

Executive Summary Backgrounder

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Revitalizing U.S. Efforts in Afghanistan

Lisa Curtis and James Phillips

Afghanistan is a crucial front in the global struggle against the al-Qaeda terrorist network and Islamic radicalism. The U.S.-led coalition was unable to transform an overwhelming military victory in 2001 into a stable postwar political situation because of several factors, including Afghanistan's fractious politics and shattered economic, state, and civil society infrastructures; a minimalist American approach to committing military forces and foreign aid; Pakistan's failure to crack down decisively on Taliban forces that have taken refuge in Pashtun tribal areas along the Pakistan–Afghanistan border; and the Afghan government's failure to expand its authority and deliver services to rural Afghans.

Although the United States dealt the Taliban a devastating military defeat in 2001, the radical Islamic movement has made a limited but significant comeback in recent years and threatens to endanger Afghanistan's hard-won progress. The United States has tried to win the struggle in Afghanistan on the cheap. It did not deploy enough military forces or economic aid to fill the power vacuum outside Kabul in a timely manner. The post 9/11 alliance with Afghan warlords made sense in terms of hunting Taliban and al-Qaeda remnants but has undermined the authority of the Afghan government, which continues to struggle to extend its authority outside of the major cities.

Yet the Afghan conflict is still winnable. The Afghans generally support and appreciate American efforts to build a stable democracy, but many are

frustrated with the slow pace of reconstruction, government ineffectiveness and corruption, and the absence of the rule of law in many places. As this frustration mounts, there is a growing danger that they will turn against the government. The United States and its allies need to do more to assist the Afghan government to build a stable and prosperous Afghanistan.

Revitalizing U.S. Policy. The Taliban poses more of a long-term political and ideological threat than a short-term military threat. Coalition forces have won important battlefield victories over the Taliban and have killed or captured many of its leaders, but the Taliban cannot be defeated merely by military means. The Afghan people are the center of gravity in the struggle against the Taliban and its allies. Ultimately, only the Afghans, not Westerners, can decisively defeat them. The U.S. and its allies need to convince Afghans that their long-term interests are better served by an inclusive democratic government with substantial economic aid from the West than by a radical Islamic regime. Building the capacity, effectiveness, and public support of the Afghan government should be the highest priority.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:
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Afghanistan is larger in size and population than Iraq but has far fewer native and foreign troops. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) currently has about 36,000 troops from 37 NATO and non-NATO countries. There is a great need for more ISAF forces to secure and stabilize the countryside, but political opposition in several European countries is growing.

The United States and the other fully involved NATO members should press their reluctant NATO allies to remove national caveats that hinder joint operations against insurgents and threaten the long-term success of the NATO mission in Afghanistan. A failure in Afghanistan would gravely damage NATO's future. ISAF forces need to be able to launch integrated operations with common rules of engagement.

Washington initially underestimated the threat posed by the opium problem. Washington needs to focus immediately on disrupting the operations of major narcotics traffickers, who are lucrative enablers for the Taliban, rather than targeting poor farmers, who are likely to join the insurgency in greater numbers if their meager ability to support their families is threatened. Poppy eradication efforts should be accorded the highest priority in areas controlled by the Taliban.

The West's ability to defeat al-Qaeda's capabilities and ideology rests on a strategy that integrates diplomatic and security efforts toward Afghanistan and Pakistan and focuses more intently on improving relations between these two countries. Washington will need to take a more proactive role in mediating disputes between Afghanistan and Pakistan, prodding them to develop a fresh strategic perception of the region based on economic integration, political reconciliation, and respect for territorial boundaries. To achieve stability in the region, Pakistan must root out Taliban ideology from its own society and close down the madrassahs (religious schools) and training camps that perpetuate the Taliban insurgency. For its part, Afghanistan must acknowledge the sanctity of the border dividing Pashtun populations between the two countries and ensure adequate Pashtun representation in the Afghan government.

To secure counterterrorism cooperation from Islamabad, the U.S. must develop a realistic and hard-nosed policy that takes on Pakistan's ambivalence toward going head to head with the extremists. Despite well over \$10 billion in U.S. aid to Pakistan over the past six years, the terrorist threat emanating from that country is as dangerous as ever. Washington needs to convince Islamabad to work more closely in joint operations that bring U.S. resources and military strength to bear on the situation in the tribal areas and employ a combination of targeted military operations and economic assistance programs aimed at driving a wedge between Pashtun tribal communities and international terrorists.

The U.S. should bolster the position of Senior Afghanistan Coordinator at the State Department to revitalize and better integrate large-scale assistance programs in Afghanistan. This official should be solely responsible for initiating and monitoring U.S. assistance programs to Afghanistan, coordinating programs and policies with European and Asian counterparts, and chairing regular inter-agency meetings.

Conclusion. Consolidating a stable Afghanistan that is free from Taliban influence and ideology will be expensive and will require a patient, long-term, integrated political, military, and economic strategy. However, allowing Afghanistan to revert to its pre-9/11 status of control by the al-Qaeda-friendly Taliban is not an option. To reach U.S. goals in Afghanistan, the U.S. will also need to prevail over Pakistani resistance to ending the Taliban's role in Afghanistan. This will require deft diplomacy that recognizes the need for improved Pakistan-Afghanistan relations through increased trade and economic linkages and joint political endeavors.

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Background

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Afghanistan is a crucial front in the global struggle against the al-Qaeda terrorist network and Islamic radicalism. The United States–led coalition was unable to transform an overwhelming military victory in 2001 into a stable postwar political situation because of Afghanistan’s fractious politics and shattered economic, state, and civil society infrastructures; a minimalist American approach to committing military forces and foreign aid; Pakistan’s failure to crack down decisively on Taliban forces that have taken refuge in Pashtun tribal areas along the Pakistan–Afghanistan border; the Afghan government’s failure to expand its authority and deliver services to rural Afghans; and a shortfall of economic aid, due in part to many countries’ failure to fulfill their foreign aid pledges to Afghanistan.

The Bush Administration made Afghanistan stabilization efforts a priority from when the Afghanistan Transitional Administration was formed in December 2001 until Hamid Karzai was elected president in October 2004. Since then, U.S. leadership on Afghanistan has waned, leading to decentralization and fragmentation of the international reconstruction and stabilization process. In addition, poor governance and corruption in the Karzai government have fueled popular discontent, which the Taliban has exploited.

The U.S. has pledged to increase assistance to Afghanistan significantly over the next two years (about \$2 billion for reconstruction and \$8.6 billion for security assistance), and in January extended the deployment of 3,200 U.S. troops in Afghanistan. These

Talking Points

The United States needs to:

- Assert a stronger leadership role in Afghan reconstruction and revitalize its military and economic commitment to Afghanistan;
- Develop a long-term strategy that integrates diplomatic, economic, and security efforts toward Afghanistan and Pakistan, encouraging them to develop a fresh strategic perception of the region;
- Lead an integrated international effort to build up the Afghan government’s capacity to provide security, the rule of law, and services to the Afghan people;
- Develop a realistic and hard-nosed policy that takes on Pakistan’s ambivalence toward going head to head with the extremists; and
- Convince Islamabad to work more closely in joint operations that bring U.S. resources and military strength to bear on Pakistan’s tribal areas through targeted military operations and economic assistance programs.

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are steps in the right direction. But to ensure that Afghanistan does not again become a safe haven for terrorism, Americans must wage a long-term integrated political, military, and economic development campaign to convince Afghans that their interests are better served by an inclusive democratic government than by a radical Islamic regime.

Political Setting: Struggling to Extend Central Authority

Historically, Afghans have resisted strong centralized rule, whether by kings, communists, or the Taliban. Afghanistan is a complex mosaic of ethnic and tribal groups that zealously guard their independence. Afghanistan's difficult mountainous terrain has posed a formidable physical barrier to movement, communication, and the extension of central authority. Local leaders in each valley and plateau have long exhibited a prickly independence, suspicion of outside authority, and latent xenophobia.

All of these factors have made it difficult for Hamid Karzai, Afghanistan's first post-Taliban leader, to extend his government's authority much beyond Kabul and the northern areas that were hostile to the Taliban, primarily composed of southern Pashtuns. Although the charismatic Karzai remains a popular leader, there has been growing criticism of his government's failure to do more for Afghans outside the main cities and grumbling from the south over the perceived inadequacy of Pashtun representation in his government.

Pashtuns have historically played a leading role in Afghan politics. Karzai, a Pashtun leader from the powerful Popalzai tribal clan, has tried to stay above tribal politics and function as a truly national leader, but he has been handicapped by lack of effective political parties, the weaknesses of the embryonic Afghan government, and the continued strength of traditional tribal leaders, warlords, and local militias.

Despite these challenges, Afghanistan has made substantial political progress in a relatively short time. Under the Bonn Process, a constitution was drafted in 2003 that established a framework for building a democratic government. In October 2004, Hamid Karzai became Afghanistan's

first elected president. A bicameral legislature consisting of the Wolesi Jirga (House of the People) and Meshrano Jirga (House of Elders) was elected in 2005.

The gains for women have been particularly noteworthy. Afghanistan's new constitution established equal rights for men and women, a radical change from the Taliban period when women were not allowed to work outside their homes or to receive more than a rudimentary education. Today, roughly 35 percent of Afghanistan's 6 million students are girls, although attendance has been falling due to Taliban attacks on schools. Insurgents attacked 198 schools in 2006 and murdered at least 20 teachers who instruct girls, including one male teacher who was dragged outside his classroom and decapitated.¹ The constitution also mandates that women should hold 27 percent of the parliamentary seats, which gives Afghanistan's National Assembly a greater proportion of female legislators than the U.S. Congress.

While the Afghan government has made considerable progress in advancing democratic and human rights, it has not delivered government services to the Afghan people effectively, especially in rural areas threatened by insurgent or criminal activity. Government bureaucracies often lack the human resources and financing to function adequately. The best and the brightest Afghans flock to work for international aid organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that pay much higher salaries.

The slow pace of government capacity-building has hamstrung efforts to expand the government's authority beyond the major cities, and a motley collection of tribal leaders, warlords, and criminal networks filled the vacuum after the 2001 fall of the Taliban. There is a growing danger that the government's failure to bring the rule of law and raise living standards in anarchic and destitute areas of the countryside could pave the way for the Taliban to return to more areas. Although most Afghans practice a tolerant form of traditional Islam and chafed under the harsh rule of Taliban zealots, the Taliban brought order to many lawless areas.

1. Associated Press, "Taliban Kills Two Sisters for Crime of Teaching," *The New York Times*, December 10, 2006.

Uneven Economic Progress. Afghanistan remains one of the poorest countries in the world, with annual gross domestic product (GDP) per capita estimated at roughly \$800. Although the economy has improved significantly since the ouster of the Taliban, progress has been uneven. Real GDP grew by an estimated 8 percent in 2006, fueled by an infusion of international aid, growth in the service sector, and the slow recovery of the agricultural sector, which forms the largest portion of the economy. Afghans continue to suffer from a shortage of jobs, housing, electricity, clean water, and adequate medical care. The lack of security in many provinces has eroded the ability of the government and over 1,200 NGOs—almost 400 of them foreign—to aid in reconstruction. People in the countryside are increasingly frustrated with the government's failure to meet the high expectations for postwar development. The growth in the legal economy has been dwarfed by a boom in the cultivation of opium poppies and the expanding trade in illicit drugs.

The “Petroleum of the Afghans.” Opium cultivation, which has a long history in Afghanistan, has skyrocketed in recent years. Afghanistan now provides about 93 percent of the world's opium supply, generating about \$1 billion in farm gate value or about 13 percent of Afghanistan's GDP, up from 11 percent in 2006.² Because most of the opium is converted into heroin inside the country, illicit drug revenues are estimated to account for more than half Afghanistan's GDP.³

Afghan farmers increasingly have turned away from other crops, partly because of persistent drought, which the hardy poppies more easily survive, and the destruction of irrigation systems, on

which other crops are more dependent. However, the chief reason is economic: A farmer can earn \$500–\$700 per acre of poppies, compared to \$33 per acre of wheat.⁴ Poor farmers also find it much easier to borrow money to finance cultivation of opium poppies and to sell their harvest, which does not need to be moved quickly to markets via badly damaged roads, like food crops.

The opium trade strengthens the power of non-state actors—including the Taliban, regional warlords, and criminal networks—at the expense of the government, which it also corrupts. Opium, dubbed the “petroleum of the Afghans,” fuels the Taliban's drive for power, as well as the activities of other insurgent groups and warlords opposed to the government. The Taliban has developed extensive financial and logistical links with drug traffickers and runs a protection racket that taxes both traffickers and farmers to finance its operations.⁵ The Taliban reportedly imposes a 40 percent tax on the opium harvest in areas that it controls, netting \$10 million to \$20 million per harvest according to one conservative estimate. It uses this revenue to finance “day fighters” or “guns for hire”—unemployed young men who fight for \$20 per day.⁶ One opium poppy harvest could therefore hire an army of 200,000 mercenaries for 100 days. In addition, drug traffickers often provide money, vehicles, and logistical support to Taliban forces and sell them arms smuggled into Afghanistan across its porous borders.

Afghanistan: The Forgotten War

Although the United States dealt the Taliban a devastating military defeat in 2001, the radical Islamic movement has made a limited but signifi-

2. United Nations, Office on Drugs and Crime, “Afghanistan Opium Survey 2007: Executive Summary,” August 2007, p. 13, at www.unodc.org/pdf/research/AFG07_ExSum_web.pdf (September 27, 2007).
3. Ali A. Jalali, Robert B. Oakley, and Zoe Hunter, “Combating Opium in Afghanistan,” National Defense University, Institute for National Security Studies *Strategic Forum* No. 224, November 2006, p. 1, at www.ndu.edu/inss/Strforum/SF224/SF224.pdf (September 27, 2007).
4. Jon Lee Anderson, “The Taliban's Opium War,” *The New Yorker*, July 9, 2007, at www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/07/09/070709fa_fact_anderson (September 27, 2007).
5. James Risen, “Poppy Fields Are New Front Line in Afghanistan War,” *The New York Times*, May 10, 2007, p. A11, at www.nytimes.com/2007/05/16/world/asia/16drugs.html (September 27, 2007).
6. Hayder Mili and Jacob Townsend, “Afghanistan's Drug Trade and How It Funds Taliban Operations,” Jamestown Foundation *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 5, Issue 7 (May 10, 2007), p. 3, at www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?issue_id=4103 (September 27, 2007).

cant comeback in recent years and threatens to endanger Afghanistan's hard-won progress. Bolstered by support networks anchored in the Pashtun tribal areas of Pakistan, the Taliban and allied insurgent groups have seeped over the porous border and gained control of a steadily increasing swath of Afghan territory. According to declassified intelligence, insurgent groups expanded the territory where they operate by more than 400 percent between 2005 and 2006.⁷ The number of insurgent attacks has steadily increased, rising from 1,558 in 2005 to 4,542 in 2006.⁸ Although attacks have occurred throughout the country, most are concentrated in the Pashtun heartland in southern and eastern Afghanistan.

The size of the Taliban's fighting force remains unknown. Most of its fighters are part-time, mobilized ad hoc to fight against specific targets. According to one estimate, the Taliban deployed 2,000 to 4,000 full-time fighters in 2005.⁹ Taliban strength has undoubtedly grown since then. The Taliban remains incapable of holding ground against U.S. or NATO forces but is successfully waging a campaign of guerrilla warfare by harassing government and coalition military forces, intimidating Afghan and foreign civilians, and attacking government officials and facilities.

The Taliban's strategy and tactics have evolved gradually since it regrouped and launched the insurgency in the spring of 2002. It initially attacked coalition forces with relatively large bands of up to 100 fighters in 2002 and 2003, but bloody

setbacks inflicted by superior Western firepower and devastating air strikes dissuaded it from continuing such tactics. The growing U.S. military presence, which rose from less than 10,000 troops in 2003 to nearly 20,000 in 2004, also may have led the Taliban to change tactics by deploying smaller bands of less than 10 fighters, which can maneuver and launch small-scale hit-and-run attacks while evading detection and counterstrikes.¹⁰

The Taliban and other insurgent groups have increasingly moved away from directly challenging coalition forces to using roadside bombs and suicide bomb attacks similar to those conducted by Iraqi insurgents. Roadside bombings increased from 783 in 2005 to 1,677 in 2006, while suicide bombings surged from 27 in 2005 to 139 in 2006.¹¹ This year, there have been 123 suicide bombings as of the end of August.¹² Such attacks have not been as effective in Afghanistan as they have in Iraq, and more than 90 suicide bombers in the past two years have failed to kill anybody but themselves, perhaps because they were not trained as well as the predominantly Arab radicals who have conducted most of the bombings in Iraq.¹³

Growing Iranian Influence. Iran has played an increasingly troublesome role in Afghanistan, as it has in Iraq.¹⁴ Tehran has a long history of supporting Afghan client groups against the central government in Kabul. After the 1979 Soviet invasion, it supported Shia resistance groups, such as Hezbi Wahdat (Islamic Unity Party), and Sunni groups fighting the Soviets such as Jamiat Islami (Islamic

7. Anthony H. Cordesman, in hearing, *Afghanistan on the Brink: Where Do We Go from Here?* Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, 110th Cong., 1st Sess., February 15, 2007, p. 3, at <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/33319.pdf> (September 27, 2007).
8. Andrew Feickert, "U.S. and Coalition Military Operations in Afghanistan: Issues for Congress," Congressional Research Service *Report for Congress*, updated March 27, 2007, p. 7.
9. Seth Jones, "Averting Failure in Afghanistan," *Survival*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (Spring 2006), p. 123.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
11. Feickert, "U.S. and Coalition Military Operations in Afghanistan," p. 7.
12. Associated Press, "U.N.: Most Afghan Suicide Attacks Start in Pakistan," *The Washington Post*, September 9, 2007, p. A 20, at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/08/AR2007090801483.html (September 27, 2007).
13. Brian Glyn Williams, "The Taliban Fedayeen: The World's Worst Suicide Bombers?" *Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 5, Issue 14 (July 19, 2007), at www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373562 (September 27, 2007).
14. See James Phillips, "Iran's Hostile Policies in Iraq," Heritage Foundation *Background* No. 2030, April 30, 2007, at www.heritage.org/Research/MiddleEast/BG2030.cfm.

Society). After the rise of the virulently anti-Shia Taliban regime, Iran supported the Northern Alliance opposition coalition, which was composed of these two groups and several other groups. Tehran has continued to supply these groups, some of which have joined the Karzai government, with money and arms as a hedge against American influence.

Iran has also sought to expand its proxy network in Afghanistan to include elements of the Taliban movement, its longtime enemy. This year, coalition forces in Afghanistan have intercepted Iranian arms shipments to the Taliban on April 11, May 3, and September 6.¹⁵ U.S. Undersecretary of State R. Nicholas Burns announced in June that the U.S. had “irrefutable evidence” that Iranian Revolutionary Guards armed the Taliban.¹⁶ The intercepted arms have included “artillery shells, land mines...rocket-propelled grenade launchers,” and “sophisticated Chinese-made HN-5 antiaircraft missiles,” which led Washington to complain to Beijing.¹⁷ Although Iran has a history of ideological hostility toward the Taliban, it has a strong geopolitical interest in aiding its war against the United States, their common enemy.

A Hydra-Headed Insurgency. In addition to the Taliban, the insurgency is waged by two other major Afghan groups and by foreign Islamic radicals. The Hezbi Islami (Party of Islam), a militant group led by Pashtun extremist Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, operates primarily in southeastern Afghanistan. During the war against the Soviets from 1979 to 1989, Hekmatyar was a favorite of Pakistan’s Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), but he fled to Iran after Pakistan passed over him in favor of the rising Taliban in the mid-1990s. He is now believed to receive more aid from Iran than from the ISI.¹⁸ He returned to Afghanistan in 2002 to resume fight-

ing against his former Northern Alliance rivals, who had joined with Hamid Karzai to form the post-Taliban Afghan government.

One of Hekmatyar’s most effective former commanders, Jalaluddin Haqqani, who later joined the Taliban and became its minister for tribal affairs, has emerged as a key leader who commands a powerful insurgent network that straddles the border near the eastern city of Jalalabad. Haqqani was perhaps the Taliban’s best military commander before its downfall, but he has maintained an independent power base and has waged his own insurgency in cooperation with the Taliban in recent years.

In addition to these Afghan groups, several hundred Muslim militants from other countries have joined the insurgency inside Afghanistan. Most of them are from neighboring Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, but smaller numbers come from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Yemen, Iraq, Somalia, and Chechnya. The foreign militants are reportedly better trained, better equipped, and more professional fighters than the Afghans, who often fight only on a part-time basis.¹⁹

All of these groups operate from sanctuaries in Pakistan. The Taliban leader Mullah Omar is reportedly based near Quetta in Pakistan’s Baluchistan Province. The Taliban, Hezbi Islami, the Haqqani network, and many foreign Islamic militant groups including al-Qaeda also have support infrastructure in Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), particularly in North and South Waziristan. The Taliban and other radical Islamic movements are more popular in Pakistan than in Afghanistan, and they conduct most of their financing and recruiting activities on the Pakistani side of the border.²⁰ The Pakistani government, which has limited authority in the tribal agencies of the FATA, has

15. Robin Wright, “Iranian Arms Destined for Taliban Seized in Afghanistan, Officials Say,” *The Washington Post*, September 16, 2007, p. A19, at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/15/AR2007091500803.html (September 28, 2007).

16. BBC News, “U.S. Concern at Iran Afghan Arms,” June 13, 2007, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6750785.stm (September 18, 2007).

17. Ron Synovitz, “Afghanistan: U.S. Worried Iran Sending Chinese Weapons to Taliban,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, September 14, 2007, p. 1, at www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/09/817530bc-0297-4034-8826-ac7fff6331bf.html (September 28, 2007).

18. Jones, “Averting Failure in Afghanistan,” p. 116.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

often turned a blind eye to the activities of Afghan insurgent groups based in its territory.

Prioritizing Pakistan–Afghanistan Relations

The West's ability to defeat al-Qaeda capabilities and ideology rests on a strategy that integrates diplomatic and security efforts toward Afghanistan and Pakistan and focuses more intently on improving relations between these two key countries. The Afghanistan Freedom and Security Support Act of 2007 (H.R. 2446), which has been passed by the U.S. House of Representatives and is now before the U.S. Senate, acknowledges this linkage and authorizes the President to appoint a special envoy to promote closer Afghanistan–Pakistan cooperation.

Washington will need to take a more proactive role in mediating disputes between Afghanistan and Pakistan, prodding both countries to develop a fresh strategic perception of the region based on economic integration, political reconciliation, and respect for territorial boundaries. To achieve stability in the region, Pakistan must root out Taliban ideology from its own society and close down the madrassahs (religious schools) and training camps that perpetuate the Taliban insurgency.

For its part, Afghanistan must acknowledge the sanctity of the border dividing Pashtun populations between the two countries and ensure adequate representation of Pashtuns in the Afghan government. Pashtuns in Afghanistan number about 12 million, making up 42 percent of the population, while about 25 million Pashtuns live in Pakistan, making up around 15 percent of the population.



British colonialists purposely divided the ethnic Pashtun tribes in 1893 with the Durand Line, which is now the 1,600-mile porous Afghanistan–Pakistan border.²¹ (See Map 1.) Afghanistan at one time claimed Pashtun tribal areas in Pakistan and has never officially recognized the Durand Line. Pakistan in the past has countered Pashtun nationalism within its own borders by promoting pan-Islamic extremism in Afghanistan.

The Afghanistan–Pakistan peace jirga held in Kabul in early August was a first step in bringing local leaders from both sides of the border together in face-to-face talks. While no one expected imme-

20. Ahmed Rashid, "Who's Winning the War on Terror?" *YaleGlobal*, September 5, 2003, at <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=2384> (September 28, 2007).

21. K. Alan Kronstadt, "Pakistan–U.S. Relations," *Congressional Research Services Report for Congress*, updated August 24, 2007, p. 16, at www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33498.pdf (September 28, 2007).

diat breakthroughs, the gathering was an important step in building confidence between the hostile neighbors. About 700 Pakistani and Afghan delegates focused on terrorism as a joint threat to the two nations and urged their governments to make the war on terrorism an integral part of their national policies and security strategies.

One highlight of the jirga was President Pervez Musharraf's admission during the closing ceremonies that Afghan militants received support from within Pakistan. His statements represented a welcome departure from past rhetorical barbs blaming Afghanistan's woes entirely on President Karzai. Musharraf's remarks demonstrate that the two sides have made some limited progress in improving relations since the historic tripartite meeting hosted by President George W. Bush in September 2006, where the Afghan and Pakistani leaders could barely stand to look at one another.

Islamabad's assistance in the capture and killing of several senior Taliban leaders over the past 10 months may have contributed to the decreased hostility between Presidents Musharraf and Karzai.²² Mullah Akhtar Osmani, formerly the head of Taliban operations in southern Afghanistan, was killed in December 2006 by an air strike; Mullah Dadullah was killed by the British in May in Helmand Province; Taliban Defense Minister Mullah Obaidullah was arrested in Pakistan earlier this year; and key Pakistani Taliban leader Abdullah Masood was killed by the Pakistanis in Baluchistan Province in July.

Confronting U.S.–Pakistan Strategic Differences

To secure the counterterrorism cooperation that the U.S. requires from Islamabad, Washington must develop a realistic and hard-nosed policy that takes on Pakistan's ambivalence toward going head to head with the extremists. Pakistan has received well over \$10 billion in U.S. aid over the past six years—making it one of the largest recipients of U.S. aid—

yet the terrorist threat emanating from that country is as dangerous as ever.

Senior U.S. intelligence officials announced over the summer that the al-Qaeda central leadership has been able to regenerate its capabilities in Pakistan's tribal border areas, where inhabitants share a Pashtun identity with the Taliban, making this area particularly attractive as a place for the Taliban and its al-Qaeda supporters to hide. Many of those involved in recently foiled terrorist plots around the globe received training and inspiration at terrorist training camps in Pakistan. A recent U.N. report says that 80 percent of suicide bombers that have conducted attacks in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2007 were recruited, received training, or stayed in safehouses in the North and South Waziristan agencies of the FATA. Recruitment of suicide bombers is most prevalent in North Waziristan madrassahs associated with Taliban leader Jalaluddin Haqqani.²³

The U.S. and Pakistan continue to have fundamentally different views of the Taliban's role in Afghanistan. At the closing ceremony of the August peace jirga, Musharraf said that the Taliban is part of Afghan society and can be brought into the political mainstream. While promoting an inclusive political system that provides adequate representation of Pashtuns is important to stabilizing the country, Musharraf's defense of the Taliban is alarming. Advocating a Taliban role affirms extremism as an acceptable ideology and undermines the establishment of pluralistic democracy in Afghanistan. Furthermore, a recent U.N. report asserts that overall support for the Taliban in Afghanistan remains "astonishingly low."²⁴

Some observers believe that Pakistan prefers to allow the Taliban to undermine the current Afghan government because the success of Karzai—perceived as a close ally of India—would be detrimental to Pakistani security interests.²⁵ At the same time, however, the recent wave of terrorist attacks in retaliation for the Pakistan military's action against

22. Richard Boucher, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, "Briefing on Pakistan," U.S. Department of State, July 17, 2007, at www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/rm/2007/88582.htm (September 28, 2007).

23. U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, "Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan," September 9, 2007, pp. 67–68.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

25. Ejaz Haider, "Reconciling with Ground Realities," *The Friday Times* (Lahore, Pakistan), August 17, 2007.

extremists at the Red Mosque in Islamabad on July 10 has led to the death of over 300 Pakistani civilians and security officials, demonstrating that the Taliban can be as threatening to the Pakistani state as it is to the Karzai government.

The Red Mosque crisis should be a wake-up call for the Pakistan government that it must deal firmly with extremist elements and develop a unified and strong opposition to any groups or individuals linked to al-Qaeda. This includes confronting groups that previously received sanctuary and support within Pakistan because of their anti-India agendas. Focusing primarily on insurgency operations in Kashmir, these groups also support al-Qaeda operations and objectives in Pakistan.²⁶ Although Pakistan has banned such groups, it has failed to arrest their top leadership or to punish members of the intelligence services who maintain links to these groups.

Although senior Pakistani military officials may not support the extremists in the tribal areas, they appear to regard completely ridding the FATA of them as a matter of little urgency and probably believe that a full head-to-head confrontation could destabilize Pakistan.²⁷ For the past two decades, powerful elements in the security and intelligence services have relied on supporting militancy and extremism as a way to counter archrival India and maintain influence in Afghanistan. Having nurtured extremists for so long, Pakistani security officials continue to believe that they can placate some and eliminate others, dealing with the situation on a case-by-case basis without a wider strategy to address the overall problem.

While hard-core Taliban elements with links to al-Qaeda will have to be defeated militarily in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, Washington, Kabul, and Islamabad should devise a joint strategy to siphon off “guns for hire” who would be willing to become part of civilian society. According to the British

House of Commons Defense Committee report released in July, British commanders in Helmand Province reported that there were two levels of Taliban fighters: “Tier one” fighters are religious fundamentalists who would never accept a compromise with government. “Tier two” fighters are in effect hired guns and more amenable to reconciliation because their allegiance is not based on ideology.²⁸

Developing Joint Strategy in the Tribal Areas

Despite Pakistan’s counterinsurgency efforts in the FATA over the past four years, the region is still one of the world’s most dangerous terrorist safe havens. Given the connections among recently exposed international terrorist plots, the instability in Afghanistan, and the terrorist training camps in these tribal agencies, it is imperative that the U.S. work with Pakistan to develop a more effective strategy to neutralize the terrorists operating in this region.

Beginning in late 2003, the Pakistan military deployed 80,000 security forces to the tribal areas to disrupt the terrorists, but these military operations also damaged traditional tribal institutions, increased radicalism in the region, resulted in the deaths of several hundred Pakistani soldiers, and stirred up opposition in the broader Pakistani population. Fighting between Pakistani government forces and insurgents in the border areas intensified in the spring of 2006, resulting in numerous Pakistani civilian casualties. The terrorists also resorted to brutal and systematic assassinations of local tribal leaders who cooperated with government forces.

On September 5, 2006, because of the growing problems with military operations in the FATA, President Musharraf announced a “peace deal” with tribal leaders of the North Waziristan Agency that included an end to offensive Pakistani military operations in exchange for the tribal rulers’ cooperation in restricting Taliban and al-Qaeda activities.

26. Barbara Elias, ed., “Pakistan: The Taliban’s Godfather?” National Security Archive *Electronic Briefing Book* No. 227, August 14, 2007 at www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB227 (September 28, 2007).

27. Moeed Yusuf, “Tackling Pakistan’s Extremists: Who Dictates, Us or Them?” Brookings Institution, September 6, 2007, at www.brookings.edu/views/op-ed/yusuf20070906.htm (September 28, 2007).

28. British House of Commons, Defense Committee, *United Kingdom Operations in Afghanistan*, 13th Report, 2006–2007 Sess., July 18, 2007, p. 28, at www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmdfence/408/408.pdf (September 28, 2007).

The Pakistan government sought to restore the traditional form of governance in the region and to co-opt tribal elders and political representatives through an infusion of economic assistance for new roads, hospitals, and schools.

Recent statements by senior U.S. intelligence officials reveal that the Pakistani peace deals in the FATA have not achieved the desired objectives and in fact have allowed the region to develop into an al-Qaeda stronghold. Cross-border attacks against targets in Afghanistan's nearby Khost and Paktika provinces rose from 40 attacks in the two months before the agreement to 140 attacks in the two months afterward.²⁹ U.S. intelligence officials noted in mid-July that al-Qaeda remains as strong as ever due to its safe haven in Pakistan's tribal borderlands. Pakistani extremists also took advantage of the decreased military pressure by attempting to impose strict Islamic edicts in the region—the same tactics employed by the Taliban in Afghanistan in the mid-1990s. The extremists have sought to close down girls schools, barber shops, and video stores by force and are increasingly challenging the writ of the government, even in some of the settled areas of the Northwest Frontier Province.

The revelations by U.S. officials of al-Qaeda's resurgence in the tribal areas coincided with the storming of the Red Mosque in Islamabad, which left at least 100 dead. Reports indicate that there were links between the leadership of the Red Mosque and al-Qaeda elements in the tribal areas. The combination of events led Pakistan to send fresh military reinforcements to the region, to re-

tivate military checkpoints, and to conduct limited military operations.

While Pakistan's willingness to go back on the military offensive in the tribal areas is welcome, Islamabad's efforts alone are unlikely to address the serious threat from the region. U.S. and Afghan forces have repeatedly pursued insurgents to the



29. David R. Sands, "Strikes on U.S., Afghan Forces Up Fourfold," *The Washington Times*, January 17, 2007.

border but are banned from crossing into Pakistan in hot pursuit. Coalition forces have alerted Pakistani authorities to the movement of retreating insurgents across the border but in the past have elicited little Pakistani counteraction.³⁰ However, since August, Pakistani forces have actively engaged militants in the FATA, killing hundreds of terrorists while suffering significant military casualties.

Washington needs to convince Islamabad to work more closely in joint operations that bring U.S. resources and military strength to bear on the situation and employ a combination of targeted military operations and economic assistance to drive a wedge between Pashtun tribal communities and international terrorists. A large-scale U.S. troop invasion of Pakistan's tribal areas would be disastrous for the Pakistani state and would not provide a lasting solution to the problem. A more effective strategy involves working cooperatively with Pakistan's military to assert state authority over the areas and, once they are secure, provide substantial assistance to build up the economy and social infrastructure. The Administration is already moving in this direction with a pledge of \$750 million over five years to develop the tribal areas. The security and development challenges in Pakistan's tribal areas are similar to what the coalition forces face in Afghanistan; that is, the need for state institutions to establish the upper hand before international development assistance can begin to flow to the region.

Over the longer term, U.S. assistance should encourage political reform that incorporates the institutions of the tribal lands fully into the Pakistani system. Some have argued that the Pakistan military is loath to implement political reform in these areas and that only the democratic parties would move in this direction. In late July, Pakistan People's Party leader Benazir Bhutto filed a petition

with the Pakistan Supreme Court seeking enforcement of the Political Parties Act in the FATA, which would extend Pakistan election laws to the region and encourage political activity. Political parties are currently prohibited from functioning in the FATA, although 12 seats in the National Assembly (the lower house of parliament) and eight seats in the Senate are reserved for FATA members. The petition claims that since the political parties are not allowed to field candidates for elections, the mosques and madrassahs have been able to assert undue political influence in the region.³¹

At the same time, the U.S. and Pakistan need to take aggressive military action when they receive intelligence on high-value targets. The U.S. has already directed two aerial strikes—in January 2006 and October 2006—in the Bajaur Agency of the tribal areas reportedly aimed at al-Qaeda number two Ayman al-Zawahiri.³² Although those particular strikes were widely condemned in Pakistan for the civilian casualties involved, decisive precision strikes will sometimes be necessary.

India's Role in Afghanistan

One reason for continued Pakistani ambivalence toward the Taliban stems from the concern that India is trying to encircle Pakistan by gaining influence in Afghanistan. To some, the Taliban offers the best chance for countering India's regional influence. In other words, the Pakistan military calculates that India, with which it has fought three wars and endured several military crises, is still a greater threat than the Taliban, which may threaten the stability of Pakistan in the future but for the moment still serves a strategic purpose in Afghanistan.³³ Pakistan believes ethnic Tajiks in the Afghan government receive support from New Delhi. India, in cooperation with Russia and Iran, supported the Afghan Northern Alliance against the Taliban in the late 1990s and

30. David Sanger and David Bohde, "U.S. Pays Pakistan to Fight Terror, But Patrols Ebb," *The New York Times*, May 20, 2007, p. A1, at www.nytimes.com/2007/05/20/world/asia/20pakistan.html (September 28, 2007).

31. "BB Moves SC for Politicking in FATA," *Daily Times*, July 31, 2007, at www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2007\07\31\story_31-7-2007_pg1_6 (September 28, 2007).

32. Kronstadt, "Pakistan-U.S. Relations," p. 21.

33. Steven P. Cohen, "The Pakistan Time Bomb," *The Washington Post*, July 3, 2007, p. A15, at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/02/AR2007070201556.html (September 28, 2007).

almost certainly retains deep links to Northern Alliance elements now in the Afghan government.

India has focused on building closer ties with Afghanistan over the past six years. It has reopened at least four consulates in Afghanistan that had been closed following the Soviet invasion in 1979. Pakistan complains that the Indian consulates in the border cities of Jalalabad and Kandahar are involved in fomenting insurgency in Pakistan's Baluchistan Province. India has also taken an active role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, pledging \$750 million, including assistance for the new parliament building and a major highway in the Nimruz Province. For India, Afghanistan represents an economic gateway to Central Asia.

Because of the regional rivalry between Pakistan and India, Islamabad has been reluctant to allow India to transship goods across Pakistan to Afghanistan. The U.S. should encourage India and Pakistan to work toward greater economic cooperation in Afghanistan as a way to defuse tensions. Participants in unofficial talks on improving Indo-Pakistani ties have suggested that the two countries add Afghanistan as an agenda item in their formal dialogue.³⁴ The bill (H.R. 2446) before the U.S. Senate calls for the U.S. to encourage Pakistan to permit India to transport goods and materials for reconstruction projects to Afghanistan through Pakistani territory.

Revitalizing U.S. Policy

Following the attacks on September 11, 2001, the Bush Administration initially approached Afghanistan from a counterterrorism standpoint. On October 7, 2001, the U.S. launched Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) to attack and uproot al-Qaeda and its Taliban hosts. The lightning campaign began with lethal air strikes and ousted the Taliban from Kabul on November 13, routing them completely by December 2001. Most of the fighting on the ground was carried out by Afghans in the Northern Alliance, supported by U.S. air power, special forces, CIA paramilitary units, a small force of Marines, and Army rangers.

Washington opted for a small military footprint after the Taliban's defeat, in part to minimize the risk of arousing Afghan xenophobia. The United States welcomed the establishment of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), a coalition of the willing created by the December 2001 Bonn Conference and deployed under the authority of the U.N. Security Council. The Pentagon initially opposed deploying the ISAF outside of Kabul, in part because it wanted to preserve its freedom of action in mopping up the remaining Taliban and al-Qaeda remnants. Regrettably, the minimal U.S. military presence and the slow pace at which the nascent Afghan government expanded its authority into the countryside created a power vacuum that gave the Taliban an opportunity to reform and recover, particularly in southeastern Afghanistan.

The United States has tried to win the struggle in Afghanistan on the cheap. It did not deploy enough military forces or economic aid to fill the power vacuum outside Kabul in a timely manner. The post 9/11 alliance with Afghan warlords, which made sense in terms of hunting Taliban and al-Qaeda remnants, has undermined the authority of the Afghan government, which continues to struggle to extend its authority outside of the major cities.

Yet the Afghan conflict is still winnable. The Afghans generally support and appreciate American efforts to build a stable democracy, but many Afghans are frustrated with the slow pace of postwar reconstruction, government ineffectiveness and corruption, and the absence of the rule of law in many places. As this frustration mounts, there is a growing danger that they will turn against the government. The United States and its allies need to do more to assist the Afghan government to build a stable and prosperous Afghanistan.

Waging a Long-Term Political-Military-Economic Campaign to Stabilize Afghanistan. The Taliban poses more of a long-term political and ideological threat than a short-term military threat. OEF and ISAF forces have won important battlefield victories over the Taliban and have killed or captured many of its leaders, but the Taliban cannot

34. Chandan Mitra, "J&K: Out of the Box," *The Pioneer*, September 13, 2007, at www.dailypioneer.com/columnist1.asp?main_variable=Columnist&file_name=mitra%2Fmitra265.txt (September 28, 2007).

be defeated merely by military means. The Afghan people are the center of gravity in the struggle against the Taliban and its militant allies. Ultimately, only the Afghans, not Westerners, can decisively defeat the Taliban. The U.S. and its allies need to convince Afghans that their long-term interests are better served by an inclusive democratic government with substantial economic aid from the West than by a radical Islamic regime. Building the capacity, effectiveness, and public support of the Afghan government should be the highest priority.

The counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan cannot be won without establishing a government that responds to the needs of Afghans in threatened areas and earns their trust. To help to fill the gap until Afghan government services can be extended to more areas, the U.S. and its allies should increase the number of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) beyond the current 25 and provide them with more funding to bring immediate and visible improvements to the lives of Afghan civilians, especially in areas threatened by a resurgent Taliban. Afghan officials should be deployed in PRTs in greater numbers to put an Afghan face on the operations and improve liaison with local, provincial, and national bureaucracies.

Building Up the Afghan Government's Capacity to Deliver Security, Law, and Order. The Taliban came to power in 1996 in large part because of widespread frustration with the anarchy and lawlessness that followed the 1992 collapse of the communist regime. Today, many Afghans in the provinces are frustrated with the perceived lack of tangible benefits provided by the Kabul government.

The Afghan National Police are severely underfunded, poorly trained, and poorly equipped. Many go months without pay because of corruption and problems with the payroll system. This encourages them to extort bribes and makes them vulnerable to corruption. Germany, the lead nation for building the police force, has mistakenly tried to build a conventional state police force rather than a mix of paramilitary police and local forces. The United States should take over lead responsibility for

reforming the police, purge corrupt leaders, and deploy more police trainers and embedded advisers to improve the effectiveness and reliability of the police. Given the extensive criminal activity in many areas, the police should be expanded beyond the current target of 82,000 officers.

The Afghan National Army (ANA), which has a current strength of about 36,000 troops, should also be expanded beyond the Bonn Conference target of 70,000 troops, which was set before the Taliban resurgence. Afghan Defense Minister Abdul Rahim Wardak has called for expanding the ANA to 150,000 men, which seems a more realistic number, especially in preparation for when ISAF forces start to draw down.

Pay for army and police recruits should also be raised to attract better candidates, increase retention rates, and reduce temptations for corruption. Afghan soldiers are currently paid about \$70 per month—less than what Taliban fighters are paid and far less than the estimated \$4,000 per day cost of maintaining a NATO soldier in the field in Afghanistan.³⁵

Reforming and Bolstering ISAF Efforts. Afghanistan is larger in size and population than Iraq but has far fewer native and foreign troops. The ISAF currently has about 36,000 troops from 37 NATO and non-NATO countries. There is a great need for more ISAF forces to secure and stabilize the countryside, but this may be politically difficult given growing political opposition in several European countries to increased involvement. Britain, Denmark, and Poland have dispatched greater numbers of troops this year, but other countries (e.g., Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands) appear to be wavering.

At a minimum, the ISAF should be freed from restrictions that prevent it from deploying troops in the most effective manner. These “national caveats” hamper the flexibility and effectiveness of NATO commanders by preventing some ISAF contingents from being deployed in insecure areas or performing dangerous missions. This makes the situation even more difficult for other ISAF forces, forcing

35. Haroun Mir, “Bolster the Afghan National Army,” *International Herald Tribune*, February 17, 2007, at www.ihf.com/articles/2007/02/16/news/edmir.php (September 28, 2007).

them to shoulder more of the burden of the hardest fighting. U.S., British, Canadian, and Dutch forces have been deployed in southern Afghanistan and have seen the most action. Danish, Estonian, and Romanian forces have also been actively engaged in the fighting, but “stand aside” countries (e.g., France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Turkey) have severely limited how their troops can be deployed. This is no way to fight or win a war.

The United States and the other fully involved NATO members should press their reluctant NATO allies to remove national caveats that hinder joint operations against insurgents and threaten the long-term success of the NATO mission in Afghanistan. After all, a failure in Afghanistan would gravely damage NATO’s future. ISAF forces need to be able to launch integrated operations with common rules of engagement. There also needs to be greater coordination between ISAF and OEF forces.

Integrating Counternarcotics, Long-Term Economic Development, Counterinsurgency, and Counterterrorism Strategies. Washington initially underestimated the cancerous threat posed by the opium problem and sought to defeat the insurgency before focusing more seriously on narcotics trafficking. The Pentagon perceived counternarcotics missions as a law enforcement matter that was a diversion from fighting terrorism, but the rapid growth in opium revenues has fueled Taliban expansion and encouraged government corruption, making it an integral part of the security threat.

Law enforcement and U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime officials believe that the “Taliban are completely dependent upon the narco-economy for their financing.”³⁶ In return, the Taliban provides protection for the opium crops, security for drug caravans, and even day laborers for harvesting the crops. This symbiotic relationship among Afghan narco-mafias, the Taliban, and other insurgents has created a substantial correlation between opium poppy cultivation and insurgency. In 2006, NATO’s Regional Command South, which operates in territory where

an estimated 62 percent of Afghan opium is produced (including 46 percent in Helmand Province and 8 percent in Kandahar Province), sustained about two-thirds of total NATO casualties.³⁷

To reduce the flow of illegal drugs, deprive insurgents and terrorists of a major source of financing, and reduce a source of corruption in the Afghan government, OEF and ISAF forces must do more to disrupt the narcotics trade. U.S. forces have begun to provide logistical support for counternarcotics operations, but they could do much more to provide intelligence and assistance to help the Afghan government target drug labs and opium stockpiles and to interdict drug smugglers.³⁸ Targeting the lucrative heroin trade would disrupt insurgent finances more than half-hearted measures to eradicate poppy crops and would cause much less collateral damage to the government in terms of popular support among Afghan farmers.

The immediate focus should be on disrupting the operations of major narcotics traffickers, who are lucrative enablers for the Taliban, rather than targeting poor farmers, who are likely to join the insurgency in greater numbers if their meager ability to support their families is threatened. Poppy eradication efforts should be accorded the highest priority in areas controlled by the Taliban. Elsewhere, eradication efforts should be incrementally escalated after there has been enough investment in economic development, development of viable alternative livelihoods, restoration of the rule of law, and anti-corruption efforts to make the anti-drug effort sustainable in a given region over the long haul. Until then, the U.S. and its allies should mount offensive operations that target insurgent-controlled poppy fields before harvest time to reduce the insurgents’ ability to finance their operations and hire day fighters.

Moving to crop eradication before corruption has been cleaned up has the unintended consequence of handing corrupt officials the opportunity to extort bribes from local farmers and drug mafias to spare

36. Mili and Townsend, “Afghanistan’s Drug Trade and How It Funds Taliban Operations,” p. 2.

37. *Ibid.*

38. Ali A. Jalali, “The Future of Afghanistan,” *Parameters*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Spring 2006), p. 6, at <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/06spring/jalali.pdf> (September 28, 2007).

their crops. Aerial spraying of poppy crops would be a more efficient way to reduce drug flows but is fiercely opposed by the Afghan government, in part due to uncertainties about health side effects and the potential damage to subsistence agriculture. Washington should continue to press Kabul to permit aerial spraying efforts, particularly in the southern poppy-growing regions controlled by the Taliban.

As with many other issues in Afghanistan, there is no realistic quick fix. Progress will require a patient, integrated, long-term approach that weans farmers away from dependence on drug traffickers by giving them alternative means of financing their crops. Because alternative crops will never be as lucrative as opium poppies, carrots in the form of microcredit programs to reduce farmers' dependence on loans from traffickers, food crop subsidies, cut-rate fertilizer, and other inducements to switch to alternative crops must be accompanied with the stick of law enforcement.

Ruling Out a Peace Agreement with Top Taliban Leaders and Other Insurgents. President Karzai is reportedly considering negotiations with the Taliban and other insurgent leaders. On September 29, he offered to include Taliban militants in his government if they agreed to a peace deal. While diplomatic efforts to split the loosely knit insurgents could pay dividends if managed correctly, any insurgents included in the negotiations must agree to renounce the Taliban's harsh ideology, denounce their ties to al-Qaeda, and publicly break with the Taliban. No deals should be offered to Mullah Omar, other top leaders, or anyone who has committed terrorist atrocities.

Strengthening Pakistani Resolve Against the Taliban. Despite the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001 and overwhelming international support for the Karzai government, Pakistan has failed to devise a workable strategy to align its own regional security concerns with the new political realities in Afghanistan. The U.S. should encourage Pakistan to adjust its perceptions of its security interests in Afghanistan by demonstrating its sensitivity to Pakistan's core security interests and a willingness to use U.S. influence with both Kabul and New Delhi to address these concerns.

More specifically, Washington should:

- *Take a more proactive role in mediating disputes between Afghanistan and Pakistan and encouraging them to develop a fresh strategic perception of the region based on economic integration, political reconciliation, and respect for territorial boundaries.*

The U.S. should take an active role in encouraging economic and trade cooperation and joint border-monitoring initiatives so that both countries begin to develop a vested interest in overall stability in the region. The Administration should also work with Congress to set benchmarks for Pakistani textile trade benefits that include cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan on economic and political endeavors. Washington should continue to build upon the jirga process as a way to bring together local leaders. It should expand the agenda of the talks and seek ways to elevate the status of the jirga process. Finally, Washington should convince Kabul to formally recognize the Durand Line to build confidence between Islamabad and Kabul.

- *Work closely with other European governments (e.g., the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) to convince the Pakistan government to break all ties with the Taliban and actively counter the movement's influence and ideology.*

The Pakistan government needs to enforce the rule of law against militants who use the threat of violence to enforce Taliban-style edicts and should close down madrassahs that are teaching hatred against the West that leads to terrorism. Washington, in coordination with European allies, should make clear to Pakistan that the Taliban has no place in any future government in Afghanistan and that only those who firmly renounce violence and participate in the current political process will have a say in running the country.

- *Convince Islamabad to work more closely in joint efforts that bring U.S. resources and military strength to bear on the situation in North and South Waziristan.*

Islamabad, in cooperation with Washington, should employ a combination of targeted military

operations and economic assistance programs to drive a wedge between Pashtun tribal communities and international terrorists. A large-scale U.S. troop invasion of Pakistan's tribal areas would be disastrous for the Pakistani state and would not provide a lasting solution to the problem. A more effective strategy involves working cooperatively with Pakistan's military to assert state authority over the tribal areas and, once they are secure, provide substantial assistance to build up the economy and social infrastructure. Washington's pledge of \$750 million to develop the tribal areas over the next five years is welcome, but the aid should not be delivered until the Pakistani authorities clearly have the upper hand in the region and can ensure that it does not fall into the wrong hands. This will require U.S. access to the region and a clear commitment from the Pakistan government to counter Taliban ideology.

- *Encourage New Delhi and Islamabad to engage directly with one another on the issue of Afghanistan and help to identify regional economic or political initiatives on which the two can cooperate.*

Pakistan should not expect the U.S. to discourage India from having a role in Afghanistan, since Washington views New Delhi's example as a pluralistic democracy as a positive influence in helping Afghanistan develop itself into a stable democracy. Washington should consider fostering regional Pakistan-India-Afghanistan trade cooperation initiatives that would encourage Pakistan to allow India to transship goods for Afghanistan reconstruction programs through Pakistan as stipulated in H.R. 2446. The U.S. could support a high-profile regional trade initiative with Indian, Pakistani, and Afghan representatives that includes U.S. companies currently involved in the Afghan reconstruction. The U.S. should also raise the profile of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project as a way to bring the countries together in a joint economic endeavor that seeks to address India's and Pakistan's growing energy deficits.

Improving and Bolstering Foreign Aid Programs. U.S. aid programs in Afghanistan lack enough resources and do not adequately reach the

rural poor, who most need help in developing local economies, particularly in areas threatened by insurgency. To extend the reach of U.S. and other aid programs and to distribute benefits more widely, the number of Provincial Reconstruction Teams should be increased. High priority should be given to:

- Road construction to help farmers transport legal crops to market;
- Rebuilding the infrastructure, particularly irrigation systems that have been severely damaged by decades of warfare; and
- Helping villages to dig wells and obtain cleaner drinking water.

Such projects would create visible and tangible progress and employ numerous Afghans in labor-intensive projects. The Commander's Emergency Response Program, which has been a valuable tool for encouraging cooperation of local Afghan leaders by funding local construction projects, should be greatly expanded.

Wherever possible, Afghans rather than foreigners should be hired to build and maintain the projects. Much of the Taliban's appeal to many poor Afghans is not ideological but economic. It provides job opportunities as day fighters and poppy harvest workers. The more jobs that can be created in jumpstarting the country's agricultural economy, the less appeal the Taliban will have. Ultimately, hiring Afghans to rebuild the country will be much cheaper than allowing the Taliban to hire them for hostile purposes on battlefields or in poppy fields.

Bolstering the Position of Senior Afghanistan Coordinator at the State Department. This U.S. official should be solely responsible for initiating and monitoring U.S. assistance programs to Afghanistan, coordinating programs and policies with European and Asian counterparts, and chairing regular interagency meetings. Section 107 of H.R. 2446, which would reauthorize the Afghanistan Freedom Support Act of 2002, states that the coordinator for assistance has not achieved the objectives of an integrated approach to U.S. assistance programs for Afghanistan.

The many diverse aid programs need better coordination to reduce duplication and waste. In cooperation with the Afghan government, the United

States should work with other major donors (e.g., the European Union, Japan, India, and Russia) to develop a coordinated multi-year plan. Washington should also press countries to deliver on their past aid pledges. Although nearly \$25 billion was pledged by donor countries, only about \$13 billion has been received, mostly from the United States and the European Union.³⁹

Conclusion

Consolidating a stable Afghanistan that is free from Taliban influence and ideology will be expensive and will require a patient, long-term, integrated political, military, and economic strategy. However, the alternative of allowing Afghanistan to revert to

its pre-9/11 status of control by the al-Qaeda-friendly Taliban is not an option. To reach U.S. goals in Afghanistan, the U.S. will also need to prevail over Pakistani resistance to ending the Taliban's role in Afghanistan. This will require deft diplomacy that recognizes the need for improved Pakistan-Afghanistan relations through increased trade and economic linkages and joint political endeavors.

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39. Roland Flamini, "Afghanistan on the Brink," *CQ Global Researcher*, Vol. 1, No. 6 (June 2007), p. 130.