going to play out?

I think the follow-up question to that really relates to whether or not our interests, and certainly we have had a number of commentators that are suggesting moving away from nation building and more toward deal making with the Taliban, whether that is a strategy that you think has more negative than positive opportunities.

Dr. PILLAR. I will try to respond to that. I think the main mistake in assumption that is being made is because what we know as the Taliban is ideologically extreme as al Qa'ida. It is ideologically similar to it. Because it has a proven alliance with al Qa'ida, then it therefore follows that the Taliban itself is some sort of security threat to the United States beyond what we are doing ourselves in Afghanistan. That is a mistaken assumption. The Taliban is one of the most insular inward-looking groups anywhere. They are concerned overwhelmingly with what is going on in Afghanistan. They are not a transnational terrorist group. They do not have larger global designs like al Qa'ida and bin Laden do.

Another assumption that has been taken as a so-called no-brainer, but I think is much short of a no-brainer is this business about, well, if the Taliban established some kind of protostate in Afghanistan that that would mean automatically al Qa'ida would come back in and have a big safe haven. Well, we have already addressed the question of how much that would matter whether they did or not, but it is not an automatic certain thing. The fact is that the biggest single setback that the Afghan Taliban has ever suffered, a catastrophic setback, was their loss of power over most of

Afghanistan thanks to our intervention in Operation Enduring Freedom as a direct result of al Qa'ida's terrorist activities. That doesn't mean we are going to have a break between the Taliban and al Qa'ida. It does mean it would be a source of strain. It does mean that that Afghan sanctuary we keep hearing about is not necessarily going to be any more attractive than what al Qa'ida has in Pakistan right now.

Dr. BIDDLE. The Taliban are clearly not a direct threat to the United States. The Taliban are not going to launch missiles at us. The question is not whether they are a direct threat to the United States. The question is would their either retaking control in Kabul or their actions leading to a collapse of the current government in Kabul indirectly create a problem for us by enabling other actors, either al Qa'ida in Afghanistan or al Qa'ida or many others in Pakistan and again for my money the latter is the bigger problem.

Moreover, I don't think the right way of thinking about the Taliban and al Qa'ida in Afghanistan is whether it is automatically an invitation to al Qa'ida. We live in a probabilistic world in which the whole problem here is one of judging relative likelihood.

So I don't think you can guarantee that al Qa'ida would be invited back in. You also can't guarantee that it wouldn't. The problem is assessing the relative likelihood and how much of the likelihood you are going willing to tolerate.

The other issue I wanted to talk about though is this question of deal making and deal making with the Taliban in particular. Most—many counterinsurgencies historically end with some sort of negotiated settlement. The right way of thinking about this war is not success means the last Taliban dies of arteriosclerosis in a cave somewhere. Probably the end game for this if we end up with something that looks like a success from our perspective is some sort of a deal in which elements of the Taliban are civilianized and brought into the government as legitimate political parties in exchange for other concessions that we can live with. The problem is we can't get that right now because the other side, or the other sides, as this is a heterogeneous collection of actors on the other side of the front in Afghanistan, are by all indications, unwilling to make any kind of compromise that would produce an outcome that we can live with. The Karzai government has made informal contacts with both the Mullah Omar Quetta Shura faction and Hekmatyar apparently through Saudi intermediaries for quite some time now. The negotiations never go anywhere because the Taliban keep insisting that a precondition for talking is that all foreign forces leave the country. That is an obvious poison pill.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

The gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. Wilson.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this very important hearing.

General Keane, when I saw you were coming, I am thrilled to have you here because your past testimony here has been very accurate. It has been ahead of the curve. It has been politically incorrect, but you have been proven correct. So I want to thank you for your past testimony and being here today. Additionally, I agree with President Barack Obama that a central front in the war on terrorism is Afghanistan and Pakistan. We just simply can't walk

away. We must face it. And I particularly have the perspective—my former National Guard unit, the 218th Brigade, served for a year in Iraq, training the Afghan police and army units. General Bob Livingston. And I visited every three months. And I know so many people in that unit and they felt so good about working with their Afghan brothers, people who do want to live in a free market society.

Additionally, I am grateful to be the co-chair of the Afghan Caucus. So I have had the opportunity to visit the country nine times. I have visited as far as east as Asadabad. I just returned two months ago from visiting in Helmand, Camp Leatherneck, Marines trained at Parris Island, General Larry Nicholson, summa graduate. It is just—seeing our troops, they can make a difference, and I know that they can be successful. And I have the greatest faith in General McChrystal, Ambassador Eikenberry. We have got the right people in place, and we need to follow their advice.

With that, General, what do you think of the capabilities and proper roles of the Afghan national police and Afghan national army? Are they being effectively trained? Are they large enough? What do we need to do for troop strength and equipment?

General KEANE. Yes. Well, thanks for all the support that you provide to our troops out there particularly with those frequent visits. I know they are appreciated.

That is a great question. I mean, the Afghan national security forces clearly are the final solution. The problem we have, we had the same problem in Iraq in 2006. The level of violence had reached epic proportions in Iraq in 2006 and was way beyond the capacity level of the Iraqi security forces to cope with it. So we had to bring that violence down to a point where they could cope with it and then we are able to put together a strategy where we gradually and deliberately leave the country. That is what is unfolding in front of our eyes. That is the way you have a successful end to that strategy. And that is what the intent time is here.

Now, can we do that? Well, the problem is this growth of the Afghan national security forces has been on a diet for the last seven or eight years. I mean, they are at a pitiful number in terms of where they should be. A little less than 100,000 police and now reaching for 134,000 by 2010 in terms of the growth of the army. We have got to expand that dramatically. The commanders certainly understand that.

Defense Minister Wardak clearly understands it. He is at the 400,000 number and I believe the generals are at that as well; so we are talking about doubling that. So that is crucial. The quantity, it really makes a difference.

Hold on to this thought: When we went into Iraq in 2007, we put about 35,000 people, part of that surge, from February to July. The Iraqis put on the street 125,000 troops from January to December of that year that were not there the previous year. Now, that also contributed to the success, and they don't get much credit for it because we have a tendency to talk about ourselves a lot. But the fact of the matter is we have to do a similar thing in Afghanistan. We have to get those numbers up to where they make a difference. We will do side-by-side operations with them. Their growth and development will be very dramatic once we do this. We have got to stop

wringing our hands about the fact that they are illiterate and it is very hard to find leaders. Listen, in the final analysis this force we put together has got to be a little bit better than the other Afghans that they are fighting. We are not building an image of a Washington military force and we are certainly not building something like the Iraqi military, who had a history of a large standing army. We are building a security force inside Afghanistan for the Afghans so that they can rely on that force without us.

Mr. WILSON. And I share your high opinion of General Abdul Wardak, the Minister of Defense, and also the Minister of Interior. They are not corrupted and I see real opportunity.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Loebsack, the gentleman from Iowa.

Mr. LOEBSACK. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Thanks to the three of you for being here today. It is always good to see you folks. My first time with Dr. Pillar, and I appreciate your testimony as well.

Let us assume for a moment that we take a maximalist approach, that the Administration chooses the counterinsurgency strategy in spite of misgivings on the part of a number of folks. We in this Congress are faced with a lot of very important decisions on a regular basis, but it seems as though we are looking at a number of big projects right now, including health care, for example, and we have got huge deficits, long-term debt problems as well as far as the eye can see, even if we don't adopt a health care plan of one sort another anytime soon.

I am interested in knowing, in particular, what Dr. Pillar and Dr. Biddle believe to be the long-term costs of the counterinsurgency strategy because we are not looking just at military costs, obviously. We are looking at a lot of other things too. If we are really going to adopt a counterinsurgency strategy and pursue that we are talking about capacity building, we are talking about economic development, we are talking about a number of things, a number of elements to that strategy.

If you would, Dr. Biddle, begin, could you give us some idea of the long-term costs, and I guess there has to be an assumption made as to how long we are talking about before we can begin talking about those costs too.

Dr. BIDDLE. On the costs side, I think a reasonable rule of thumb here might be roughly the scale of costs that we have been expending in Iraq. Iraq is a country of comparable population to Afghanistan. Ordinarily counterinsurgency effort is scaled to the size of the population to be defended. So I think to a first approximation, a ballpark on the likely cost of continued operations on an annual basis in Afghanistan will be that they could very well rise to what we have been spending in Iraq. They have been running radically—well, substantially lower than that in Afghanistan. I think that is not a good guide to the future.

In terms of how many years we will have to incur that scale of cost, there is a paradoxical quality to the answer to that question. If we are prepared to stay long enough to prevail, there is a reasonable chance that we can negotiate the kind of deal that Mrs. Davis was talking about earlier because we can change the long-term

prognosis of the opponent, what they think they could get in the absence of a deal in a way that opens bargaining space and makes a possible deal sooner. A deal could end the war if reached much, much sooner than the kind of 5- to 15-year commitment that people often talk about for counterinsurgency.

If we are not willing to stay for the longer term, we aren't going to get the deal in the short term that could shorten the war. I think the expectation, therefore, has to be that if we are going to do this, we have to be willing to pay Iraq-scale costs for three to five years at a minimum.

If we are willing to do that, perhaps we will be fortunate and be able to negotiate a deal that would end that expenditure sooner than that, but I think it would be very unwise to plan on that basis.

Mr. LOEBSACK. Dr. Pillar.

Dr. PILLAR. Steve Biddle is much more of a counterinsurgency expert than I, and I have no reason to differ from his estimation of Iraq-scale cost for at least three to five years. The only thing I would add as a supplement to what Steve said is I don't see any one deal that would cut short the war. We are not going to reach an agreement with Mullah Omar or the Quetta Shura. We can and should and must, or the Karzai should and must reach individual deals with pieces of what come under the label of Taliban, but that is part of prosecuting the war. It is a support to the war. It would not end the war.

Mr. LOEBSACK. One last question. Dr. Biddle, could you respond to Dr. Pillar and his concern in particular about engaging in the kinds of activities that you and General Keane are talking about in Afghanistan and the problems that that creates for reputation, what have you, on the part of the United States in Pakistan? Because you are assuming that really the major interests that we are trying to deal with in Afghanistan is the indirect one having to do with Pakistan.

Dr. BIDDLE. The issue has to do with the difference between the short term and the long term. In the short term, anything we do in Afghanistan tends to hurt us in Pakistan. Anything we do, period, tends to hurt us in Pakistan. I give you the Kerry-Lugar bill, for example. The question is in the longer term if what we do in Afghanistan has the effect of creating government collapse and chaos there my sense is that is likely to have more negative consequences for stability in Pakistan than the short-term problem of U.S. reinforcement in Afghanistan in a way that would be played in Islamabad and in Pakistan public opinion. Let me just, very briefly, emphasize that Paul Pillar and I are in agreement on the dynamics of negotiation with the Taliban.

Clearly this is very a heterogeneous movement. If we could settle with factions other than the Quetta Shura Taliban and Mullah Omar that might very well enable us to largely disengage from the conflict, that would not end violence in Afghanistan per se.

Mr. LOEBSACK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks to all three of you.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The gentleman from Texas, Mr. Conaway.

Mr. CONAWAY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And gentlemen thank you for being here today. The—from a commander's perspective, sending men and women into harm's way and knowing some of them won't come has got to be the toughest thing they do and as the Commander in Chief, that is what the President is doing right now. But I cannot believe that this public hand wringing that the President is experiencing and going through isn't doing anything but being unsettling to the men and women he has asked to fight that fight and their support group back home as they watch this unseemly process he is going there. Yes, he has got to get advice from everyone, but I would argue that sooner is better than later in much of what is going on.

The Taliban has been—al Qa'ida has been collocated with the Taliban long enough now that they are co-married—they have married with these tribes. They are undistinguishable between each other. It is not a hat they switch. And even the President has said in a speech in August that a strength in Taliban—his words were "if left unchecked, the Taliban insurgency will mean an even larger safe haven for al Qa'ida." I don't know that we can, in effect, separate those two.

A show of hands or just a head nod, anybody arguing for the status quo in Afghanistan? Dr. Pillar, are you arguing for the status quo? Okay.

It comments on the fact that Pakistan seemed to have made a deal with the devil that as long as Taliban would stay in the FATA in the northwest provinces they were fine. Clear evidence is that that is no longer the case. They have come out of the FATA. If we would abandon everything and leave, do you think the al Qa'ida/Taliban would stay in the FATA and not continue to threaten the central government in Pakistan?

Dr. PILLAR. One thing we should remember is that the Taliban was—the Afghan Taliban was midwifed by the government of Pakistan, as General McChrystal noted in his assessment that was made public last month. The Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence Director reportedly still does do business with the Afghan Taliban. It is part of their way of hedging their bets. I think much of our discussion about this topic undersells the government of Pakistan in terms of their inclination and proven willingness and ability to cut their own deals and in this case not just cut deals but do business with the Afghan Taliban, which they have, to put it quite bluntly, considered as one of their tools in their confrontation with India.

Mr. CONAWAY. General McChrystal's call for a surge I think is focused on the military aspects of it, but shouldn't there be a civilian surge equivalent to that and is it rational to think that we have got State Department personnel available to do that kind of surge to meet the dual needs of the security and the governance improvements?

Dr. Biddle.

Dr. BIDDLE. Clearly, General McChrystal strongly favors a major increase in civilian resources in Afghanistan and I think everyone does. The issue is how do we go about providing it? Do we—are the resources being provided to the State Department? Is the State Department's hiring process up to the job of bringing in the kinds of skill sets that are need to do this? But I think there is no question

but that the military command in theater desperately wants a substantial increase in civilian expertise in country.

Mr. CONAWAY. General Keane.

General KEANE. I totally agree with that. And we had an excellent template in Iraq in the recent counterinsurgency there with the team that Ryan Crocker brought together and how they worked on increasing the ministerial capacity, worked on corruption and a number of other issues and certainly the political progress in the country leading to national and provincial elections and not the least of which was those 18 benchmarks that the Congress of the United States insisted on them having. So there is a lot of work to be done there. If we don't do it, the military guy—they will default and they will try to do it themselves. And some of that they can do but a lot of it they can't.

So they really do need some help. I have been encouraged by the Secretary of State in her comments about how she wants to clearly increase the commitment of the capacity of the State Department to help a counterinsurgency in a meaningful way to work to deal with governance and reconstruction, and clearly governance is a major issue, identified by General McChrystal in his support. So he needs to that help. It remains to be seen whether he is going to get that help or not.

Mr. CONAWAY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

Ms. Tsongas.

Ms. TSONGAS. Thank you very much for your testimony. I have appreciated very much your range of opinions.

General, you have focused on, as has General McChrystal, on the need to grow the Afghan national security forces to a size that has never before been achieved; so that is a challenge in it and of itself. But going forward, how would we expect the Afghan government to be able to support a force of that size given it has no obvious source of revenues? If we look at Iraq, for example, you have the potential for oil revenue. How would they manage that and support that going forward assume they could even grow it to that point?

General KEANE. You are absolutely right. They don't have the Treasury to do it and that is one of the reasons why it did not grow to the level it probably should have grown to. That would have to come largely from our finances as well as other countries that are willing to provide it. But, listen, if we use that as a cost and a limitation, the cost of a U.S. soldier versus an Afghan is about 25 to one. So as we build Afghan soldiers, keep in mind, yes, we are going to pay for that. It is going to be considerably cheaper than it is for a U.S. soldier. And as we build that capacity, eventually we will be able to take those U.S. soldiers out and it will be a net savings for us financially.

Ms. TSONGAS. But it may require years of support.

And I am curious, Dr. Biddle, if you have some thoughts as to how the Afghan economy can be developed to the point where it doesn't require American dollars even to support the Afghan national forces.

Dr. BIDDLE. I don't think it is reasonable to expect that the Afghan economy is going to grow to the point where they will be able to support a governance infrastructure, civilian and judicial and

military, sufficient to meet their needs. That was not the case in the 1930s or 1940s when we had relative stability in Afghanistan. Afghanistan has always been a ward to some degree of the international community, either their neighbors or great powers like Britain or the United States. The question is the magnitude of the support they will require from the international community and the political mechanism set up for the international community to manage this problem. I think it is important when we think about building up the Afghan national security forces to build into it a plan for building it back down again once the security threat goes down through a DDR process that makes it possible not to eliminate or liquidate the Afghan military but to downsize it without destabilizing the country when we get to the point where some settlement or series of settlements has reduced the threat to the point where a smaller force is possible. That kind of build-down process has long lead time items involved in it, like, for example, providing job training as part of the training regime for troops what they are brought into the Afghan security forces in the first place. We need to start planning for that now.

I don't think, however, that because it is unreasonable to expect that of Afghanistan itself will be able to afford a government and a security structure large enough to keep the country stable that therefore the undertaking is hopeless and it shouldn't be undertaken in the first place. I do think we need to anticipate the downstream problems and the downstream need to downscale and to ensure some sort of international mechanism for keeping the Afghan state funded. But I think if we do that properly, it is not necessarily a hopeless undertaking.

Ms. TSONGAS. Is the cost of all that included in your calculations as to what a counterinsurgency strategy would cost this country or is that sort of an add-on cost down the way?

Dr. BIDDLE. No, I think that is part—for example, much of what we were doing in Iraq during the time of our larger combat involvement there was involved in building up the Iraqi national security forces in ways that the Iraqi government was wasn't wholly funding itself. That is a direct analogy to the situation in Afghanistan. In the outyears, the kind of support for Afghanistan that will be required even after the insurgency ends is a different business and need not necessarily be funded entirely by the United States. I think we need a broader diplomatic mechanism for ensuring the proper provision of revenue to the Afghan government in the outyears.

Ms. TSONGAS. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentlewoman.

Mr. Wittman.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you all so much for joining us today. I really appreciate your candid and well thought-out statements. It gives us lots of information to ponder as we all look at the decisions that are before all of us concerning the efforts there in Afghanistan.

I do want to focus some of my questioning on Afghanistan police and security forces. I think those are important parts of the whole effort there. Dr. Biddle, I want to capture some of your thoughts and ideas.

On page 10 of your statement, you outline some of the challenges and the benefits of focusing on training rather than fighting, and you say "training and combat are not meaningful alternatives in Afghanistan. The former requires the latter," and you also go on to say that "proper combat advising and mentoring speeds things up but cannot provide an effective mass military instantly. In the meantime, someone must protect not just key population centers, but also the very mobilization infrastructure of recruitment centers, supply depots, bases, and transportation connections needed to create the new Afghan formations."

And my question goes to the point of in this development of these security and police forces, should it be the Department of Defense that does this training or should it be the State Department? It is my understanding that in General McChrystal's recommendations that he says in his initial assessment that the Afghan police training and mentoring program be transferred from the Department of State's Narcotics and Law Enforcement Bureau to Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC–A). And I understand the military is ready to assume this mission.

From your perspective, do you think the military should take over this activity from the State Department? And if this recommendation is approved from General McChrystal, do you have any recommendations for seamless transition with no disruption to training or mentoring operations, and with that do you see the need for an intermediary there to maybe make that transition smoother and to make sure that it is without, number one, delay but also without keeping up the effort to stand up this police and security force?

Dr. BIDDLE. Police functions are traditionally thought to be central to counterinsurgency because they are the people that are on the ground in grassroots contact with the people already and have the most knowledge about the immediate environment. But the kind of policing that people talk about in the context of counterinsurgency isn't writing traffic tickets or even arresting drug kingpins, per se. It is closer to paramilitary activity. And, in fact, countries like Italy, for example, who have been involved in this activity in the past, often produce paramilitary organizations, constabulary forces that are substantially more heavily armed and equipped than an orthodox police force and that have training that includes self-defense in a higher threatened environment that is typical of counterinsurgency as opposed to the kind of peacetime domestic policing that we normally think about when we think about police.

One of the reasons why I think it is not the right way of thinking about police training in Afghanistan to hand this over to metropolitan police officials from the West imported to Afghanistan for this job is because this is such a radically different environment than any of those officials will have lived in prior to that time. I think this is necessarily either a military police undertaking or a paramilitary training undertaking, and I think the proper way to organize and control it is through ISAF and the military command in theater.

Now, as far as the administrative mechanics of handing off, I will leave that to those who are closer to the day-to-day administration of this problem than I am. The one point I would add to this, how-

ever, is there have been, in the past, serious challenges with coordinating different national contributions to training activities, especially for the police. It is very important that there be a uniform approach to doing this and that there be a degree of unity of effort in the way we train both the Afghan police and the Afghan military.

Unity of effort is always complicated in a multinational counterinsurgency effort. It is especially problematic here. The management challenge I think is going to be at its greatest with respect to this business of coordinating different national efforts to assist in the training activity.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The gentleman from my Mississippi, Mr. Taylor.

Mr. TAYLOR. I want to thank all of you gentlemen. And General Keane in particular, welcome back and thank you for your service.

In the unclassified McChrystal report, I was struck by how often the words "corruption" and "narcotics" jumped out. Having followed our efforts in Latin America where our presumed goal was to keep the FARC from creating a narco state in Colombia, it strikes me as strange that I haven't heard any of you gentlemen talk about the need or even a desire to eliminate narcotics in Afghanistan. And, again, what I sense is almost sweeping under the rug of the corruption. Unless those two things are addressed, I only see two outcomes. In the case of corruption, I don't see how the people can continue to have any sort of loyalty to Karzai. I am told by Rory Stewart and others that Karzai is referred to as the America bull, that once you get outside of the city, he really has no influence. I am told that his brother is one of the biggest dope dealers in Afghanistan. It is common knowledge in that country. So here is a guy who apparently is not controlling his own brother where narcotics are rampant, and having just as a nation having funded a very expensive but successful effort in Colombia, why is it that we are willing to coddle what apparently is a narco regime in Afghanistan? And I ask this in all seriousness.

Secondly, if they don't address the corruption, which I think, in turn, leads to a people having no connection to the central government, then when we choose to leave, whether it is 1 year, 10 years, 15 years from now, what is to keep the people who have a resentment against that corrupt government from getting rid of that regime then? And I will open that up to the panel.

Dr. BIDDLE. I don't think that General McChrystal is remotely recommending that we coddle narcotics kingpins or——

Mr. TAYLOR. I think he expressed the same concerns. That is where I got the concerns is from his report.

Dr. BIDDLE. Indeed. And speaking for myself but I suspect for the rest of the panel, I absolutely share, A, his concern with the importance of—I will broaden it slightly to governance improvement. But, B, the centrality of the narcotics problem to the government's problem.

Corruption per se is common in the developing world. Corruption on the scale we see it in Afghanistan today is not and that is driven in an important measure by the narcotics problem. The question

isn't so much do we ignore it? Of course we don't. The issue is what do we do about it? The approach we have tended to take in the past has had a heavy emphasis on eradication. That for a variety of reasons hasn't worked very well, and I think policy in country is moving towards an emphasis on in the longer term developing the infrastructure needed for alternative crops to be economically viable and in the short term going after specifically—quite exactly the intermediaries in the process, the middlemen and the kingpins that are in fact making the great majority of the money from narcotics in Afghanistan. The farmer at the grassroots level isn't the primary winner from the narcotics problem in Afghanistan. It is the intermediaries.

When we talk about using the leverage at our disposal to change governance in Afghanistan, I think one central dimension of that is using the leverage at our disposal to get the President—to get Karzai to crack down on some of the more egregious narcotics kingpins in the country and probably including but certainly not limited to Ahmad Wali, Karzai's younger brother.

Mr. TAYLOR. I have not heard that articulated by anyone either within the Pentagon or within the Administration as being a goal of our Nation right now.

Dr. BIDDLE. Well, again, I won't speak for government. Certainly for myself when I say governance improvement, that is an absolutely critical component of it. No question about it.

Mr. TAYLOR. General Keane.

General KEANE. Yeah. Well, in my statement, I did talk about Karzai's corruption and how we needed to deal with that. Certainly his involvement in the narco trafficking is certainly an issue. His brother is very much involved in it in the Kandahar province, and many people in his administration are involved in it.

General McChrystal is seized with it—and I think here is the reason. Much of the money that comes—that the Taliban get a fair amount of that money is coming from this issue. And we have got to go after this money. And I think what we will see is a—depending on the President's decision. But if he puts in play a full counterinsurgency strategy, you are going to see a pretty tough hand dealing with corruption in general. Not able to stamp it all out. I agree with Steve; it is endemic with the culture to a certain degree. But we can be very specific about people whose hands are dirty and what to do about them. That is number one.

And then go after the money. There are networks themselves, and we have intelligence on this. We can go after these networks themselves. I am talking about killing and capturing and going after that money and breaking that system down, so it is not being funded—it is not helping to fund the insurgency, which it is currently doing, which also was the issue in Colombia and South America.

So I believe part of this counterinsurgency strategy is clearly to put in play an element to deal with that very issue that you are talking about. And I am convinced they are going to be very aggressive about it. Not with production in terms of poppy fields, but with the cells that are enabling it and where the money is the leaders who are involved in it. I think that is what we are going to go after.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The gentleman from Colorado, Mr. Coffman.

Mr. COFFMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

One of the issues that seems necessary to have a successful counterinsurgency strategy at the end of the day is governance. And the question is, is the Afghan government capable of the—has the capacity to do things like the rule of law and do basic functions whereby the people of Afghanistan see that that is a better choice for them, that there is a marginal difference to support the government versus to support the Taliban? And I have got a couple of questions on that.

Number one, do we need—I hate to use the word—dumb down our expectations of the government, but did we superimpose a representative form of government, a Western style form of government that doesn't reflect the political culture of the country? And do we need to visit something that is more realistic? And let me focus on that question first if you could look at that question first.

Dr. BIDDLE. I think certainly the original constitution was substantially over-centralized, and I think, unquestionably, there is a trend in theater at the moment towards a decentralization of authority from the national level in Kabul down to at least the provincial level and in important ways to the district level as well. That will almost certainly be part of the governance process moving forward, is to empower more local officials in closer contact with the population and seen as more legitimate by the population in ways that it has not been the case in the past.

I think when it comes to things like rule of law in particular, part of that process of decentralizing government authority in Afghanistan will probably include some kind of hybrid between a traditional judicial system emphasizing village shuras and other collaborative methods of conflict resolution and dispute adjudication that have existed in Afghanistan for centuries with a formal government legal system in which you have neither a completely tribal system of justice, nor a completely government system of justice, but one in which an important subset of disputes before communities are resolved locally, another subset, major felonies, for example, are handled by the government, official, formal government system.

That is, I think, almost certainly the direction that governance efforts in Afghanistan are going to go. How far they go, how many of the current authorities that are vested in Kabul are decentralized in the provinces in the districts is where the issue is? That I don't think has been resolved yet. The direction, however, I think is clear.

General KEANE. The Taliban's progress certainly is being made in the rural communities and away from the major cities. And they set up a shadow government to do all of that. They, in many cases, because there is a lack of the rule of law, there is no way to arbitrate the differences that people all over the world have in disputes. They set up their own Shari'a court system to deal with that.

So that has to be replaced, in my view, with something that has some legitimacy. The problem we have with the current constitution is it allows the president to make all of those appointments

himself. And at some point—it is unfortunate. I think at some point we need to get that to a point where the people will be able to elect their own officials. That is not in the near term. That is down the road. But it is a problem because it has led to ineffectual government at the lower levels, patronage system to a fault, and none of that would surprise anyone.

But those kind of improvements have got to be made. And our emphasis—we have a tendency to talk about Karzai because of the national vote and his illegitimacy as a result of that and the corruption, and I did in my statement as well. But what Steve is talking about here is really crucial to the success of Afghanistan in terms of its stability because most issues in Afghanistan are really down at the local level where the people are. And we have to provide them through their own mechanism a much more responsive form of government there that will attend to their needs, and it has to have some connection obviously to a central government for it to be able to work.

Dr. PILLAR. In addition to being decentralized, effective governments in Afghan terms would be characterized by a lot of deal making, not just casting votes in a legislature or a provincial council, but the traditional way, going back to those years of stability that were alluded to before, up to the 1970s, was one of bargaining and deals among groups defined in terms of local power and ethnicity and sectarian identity.

Mr. COFFMAN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Johnson.

Mr. JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Between al Qa'ida and the Taliban, which entity has the most structure, the ability to govern? Which entity has the most financial resources that can be mustered, and which one currently has the, for lack of a better word, military force? And I would like a real short answer on that.

General Keane.

General KEANE. Well, they are very different organizations to be sure. The Taliban in Afghanistan and also in Pakistan has a local focus and therefore considerably more structure associated with that because it is dealing with the communities that already exist in those countries, considerably more cells and more networks.

At the same time, they are not a homogenous organization to be sure. In Afghanistan, as an example, there are three major groups involved, and even in those groups, there are splinters from them.

The al Qa'ida has regional and global objectives that differentiate them certainly from the Taliban entirely. We have hurt the al Qa'ida rather significantly in terms of its—the amount of money that it has available. I no longer see those classified reports to be able to tell you where they are. All I can tell you is that we have—we have made a significant impact on them in terms of their financial treasures, with the help of a lot of other countries in the world in doing that.

And I think I will just—in terms of military force, both the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Taliban in Pakistan are—both of

those forces are larger than the al Qa'ida that is sitting in—up in the tribal areas. And also they have a different focus.

Mr. JOHNSON. So would it not be correct to say that if the Taliban were able—were successful at running us off, if you will, and then retaking control of Afghanistan, it could not be said that they may be in a position of being overthrown by the al Qa'ida; and then al Qa'ida would have more than just a sanctuary, they would control a country? Is that something that is a reasonable possibility?

General KEANE. In my view, no. If I understood what you were saying, I think that the al Qa'ida would welcome the return to power of the Taliban. While their interests are different, they certainly have a common foundation in terms of what their belief systems are. And they would see them as an ally, and they would have more than a cooperative relationship. I don't see the al Qa'ida as doing anything to change the nature of the Taliban rule.

Mr. JOHNSON. That belief system that they both share, what is that?

General KEANE. In a general sense, I think it is an ideology that goes many centuries back in terms of the supremacy of Islam and what it represents to the world, and I think you are probably pretty familiar with all of that.

Mr. JOHNSON. Right. So continue with what you were saying prior to me interrupting.

General KEANE. In terms of——

Mr. JOHNSON. Taliban being overthrown by al Qa'ida.

General KEANE. No. I don't see any scenario that would bring those forces to clash, given the cooperation that they currently have. I think while they are different people to be sure, the Afghans, the Taliban in Afghanistan are Afghans——

Mr. JOHNSON. I have 10 seconds, let me ask——

General KEANE. I think you are on the wrong track thinking they are going to fight each other.

Mr. JOHNSON. Do either one of you disagree?

Okay. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

Ms. Shea-Porter.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Thank you.

General Keane, first of all, thank you for your service.

And thank you all for coming today.

You talked about the costs. You were asked about the costs, and you said the costs would come largely from the United States. Do you worry about our overall fiscal condition, and are you concerned that this will drain money from other projects, proposals and military needs?

General KEANE. Well, I don't want it to come overwhelmingly from the United States. As I said in my statement, I would hope, if we are going to make a decisive decision to commit to the stability of Afghanistan as part of the United States' national interests and to further help stabilize the region, we are not the only country that has an interest in that. Certainly the region has interest in it, and certainly the international community has interest in it. And I think it is time to get others to share in the largesse in

terms of our commitment. But clearly the amount of money that we are putting in now is disproportionate to others.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. It is.

And in the interest of time, I will say it is very concerning to us, who have to look at every dollar that this country is spending right now, to decide that we will be the ones because nobody else will, or for whatever reason, to do that.

And Dr. Biddle, you said there has to be some kind of international mechanism to pay. Can you say what that international mechanism would be? And was that really a realistic statement since we are now eight years into it, and it doesn't seem as if there is an international mechanism or even indeed an international will to create a mechanism?

Dr. BIDDLE. I don't think we have been pursuing it particularly aggressively through the first eight years in terms of this conflict. But I think in terms of looking out towards the end-game solution that we would like for Afghanistan, I think we would want to embed Afghanistan in some sort of regional diplomatic framework, a contact group, a collaborative mechanism of some kind in which Afghanistan's own neighbors who all have a very central security stake in what happens in the country and great powers like ourselves, but not limited to ourselves, who have a stake in what happens in Afghanistan have a collaborative mechanism in which we can exchange information, engage in——

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Hasn't that existed? Hasn't that existed? I mean, one of the things that I appreciate about the President right now is, after eight years, to have an intense eight-week review to make sure going forward.

But don't you think the Bush Administration tried to bring other countries on board? Are you saying that they didn't try to convince people there needed to be an international mechanism?

Dr. BIDDLE. I am saying the Bush Administration didn't pursue it very aggressively, A.

And B, the interests of the parties in this kind of arrangement change as a function of the situation on the ground in Afghanistan. In a situation in which security in Afghanistan is declining and nobody appears to be in a position to deal with it, the interests of any of parties in doing what is going to look to them like the unilateral intervention to save a failing situation creates serious disincentives for any of them to act.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. I am sorry to interrupt. We only have five minutes. I would say that, considering what happened in 2001, if they were going to step forward and they felt like they were compelled to help, that might have been the time. I have——

Dr. BIDDLE. In 2001, we actively rejected international assistance.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Right. But what I am saying is that, when we decide to reach out, it is not as if Afghanistan hasn't been a huge problem and part of the national/international conversation for many years now.

But I also wanted to ask you, I did want to touch on the drug addiction. But from a slightly different perspective of my colleague. I have been concerned with—and I am not really sure, but I think it is about 15 percent. Does that sound right, for addiction? At any

rate, the addiction rate is high in Afghanistan, and how are we going to motivate—and I don't know what the percentage is for men who are serving, but do you have any idea? Are we trying to get police and Afghan national police to do something they are not able to do, and how large a problem do you think the addiction is factoring in?

And what about the populace? How are we going to—even in our own country, people who are suffering from drug addiction have problems that would prevent them from actually engaging in some of the issues we are talking about today. What do you see as a solution for that? And do you think that we need to solve that problem first before we actually take care of the other problems?

Dr. BIDDLE. I assume you mean the addiction rate in the Afghan National Security Forces?

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. No, I am just talking about I think the populace for the number of Afghans. I have no idea, and I am asking you if you have any idea how large a problem this is for the Afghan police, for example, for those who are in charge of security?

Dr. BIDDLE. I don't consider myself an expert in drug policy per se. The parts of counter narcotics in Afghanistan that I have looked at are primarily those that affect the insurgency more directly. So I will defer to others on the question of dealing with addiction in the civilian population at large.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Do you think we should ask that question before we do anything to find out if the men that we are going to depend on to help Afghanistan stand up have another, more essential, critical problem right now?

Dr. BIDDLE. I think with respect to addiction in the Afghan National Security Forces, yes, absolutely. We have to do some of the same things there that we did with our own military after Vietnam in which narcotics were a problem for us.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Have we looked at it?

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentlelady.

The gentleman from North Carolina, McIntyre.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen for your testimony.

And, General Keane, it is especially good to see you today. Thank you for your many years of service to our great United States Army and for always being an inspiration for us who remember well your service at Fort Bragg and have followed your career since then over the years.

I especially am impressed with your written statement and wanted to ask you three specific questions that you may be able to answer succinctly or can expand upon.

Number one, on page 4, midway through the page, you speak about how the Afghan National Security Forces is currently projected to grow to 234,000 by 2010 and needs to grow to 400,000. And that will take until 2013 or 2012 at best. I have also read some statements in recent days challenging whether that is even an achievable number. Do you believe that 400,000 is a realistic number that could be achieved, or is it more of an idealistic number?

General KEANE. Oh, I think it is a realistic number. I mean, it has to do with our level of commitment to this. And also breaking

the paradigm from the past where we put a lot of obstacles, that are out there, but we made them formidable and those were high illiteracy rates in terms of the challenge of training and the difficulty of finding leaders. And as I said before—I mean, stay focused on what the goal is here.

We have a near-term problem that we need to solve, and security is the issue. And these forces have to be better than the other Afghans that they are fighting. And as we grow the size of them, they will operate largely side by side with us for a period of time. And out of that will grow a better force.

All of that said, we should put in place an infrastructure to sustain the quality and improve the quality of that force over time with education and other things that we know how to do. But we can't do all of that at once and then wait for a force to come out the other end years later. That is impossible. Not when what we have in front of us is a few years to solve the problem.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Second question I wanted to ask you, also on page four of your testimony, at the bottom, the last sentence says that as these forces conduct side-by-side operations, which you were just alluding to, with U.S. and NATO forces as a matter of routine, similar to what we did in Iraq, their proficiency increases exponentially, which I think is an ideal and a great statement. My concern is and what if, if the NATO forces do not cooperate as a manner of routine, we know that is part of the concern right now, is getting them to cooperate. Does that then undermine the entire premise here?

General KEANE. To be frank, I was using NATO forces there as a generous term. I mean, the truth of matter is that those conducting combat operations are few as opposed to the 42 nations that are contributing something in a uniform.

Make no mistake about it, we are Americanizing this war. I don't usually want to use that term for obvious reasons, but that is a fact. And most of those operations will be conducted side by side with U.S. forces and a few other NATO countries, and you are familiar with who they are.

Mr. MCINTYRE. And I think that is going to be the great challenge for us, when the statement that you just made, we are Americanizing this war, is, how long will the American public give the support depending on how long and how quickly these goals can be accomplished? So I appreciate you laying out these goals, and I think that is where the challenge for all of us is, is can this be done in a reasonable time frame so it doesn't drag on and on and on?

And the last—rest of the time I have left, I have a third question for you. The top of page seven of your testimony, you talk about governance at the local level, particularly the district and provincial level and assist with economic development, which you just alluded to in your statement and also orally. When you say "and economic development," are you talking about the infrastructure, like water and sewer? Are you expanding that to also mean schools, roads, health care, all of the above, or how much of the above? I know that is the challenge we face domestically, is, in extremely rural and poverty-stricken districts like many of us represent and are right near Fort Bragg, we don't have the substantive type of

health care. We have problems with schools. We have concerns with infrastructure and water and sewer here at home.

So that is part of the challenge we also have is, is deciding how much are we going—how much do we really need to do in Afghanistan to sustain what our great superior military is doing, and I guess I am wondering, how broad do you mean assist with economic development when you use that phrase?

General KEANE. Yeah. I only meant that to mean as it impacts the people more at the local level. Most of our nonmilitary efforts in Afghanistan to date have been involved largely in the reconstruction effort where you mention in terms of large projects. I think while some of that is important, the much more important issue is governance, and the much more important issue is some of the things that we need to do at the local level to assist the people with the quality of their life experience. And as we have found out in Iraq, that doesn't have—it is not necessarily a major, major event in terms of what that is doing in terms of financial expenditures or major engineering and construction projects. A schoolhouse, other things to make life better for them are things that are very helpful and also gives the local leader who we are supporting some credibility with his own people and starts to break this umbilical cord with the Taliban, who are also doing similar things.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The gentleman from California, the ranking member, Mr. McKeon.

Mr. MCKEON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you for—I think this has been very enlightening, and I appreciate you being here, and I appreciate your testimonies.

Dr. Pillar, in reading your conclusion, you basically say expanded military effort would be unwarranted; at best, the difference such an effort would make in the terrorist threat facing Americans would be slight, and at worse, the effort would be counterproductive and not reduce the threat at all. Even at its best, the benefit would be outweighed by the probable costs, especially in American lives and limbs and monetary resources, U.S. equities. Pretty dismal.

Do you have an alternative? Let me ask. Would you say we should keep the status quo, keep the number of troops we have there now, or would you just pull out altogether? What would be your answer?

Dr. PILLAR. As the President's spokesman made clear, pulling out altogether——

Mr. MCKEON. I want to know your opinion based on your statement here.

Dr. PILLAR. Well, I would identify myself—well, if I could just borrow on someone else's proposals. Richard Haas had a piece in the Washington Post, you may have seen, over the weekend in which he lays out the continued important and useful things that we can do at our current force levels. Much has been said in the hearing this morning about training the Afghan forces, armed forces and police. He would, and I would support this position, shift the emphasis away from our direct combat operations to training.

There is much more to be done, and again, this is something else that has been touched on in this hearing in the area of economic development and infrastructure.

And I would certainly place heavy emphasis on the international diplomatic front. There have been countless issues touched on here this morning that affect many other countries at least as much as ourselves. For example, the narcotics issue that a couple of members have asked about, Russia and Iran both have major addiction problems that involve overwhelmingly heroin from Afghanistan. That is just one of many ways, not to mention the other security related ways in which we can——

Mr. MCKEON. Most of those things you mentioned, they are addressing. Maybe not the way you would like or maybe not as much as you would like, but they are addressing those issues. So, basically, then, it sounds like you would be for the status quo.

Dr. PILLAR. Well, I think with the kind of——

Mr. MCKEON. Not increasing troop, not reducing troop, just kind of doing what we are doing, maybe with a little change of emphasis.

Dr. PILLAR. It is not just doing what we are doing, but certainly with more of a change of emphasis in terms of the Afghanization of the security force structure and certainly more vigorous efforts with regard to the international diplomacy.

Mr. MCKEON. But you would not be for pulling out? As dire as your assessment is, you are not for pulling out?

Dr. PILLAR. I am not for precipitously pulling out. I would envision a glide path that is very similar to what we are facing right now with Iraq.

Mr. MCKEON. Well, you would support pulling out in the next year or two?

Dr. PILLAR. Iraq, with that comparison, we are talking about the next couple of years, yes, sir.

Mr. MCKEON. Okay. You all mentioned I think in your testimony that you said, probably, our main—the main reason we should be there is for national security, and we looked at different areas of national security. It seems to me that when we pulled out of Vietnam, we kind of set a pattern. And I think that people now kind of question our staying power.

I mean, we have been there eight years. That is a long time, and that does take a lot of staying power. And I don't know exactly where the American people are on this. I think they are probably kind of drifting because they haven't heard much from the White House as to why we are there or why we should be there, and they really don't understand—I think most of them don't know where Afghanistan is and don't see it as a national interest.

But the question I have is, isn't it in our national interest—would it be against our national interest to just pull out? Because I know when I talked to General Nicholson over there in August, he said his Marines every day are getting asked, when are you leaving? When are you leaving, because the Taliban say you are going to be gone, and they are worried that—you all have mentioned in your testimony—that when we leave, the ones that have helped us are going to get killed, which is what happened in Vietnam. And so how do you think leaving, even not precipitously, say

in two years, what are we going to leave behind, and what is that going to do to our national interests?

General.

General KEANE. Well, I mean, look it, even with the forces we have there now and with the current 134,000 Afghan National Security Forces and 100,000 NATO forces, the Taliban has the momentum. They have gained the initiative. If we just continue that, there is nothing to stop that momentum. That will continue. In other words, they will gain more influence over the people, and they will gain more territory to have that influence. That is the momentum they are on. And the level of violence will continue to increase. That is the reality of that. If we took those resources away that we have, that we currently have, that is just going to accelerate all of that to eventually, well, they will regain control of the country. That is the inevitable path.

Mr. MCKEON. What does that do to our standing on the world scene? Why would people want to be an ally of ours?

General KEANE. Certainly there are huge implications for our allies, and some of our allies' relationships are tenuous to begin with, like in Pakistan and other places. It would have a dramatic adverse effect, and it would also have a dramatic effect on our adversaries, in terms of encouraging them and embolden them to do other things.

Look it, we did draw a line here. We drew this line, and we said this was important to us. And we stated the reasons for that. It was obvious at 9/11, and for many of us, those reasons are still there in terms of national interests. And we tried to explain why that is, at least Steve and I have, in terms of its impact on Pakistan. So we have drawn a line. To go back and erase that line right now will have detrimental impact on Southern Asia to be sure and the radical Islamic movement and its march that has taken place in that area, plus what one would do to encourage adversaries in other parts of the world as well.

Certainly one of the things that has happened to us and what the radical Islamists have been throwing in other peoples' faces for years is Lebanon, Somalia, no response to the *Cole,* no response to the Khobar tower. I mean, this is in their literature and not ours in terms of this is a country that lacks moral character; this is a country that will not shed its blood, et cetera.

Now, we have changed all of that since 9/11. We have taken that issue away, and we have defeated that movement in Iraq, and we are drawing a line here in Southern Asia as well. So I think there is a lot to be said for what we have done and what we are doing.

Dr. PILLAR. If I may comment on two of the key questions that General Keane has raised, and I do have to disagree.

One, it is by no means inevitable that the Taliban would take over. The Taliban swept to power in 1994 on a wave of sympathy and support from the Afghan people who were fed up with the civil war among the warlords that had persisted after the Soviet-supported Najibullah government was overthrown. They were welcomed.

The Taliban today is far, far less popular. In fact, they are extremely unpopular with the overwhelming majority of the Afghan

people, who knew what they lived through during the period of Taliban rule.

What will happen when we withdraw is not something we can predict with any certainty. The most I would say is we—deals will be struck in the traditional Afghan sort of way. I think it is far from certain that the deals will be shaped in a way that the Taliban will have the upper hand.

The other very important question that you have raised, Mr. McKeon, is about the broader effects on how U.S. credibility is seen, about who is seen as winning and losing all around the globe. These were, of course, issues that were raised after Vietnam.

There has been academic research on this. I would commend the work of Professor Daryl Press of Dartmouth, who has shown looking back through history that other countries and other actors do not calculate our degree of commitment or credibility to uphold our continuing important interests by whether or not we pulled back from or pulled out of peripheral interests. That is just not the way other actors, including our adversaries, judge our commitment or our will.

We would not judge the commitment or the will of our adversaries that way either. If we saw one of our adversaries pulling back from where he had a losing hand, that doesn't make us—that doesn't lead us to deceive ourselves that the same adversary would be any less determined to uphold his interest elsewhere.

So I really don't think that is damage that would justify our continued staying where we have—as the general put it—drawing the line.

Mr. MCKEON. We can probably debate that point for a long time because what I have seen is, people react as individuals; countries tend to react the same way. And it seems to me that we go to war when we are in a weakened position, and how people perceive us is if we are willing to stand for the things that we stand for, we are stronger. If we back away, we are weaker, and that seems to me that, every time we have done that, we face the consequences.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I certainly thank the gentlemen.

Let us go back to basics before we close our hearing.

Why is it important that our efforts in Afghanistan be important to our national security? Why should we have our efforts in Afghanistan tied to our national security?

Dr. PILLAR. Mr. Chairman, as I tried to begin in my own statement, I think the bottom line here is protecting the American people from threats of harm, particularly from international terrorists. That is what got us into Afghanistan in the first place. And I think that is the overwhelming first reason, even though there have been other reasons deduced here in the course of this morning.

Dr. BIDDLE. There is an old distinction between interests and vital interests, where vital interests are usually thought to be those central enough to secure that you would use force for. And that is the distinction I would draw for Afghanistan. We have a wide range of interests there. There is a much narrower set of things that are worth spilling blood over, and those involve the potential threat of downstream violence against America and Americans. And Afghanistan, in my view, largely because of its proximity to

Pakistan poses the downstream threat of violence against America and Americans, and that is what makes it a national security interest for us.

General KEANE. I would say the same; just a stable Afghanistan is in our national interest. We clearly do not want a sanctuary there. We can argue over whether one would get there or not. And clearly, there is a relationship between the stability of Afghanistan and the future stability of Pakistan with nuclear weapons, with a raging insurgency already in place with the al Qa'ida in Pakistan, aiding and abetted by Pakistani Taliban and also to a lesser degree, Afghanistani Taliban. We have drawn a line for national security reasons not to let Afghanistan destabilize because of what its consequential effect would be on the security of the American people, and I think it makes sense.

The CHAIRMAN. Another basic question we can close our hearing with, how do we explain to the American people what success is?

General.

General KEANE. I think that is a great question. And I don't believe that by making an increased military commitment to Afghanistan, by definition, this is an open-ended commitment that goes on for a decade or so. I mean, a stable Afghanistan is what we are seeking, where its own national security forces are able to protect its people and has a legitimate, stable government as well. I think those things are achievable, and they are achievable more in the short term than in the long term, in my view. So the growth of the Afghan national security forces is a huge issue for us, just as it was in Iraq.

And as we begin to turn the momentum around—and I think we can do that once we get the proper resources there. And we will start to see some of this in 2011 for sure and maybe a little bit by the end of 2010, and we start to begin to have the Afghan national security forces take over from us. So the end state for us certainly is not necessarily a major political reconciliation. Our end state in terms of our U.S. military involvement will be turning over the security operation to the Afghan national security forces because it is now within their means to cope with it, just as it is happening in Iraq.

Commensurate with that, I do believe we will make some true progress. Once we turn momentum, many of these Taliban leaders who are in it for different reasons will want to be on the winning side and will see their political opportunities with the success that has taken there. And some reconciliation will start to take place. So that is the way I would describe to the American people, a stable Afghanistan where its national security forces are capable of protecting its own people, and we are going to get it to that point so we can pull our forces out of there.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Anybody else?

Dr. PILLAR. Yes, Mr. Chairman, that is an excellent question. And I don't think it can be satisfactorily answered.

For the American people, the internal political makeup of Afghanistan is not what is important or should be important, in their view. It is ultimately our own security here in the United States and American interests abroad. And there is not going to be any

one mark of success, any one mark of victory where either the current or future President can say, all right, we have achieved our objective.

Even if General McChrystal achieves all of his objectives as he has laid them out in his strategy, al Qa'ida is still going to be out there, in Pakistan, in the unsecured areas of Afghanistan, and all the other places they are in the world, emitting their propaganda. And all it takes is a single terrorist attack to emphasize what will be their continued point: You did not defeat us, despite all your effort in Afghanistan.

Dr. BIDDLE. Success in war normally means you secured the interests that led you to go to war. And if those interests are essentially twofold, that it not become—Afghanistan not be a base for attacking us and it not become a base for attacking Pakistan, success means an Afghan government of whatever kind, of whatever composition, of whatever system that has enough control over its territory and population to prevent either of those two things from happening. And there is a wide range of possible specific makeups of an Afghan government that could achieve that, many of which will look very imperfect from our perspective.

Iraq is in some ways an interesting analogy in that the degree to which Iraq has been a success is controversial, but nonetheless, the central U.S. interests in Iraq of the war not spreading to its neighbors and genocidal violence not taking place within Iraq's borders, those two interests as of today are met in Iraq through a political makeup that is not what I think anyone anticipated in 2006 or when the surge began.

So I think, with respect to Afghanistan, the point to bear in mind is not that success is achieved only if we create a democracy that looks like x other country in Afghanistan; success I think is achievable if we have met our aims and those are, at the end of the day, relatively undemanding aims that permit a wide variety of different specific political solutions in Kabul.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentlemen.

Are there any other further questions?

If none, we wish to thank our panel for the excellent testimony. This has been one of the best hearings we have had.

Adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:46 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

October 14, 2009

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

OCTOBER 14, 2009

Congressional Testimony

Gen. John M. Keane
US Army, Retired

House Armed Services Committee

14 October 09

1000 a.m.

Capitol Visitors Center
Room HVC-210

Washington, DC

House Armed Services Committee
Testimony
14 October
1000 hrs

Mr. Chairman, ranking minority and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me, once again, to testify before your distinguished committee.

Let me say up front, that while there are many options for the way ahead in Afghanistan there is a single choice which offers the U.S. and the Afghan people the opportunity to succeed against the Taliban insurgency and thereby stabilize the country; that choice is Gen. McChrystal's and Gen. Petraeus' counter-insurgency strategy with the appropriate level of military forces, civilian personnel and financial resources.

To understand that statement we must know what has happened to Afghanistan since the invasion of 2001 and why this is the only remaining viable choice.

It is a fact, that Afghanistan beginning in 2002 and increasingly so in 2003, became a secondary priority to the war in Iraq. Indeed, it remained as such till this year, 2009, when only now, we are beginning to shift our priority effort from Iraq to Afghanistan. As such, as a secondary effort, despite the addition of NATO forces and resources, Afghanistan has always been operating at the margin and, in most of those years, below what was required in forces and resources. Not surprising the Taliban advantaged this vulnerability and not only re-emerged but have been able to gain the initiative to the point the momentum is on their side, particularly, in the south and east. Add to that, a weak, ineffectual central government plagued by corruption, election fraud and legitimacy issues, Afghanistan has now become a major challenge.

It is appropriate to ask, is Afghanistan worth the continued sacrifice of U.S. lives and treasures? What should be our strategic goal? Is an adjustment in goals and resources appropriate?

Let me briefly answer those questions by stating our strategic goal in Afghanistan should be a secure, stable country without an Al Qaeda sanctuary. And yes, it is worth the continued sacrifice to achieve that goal, not only because a stable Afghanistan is in our national interest but its stability is inextricably linked to the stability in Pakistan. The Al Qaeda center of gravity, is not Afghanistan, it is Pakistan. A loss of Afghanistan is a win for the Taliban and the Al Qaeda in Pakistan with potential serious consequences for Pakistan. While there are few Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, it is clear they supported one another going back to pre 9/11 when the Taliban would not give up the Al Qaeda when U.S. / Allied attack was imminent. Moreover, the Taliban is very current on IED technology and U.S. tactics as they evolved first in Iraq. It is not about how many Al Qaeda fighters are in Afghanistan but how the Al Qaeda network enables, trains and supports the Taliban. We cannot conveniently separate the two, if we lose in Afghanistan, the Al Qaeda will be right behind the Taliban as they take over.

Make no mistake, Pakistan is a far more consequential country, strategically, mostly because of nuclear weapons but also because of the size and influence of the country. Therefore, it is appropriate to link the stability of both of these countries together as U.S. strategic goals and national interests. One of our major challenges with the political and military leadership in Afghanistan and Pakistan is their skepticism surrounding the U.S. commitment to their countries' stability and our resolve to stay the course. Given our track record in both countries, these doubts are well founded which clearly affect their attitudes and behavior. Many leaders in Afghanistan are unwilling to commit to the government of Afghanistan because they are uncertain about the U.S. commitment. As we deliberate on the way ahead this issue must be kept in mind. It is difficult to forecast a stable southern Asia without the U.S. directly assisting in defeating the radical Islamists, who are threatening that stability. Our resolve should not be limited to staying, but it should be -- defeating the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

How can we do that? We must adopt a civil-military strategy with counter insurgency strategy as the center piece. In insurgencies the center of gravity

is not the enemy, as it is in conventional wars, it is the people. These are fundamentally people wars and, as such, securing, protecting and freeing the people from intimidation, coercion and terror becomes job ONE.
Our operations take on a different character and, in many cases, are largely non-kinetic because our focus is to free the people from insurgent malice and influence. Of course, we still must kill and capture insurgents and hold their horrific behavior liable, and we do. It is critical that tribal insurgent leaders feel the burden of the loss of their tribal members, sense our commitment to see it through to the end. War is always about breaking the will of your opponent.

The ultimate solution in Afghanistan, as it is in Iraq, is for Afghanistan security forces to provide a secure and stable environment. The problem we have in front of us, similar to 2006 in Iraq, is that the security situation has deteriorated well beyond the ANSF's capability to cope with it even with U.S. and NATO force assistance. The ANSF is currently projected to grow to about 234,000 by 2010 and needs to grow to 400,000, and that will take until 2013 or 2012 at best. Given the new COIN strategy and current force levels what can we do to turn around the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan in the meantime? How do we mitigate the 2 to 3 years as we wait for the appropriate growth of the ANSF? The only remaining answer to "stop the bleeding" and turn around the situation is the introduction of U.S. troops. It is not necessary to apply the COIN strategy to Afghanistan, at large, the priority and focus is south and east and we can achieve the appropriate COIN force levels combining NATO and Afghan forces. I will leave to Gen. McChrystal as to what the appropriate number is because only he and his staff have the fidelity to make that kind of analysis.

What I am saying is we need multiple brigades of combat troops, support troops and trainers for the ANSF. It seems appropriate that while the NATO countries are unwilling to provide additional combat forces, they should be pressured to provide additional trainers and financial resources. As the ANSF conducts side by side operations with U.S. / NATO forces as a matter of routine, similar to what we did in Iraq, their proficiency increases exponentially.

One of the major lessons learned from Iraq, after 3 years with the wrong strategy, and the favorable turnaround in 2007 and 2008, is that security is a necessary pre-condition for political progress and economic development. This applies directly to Afghanistan. The military as part of the COIN strategy was key to executing government reform, attacking corruption and malign behavior in Iraq and it can have the same impact in Afghanistan. We cannot just execute the status quo on security or do more than the status quo but less than what is required and expect to make political, governance and reconstruction progress without the appropriate level of security. It will not happen; we will fail. What about other options? Why not a counter-terrorism strategy given the Al Qaeda are in Pakistan and not Afghanistan? Why not make a diplomatic effort to seek political accommodation with the Taliban in Afghanistan.

A counter-terrorism strategy is essentially killing and capturing insurgent and terrorist leaders. To do so, we rely primarily on a technology solution, drones, missiles, and precision bombs. This strategy is helpful in Pakistan / Afghanistan as it was in Iraq, but it is not decisive. (In Iraq we relied primarily on SOF versus technology). Nor has it been decisive for the Israeli's in the many years of their struggle. The reality is leaders are replaced, a set back to be sure for a particularly influential leader, but a movement based on ideas and determination is not defeated by killing leaders. It is only defeated by isolating the movement from its source of strength, the dependency on the people. Give the people a better alternative and the insurgency is isolated. When the insurgents are isolated they are very vulnerable to being killed and captured. Moreover, despite a very aggressive and successful counter-terrorism operation in Iraq from 2003 to 2007, we were failing and we nearly lost the country. Similarly, we have been using a CT strategy in Afghanistan for many years and the situation has simply gotten worse. Are CT operations, valuable, yes, definitely, but they must compliment a fully integrated civil-military counter-insurgency strategy.

Why not make a political accommodation with the Taliban in exchange for stopping the violence and possibly ensuring that no Al Qaeda sanctuary returns to Afghanistan. This is the height of folly and naiveté. The Taliban are winning from their perspective, believe that the U.S. will be leaving, and they will be back in control of Afghanistan. Why should they settle for less, now, when they can get it all, later? In their minds, time is on their side.

These leaders have been approached before and there's no deal to be had and, "for the life of me", what part of Afghanistan do we surrender to the Taliban, forcing the Afghan people, who we have supported for eight years, to live under the Taliban sadistic rule. Let me be clear, we can reach out to the lower level Taliban leaders who are reconcilable, particularly, those who are motivated by being on the winning side. This can occur quite substantially when we turn around the deteriorating situation and begin to gain momentum. Certainly, Gen. McChrystal understands this and has Gen. Graeme Lamb assigned as his deputy to pursue and create these opportunities, who did the very same in Iraq for Gen. Petraeus.

In conclusion, what is the way ahead:

-- Not since 2001 when the decision to attack Afghanistan was made have we had a more critical opportunity to make a decisive decision to stabilize Afghanistan. We can succeed. We can turn this around in 2 to 3 years. CAUTION: If there is a sense of a lack of commitment, NATO and Pakistan will hedge and pull back, many tribal leaders and others in Afghanistan will do the same, and it will undermine the very objectives we are trying to achieve.

-- Put in play a COIN strategy with the appropriate military, civilian and financial resources. CAUTION: Do not be tempted to do the COIN strategy with less than the required troops because you will be doing more in other areas such as: an enhanced CT operation, aggressive governance to stomp out corruption, surging against poppy production and narco-trafficking, enabling reconciliation and other worthy focus areas. Trying to do more with less, will fail, and, fail miserably.

-- Get tough with Hamid Karzai about his known corruption, election fraud and ineffectual government Be specific and hold his behavior accountable. We should not be bashful, our national interests are at stake and our sacrifice and promised future commitment is real and gives us the premise for tough mindedness.

-- Major nation building should not be our objective but it is appropriate to establish the rule of law with a workable judiciary, improve the central government's effectiveness, strengthen

governance at the local level, particularly at the district and provincial level, and assist with economic development.
-- Re-engage countries in the region in the stability of Afghanistan and Pakistan, in particular, and, in general, the radical Islamist threat to that stability. Their assistance is vital.

-- Make a strong commitment to the future stability of Afghanistan which is enduring but is not open ended in terms of our military forces. Our forces will begin to leave as the ANSF's grow in size and capability (similar to what we have done in Iraq).

-- We are blessed with some of the very best general officers we have had in our history to execute our strategy, in McChrystal, Lamb, Rodriguez and Petraeus along with Ambassador Eikenberry. We should rely heavily on their judgment and experience.

--There are no guarantees of success but our troops who are sacrificing, the most, deserve the best winning hand possible. Their competence, extraordinary sacrifice, unprecedented resilience, their dogged determination to succeed may in fact be the finest chapter in U.S. military history. Never before have we asked so much, of so few, for so long.

Thank you and I look forward to your question.

General Jack Keane - Biography

General Jack Keane served 37 years in the Army, rising to the rank of four-star General. Most recently, he held the position of the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army. During his four years in this job as Chief Operating Officer of the United States Army, he managed operations of more than 1.5 million soldiers and civilians in over 120 countries and an annual budget in excess of $110 billion dollars. Throughout his tenure in this position the Army has fought and won wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, while supporting numerous worldwide peace operation, maintaining readiness, and transforming to a faster, more deployable force.

As the Vice Chief of Staff, General Keane developed and maintained strong relationships, on behalf of the Army, with Congress, the media, opinion leaders, national security policy makers, and the American people. In doing so, he delivered over 400 speeches in four years, communicating critical Department of Defense and Army messages. He testified before Congress on 18 separate occasions on subjects as diverse as the war in Iraq, Military Health Care, the Budget, Environmental Law, Army Readiness and Army transformation.

General Keane was a career paratrooper who commanded at every level to include the 18th Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg, NC; the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and Fort Campbell, KY; and the Joint Readiness Training Center. He also served as the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the United States Atlantic Command prior to becoming the Army's Vice Chief of Staff, and was featured in Tom Clancy's book, AIRBORNE.

General Keane is a combat veteran having served as a platoon leader and company commander in Viet Nam. His units deployed to Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia and Kosovo.

General Keane graduated from Fordham University business school in 1966 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Accounting and holds a Masters of Arts Degree in Philosophy from Western Kentucky University. His military education includes the Infantry Officers Basic and Advanced Courses, the United States Army Command and General Staff College, and the United States Army War College. General Keane is the recipient of an honorary PH.D in Law from Fordham University and an honorary PH.D in Public Service from Eastern Kentucky University.

General Keane's Army awards and decorations include: two Defense Distinguished Service Medals, two Army Distinguished Service Medals, the Silver Star, five Legions of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal, the Ranger Tab, the Combat Infantryman's Badge, the Master Parachutist Badge, and the Air Assault Badge.

Since his retirement from the Army, General Keane is currently President GSI, LLC, is senior advisor to Kohlberg, Kravis, Roberts and Co. and advisor to Chairman and CEO, URS Corporation. He is a director of METLIFE, Inc and General Dynamics Corporation.

General Keane serves as a member of the Department of Defense Policy Board. He is also a military contributor and analyst for ABC News.

General Keane is married to the former Theresa W. Doyle. They have two adult children, Matthew and Daniel.

DISCLOSURE FORM FOR WITNESSES
CONCERNING FEDERAL CONTRACT AND GRANT INFORMATION

INSTRUCTION TO WITNESSES: Rule 11, clause 2(g)(4), of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives for the 111th Congress requires nongovernmental witnesses appearing before House committees to include in their written statements a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source of any federal contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants) received during the current and two previous fiscal years either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness. This form is intended to assist witnesses appearing before the House Armed Services Committee in complying with the House rule.

Witness name: General Jack Keane

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)

✓ Individual

___ Representative

If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the company, association or other entity being represented:_____

FISCAL YEAR 2009

federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
N/A			

FISCAL YEAR 2008

federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
N/A			

FISCAL YEAR 2007

Federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
NA			

Federal Contract Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts (including subcontracts) with the federal government, please provide the following information:

Number of contracts (including subcontracts) with the federal government:

Current fiscal year (2009):_____;
Fiscal year 2008:_____;
Fiscal year 2007:_____.

Federal agencies with which federal contracts are held:

Current fiscal year (2009):_____;
Fiscal year 2008:_____;
Fiscal year 2007:_____.

List of subjects of federal contract(s) (for example, ship construction, aircraft parts manufacturing, software design, force structure consultant, architecture & engineering services, etc.):

Current fiscal year (2009):_____;
Fiscal year 2008:_____;
Fiscal year 2007:_____.

Aggregate dollar value of federal contracts held:

Current fiscal year (2009):_____;
Fiscal year 2008:_____;
Fiscal year 2007:_____.

Federal Grant Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has grants (including subgrants) with the federal government, please provide the following information:

Number of grants (including subgrants) with the federal government:

Current fiscal year (2009):_____;
Fiscal year 2008:_____;
Fiscal year 2007:_____.

Federal agencies with which federal grants are held:

Current fiscal year (2009):_____;
Fiscal year 2008:_____;
Fiscal year 2007:_____.

List of subjects of federal grants(s) (for example, materials research, sociological study, software design, etc.):

Current fiscal year (2009):_____;
Fiscal year 2008:_____;
Fiscal year 2007:_____.

Aggregate dollar value of federal grants held:

Current fiscal year (2009):_____;
Fiscal year 2008:_____;
Fiscal year 2007:_____.

Assessing U.S. Options for Afghanistan

Statement by
Dr. Stephen Biddle
Senior Fellow for Defense Policy
Council on Foreign Relations

Before the
Committee on Armed Services
United States House of Representatives
First Session, 111th Congress

14 October 2009

Public support for the war in Afghanistan has been falling for much of the last year. The manifest corruption of Afghan elections last summer aggravated this decline, but it was ongoing well beforehand and stems from deeper causes. Americans have increasingly been asking fundamental questions about the war: do we have important interests at stake? Can we secure them? Will the cost of securing them be tolerable?

The answers are less clear-cut than anyone would like – the case for war in Afghanistan is a close call on the merits. The debate often treats Afghanistan in absolutes: it is either a graveyard of empires in which no outsider can succeed and a country where we have no meaningful interests at stake; or it is a war where victory can be assured if we show sufficient resolve and where only success can avert a direct threat of attack on the American homeland. In fact it is a harder call. This war is neither the obvious necessity that its strongest supporters claim, nor the clear loser that its opponents typically see. The war engages important, but indirect, U.S. interests. It will be expensive to wage properly, could require many years to resolve, and might ultimately fail even if waged vigorously, but failure is not guaranteed and the U.S. enjoys advantages that other outsiders in Afghanistan have not. "Middle way" options designed to secure our interests but cut our costs, moreover, have important shortcomings and are unlikely to offer an escape from these dilemmas.

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

I present this argument in five parts: the interests at stake; the cost of pursuing them via an integrated counterinsurgency strategy; the odds of success if we do so; the

prospects for a cheaper pursuit of the same ends via a "middle way" between the extremes of large-scale integrated counterinsurgency and withdrawal; and finally an assessment of the overall balance of cost and risk in light of this.

What interests do we have at stake in Afghanistan?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

These stakes are thus important. But they do not merit infinite cost to secure. Afghanistan is just one of many possible al Qaeda sanctuaries. And Afghanistan's influence over Pakistan's future is important, but incomplete and indirect. A Taliban Afghanistan is a real possibility in the long run absent U.S. action, and makes Pakistani collapse more likely, but it does not guarantee it. Nor would success in Afghanistan

guarantee success in Pakistan: there is a chance that we could struggle our way to stability in Afghanistan at great cost and sacrifice only to see Pakistan collapse anyway under the weight of its own errors and internal divisions.

What will it cost to pursue our interests?

General Stanley McChrystal has recommended an integrated counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy to secure these interests. COIN is a notoriously resource-intensive form of warfare. As current U.S. Army doctrine puts it:

> [M]aintaining security in an unstable environment requires vast resources, whether host nation, U.S., or multinational. In contrast, a small number of highly motivated insurgents with simple weapons, good operations security, and even limited mobility can undermine security over a large area. Thus, successful COIN operations often require a high ratio of security forces to the protected population. For that reason, protracted COIN operations are hard to sustain. The effort requires a firm political will and substantial patience by the government, its people, and the countries providing support.[1]
>
> Insurgencies are protracted by nature. Thus, COIN operations always demand considerable expenditures of time and resources.[2]

In the Afghan context, an integrated COIN strategy would involve a combination of population security for Afghan civilians, rapid expansion of the indigenous Afghan Army and Police, governance reforms, economic development assistance, reconciliation to wean Taliban fighters and leaders away from Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden, and carefully delimited targeting of enemy leaders who decline to be reconciled.

Such a demanding, multidimensional program requires concomitant resources. GEN McChrystal is widely reported to have concluded that current plans to support an Afghan security force of 170,000 soldiers and police with some 68,000 U.S. and about 35,000 other Western troops are insufficient, and that reinforcements will be needed; he has recommended roughly doubling Afghan forces to a total of 400,000, and is said to have proposed options ranging from 10,000 to 40,000 or more additional U.S. troops, with the lower figure representing a higher risk approach and the upper figure yielding lower risk. And the commitment could be very long: successful counterinsurgency campaigns commonly last ten to fifteen years or more.[3]

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

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

[2] Ibid., p. 43.

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

Iraq; it would be prudent to assume that fatality rates in excess of 50 per month could persist for many months, if not years.[4]

Can a COIN strategy succeed in Afghanistan?

The aggregate historical record of great power success in COIN is not encouraging. The political scientists Jason Lyall of Princeton and Isaiah Wilson of West Point estimate that since 1975, the success rate of all government counterinsurgents has been just 25 percent.[5] Given the costs of trying, this average offers a sobering context.

Nor are current conditions in Afghanistan encouraging. Orthodox COIN theory puts host government legitimacy at the heart of success and failure, yet the Karzai government is widely seen as corrupt, inept, inefficient, and en route to losing the support of its population. Widespread fraud in last summer's Afghan elections should not have been a surprise, but has surely reduced Karzai's perceived legitimacy, both in Afghanistan and especially abroad. Economic and political development prospects are constrained by Afghanistan's forbidding geography, tribal social structure, lack of infrastructure, and political history. The Taliban enjoy a cross-border sanctuary in the FATA that the Pakistani government seems unwilling or unable to eliminate. Violence is up, perceptions of security are down, casualties are increasing, and the Taliban is widely believed to be increasing its freedom of movement and access to the population. And only some of these challenges are things Americans can affect directly: the United States can increase security by deploying more U.S. troops, it can bolster the economy to a degree with U.S. economic aid, and it can pressure Karzai to reform, but only the Afghans can create a legitimate government, and only the Pakistanis can shut down the safe havens in the FATA. Americans can influence these choices to a much greater degree than we have so far. But the United States cannot itself guarantee Afghan reform, and to date neither ally seems ready to do what it takes.

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

The new Army/Marine counterinsurgency doctrine, for example, is the product of a nearly unprecedented degree of internal debate, external vetting, historical analysis, and

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

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

direct recent combat experience.[6] None of this makes it a magic silver bullet for COIN success, and in important ways it makes underlying assumptions about the nature of counterinsurgency that made it an awkward fit for conditions in Iraq.[7] But those same assumptions make it a much stronger fit for Afghanistan, which is precisely the kind of war the manual was built around. And there is some, albeit preliminary, empirical evidence to suggest that the new doctrine's emphasis on population security as opposed to insurgent attrition has been substantially more successful historically than more-violent, attrition-oriented strategies: Andrew Enterline and Joseph Magagnoli, for example, estimate that since World War II, COIN strategies emphasizing population security over insurgent attrition have succeeded almost 70 percent of the time.[8]

One of the doctrine's remaining shortcomings, moreover, is a problem the Obama Administration seems likely to address. The published doctrine assumes a very close alignment of interests between the United States and its host government: the manual assumes that the U.S. role is to enable the host to realize its own best interest by making itself into a legitimate defender of all its citizens' wellbeing, and that the host will see it this way, too.[9] In many ways, the Bush Administration shared this view, offering assistance with few conditions or strings on the assumption that developing its allies' capacity for good governance was all that would be needed to realize better performance. In fact, though, many allies – notably including Hamid Karzai and Pervez Musharraf, have had much more complex interests that have led them to misdirect U.S. aid and fall far short of U.S. hopes for their popular legitimacy. Some students of counterinsurgency have thus emphasized the need for conditionality in outside assistance to reduce this problem of moral hazard: the U.S. should not assume that allies share all its interests, and Americans should impose conditions, and combine carrots with sticks in order to push reluctant hosts toward behavior that could better realize U.S. interests in their broader legitimacy and thereby damp insurgencies.[10] The Obama Administration has made it very clear that they intend to combine bigger carrots with real sticks in the form of prospective aid withdrawals should the recipients fail to adopt needed reforms. This is an important step forward in competing for hearts and minds via effective host governance.

The U.S. military forces that implement this doctrine are also much improved over their ancestors in Vietnam, or even their immediate predecessors in Iraq in 2003-4 – and

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

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

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

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

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

they are vastly superior in training, equipment, and doctrine to the Soviet military that failed in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Soviet methods in the 1980s made lavish use of indiscriminate firepower that created enemies much faster than it killed insurgents. Soviet troops, moreover, were so poorly trained and motivated that their commanders were often forced to use elite commando units to carry out routine missions; regular Soviet infantry often could not be relied upon to do much more than passive garrison duty. And Soviet equipment was almost entirely designed for major warfare against NATO in central Europe – the Soviets never made a systematic decision to re-equip for counterinsurgency.[11] By contrast, the U.S. military of 2009 has adapted into an unusually proficient counterinsurgency force. It did not begin the war this way, but hard experience in Iraq, coupled with an almost preclusive training emphasis on COIN since the early years of the Iraq war, a new doctrine with a heavy focus on the population-defense methods that have proven most effective historically, and systematic re-equipment with new mine-resistant armored vehicles and other ground-force equipment designed for counterinsurgency has produced a vastly more effective military for this mission than the Soviets ever fielded.

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

The Taliban, moreover, are far from a unified opposition group. In fact, to refer to the opposition in Afghanistan via a singular noun is in many ways a misnomer. By contrast with the Viet Cong of 1964, for example, where a common ideology bound the leadership together and linked it to its fighters, the neo-Taliban of 2009 are a much looser, much more heterogeneous, much more divided coalition of often fractious and very independent actors. There is a hard core of committed Islamist ideologues, centered on Mullah Omar and based in Quetta. But by all accounts much of the Taliban's actual combat strength is provided by an array of warlords and other factions with often much more secular motivations, who side with the Taliban for reasons of profit, prestige, or convenience, and who may or may not follow orders from the Quetta Shura leadership. Americans often lament the challenges to unity of effort that flow from a divided NATO command structure, but the Taliban face difficulties on this score at least as severe and

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

potentially much worse: no NATO member is going to change sides and fight for the Taliban, but the Taliban need to be constantly alert lest one or more of their component factions leave the alliance for the government side. And this makes it difficult for the Taliban to mount large-scale, coordinated offensives of the kind that would be needed to conquer a defended city, for example – such efforts would be hard for any one faction or any one commander to accomplish without closely-coordinated assistance from others, yet such coordination can be hard to achieve in such a decentralized, factionalized leadership structure.

The Taliban also face major constraints in extending their influence beyond their ethnic base in southern and eastern Afghanistan. The Taliban is an overwhelmingly Pashtun movement. Yet Pashtuns make up less than 45 percent of Afghanistan's population overall, and constitute only a small fraction of the population outside the south and east. Afghanistan is not primarily an ethno-sectarian war of identity, as Iraq has been – most Taliban are Pashtuns, but most Pashtuns are not Taliban (in fact the government is itself headed by a Pashtun in President Hamid Karzai). Afghanistan is a war fought over the Taliban's ideology for governing, not the hope for a Pashtun government. But whereas the government has members from many ethnic groups and a presumptive claim to the loyalty of all citizens, the Taliban has a much more exclusivist identity and is especially unpopular and unwelcome outside its geographic ethnic base. This in turn will make it harder for them to conquer the north and west of the country, and acts as a limiter on their expansion in the near term. This is not to say that the north or west of Afghanistan are permanently or inherently secure; on the contrary, recent trends there are worrisome, and even these parts of the country will eventually require attention to stabilize. But the Taliban's Pashtun ethnic identity makes it harder for them to expand out of the south and east, and this in turn buys time and reduces resource requirements for effective counterinsurgency nationally. (It is worth noting that even in their first rule, the Taliban never completely secured the north – it was the unconquered "Northern Alliance's" hold over contiguous territory in that part of Afghanistan that provided allies, a base, and a jump-off point for the American Special Forces who teamed with them to topple the Taliban in 2001.)

Finally, by all accounts the enemy in Afghanistan today is much less numerous than that faced by the Soviets, for example, in the late 1980s. Intelligence estimates on insurgents' order of battle are always imprecise and uncertain. But most sources suggest that the Mujaheddin opposing the Soviets by the late 1980s numbered around 150,000 armed combatants.[12] After 1986, these guerillas were also equipped with increasingly sophisticated Western-supplied arms, and especially shoulder-fired precision guided anti-aircraft missiles. By contrast, the Taliban today are usually assessed at a strength of 20-40,000 fighters, of whom only around one-fourth are full time combatants, and who have to date deployed little or no precision weaponry.[13] The size of the insurgent force is not

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

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

the most important variable in COIN, but against the commonplace assumption that the Soviet experience will be America's fate in Afghanistan, we must keep in mind that the situation the United States faces is less dire in important respects – including the strength of the insurgent enemy.

Is there a "Middle Way?"

COIN thus has some chance to succeed, but it will clearly be very expensive. Its costs and risks have led many to oppose General McChrystal's recommendations. Yet few of these opponents advocate leaving Afghanistan outright. Instead, most pair opposition to reinforcement and COIN with support for a middle way – a more limited presence intended to secure U.S. interests without the cost and risk of escalation. At least a half-dozen such "middle ways" have been proposed, ranging from greater reliance on drone-based counter-terrorist leadership strikes to a switch from combat to training missions for U.S. forces, early pursuit of a negotiated settlement to end the war, and others. The specifics are often fuzzy; none have been articulated with the detail of General McChrystal's proposal, and troop requirements in particular are rarely spelled out. But the idea underlying them all is to reduce the burden of McChrystal-style integrated COIN – and especially, the need for U.S. combat troops to defend Afghan civilians – without abandoning the central U.S. interests of denying Afghan soil as a base for terrorism against the West or destabilizing neighboring Pakistan.

It is easy to see why such middle ways are so popular. They could lighten the burden on the federal deficit. They would seem to offer a better fit with the U.S. interests at stake, which are real but limited and indirect. They appeal to the centrism of many American voters. The problem is that they probably won't work: their odds of success are uniformly lower than integrated COIN's.

The reasons vary from proposal to proposal. But most are tantamount to splitting off a piece of McChrystal-style integrated COIN and executing it alone, without the rest – and especially, without the large U.S. combat presence on the ground. Yet the logic of integrated COIN is that the pieces are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts; implementing one or two by themselves denies them critical enablers and undermines their effectiveness.

Depending on one's tolerance for cost and risk, it can make sense all the same to adopt a middle way and accept a greater risk of failure in exchange for reduced costs. To date, however, few middle way proponents have advocated accepting the diminished odds of success that are the corollary to their lower resource requirements. Yet we cannot get the latter without accepting the former. There is no magic middle way between the McChrystal recommendation and total withdrawal that offers comparable odds at a lower price: less is not more in counterinsurgency.

I provide a more complete analysis of such "middle way" options elsewhere.[14] For now, however, I will sketch the challenges facing four such proposals as an illustration of the difficulties involved.

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[14] Stephen Biddle, "Can the Middle Hold? The Problems with Half-Measures in Afghanistan," *The New Republic*, Vol. 240, No. 4871 (November 4, 2009), forthcoming.

1. Training rather than fighting

Many, for example, would like to shift the U.S. role from combat to training and advising Afghan forces. This would put an Afghan face on the war effort, it would put the burden of the fighting on those with the most at stake, and it would ostensibly reduce U.S. exposure to casualties and reduce U.S. troop requirements. In fact indigenous military buildups are a standard element of orthodox COIN, and play a large role in General McChrystal's proposed way forward in Afghanistan; a mere call for more Afghan troops per se is perfectly consistent with the General's proposal. The real difference is the call to do it with less, and especially, with a major reduction in U.S. combat activity and the associated troop requirement.

But training and combat are not meaningful alternatives in Afghanistan. The former requires the latter, and to field a large Afghan force faster will require more, not fewer, U.S. combat troops – who will be fighting, not just teaching.

To build an indigenous security force in the middle of an ongoing war is not like teaching arithmetic to high school students – it cannot be done successfully by a handful of teachers standing in front of safe classrooms with chalk and blackboards. To field Afghan troops quickly without breaking them in the process requires close partnership, on the battlefield, with experienced Western combat units who provide a combination of on-the-job training, mentoring, role modeling, confidence building, fire support, and stiffening in actual combat. And this requires Western troops, in large numbers and in harm's way, living and fighting together with Afghan forces at all levels of command. The faster the Afghans are to be fielded, the more Western combat forces are needed to enable the partnered units to survive and improve. If a large Afghan military is to be raised – General McChrystal believes 400,000 Afghan soldiers and police will be required – then many tens of thousands of Americans will be needed to enable this, and those Americans will be exposed to combat, and to casualties.

And the process takes time even so. Proper combat advising and mentoring speeds things up, but cannot provide an effective mass military instantly. In the meantime, someone must protect not just key population centers but also the very mobilization infrastructure of recruitment centers, supply depots, bases, and transportation connections needed to create the new Afghan formations. As the Afghan military matures it will comprise an increasing proportion of the total security requirement, but in the near term there will be a large need for Western troops to fill the gap in Afghan capacity no matter how quickly the United States tries to field Afghan forces. Close partnership with expanded indigenous forces is indeed the best way to pursue counterinsurgency in Afghanistan. But this is not a plausible route to reducing U.S. combat activity or troop strength there any time soon.

2. Standoff counter-terrorism via drone strikes

Perhaps the most popular middle way is to rely on drone attacks of the kind now ongoing in northwest Pakistan to suppress al Qaeda without a major ground commitment in Afghanistan. By killing key leaders and limiting the others' freedom of action, it is argued, the drone strikes make large-scale terrorism much harder. Standoff counter-terrorism (CT) cannot destroy al Qaeda outright, but it is far cheaper than major

counterinsurgency campaigns; if it could constrain al Qaeda in Afghanistan this might secure limited aims at much lower cost.

Like training, however, CT is not strictly inconsistent with COIN, but rather a normal part of it. In a COIN context, discriminating leadership strikes are used to disrupt enemy command and control, to keep the opposition off balance, and to encourage reconcilable elements of the insurgency to realign in order to avoid being targeted. Integrated COIN involves much more than just leadership targeting, but the latter is a normal part of the former. In fact, GEN McChrystal himself led the primary organization conducting such strikes in the 2007 Iraq COIN campaign, and will surely employ them in Afghanistan as well. The drone strikes in Pakistan are outside his area of operations, but any al Qaeda re-infiltration of Afghanistan would be engaged by drones or commando strikes if detected, and the McChrystal report presupposes that the CT campaign in Pakistan would continue even as COIN in Afghanistan proceeds. CT is only a meaningful alternative to the McChrystal approach if it is conducted *without* this ongoing COIN campaign (or if the latter is substantially restricted in scale or scope) – otherwise it is simply a piece of what McChrystal himself is proposing to do.

But to pursue standoff CT without COIN is to ignore important preconditions for drone effectiveness – and especially, the need for a cooperative government underneath them. The purpose of counterinsurgency is to support the key governments; if the United States abandoned counterinsurgency in favor of counterterrorism and the governments then fell or realigned, this would undermine the counterterrorism campaign, too.

Drones are not wonder weapons. They are essentially low-performance airplanes which require targeting intelligence, benign airspace, and proximate bases to be effective. Today, a cooperative Pakistani government provides most of these requirements. Much of the intelligence to support drone targeting, for example, comes from the Pakistanis. It was their penetration of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, for example, that reportedly provided the tip that enabled a U.S. Predator drone to kill terrorist leader Baitullah Mehsud in August 2009. More generally, "HUMINT" (or HUMan INTelligence – i.e. spies or other tipsters) is a critical component of any successful counterterrorism campaign. HUMINT is not everything – there are some technical means that can be valuable in CT – but the low-tech HUMINT contribution is critical (and it is just as critical to commando raids as to drone attacks). Spies, however, require access to produce information. And access is strongly influenced by governments. The United States has historically found it very hard to penetrate hostile states to develop human sources. Penetrating wary, secretive, ruthless terrorist organizations with human informers is hard enough anywhere, but to do so on the soil of an actively hostile state means facing multiple layers of state security and counterintelligence efforts first before getting anywhere near the terrorists. Occasionally the U.S. will get lucky even in very hostile environments, but for a sustained drone campaign to keep a resilient group like al Qaeda on the ropes requires a lot more than an occasional stroke of good luck – it needs systematic intelligence of the kind that is very hard to get without the access enabled by a tolerant government. The difference between even an ambivalent ally in limited control of its territory (like Pakistan) and an actively hostile regime thus has important consequences for U.S. ability to find terrorists and prosecute effective standoff CT.

Pakistani cooperation is also needed for airspace access. The Pakistani Air Force is no juggernaut, but little is needed to shoot down a small fleet of slow-moving, unmaneuverable, remotely-piloted airplanes loitering for hours over the same locations. Even a minimal air defense effort could clear the skies of CT drones. And piloted or not, airplanes need bases. Even high-endurance drones have finite range and dwell time over target. Today, Pakistan quietly provides base access; without this, the problem of simply reaching remote target areas becomes much harder.

And this means that preserving friendly governments – the central purpose of COIN – is crucial to standoff CT. If the Taliban were restored to power in Kabul because the U.S. counterinsurgency failed, we would obviously lose that sort of access in Afghanistan, significantly hampering our ability to pursue al Qaeda there. Perhaps even worse, they could threaten the stability of the government in Islamabad. In 2000, the Taliban ruled Afghanistan and Pakistan was its ally, but in 2001 the Bush administration coerced Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf into turning on his erstwhile ally and aligning with the United States. That realignment was never as complete as Washington wanted, but it was enough to persuade the Taliban and a variety of other Islamist terror groups within Pakistan that the secular government in Islamabad had become a tool of the hated Americans. The result has been a growing insurgency within Pakistan fueled by groups once aligned with (and indeed created by) the government they now attack. These groups are diverse, and the connections between them are complex – they are not a monolithic unified front. But they are interconnected, and they share great distrust of both the United States and a secular Pakistani government. Collectively, they have mounted an insurgency that is dangerous enough as it is; with the advantage of a state-scale haven across the Durand Line its virulence could increase dramatically. If COIN failure in Afghanistan enabled insurgent success in Pakistan, this would undermine the effectiveness of U.S. CT there even as the need for it skyrocketed: state collapse in Pakistan would threaten control of its nuclear arsenal and create an urgent need to prevent its nuclear weapons from falling into the hands of al Qaeda or other radicals, yet the loss of Pakistani state intelligence cooperation would hamstring U.S. CT effectiveness at just the moment when we needed it most.

To be sure, the connection between Afghan and Pakistani stability is incomplete. Karzai could fall, but if Pakistanis put their house in order and defeat their own insurgency, then the net consequences would be moderate; conversely, Pakistan could fail even if Afghanistan stabilizes. COIN in Afghanistan affects Pakistan, but only indirectly. The problem is that the odds of success in Afghan COIN and Pakistani CT move in the same direction. COIN failure makes CT failure more likely, and vice versa. And this makes CT a poor substitute for COIN: the weaker our effort in the latter, the lower our odds in the former; failure in the latter undermines the former.

3. Negotiation and reconciliation

Another common proposal is to negotiate a power-sharing deal with some or all of the Taliban as a means of ending the war without the escalation embodied in the McChrystal recommendations. America's real interests are limited, so why not pursue a settlement to bring the Taliban into a coalition government on the proviso that they keep al Qaeda out and deny the use of Afghan territory for destabilizing Pakistan? Others

recommend lower-level reconciliation with individual Taliban foot soldiers. Many of these fight more for the financial incentive of pay to feed their families than for any ideological commitment to Mullah Omar; if so, then why not outbid the Taliban for their services and win them over to the government's side without killing or capturing them all?

Here too, the only real difference with McChrystal is the assumption that this is an alternative to reinforcement and escalation. The McChrystal report itself explicitly calls for low-level reconciliation with Taliban fighters, after all, and many successful counterinsurgencies end by negotiation rather than outright annihilation to the last insurgent – nothing in orthodox COIN precludes a negotiated settlement as the mechanism by which insurgents cease fighting. The problem is the idea that this can be done on the cheap and still produce terms the West can accept. It cannot.

The issue here is the terms. Today the Taliban have little incentive to accept any deal the West could live with. The Taliban leadership appear to believe that they have the upper hand and are in the process of winning the war outright by driving the foreigners out and toppling the Karzai government. And this is hardly a crazy position for them to take: the McChrystal report itself suggests that the security trends are now dangerously negative for the government. Why should Taliban leaders compromise for half a loaf when the whole bakery is apparently available? Karzai has reportedly been reaching out to the Quetta Shura and Hekmatyar factions of the Taliban via Saudi intermediaries for some time now; the talks have never made real progress because the Taliban insist on a total withdrawal of foreign forces as a precondition for negotiation. This is an obvious nonstarter and the Taliban surely understand this – the indications are that the other side is unwilling to accept any meaningful compromise when they think total victory is in prospect.

A similar problem confronts related proposals for lower-level reconciliation with individual Taliban foot soldiers. In principle the government could try to outbid the Taliban for their foot soldiers' services. The Taliban, however, are not an easy employer to leave. Foot soldiers who turn on them are subject to brutal retaliation against themselves and their families. If the government cannot offer security against the inevitable retribution, it would be suicidal for individuals or small groups of fighters to change sides. Nor is mere acceptance of government subsidies real evidence of realignment: the worst outcome is actually penetration of government militias with fighters who take the government's pay but answer to Taliban commanders whose ability to threaten families in an insecure environment makes real alignment with the government too dangerous.

This is not to say that negotiation is unwise, or that low-level reconciliation is impossible. But a precondition for success is a change in the Taliban's expectations for the war, and an ability to provide real security at the grassroots level. If an improved Western military effort persuades key factions that the payoff to fighting is lower and the cost higher than they think now, then negotiating space opens up that might make acceptable deals possible. And a credible promise of real security under government pay could wean away an important fraction of today's Taliban foot soldiers. Such deals could substantially shorten the war and reduce its cost to all sides. But without a major change in the tide of battle and the associated expectations, it is hard to see where the mutually-

agreeable common ground lies that could enable such deals. And the heart of the McChrystal approach – and its price tag – is the intent to produce exactly that change in the tide of battle. It will be hard to get the result without the price.

4. A light footprint

Some argue that the chief obstacle in Afghanistan is nationalist resistance to foreign occupation. In a proud, xenophobic society, it is argued, foreign forces stimulate an "antibody reaction" in which, regardless of the foreigners' mission or intentions, Afghans will fight to expel any alien presence. The larger and more visible the foreign presence, the harsher the resistance. If so, then reinforcement will only make things worse, and a better strategy is to reduce outside forces to a minimal strength adequate only to advise Afghan leaders on defending themselves, perhaps in combination with an increase in development aid.

Afghans surely resent foreign occupation, as would anyone. But it is far from clear that this is the primary problem, or that a drawdown to a "light footprint" posture could defeat the Taliban. In fact we have considerable experience with light footprint approaches in Afghanistan: this is exactly what the United States actually did there after 2001. In 2004 there were only 15,200 foreign troops in the country; as recently as 2006 there were only 20,400 in a country of about 30 million people. The thinness of these deployments was defended by then-Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld precisely in terms of a perceived need to avoid nationalist resistance to a large presence that he thought would be seen as a foreign occupation. If a light footprint could avert insurgency then there should be no war in Afghanistan today. To put it mildly, it has not worked out that way: the Rumsfeld light footprint policy gave us the mess we have now. It yielded too little security to protect the population from the Taliban, too few trainers and advisors to create an indigenous military, but enough foreign presence to alienate the public all the same.

By contrast, there is evidence to suggest that civilians will accept foreign forces when these are strong enough to bring security in exchange. Americans, for example, were hated and resisted in Iraq's Anbar Province in 2004-6, when they were present in numbers large enough to be irritating but too small to provide real security. By late 2007, when reinforcements (together with the Anbar Awakening) enabled the troops to offer security in exchange for their presence, that presence was tolerated to the point where this author was able to walk the central marketplace in Falluja in November 2007 handing out candy to schoolchildren. Americans were not loved in Anbar even then. But because the U.S. presence brought security it was tolerated. Afghanistan, by contrast, is now the worst of both worlds: there are enough foreign forces to be annoying, but not enough to accomplish much. Reducing those numbers would cede the country to the insurgents; increasing them to enable real security might make the price worth paying for Afghans.

Nor would an increase in development aid compensate for a dramatically reduced security footprint. Aid is in fact a major component of orthodox counterinsurgency strategy. But to rely on it as an *alternative* to the security provided by military forces is impractical in an active war zone. Aid is inherently political and is clearly understood to be so by the Taliban, who systematically target Western aid projects for attack. Without large security forces to defend them, aid projects cannot survive. In fact, development projects in Afghanistan are often destroyed even when they *are* defended, if those

defenses are inadequate. No sensible Taliban will allow aid projects to undermine their control over the population when insurgents have the means at their disposal to destroy them or to intimidate their staff; aid without security in Afghanistan is fruitless.

Assessment

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

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

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

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

This danger is real, but it is not unlimited and should not be exaggerated. For a U.S. withdrawal to result in a nuclear al Qaeda would require a chain of multiple intervening events: a Taliban restoration in Kabul, collapse of secular government in Islamabad, and

loss of control over the Pakistani nuclear arsenal (or deliberate transfer of weapons by sympathetic Pakistanis). None of these events are certainties, and the compound probability is inherently lower than the odds of any one step taken alone. Though these odds are hard to estimate, analysts such as John Mueller make a persuasive case that terrorists are more likely to fail in their efforts to obtain nuclear weapons than they are to succeed, and the series of setbacks needed for a U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan to yield a useable al Qaeda nuclear capability probably implies a compound likelihood that is low in absolute terms.[15]

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

Nor do the available "middle way" options offer a way out of the dilemmas here. Many are potentially important *components* of an integrated, properly resourced COIN

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

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

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

strategy. But to pull individual pieces out of this integrated context and undertake them alone as substitutes for major troop deployments is to deny them essential preconditions they need to function. The pieces of orthodox COIN strategy interact: security enables development and governance, development and governance enhance security, governance facilitates CT, CT improves security, security enables negotiation and reconciliation. Each is a valuable complement to the others; none is a viable substitute. In a world of probabilities rather than guarantees, no strategy – whether COIN or a middle way – can ensure success. But different strategies offer different odds. Integrated COIN is expensive, but in exchange it offers a higher probability of success than any of the proposed middle ways. Middle ways are cheaper, but also likelier to fail: they represent disembodied pieces of an integrated COIN campaign attempted in isolation and are therefore less likely to succeed than an integrated campaign that provides key enablers and offers synergies among the parts.

The net result is thus a difficult value judgment between unattractive alternatives, rather than a clear cut, open-and-shut case on analytical grounds. In this context, analysis can exclude certain popular but overstated positions: in fact, COIN in Afghanistan is not hopeless; the United States is not without important interests in the conflict; to secure these interests does not require a modern, centralized, Westernized Switzerland of the Hindu Kush; conversely, success is not guaranteed if only we are resolute; U.S. interests in Afghanistan are not unlimited; and the most important U.S. interests in the conflict are indirect and concern Pakistan more than Afghanistan per se. Analysis can also establish that the likely costs of pursuing COIN success will be high, and that the available "middle way" alternatives have important shortcomings and do not represent reliable, high-likelihood but low-cost means of securing American interests without the sacrifices demanded by integrated COIN. Analysis can illuminate the causal pathways by which different outcomes can affect U.S. interests in general, or the danger of a nuclear al Qaeda in particular. But with important costs and risks on both sides of the ledger, the answer for how much cost is worth bearing for what reduction in risk is ultimately a value judgment rather than an analytical finding. This is *not* a judgment on the value of American lives or the moral worthiness of sacrifice or resolve. All options here involve risks to American lives – a choice to withdraw, for example, is neither more nor less humanitarian, neither more nor less respectful of sacrifice or service or others' suffering, than the opposite. Rather, the judgment here is between accepting greater casualties and sacrifices in the nearer term to reduce some probability of higher casualties and sacrifices in the longer term. For me, this balance is a close call but ultimately favors the conduct of integrated COIN in Afghanistan. But reasonable people can differ on such judgments. Perhaps the most important conclusion is instead that the choice is unavoidably hard: what analysis can show is that there is no course open to us that is without important downsides – there is no easy way out of Afghanistan for the United States in 2009.

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Dr. Stephen D. Biddle is senior fellow for defense policy at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). Before joining CFR in January 2006 he held the Elihu Root chair in military studies at the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute (SSI), and has held teaching and research posts at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA); Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs (BCSIA); and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government's Office of National Security Programs.

His book *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton University Press, 2004) has won four prizes, including the Council on Foreign Relations Arthur Ross Award Silver Medal for 2005, and the 2005 Huntington Prize from the Harvard University Olin Institute for Strategic Studies. His other publications include articles in *Foreign Affairs, International Security, Survival, The Journal of Politics, The Journal of Strategic Studies, The Journal of Conflict Resolution, Security Studies, The American Interest, The National Interest, Orbis, Contemporary Security Policy, Defense Analysis, Joint Force Quarterly*, and *Military Operations Research*; shorter pieces on military topics in *The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, The Boston Globe, The International Herald Tribune, the Suddeutsche Zeitung, the Guardian*, and *Defense News*; various chapters in edited volumes; and 31 IDA, SSI, MNF-I and NATO reports.

Dr. Biddle is a member of the Defense Policy Board, and has presented testimony before congressional committees on issues relating to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, force planning, conventional net assessment, and European arms control. He served on General Stanley McChrystal's Initial Strategic Assessment Team in Kabul in 2009, on General David Petraeus' Joint Strategic Assessment Team in Baghdad in 2007, and as a Senior Advisor to General Petraeus' Central Command Assessment Team in Washington in 2008-9. He is co-director of the Columbia University Summer Workshop on the Analysis of Military Operations and Strategy (SWAMOS), and holds an appointment as Adjunct Associate Professor of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University.

His research has won Barchi, Rist, and Impact Prizes from the Military Operations Research Society. He was awarded the U.S. Army Superior Civilian Service Medal in 2003 and again in 2006, and was presented with the US Army Commander's Award for Public Service in Baghdad in 2007. He holds AB (1981), MPP (1985), and Ph.D. (Public Policy, 1992) degrees, all from Harvard University.

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Counterterrorism and Stability in Afghanistan
Statement to the Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
14 October 2009

Paul R. Pillar
Georgetown University

I thank the committee for its invitation to address the very important policy problem the United States currently confronts regarding Afghanistan. I will attempt to define the issues at stake and to identify the most important questions that need to be asked. I do so primarily from the perspective of a longtime counterterrorist specialist who also has had past official responsibilities involving Afghanistan and South Asia.

Objective, Mission, and Strategy

The ultimate objective of U.S. endeavors involving Afghanistan is, and should be, to enhance the safety and security of the American people. We need to evaluate whatever we do in South Asia in terms of how much it would further this objective, and at what human and material cost. Much public discourse about Afghanistan has unfortunately failed to distinguish clearly among that ultimate objective, particular missions that may (or may not) advance that objective, and specific strategies for accomplishing a particular mission. The theater commander has quite properly focused on strategies for accomplishing his mission as he currently understands it, which, put very simply, is to stabilize Afghanistan, or at least to prevent the government of Afghanistan from falling. But policymakers in the executive branch and the Congress must confront a larger question: whether stabilizing Afghanistan through counterinsurgency would sufficiently enhance the safety and security of Americans enough that, given the costs entailed, it would be a mission worth pursuing.

We are in Afghanistan as a direct result of, and a justified response to, the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001. Our troops would not be there today were it not for Americans' collective outrage over 9/11. The prime, overriding purpose of our intervention in Afghanistan is counterterrorism. Whatever other interests we have acquired, or appear to have acquired, during our eight years there and that are part of the public debate today are in this sense secondary, although some of them need to be addressed. This leads to a more refined version of the overall question for policymakers: is the difference between the terrorist threat Americans would face if we wage a counterinsurgency in Afghanistan, and the threat we would face if we do not wage it, sufficiently large—and in the right direction—to justify the costs and risks of the counterinsurgency itself?

Safe Havens

The generally accepted counterterrorist objective in Afghanistan is to prevent terrorist groups, and especially al-Qa'ida, from establishing a safe haven there. Terrorist groups do make use of territorial havens when they have them, as the leadership of al-Qa'ida did in Afghanistan before being rousted in the opening weeks of Operation

Enduring Freedom. Groups have used such havens for a variety of purposes, from training recruits to holding planning meetings. Training camps at which such skills as hand-to-hand combat and the handling of firearms are taught require a secure piece of real estate, although these are not the skills most threatening to U.S. interests. Usama bin Ladin and Ayman al-Zawahiri remain at large today partly because they found a hospitable haven in the tribal areas of northwest Pakistan. But the use by a terrorist group of a territorial haven does not imply that its operations would be significantly impeded if it did not have one. Most important activities that transnational terrorist groups have performed in safe havens also can be performed, often with comparable ease, elsewhere. Terrorist attacks can be conceived anywhere. Operations can be, and often have been, planned and prepared in Western cities. Most recruitment and radicalization takes place outside anything that could be called a safe haven, and again often in the West.

Terrorists' exploitation of information technology, and of the ease of movement that goes under the label of globalization, have made them less dependent than ever before on any physical haven. Terrorist leaders exert command and control through cyberspace at least as effectively as through older methods. As 9/11 demonstrated, the planning, training, and other preparation for a major operation need not be centered in any one location but instead can span several continents.

Considerable discussion has addressed whether a re-establishment by the Taliban of control over portions of Afghanistan also would mean re-establishment of an al-Qa'ida haven there. The connection is not as simple and automatic as is commonly postulated. The Taliban and al-Qa'ida unquestionably still are ideological soul mates, and probably would still find old reasons, and maybe some new ones as well, for continuing or reviving their alliance. But it was al-Qa'ida's transnational terrorist activity that led directly to the most calamitous loss the Taliban have ever suffered—an end to their rule over most of Afghanistan, from a U.S.-led military intervention. And now the Taliban see a United States whose demonstrated willingness to use military force in Afghanistan in a reprisal mode is far greater (and still would be greater even without a counterinsurgency) than it was prior to 9/11. None of this implies that an open break between the Taliban and al-Qa'ida would be likely, but it does at least mean that the conditions of any al-Qa'ida return to Taliban-controlled territory would be a source of strain between the groups. This in turn would affect al-Qa'ida's perceptions of the relative attractiveness of Afghanistan and the current haven in northwest Pakistan. It is hard to discern much that the former would offer over the latter.

In any event, it is not apparent how a move of al-Qa'ida or parts of it from one side of the Durand line to the other would substantially affect the threat the group poses to U.S. interests. Any such threat should be no less from Waziristan than it would be from Nuristan.

Regardless of whether a renewed haven inside Afghanistan were attractive and useful to al-Qa'ida or any other terrorist group, there is the question of whether a counterinsurgency would preclude it. A haven would not require a patron with control over all of Afghanistan, which has an area of 647,000 square kilometers, but instead only a small slice of it. As described in General McChrystal's assessment, a "properly resourced" strategy would leave substantial portions of the country—those portions not deemed essential to the survival of the Afghan government—outside the control of that

government or of U.S. forces. In short, even a counterinsurgency that was successful, in the sense of accomplishing the mission of bolstering the government in Kabul and stabilizing the portions of the country where most Afghans live, still would leave ample room for a terrorist haven inside Afghanistan should a group seek to establish one.

Terrorism Beyond South Asia

A further question is whether a group seeking a haven would require either Afghanistan *or* Pakistan. Radical Islamists, including al-Qa'ida, have other unstable places to which to turn; Somalia and Yemen immediately come to mind. Afghanistan is associated with terrorism not because Afghans are disproportionately inclined to become international terrorists. They are not—notwithstanding the recently publicized case of Najibullah Zasi and the large number of Afghans who have been swept up by Operation Enduring Freedom. Instead, we are seeing a legacy of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the insurgency against it in the 1980s, which attracted foreign (chiefly Arab) jihadists such as bin Ladin and was followed by unending civil war.

The terrorist threat to U.S. interests—even just the Sunni, Salafi, jihadist portion of that threat—does not all emanate from Afghanistan or from any other single place. It is decentralized, more so now than it was at the time of 9/11. It involves a diverse movement with different groups, cells, and individuals having different mixtures of local and global objectives. The movement does not have a central command, even though bin Ladin's al-Qa'ida continues to be the most recognizable part of it. Even some groups that have found it advantageous to adopt the al-Qa'ida brand name, such as the one in the Maghreb of North Africa, act more on local initiative than in response to any orders from South Asia. One hears frequent mention of "links" back to Afghanistan or Pakistan, but links do not necessarily mean direction or instigation. They can mean nothing more—as in what has become publicly known so far about the Zasi case—than having once passed through a training camp. They may mean even less.

Perceptions and Propaganda

Concern has been expressed about broader perceptions that could undermine counterterrorism if the United States were not seen as successfully imposing its will through military force in Afghanistan. Being able to claim victory over the superpower would boost al-Qa'ida and other Islamist radicals, according to this concern. Such perceptions do come into play, and they do matter. Defeat of the Soviet Union—then still a second superpower—in an earlier intervention in Afghanistan unquestionably boosted the morale and aspirations of an earlier generation of jihadists, with effects still being felt today.

But on this issue as on others, one has to consider carefully the difference that a U.S.-led counterinsurgency would or would not make. Once the United States has made a commitment, radicals find ways to claim victory no matter when that commitment ends, and with little reference to how it ends. In the spin game of defining victory and defeat, terrorists have inherent advantages. Even if the U.S. military command achieves everything it sets out to achieve in stabilizing the Afghan government and the portions of the country most Afghans inhabit, al-Qa'ida and other terrorist groups will still be out there—in Pakistan, in the unpacified portions of Afghanistan, or elsewhere. They still

will be issuing their audiotapes and other propaganda. And all it takes is a single terrorist attack against U.S. interests to punctuate their boast that they have not been defeated.

This propagandizing is likely no matter what the United States does from this point forward in Afghanistan. A larger and more costly U.S. military commitment may make the propaganda all the more effective by bolstering arguments that the United States has been unable to deliver a knockout blow to the jihadist movement even when it pours large resources into the effort.

Perceptions of what we do militarily in Afghanistan have other effects that are important to counterterrorism. These include resentment over Western troops occupying Muslim lands, and anger over the civilian casualties and other collateral damage that are an inevitable by-product of even the most carefully prepared and executed counterinsurgency operations. The resentment and anger extend throughout the Muslim world but are especially apparent in Afghanistan itself. What previously had been an oasis of goodwill toward the United States has dissipated. There are multiple reasons for this, some of which—including general concern over deteriorating security—suggest that a more robust western military effort to protect the Afghan population might help to reverse the trend. But at least as marked is the anger over damage from western military operations themselves.

These sentiments matter not because we are engaged in a popularity contest but instead because they increase the number of people who support violence against our interests, and the number of people willing to commit such violence themselves. A reflection of this in Afghanistan has been the increase over the past few years in the number of insurgents fighting against us and our allies. We generally label the insurgents as "Taliban," but many have little or no identification with the extreme ideology of the principal Taliban leadership. In one recent engagement in which U.S. forces suffered heavy casualties, the U.S. command did not even consider the Taliban label to be appropriate, instead describing the insurgents as "tribal militias."

The Taliban

This observation sheds light on the nature of the Afghan Taliban, and on the question of what danger they do or do not pose to broader U.S. interests. The Taliban are a loosely organized resistance concerned above all with society, politics, and power inside Afghanistan. Despite their ideological affinity to, and proven cooperation with, al-Qa'ida, they are not driven by the transnational objectives associated with bin Ladin and Zawahiri. Their interest in, and antagonism toward, the United States is almost entirely a function of what the United States does inside Afghanistan to thwart their aims there. The Taliban's values and practices, as demonstrated in their previous rule over most of Afghanistan, clearly are repugnant to our own values. But there is nothing in their origins or objectives to suggest that they will become less insular and inward looking in the future than they are now.

The Taliban are the object of wide dislike among Afghans, based on the earlier experience of their harsh rule. Their lack of cohesiveness is another of their handicaps. The cause most likely to unite them is resistance to foreign occupation of Afghanistan. They will tend to be stronger to the extent that our military presence there is seen as an occupation.

Pakistan

The possible connection of events in Afghanistan to Pakistan has, of course, become a major part of debate on U.S. policy toward Afghanistan. Although influencing developments in Pakistan is not why we intervened in Afghanistan, Pakistan's importance requires that the connections, if any, be addressed. Two questions must be asked.

One is how much effect anything happening in Afghanistan is likely to have on the politics and stability of Pakistan. There is a tendency to think of such questions in spatial terms, with visions of malevolent influences suffusing across international boundaries like a contagious disease. But the future of Pakistan will be influenced far more by forces within Pakistan itself. Those forces include the inclinations of the Pakistani population and the will and capabilities of the Pakistani military, which is by far the strongest—in several senses of the term—institution in Pakistan. Pakistan has more than five times the population of Afghanistan and an economy ten times as large. Pakistani policymakers and the Pakistani military have a keen interest in Afghanistan, partly because of concerns about Pashtun nationalism and mostly as a side theater in their rivalry with India. But events inside Afghanistan will not be decisive, or anything close to it, in shaping Pakistan's future.

The other question is exactly what sort of influence, for good or for ill, events in Afghanistan are likely to have on Pakistan even if that influence is marginal rather than decisive. Again, the spatial model of spreading instability tends to dominate thinking, but it is unclear exactly how the model would materialize in practice. Establishment of a hostile regime on one's borders (and we should note that Islamabad's relations with the current Afghan government of Hamid Karzai have been anything but cordial) may weaken one's own internal stability if it offers substantial new resources to an internal opposition or provides a base of operations that the opposition previously lacked. But even establishment of an Afghan Taliban state or proto-state would not do these things to Pakistan. Even if the Afghan Taliban—who have been beneficiaries more than enemies of the Pakistani government—decided to turn their attention away from consolidating domestic power to try to stoke an Islamist fire in Pakistan, they would have few additional resources to offer. And the Pakistani Taliban already have bases of operations in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, which appear as part of Pakistan on maps but which Islamabad has never effectively controlled.

In the meantime, an expanded U.S.-led counterinsurgency in Afghanistan is more likely to complicate than to alleviate the task of Pakistani security forces, insofar as it pushes additional militants across the Durand line. A larger U.S. military presence in the immediate region also would make it politically more difficult for the Pakistani government to cooperate openly on security matters with the United States, in the face of widespread negative sentiment inside Pakistan regarding that presence.

Costs and Benefits

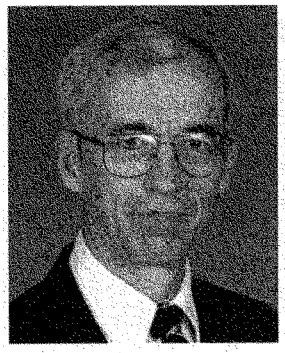
We Americans are most comfortable defining our struggles against foreign threats in terms of warfare over identifiable pieces of territory. So it is unsurprising that counterinsurgency in Afghanistan has become a kind of surrogate for thinking about the task of countering contemporary Islamist terrorism. But military force is only one tool for performing that task, South Asia is only one possible region for wielding that tool,

and counterinsurgency in Afghanistan is only one possible way of wielding it even in that region. Protecting Americans from terrorism will depend at least as much on the less visible, day-to-day counterterrorist work of our own and allied security services. The degree of terrorist danger to Americans also will depend in large measure on sentiments around the globe—shaped in large part by our own policies—that will lead some people to try to do the United States violent harm, or to support or sympathize with the efforts of those who do.

We Americans also are most comfortable in thinking about such struggles in absolute terms—of victory rather than defeat, of success rather than failure, and of "doing whatever it takes" to win. But the present policy problem (like many others) offers no clear conception of victory. The policy process must discard absolutes and instead carefully weigh costs and benefits of each contemplated course of action, including the direct expenditure of blood and treasure in waging counterinsurgency in Afghanistan, while recognizing that estimates of costs and benefits are inevitably uncertain, that no course assures success, and that every course entails risks.

Conclusion

My own weighing of these considerations leads to the conclusion that an expanded military effort in the cause of counterinsurgency in Afghanistan would be unwarranted. The benefits in terms of ultimately adding to the safety and security of Americans would be marginal and very questionable. At best, the difference such an effort would make in the terrorist threat facing Americans would be slight. At worst, the effort would be counterproductive and not reduce the threat at all. Even at its best, the benefit would be outweighed by the probable costs—especially in lost American lives and limbs but also in monetary resources and other U.S. equities—of the counterinsurgency.



Dr. Paul R. Pillar

Biography

Professor Pillar retired in 2005 from a 28-year career in the U.S. intelligence community, in which his last position was National Intelligence Officer for the Near East and South Asia. Earlier he served in a variety of analytical and managerial positions, including as chief of analytic units at the CIA covering portions of the Near East, the Persian Gulf, and South Asia. Professor Pillar also served in the National Intelligence Council as one of the original members of its Analytic Group. He has been Executive Assistant to CIA's Deputy Director for Intelligence and Executive Assistant to Director of Central Intelligence William Webster. He has also headed the Assessments and Information Group of the DCI Counterterrorist Center, and from 1997 to 1999 was deputy chief of the center. He was a Federal Executive Fellow at the Brookings Institution in 1999-2000. Professor Pillar is a retired officer in the U.S. Army Reserve and served on active duty in 1971-1973, including a tour of duty in Vietnam.

Education

- Ph.D. (1978) Princeton University, Politics
- M.A. (1975) Princeton University, Politics
- B.Phil. (1971) Oxford University, Politics
- A.B. summa cum laude (1969) Dartmouth College, Government

DISCLOSURE FORM FOR WITNESSES
CONCERNING FEDERAL CONTRACT AND GRANT INFORMATION

INSTRUCTION TO WITNESSES: Rule 11, clause 2(g)(4), of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives for the 111th Congress requires nongovernmental witnesses appearing before House committees to include in their written statements a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source of any federal contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants) received during the current and two previous fiscal years either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness. This form is intended to assist witnesses appearing before the House Armed Services Committee in complying with the House rule.

Witness name: **Dr. Paul R. Pillar**

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FISCAL YEAR 2009

federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
none			

FISCAL YEAR 2008

federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
none			

FISCAL YEAR 2007

Federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
none			

Federal Contract Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts (including subcontracts) with the federal government, please provide the following information:

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Current fiscal year (2009):_____;
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List of subjects of federal contract(s) (for example, ship construction, aircraft parts manufacturing, software design, force structure consultant, architecture & engineering services, etc.):

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Fiscal year 2008:_____;
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Aggregate dollar value of federal contracts held:

Current fiscal year (2009):_____;
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Fiscal year 2007:_____.

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Number of grants (including subgrants) with the federal government:

Current fiscal year (2009):_____;
Fiscal year 2008:_____;
Fiscal year 2007:_____.

Federal agencies with which federal grants are held:

Current fiscal year (2009):_____;
Fiscal year 2008:_____;
Fiscal year 2007:_____.

List of subjects of federal grants(s) (for example, materials research, sociological study, software design, etc.):

Current fiscal year (2009):_____;
Fiscal year 2008:_____;
Fiscal year 2007:_____.

Aggregate dollar value of federal grants held:

Current fiscal year (2009):_____;
Fiscal year 2008:_____;
Fiscal year 2007:_____.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING

OCTOBER 14, 2009

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. KLINE

Mr. KLINE. We heard from General Keane during the hearing, state the war in Afghanistan is a war of "ideas and desires."

Dr. Pillar in his testimony stated "the majority of the "Taliban," have little or no identification with the extreme ideology of the principal Taliban leadership."

Dr. Biddle stated "there is a hard core of committed Islamist ideologues, centered on Mullah Omar and based in Quetta. But by all accounts much of the Taliban's actual combat strength is provided by an array of warlords and other factions with often much more secular motivations, who side with the Taliban for reasons of profit, prestige, or convenience, and who may or may not follow orders from the Quetta Shura leadership."

It is understood Afghanistan is a complex environment with a wide variety of bad actors with separate motivations. However, with the role religion plays in the lives of Afghans, are we discounting the role it could be playing in the insurgency?

What would each of you identify as the top three motivations fueling the Afghan insurgency?

General McChrystal has emphasized an extremely robust COIN initiative as the best strategy moving forward and our best chance for success. Should this strategy address the ideology piece and if so, how?

General KEANE. [The information was not available at the time of printing.]

Dr. BIDDLE. This memorandum is in response to the question for the record submitted by Rep. John Kline following the House Armed Services Committee hearing on "Afghanistan: Getting the Strategy Right" (October 14, 2009). Rep. Kline asks what are the three top motivations fueling the Taliban insurgency, what role does religion play in this, should U.S. strategy address the ideological dimension of those motivations, and if so how?

What we call "the Taliban" is actually a heterogeneous collective consisting of many different factions with different motivations. Hence there is no single answer to the question as posed, but instead as many different answers as there are factions.

For example, the Quetta Shura Taliban (QST) faction, centered on Mullah Omar and based in the Pakistani city of Quetta, is motivated chiefly by ideology. They wish to return Afghan governance to the system they imposed in their previous rule (the QST leadership are the survivors of the pre-existing regime the U.S. toppled in 2001). This system is based on a harsh theocracy with strict Islamist Sharia law, an intrusive state apparatus designed to enforce a conservative interpretation of virtue among the population, and a thoroughgoing exclusion of Western ideas, practices, and mores. (Taliban ideology is thus a call for government to mandate a particular form of religious practice, but it should be emphasized that this is not mainstream Islamic doctrine, and there is no inherent connection between Taliban Islamist theocracy and Islam as a religion: the overwhelming majority of Muslims worldwide, and in Afghanistan, reject the Taliban's interpretation of the faith.) Secondary motivations for individual members of the QST surely include hopes for personal power and authority in a restored Taliban government, tribal and ethnic rivalries, hatred of Americans and other foreigners, and fear of retribution at the hands of erstwhile colleagues were they to defect, among other contributing factors. But for the QST, ideology is especially important.

For other Taliban factions, ideology is much less central. The Hezb-i-Islami Gulbuddin (HiG), for example, centered on the warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, is motivated chiefly by the prospect of money, power, and influence. The HiG are willing to accept Taliban ideology as a price of alliance with a force they find tactically useful in establishing power and authority in as much of Afghanistan as possible (and especially their traditional strongholds in the Afghan northeast), but for them ideology is closer to a means than an end.

The Haqqani network (HQN), centered on the warlords Sirajuddin and Jalaluddin Haqqani, is probably somewhere between the QST and the HiG ideologically. The Haqqanis have traditionally sought personal power and influence (especially in their traditional homelands in east-central Afghanistan), but have grown more radical in recent years through some combination of deal-making with the QST, ideological po-

sitioning to attract radicalized graduates of Pakistani Madrassahs (religious schools) as foot soldiers, and possible religious or intellectual evolution on the part of the HQN leadership.

For U.S. strategy, two central insights follow from this. First, the importance of ideology as motivation for the Taliban varies, and is central only for a few factions (and especially the QST). Second, and perhaps most important, the primary ideology among those factions who *are* ideologically motivated is one that most Afghans decisively reject. The QST's ideas are extremely unpopular with the Afghan population at large, who already understand them and overwhelmingly reject them. Afghans know what the QST is offering ideologically—they lived with it every day during the Taliban's previous rule. And repeated surveys have shown no significant sympathy for a return to Taliban rule among Afghans. This is an important advantage for us in the conduct of the war, and provides an important basis for hope that we can meet our aims in the war.

There are things we can do in our information strategy for the theater to exploit this advantage more fully, such as emphasizing wherever possible the history of Afghan life under the Taliban and reminding Afghans of its cruelty. (David Kilcullen suggests other useful possibilities as well in his book *The Accidental Guerilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One,* esp. pp. 58–59, 109–114.)

But the central challenge in Afghanistan today is not to persuade Afghans to reject the Taliban's ideology: they already do. And an information campaign to clarify the superiority of the Afghan government's ideology to the QST's would probably not convert many of today's Taliban—most of whom are cynics who pursue worldly self-interest with little regard for ideology anyway (the minority who are motivated chiefly by ideology, moreover, are typically highly committed extremists, such as the QST central leadership, who are unlikely to be persuadable). Instead, the central challenge today is twofold: first, to provide Afghans the security they need to hold out against an ideology they already dislike; and second, to provide Afghans a viable, meaningful alternative in the form of a non-Taliban government which can deliver practical vital administrative services at the grassroots level, and especially disinterested justice. General McChrystal's strategy is focused on precisely these two key requirements: security and governance reform. This is not to argue against improvements in our information strategy and public diplomacy to highlight the Taliban's ideological weaknesses. But it is to suggest that the higher priority is properly security and governance, as our current strategy assumes.

Dr. PILLAR. The motivations of the armed opposition in Afghanistan vary significantly from one part of the opposition to another. Keeping that variation in mind, I would identify the following motivations behind the insurgency. One is broad dissatisfaction with the performance and integrity of the central government. A second is opposition to foreign occupation, which is now focused primarily against NATO and especially U.S. forces. A third, which applies less broadly than the first two and most of all to the Taliban leadership, is a religiously based ambition to establish a social and political order rigidly based on an extreme interpretation of *sharia* or Islamic law. Other motivations, including ones as simple as needing some cause or vocation in the absence of gainful alternative employment, also drive the involvement of many fighters in what we loosely label as the Taliban.

Ideas and ideologies certainly play a part in successful counterinsurgencies. This does not mean, however, that there is any effective way for the United States and its allies to address religion in the conflict in Afghanistan. Those insurgents who are religiously motivated—and this mainly involves a hard core of Taliban leaders—are not about to be dissuaded from their course of action through any religious discourse, and certainly not any with westerners. The principal idea that would help to undermine the appeal of the Taliban is a reminder of how ruthless and draconian has been their rule when they have had a chance to exert rule over parts of Afghanistan.

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