

ISLAM: GOVERNANCE, IDEOLOGY AND U.S. POLICY FOR THE NEW ADMINISTRATION AND THE NEW CONGRESS

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DIRECTOR AND MODERATOR:
Dick Clark



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Rapporteur's Summary

Geoffrey Kemp, Ph.D.

Director of Regional Strategic Programs
The Nixon Center

The Congressional Program conducted a conference on *Islam: Governance, Ideology and U.S. Policy for the New Administration and the New Congress*, February 14-20, 2009 in Amman and Sweimah, Jordan.

On the first day, Bruce Hoffman led a discussion on the global war on terrorism and the lessons of 9/11. Terror remains a top priority for the United States. Although there are some indications that Al-Qaeda is on the run, others believe it is thriving. The latest National Intelligence Estimate suggests that Al-Qaeda is shifting its resources to Pakistan. This contrasts with an earlier estimate in 2008 which argued that Al-Qaeda had suffered a strategic defeat, particularly in Iraq. The good news is that many Muslims are turning their back on Al-Qaeda, and there has been a sharp decline in support for suicide bombing. In this regard Al-Qaeda sows the seeds of its own defeat. Al-Qaeda has killed more Muslims than any one on its enemies' lists.

But there are still troubling times ahead; terrorism can turn on a dime. To write the obituaries of Al-Qaeda would be premature. Worldwide support for the organization varies. Its core base is within the demographic age 18-28, and the question is whether these young men are paying attention to the aging clerics who still nominally run Al-Qaeda. According to polls, support for Al-Qaeda's activity is down in the frontline states but up in the countries far

away, such as Indonesia. How does Al-Qaeda survive the very intense pressures, particularly military pressures brought on it by the United States? First, Al-Qaeda has a capacity for learning and is constantly exploring U.S. and Western weaknesses. Al-Qaeda operates as a force multiplier and is very adept at exploiting western intelligence. Its greatest achievement has been to train sleeper cells, perhaps including some in the United States. Our biggest challenge is whether we can deter Al-Qaeda. Plans for the mass destruction of aircraft flying across the Atlantic which were disrupted several years ago suggests that they have not given up hope for another spectacular action.

In the discussion Al-Qaeda's longevity was considered and whether or not there was a major opportunity lost in the early fall of 2001 to kill Osama Bin Laden. There is no evidence that Bin Laden is dead, but he is probably a figurehead and not a field commander. If he were killed or captured it would have a huge impact. The fact that Al-Qaeda has loose affiliations with other groups, including U.S. groups, suggests there may be direct dangers to the United States. It is true that Al-Qaeda is a strategic animal and is always thinking about new opportunities, such as the London bombings in 2005. Before 9/11, Al-Qaeda could establish contacts and recruits in the United States who were living the American dream.

How should the Obama administration deal with Al-Qaeda? Should it continue to provide

huge sums of money to the Department of Defense rather than the Department of State to crack down on terrorism? Obama is inheriting the same bureaucratic system that his predecessor had. The focus on the use of force, particularly in Pakistan where Predator remote-controlled vehicles kill Pakistani citizens, resonates badly with the local public, but the success in “soft power” activities including “Voice of America” cannot be measured so easily. We were much more successful in the Cold War utilizing our soft power because we “knew the enemy”. We have been woefully ignorant of the Muslim world. This was very apparent after 9/11. Ignorance makes us turn to quick fixes. However, the U.S. military is getting better, but it takes a long time. Al-Qaeda sees the U.S. impotence to act quickly as our Achilles’ heel. One participant suggested an analogy of a huge company like IBM having to deal with the challenge of quick innovations by start-up companies in Silicon Valley. Others pointed out that we have a huge department to deal with Al-Qaeda rather than quick action forces. And we must remember that the terrorists themselves are not a disgruntled lumpen proletariat. They are motivated and are driven by ideology. Nonetheless, our bureaucracy for countering terrorism has improved dramatically since 9/11; our inner cities are certainly securer than they were then.

The most dangerous problem is Al-Qaeda and like-minded groups exploit failed states like Somalia. This is why it is so important to bring stability and good governance to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Al-Qaeda’s grand strategy is to subvert and hijack local agendas and push local groups towards global jihad. Their strategy is to stay in the background and work with the locals. They benefit from the fact that in countries like Pakistan, illiteracy is a problem, and that the Pakistani army was not trained to be a counter-insurgency force. Al-Qaeda and its affiliates have been clever at exploiting the internet, whereas the United States has been behind in challenging them in this arena.

One participant suggested that the crux of the terrorism issue is about ideas and ideology.

Killing Osama Bin Laden or his number two in command is less important than some would suggest. There have been three important changes amongst the jihadists which we should take solace from. Revisionism within the radicals suggests that they have their own internal debate about tactics and strategy. Second, they seem to be shifting from the remote enemy i.e., the United States and the West, to new enemies in Africa and Asia. Third, they are mixing with ethnically related conflicts including the Shia, the Palestinians and the Pashtun. They now have more links with crime and drug gangs and therefore are more susceptible to police intervention.

The fundamental problem is that we have to work on the assumption that Al-Qaeda and the Taliban are intimately involved in destabilizing Afghanistan and Pakistan. For this reason, rebuilding and security in Afghanistan and Pakistan go hand in hand. “It takes 6 months to build a school; it takes 6 minutes to burn it down”. In Iraq, what we are fighting is an insurgency, rather than a global war on terror. It was suggested that in doing so 25% of our actions should be military, whereas 75% of our effort should be to get the population on our side. This was one of the lessons that the British learned during the Malaya insurgency in the 1950s. It was asked whether there were sleeper cells in the United States and if these included Al-Qaeda. There are, but they have no safe haven in the United States. They are more dangerous when they have a safe haven.

One participant urged that we be more understanding of the broad context in which Al-Qaeda and the Taliban operate. There is no such thing as a Muslim, Christian or Jewish world. 57% of the Muslim countries and 90% of the Muslims do not know Arabic and they do not support an Islamic caliphate. We have created a huge problem in publicizing Osama Bin Laden; instead of putting a \$25 million bounty on his head we should have made it \$25,000 and depicted him as the common criminal that he is. We must remember our own murky past in intervening on such matters to do with Muslims. For 50 years we supported the oppressed

Muslims in the Soviet Union. We promoted the insurgents in Afghanistan when they were fighting the Soviet invasion. Since the 7th century there has never been a united Muslim world. We should not have a nervous breakdown on these matters when they are so complicated.

Concerning recruitment for terrorism and how successful it has been, it is usually most effective for specific ends, like Kashmir and Palestine. Thus, resolving these conflicts becomes an important part of the containment process. On the question of getting more help to deal with the problem, are we involving Americans of Islamic backgrounds to stop terrorism? There have been some success stories. The FBI went out to U.S. Muslim communities and this has been very beneficial. There are no left-wing terrorists, no separatist groups in the United States. The New York Police Department has been particularly successful in this regard because it can bring in minorities to deal with the highly complex mix of ethnic groups in New York City. Unlike the federal agencies, it has much laxer security requirements and therefore can act more quickly.

Many participants believe it would be useful to redefine the terrorists as criminals rather than making them part of a global war and therefore martyrs. For this reason, we should also downplay our role in fighting a war on terrorism as part of a push to establish democracy in the Muslim World. We need a new paradigm, but it must have a security umbrella. In Pakistan, you must have military inputs while you build schools. The problem in Afghanistan is that the Taliban controls 70% of the country, therefore we cannot send aid workers to where they are needed. The first priority has to be security.

In discussing the implications for U.S. policy, it was suggested that the central front now in the war on terrorism is Afghanistan and Pakistan. The U.S. has made this war more complicated, it has framed it incorrectly. By conducting a traditional bombing campaign against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, we have made mistakes. We should have used more ground troops to capture Osama Bin Laden,

but we ran a risk-averse strategy. If Pakistan is the center of our efforts, rather than Afghanistan, then indeed our aid so far has been pitiful. We are losing the territory in Pakistan; we have to get a strategy that brings the Allies onto the same page. We have got to get Pakistan right. In this regard, we must look at the mistakes we have made, including the bad publicity that has arisen out of both the Afghan and Iraq War, including Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo and “extraordinary rendition” and what these events have done to our reputation and for the recruitment of Al-Qaeda. But it would be wrong just to focus on the last seven years; the problem went back to the previous administration when we made lots of mistakes. The good news is that progress has been made with the U.S. local communities in terms of outreach. In this regard, the Congress remains a broken instrument for dealing with terrorism. There are 88 subcommittees that deal with Homeland Security, which is not constructive. The paradigm now is that if the United States gets attacked again, the administration will be blamed. We need to prepare the American citizens for another attack. We prepare for earthquakes all the time.

On the second day, Anthony Cordesman began the discussion with a review of the complex situation in Afghanistan. The growth of the Taliban network has led to an expansion of its influence. We are fighting a war with underfunded forces. Although money has been appropriated, the delivery of equipment and resources has been inadequate. We need more trainers for the Afghani army and more recruits for their forces. The good news is the insurgent movement is not strong and it is not cohesive. Unfortunately, the problem of Afghanistan is compounded by developments in Pakistan, the inadequacies of the ICAF forces and rampant corruption throughout the Afghani government. Many of these problems are of our own making. We have never been honest about the state of the situation in either country, particularly Pakistan. In terms of what we should be doing right now,

certainly we should not wait for Iraq to become stabilized—we have had lots of warnings from the Department of Defense and the intelligence community that the situation is critical. The danger period is in 2009 and 2010. We have got to insist on more transparency and set realistic war-fighting goals. We cannot rebuild Afghanistan if we don't control the areas we are trying to rebuild. Therefore, you have to have a major review of the military situation. We have to secure the cities and then put the military into the areas where aid is necessary. We should focus on the Afghan national army. The problem with their police forces is that they cannot operate until there is good governance and the rule of law.

We should send Special Forces to help Pakistan in the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA). The Pakistani army needs to be revamped. We cannot solve corruption unless the drugs are controlled. We need to go after the drug kingpins and networks and destroy them. We have to get serious and accept that there will be great risks and falling popularity in Afghanistan among the people for our operations. Our policy on air strikes is counterproductive. If we do not have enough troops on the ground there is poor coordination and intelligence about what's happening on the ground. Hence, mistakes are made in targeting and civilians are killed.

In the discussion the question as to how one defines victory in Afghanistan was posed. First, we have to create a climate so that the Afghanistan government can absorb aid. Victory consists in leaving behind a stable environment. Some suggested that the tribal structures in Afghanistan may be the key. The Soviets destroyed much of this structure when they invaded. President Karzai runs a bad government. However, we cannot make Afghanistan the 51st state. We need to redefine the mission and focus on stopping Al Qaeda. This requires lowering the stakes. It was suggested while this is a great idea there will be high stakes since there is no easy way out. The idea of win, hold, and build is a key challenge.

Unless the Pakistanis themselves decide that Afghanistan is a credible threat to them, we will have to use pressure on them.

Many Americans question why we are still in Afghanistan. One answer is that we have a moral obligation—that if you bring a bull into a china shop, and it destroys the pottery, you own it. If we see the collapse of Afghanistan and Pakistan, we face huge problems. But to counter this, it was pointed out that the U.S. people do not want to accept more body bags coming from this part of the world. If we continue, the planning must be done by the U.S. military not the National Security Council (NSC)—that is the worst place to focus our reassessment efforts. On the whole, General Petraeus and his team are highly pragmatic and have some good ideas. The military has made a lot of mistakes in the past but they are improving. Others suggested that it was not the U.S. that was a bull in the china shop; Afghanistan was broken before we went in, and so we don't own it. We must rely on regional players to work with us while we go after Al Qaeda. But if we regionalize the problem, we may see the whole region collapse if we do not play a major role. Furthermore, given the unpopularity of the U.S. in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, is there a strategy where we don't fight in these two countries but have counterinsurgency forces for surgical strikes against the terrorists? Others did not believe that it is possible to do surgical counterinsurgency in this operation—its good on paper but you cannot do it in practice.

There were examples from other countries that one could draw upon to point to possible progress. Saudi Arabia, after a series of terrorist attacks against its own citizens, did focus on counterinsurgency and in four years it has done a good job. Furthermore, it learned how to deprogram terrorists. One problem is that we cannot just go after Al Qaeda because Al Qaeda is now embedded in other groups and has spread itself very thin. Some suggested that we should reach out to the Taliban since it's a highly diversified group. But the U.S. is not the only player—Russia, NATO, Iran and India are all

important and must be involved. You need to revisit the alliance and find a new form of coalition. It is true that the Taliban is divided but we have had no success so far in exploiting this weakness. All the ideas for post-conflict reconstruction make sense but they cannot work if there is no security.

The Taliban is getting stronger in Karachi. So what are we going to do with Pakistan? There is no doubt that aid to Pakistan can help, but how to get this aid into the areas of Baluchistan and FATA where it is most needed? If the Pakistanis themselves cannot do it, we cannot. The problem of Al Qaeda may be overtaken by the problem of Pakistan. It was asked where the Pakistani army was on this issue. Pakistani Special Forces are satisfactory but at the top they are bitterly divided. The army has been corrupted by long years in power. Pakistan is fertile ground for the Taliban—over a million Afghani refugees are in Pakistan. The Pakistani army is still focused on India. We have to be an honest broker. We should forget about corruption—it is their way of life.

Others felt a regional solution is a recipe for failure. Is there any point in going on with this unless we can come up with a plan on Afghanistan and Pakistan that we can carry through? Our national security structures are still geared to the Cold War. Some felt containment indeed is the key. However, the most important foreign policy crisis is the U.S. economic meltdown. It is wishful to think that Afghanistan can be made into a modern state. The priority for Afghanistan is survival. The U.S. must deal with allies as they are and not who we want them to be.

Why is there such skepticism amongst our allies about what we are doing? They think we see the issues in both countries as a military matter and they feel another big military project doesn't win hearts and minds. The solution is to have positive goals—not to be confined to mission creep. Mr. Karzai was a Pashtun who was imposed on Afghanistan by the UN at the Bonn Conference in 2001. He was not a problem of America's making. Until such time as the

Pakistani government and India can resolve their problems over Kashmir, the Pakistanis will continue to believe that India remains the most serious threat they have to worry about, particularly given India's increasing presence in Afghanistan. The Russian connection was mentioned and how important Russia may be as a transit route to Afghanistan given that we may be denied access to air routes through Kyrgyzstan. Seventy percent of our logistical support for Afghanistan comes through Pakistan. The city of Kabul would literally starve if we did not have access to Pakistan. One participant reminded the group that Afghanistan, along with Russia and India, has always wanted to create a "Pashtunistan" with access to the sea. The Soviet invasion changed Afghanistan from an ethnic to a religious war. Pakistan is the most important country we have to deal with. The problem is it's all very well to talk about projects to help rebuild Afghanistan and Pakistan but, until the security situation is better, nothing is going to happen.

In the discussion on policy implications there was a general pessimism throughout the group. This is a highly complex problem. And the problem is how do you sell a continued presence in Afghanistan to the American people? The big elephant in the room was the U.S. economic crisis. We are not going to have as much money as we hoped for to spend in places like Afghanistan and Pakistan. Talk about additional Department of Defense supplementals for these two countries will have to be looked at in the context of the overall challenges to our economy. Successful stabilization efforts can take decades. Korea and Taiwan took 50 years. We need much more reform in our military for conducting the sort of operations we need. It was pointed out that for the cost of one F-22 fighter you could put 10,000 soldiers and marines on the ground. "F-22s cannot conduct ground patrols and they cannot speak Arabic". We have to be realistic about the U.S. economy and degree of public support. Some feared that President Obama has put himself far out in front on Afghanistan. We must face facts about the tribal realities of Afghanistan. However,

some felt Afghanistan has been short-changed and sidestepped. We now need to focus greater efforts on it. If we end up with Afghanistan once more in the hands of the Taliban, the consequences will be dire. Leadership is critical. Russia could help us with Afghanistan. The problem is the Taliban offers better governance in large parts of the region than the Kabul regime. The President should not go out on a limb. The key is Pakistan. We need to get more allies involved. We need to tighten transparency and stop wasting money because of lack of oversight. Some felt that the governance and the role of women was a critical benchmark as to how well we were doing, particularly in Afghanistan. The Taliban is a fundamentalist regime and we need strong leadership from Congress on both oversight and ideas and to stress that women's rights are human rights. We also need much better intelligence on what's going on in the region. Many of our best military officers are more impressive than those from the state department. There are also worries about the leadership in Pakistan and a possible power vacuum. Others were not so concerned about Pakistan. Some felt we should downgrade both the Afghanistan War and downgrade the greater war on terrorism and present the issues in terms that our constituents can understand. We shouldn't pull back but we should be smarter on how we handle matters. The discussion on Afghanistan and Pakistan was overshadowed by an abiding skepticism and pessimism about the ability of the U.S. to formulate a coherent and workable policy at a time of severe economic crisis when the support of the American people is, to put it mildly, ambivalent.

On the third day, Fred Starr began the discussion with a review of the situation in Central Asia. This was a timely occasion to discuss "the Stans" because General Petraeus had just visited the region to try to get more access and bases in the context of the war in Afghanistan. This is a very large zone that includes Western China, Turkey, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and eastern Iran as well as "the Stans". What we have to do is get our

policies right; it is not just Russia's back yard that we have to be concerned about.

There are several important features about this zone: First, it is at the center of the huge Eurasian landmass. It is surrounded by great powers. It is surrounded by nuclear powers. For many years it was divided by the largest closed borders in the world. In 1989, the collapse of the Soviet Union opened the door for China to re-enter the region, and the event of 9/11 demonstrated the strategic value of access through Central Asia. It is a major resource zone; it has huge quantities of oil and natural gas, as well as uranium, gold, cotton and hydro-power. Its human resources are significant, with high numeric literacy and emancipated women, since a good education was one of the legacies that the Soviets bequeathed them. All the Stans have ethnic groups that are related to the tribes in Afghanistan. At the political level, they are all preoccupied with sovereignty and security.

Each of the Central Asian countries is making different levels of progress: Kazakhstan is booming with its huge gas and oil resources, Turkmenistan will be a rich country with its gas, Azerbaijan has developed perhaps the fastest, and Uzbekistan has a very large population and is a crossroads through the region. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are hurting as remittances decline and they have few major natural resources.

All the Stans have strong presidencies (the analogy of General DeGaulle is appropriate) but they do have nascent parliamentary bodies that are emerging. There are many violations of human rights and there is much corruption. The key to their future and stability of the region is good governance. The problem is that U.S. intelligence on the Stans is very poor, and this leads to bad levels of information. But for all new problems, no major ethnic conflicts exist. Talented young people are on the way up, but there are problems of political succession in each country. The region is of great importance to the United States since it embraces the largest group of secular states in the Muslim world and they are very open to good relations with the West.

In the discussion, there was considerable focus on the corruption in Kazakhstan, and whether or not this was an impediment to regional cooperation. It is true the corruption is real, and no effective civil administration or institution building is underway. On resources, it is necessary to get products to market by multiple routes, and these have to go through other countries. One success has been the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline.

There was a question raised about secular governments and whether Turkey has the potential to become an Islamic state. Although this was a little bit off the subject, it was highly relevant to the overall theme of the discussion. Has the U.S. been too preachy on some of these issues of democracy? Unfortunately, some felt that Turkey is sliding away from us; it is Islamizing its police force and its bureaucracy. The U.S. problem in this region of the world is not that it preaches about democracy, but that it is impatient, it expects things to happen overnight and they simply won't. While some felt that Turkey's relations with Israel were deteriorating, it was pointed out that Israel has excellent relations with Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan.

When questioned about the delivery of services to the Stans, it was pointed out that the biggest constraint on logistics was poor bureaucracy, not the infrastructure or security. On the question of supply routes to help us in Afghanistan, there was some skepticism about the proposed Russian route. It was noted that right after 9/11 Putin put in personal calls to all the leaders of the Stans telling them not to cooperate with the United States. When it was clear that they wanted to help us, Putin reversed himself and took credit for bringing them on board. Putin belongs to a group of Russians who have never gotten over the trauma of the loss of the Soviet Union and the defeat in Afghanistan.

On questions related to Islam, most of the Muslims in the region are Hanafi. They are moderate and open to secularism. The majority are not tied to fanaticism, but there are some fanatical groups. And Islam is an issue as far as the Chinese are concerned; they see

Xinjiang Province as the second domestic problem after Taiwan.

The question came up as to how much of a yoke the Soviet Union has been and what its impact has been on the Stans. Was it equivalent to what had happened in Eastern Europe? It was suggested that within the Soviet Union, the Stans carved out a lot of independence, but migrant workers from the Stans in Russia are today having a bad time. On the question of Iran, Iran is part of Central Asia. After 1979, when their revolutionary fervor was at its peak, the Stans essentially told them, "keep your religion out of here." The Iran that looks East has better relations with its neighbors than the Iran that looks West.

How Russia, China and India play in the region, given their energy needs, is something the United States has to be wary of. It was suggested that the current hostility in Moscow is real, but transitory. Putin and the generation who fought Afghanistan have long memories, and therefore there is a problem in the short run. The Chinese are moving into Central Asian markets, the Indians are everywhere, and Japan is the largest aid donor. The EU has gotten deeply involved, and is helping with land logistics and supply routes. Some of the infrastructure projects could be extremely important, particularly those that open up to the South through Afghanistan, ultimately a route that runs through Afghanistan, India and Pakistan, through the Indian Ocean. These routes would offer alternative transit routes to those that are currently dominated by Russia.

One participant felt that focusing on development as a remedy and challenge to radical Islam is not the solution; you have to fight radical Islamic politics with politics. You have to create a middle class. One participant suggested that our strategic interests in Central Asia, if we are constrained, should be limited. They should be to counter terrorism, to achieve access to energy and bases, to achieve access to markets, and to protect human rights. But others countered that this list of American objectives won't work if you do not take into account

the interests of the Stans themselves. You have got to make sure the people get a better life and avoid alienating people. You have got to understand that their goals are not the same as ours. It was a problem for Congress engaging Central Asia because it is a culture we don't know. We should use our impressive convening power to learn more about the region.

When we came to the discussion about policy implications, some felt this was an ideal area for us to use our "Smart Power," that we should use purchases from Central Asia to help our work in Afghanistan. For instance, Central Asia could provide huge amounts of cement for Afghanistan, and this would help everybody. We should make a large effort to build cultural bridges. We need to look more through the eyes of the region rather than through our own highly focused type of interests. The problem is that other conflicts suck up all our time. Modest changes can have a bigger impact here; going from zero to one can make a difference. Will cooperation with the five Stans help us in Afghanistan? It is felt that Afghanistan is the heart of Central Asia, not peripheral to it, and therefore it is essential that we engage the Stans. Thus, we need to be more interactive because of the linkage; we need to pay more attention because of the leverage this gives us with Russia and China. Some suggested that we should send a delegation of women from the U.S. Congress to meet with their counterparts in the emerging legislatures in the Stans. We need to acknowledge the importance of things we have done, including the BTC, and need to have a higher ranking person in the State Department dealing with energy. Our military has access, but we need more pressure from Congress to get high-level diplomats into the region.

On day four, Lisa Anderson began the discussion on Arab moderates and the role of democracy in the Middle East. She began by noting six points about the region: First, there is a tendency to conflate the state with the governments of the Middle East. U.S. policy has been directed toward governments, not the

state. Governments play a two-level game and they play off our relations with other states and their citizens. The governments should be seen as the CEO of a business. In the case of Saudi Arabia, the country is named after the rulers. Second, all governments in the Arab world are autocratic, and not interested in democratic change. Democracy presumes that one has other things to do if one is not elected, or if one loses an election. There is not much else to do in the Arab world if you do not have good relations with the government. If there were free elections, the incumbents would be likely to lose them. Were they willing to lose, chaos might follow, both tribal and gang related. Opposition in the Arab world is not organized in any systematic way. Third, why do some governments appear to be interested in democracy? They want to be pleasant to their benefactors, such as the United States. In turn, we want stable and friendly governments. The autocratic governments are willing to accommodate some reforms such as women's rights, free speech, and, on occasion, elections, but they are not supporting them because they are committed to democracy. The most recalcitrant governments have the most wealth. Furthermore, everyone in the Arab world assumes that the United States is not fully serious about its commitment to democracy. Fourth, U.S. cynicism makes people mad; it is very hard to be a democrat in the region since there is not a lot of space to operate. The Islamist movements are popular because Islam is a much more familiar concept than democracy. There has been much evangelicalism for Islam over the past forty years; the Saudis and the Libyans have poured in lots of money. More resources go into promoting Islam than promoting democracy. Fifth, moderates and democrats are caught between two autocratic groups: the secularists and the Islamists. Everyone has over promised with claims that "democracy is the solution," or "Islam is the solution," and none of these concepts are true. Sixth, the people sense that the governments are corrupt, and their incapacity is measured in

part by their failure to solve the problem with the Palestinians.

From this list, three policy recommendations emerged. First, the U.S. should premise its policy on what it can deliver, and make more modest claims. Second, we should be more selective in our aid programs and provide investment for small businesses. For example, the American University in Cairo would be a good investment. Third, a resolution for the Palestinian conflict would have a salutary effect on the region; the United States has to understand that this linkage is real.

In the discussion, it was suggested that Egypt and Jordan have poorly conceived economic programs, but what they have produced is a business elite. The business elite have not led to further liberalization of the political system or the economy. Democracy needs to deconstruct into its really important components—transparency, the rule of law, and viable institutions. The concept that “small is beautiful” certainly applies to progress in the Arab world. The problem is that people are not better off, and there is huge unemployment amongst the youth.

One discussant pointed out that it is important not to lump all the Arab countries together. Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon, and Jordan all have institutions for civil society, and there is an increasing role for women in these societies. However, in the traditional states in the Gulf, and in Yemen, there has been far less institution building. Then there are the Cold War states, Libya and Syria, which have still not really adjusted to modernity. Finally, there are failed states such as Somalia and the Sudan. One has to look at these categories before generalizing about the region. Furthermore, it is misleading to constantly talk about “anger on the Arab street.” There is not a seething demand for democracy; what ordinary citizens focus on are priorities such as unemployment and poverty. This is what they are angry about. Political Islamist parties are not democratic in the Arab world, and it would be much better if the United States would focus on institution building in the private sector.

There was considerable discussion about the relevance of the Palestinian issue to the overall problem of American democracy promotion in the Middle East. Most participants believe that the United States has a problem presenting itself as an honest broker, but at the same time, the Arabs have been intentionally unhelpful on many issues. Furthermore, often the Arab governments use the Palestinian issue as an excuse for not doing anything.

The problem with U.S. policy is that after the Cold War, we assumed that removing tyrannical governments would lead to a thriving democracy. This began with the Clinton administration which has as much blame for this concept as the Bush administration. Some felt that the problem with the United States is that it is an impatient country. Democracy takes centuries to develop, it doesn't guarantee honesty, but it is a process. Perhaps the more important need in these countries is to focus on an independent judiciary. Americans must be willing to have others participate in a way that they feel would be helpful. Egypt has a good model of a relatively independent judiciary, but we must be prepared to accept their decisions, even if we don't like them.

We also make assumptions that democratic moderates in the Arab world will be pro-American. For many years, we had three policy objectives: The security of Israel, access to oil, and the containment of the Soviet Union. This did not jibe with the ambitions and hopes of democratic moderates in the Arab world, so unless our interests are consistent with theirs, we will constantly be disappointed. This also suggests that we should be much more modest about our goals and what we can actually achieve. Most of all, moderates in the Arab world want competence; most people want jobs and a better life. We should not overestimate either the importance of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the sense that many Islamists simply don't want to see it resolved; they don't want a Jewish state in the region. Rather than focusing on democracy, we should narrow it down to transparency and the rule of law.

In reviewing the overall economic troubles of the region, one participant said that the United States must accept some accountability for what is happening. There are 400,000 Egyptians who have lost their work thanks to the behavior of Wall Street. Iraq was destroyed on the expectation that nuclear weapons would be found and they weren't.

In the summary session, it was agreed that humility was necessary, and that we are at a critical moment. It has been 350 years since the Treaty of Westphalia, and some are questioning the future of the nation-state. We should no longer see everything through the eyes of the nation-state paradigm; we need to adapt. Everyone agreed that lowering the rhetoric is the key, and some even suggested that the United States might be heading in the direction of Britain, which used to be Great Britain. We have to recognize that most constituents in the Arab world care about services and the quality

of life. The most important quality of democracy is equality. The irony is that while the U.S. power may wane, there may be a silver lining; if we have less military presence in the region, people can respect us for our true values. People want to come to America, even though they disagree with American policies. The U.S. should lead by example and should not constantly criticize others. We should participate in more schemes for student exchanges that have been very successful in working with the youth in Europe, particularly Germany and Poland. Whatever happens, we should not promise what we can't deliver. One participant cited the now familiar phrase that, "a crisis is a terrible thing to waste." We need to bolster the capabilities of the State Department even though its sources have been depleted with the focus on our military efforts. In this regard, it would be helpful if the Arab-Israeli conflict were to be addressed in a more serious way.

Confronting Terrorism: 12 Lessons Learned Since 9/11

Bruce Hoffman, Ph.D.

Professor, Security Studies Program
Georgetown University

Seven-and-a-half years into the global war on terrorism, the U.S. is at a crossroads. The sustained successes of the war's early phases (e.g., between October 2001 and March 2003) are now challenged by an al-Qaeda that has regrouped and reorganized along the lawless tribal border area between Pakistan and Afghanistan and is once again threatening. "Today, virtually every major terrorist threat my agency is aware of, has threads back to the tribal areas," Michael V. Hayden, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, lamented last November in a major public address before a Washington, D.C. audience.

Even though there has been no successful terrorist attack in the United States since 9/11, the confidence and certitude that America was on the right track with the war on terrorism only a few years ago has now also mostly eroded. A poll commissioned by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) shortly before the recent presidential election bears this out. A third of Americans surveyed, for example, believed that al-Qaeda was actually stronger today than it was on 9/11 and another 30 percent thought that the war on terrorism had in fact no effect on it. Even more worrisome is the fact that, seven-and-a-half years after 19 men hijacked four airplanes and changed the course of history, only five percent of voters polled on election day thought terrorism an issue worthy of their concern.

It should be emphasized that al-Qaeda is but a shadow of its former 9/11 self. But the threat that even a weakened, diminished al-Qaeda still poses cannot be discounted. It is exactly when we are lulled into complacency and our defenses are down, that al-Qaeda will strike. The importance, therefore, of learning and implementing lessons learned in countering terrorism since 9/11 could not be more important or critical. Among the most significant are the following dozen lessons.

1. The fundamental organizing principle of America's struggle against terrorism as a global war has outlived its utility. Although relevant to the challenge that the U.S. faced in the immediate aftermath of the September 11th 2001 attacks, the term global war on terrorism (GWOT) has increasingly alienated our friends and discouraged our allies. This is particularly so in the Muslim world where the GWOT has unfortunately, and however erroneously, nonetheless become synonymous with a war on Islam. Accordingly, it may be more useful to reconceptualize this struggle in terms of a global counterinsurgency (GCOIN). Such an approach would *a priori* knit together the equally critical political, economic, diplomatic, information, and developmental sides inherent to the successful prosecution of counterinsurgency to the existing dominant military side of the equation.

Greater attention to an integration of American capabilities and instruments of U.S. power would provide incontrovertible recognition of the importance of endowing a GCOIN with an overriding and comprehensive, multidimensional, policy. Ideally, this policy would embrace several elements: including a clear strategy, a defined structure for implementing it, and a vision of inter-government agency cooperation, and the unified effort to guide it. A more focused and strengthened interagency process would also facilitate the coordination of key themes and messages and the development and execution of long-term “hearts and minds” programs.

2. The central front in the war on terrorism today is not Iraq, but the lawless border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan. America’s continued preoccupation with Iraq has exacted a heavy price in terms of mounting instability and growing jihadi strength in both south Asian countries. If 9/11 has taught us anything, it is that al-Qaeda is most dangerous when it has a sanctuary or safe haven from which to operate—as it now indisputably does. Indeed, virtually every major terrorist attack or plot of the past four years has emanated from al-Qaeda’s reconstituted sanctuary in Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) or North West Frontier Province (NWFP). Perhaps most important, however, is that the broader movement’s ability to continue to appeal to its hardcore, political base and thus ensure a flow of recruits into its ranks, money into its coffers, and support among its core base for its aims and objectives, ensures that this struggle will neither abate on its own accord nor be easily—and quickly—defeated.

The problem to date is that the U.S. has no effective political or military strategy for either Afghanistan or Pakistan and appears to treat them separately and not synergistically. Given that the security challenges in both countries are now ineluctably symbiotic, any serious effort to stabilize and secure Afghanistan must begin with a clear and consistent policy designed to

achieve the same in Pakistan. Accordingly, the highest priority for the Obama administration must be to refocus our—and our allies’—attention on Afghanistan and Pakistan, where al-Qaeda began to collapse after 2001, but has now regrouped. This will entail understanding that al-Qaeda and its local militant jihadi allies cannot be defeated by military means alone. Success will require a dual strategy of systematically destroying and weakening enemy capabilities—that is, continuing to kill and capture al-Qaeda commanders and operatives—along with breaking the cycle of terrorist recruitment among radicalized “bunches of guys” as well as more effectively countering al-Qaeda’s effective information operations. The U.S. thus requires a strategy that harnesses the overwhelming kinetic force of the American military as part of a comprehensive vision to transform other, non-kinetic instruments of national power in order to deal more effectively with irregular and unconventional threats.

3) The interagency process is broken and requires fixing. This is as much a matter of a change in mindset as it is bureaucratic reorganization. Success in the campaign against global terrorism and radical jihadism will ultimately depend on how effectively the U.S. can build bridges and untangle lines of authority, de-conflict overlapping responsibilities and improve the ability to prioritize and synchronize interagency operations in a timely and efficient manner. Organizations will therefore have to do—or be compelled to do—what they have been reluctant to do in the past: reach across bureaucratic territorial divides and share resources in order to defeat terrorists, insurgencies, and other emerging threats. Clarifying these expectations and processes is a critical step in efficiently addressing contemporary threats to U.S. security as is creating incentives to more effectively blend diplomacy, justice, development, finance, intelligence, law enforcement, and military capabilities and coherently generating and applying resources to defeat terrorist and insurgent threats.

Arguably, by combating irregular adversaries in a more collaborative and integrative manner with key relevant civilian agencies, those charged with countering terrorism and insurgency can better share critical information, track the various moving parts in terrorist/insurgency networks, and develop a comprehensive picture of this enemy—including their supporters, nodes of support, organizational and operational systems, processes, and plans. With this information in hand, the U.S. would then be better prepared to systematically disrupt or defeat all of the critical nodes that support the entire terrorist/insurgent network, thus rendering them ineffective. Achieving this desideratum, however, will necessitate the coordination, de-conflicting, and synchronization of the variety of programs upon which the execution of American counterterrorist and/or counterinsurgency planning are dependent. An equally critical dimension of this process will be aligning the training of host nation counterparts with U.S. counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations: building synergy; avoiding duplication of effort; ensuring that training leads to operational effectiveness; and ensuring that the U.S. interagency team and approach is in complete harmony. In other words, aligning these training programs with operations to build indigenous capabilities in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency will be absolutely fundamental to the success of such a strategy.

4. Decapitation strategies only work if fully and successfully executed at the onset of a counterterrorism campaign. Accordingly, in tandem with decapitation efforts, continue to emphasize targeting mid-level leaders in terrorist groups. Killing or capturing Usama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri in 2001 or 2002 would then have dealt a stunning, perhaps even fatal, blow to al-Qaeda. Although it is still absolutely vital to fulfill President Bush's 2001 pledge to get these killers "dead or alive," we should be under no illusion that this act in and of itself will now completely stop al-Qaeda. Instead, U.S. counterterrorism strategy should continue to focus on

eliminating senior and mid-level al-Qaeda commanders and thus progressively weakening its bench alongside a redoubled hunt for bin Laden and al-Zawahiri. Mid-level leaders and commanders, in fact, are often more important than top decision-makers to the long-term survival of a terrorist organization. Strategies aimed at removing these mid-level leaders more effectively disrupt control, communications, and operations up and down the chain of command. In addition, such strategies may also inhibit a group's long-term growth by eliminating the development of future leaders. The targeted assassinations in Pakistan of eight key al-Qaeda commanders since July are an example of the proven efficacy of this strategy.

5. Information operations that de-legitimize the top leaders of terrorist groups and undermine the image of these groups' omnipotence are essential adjuncts to kinetic approaches. The top leaders of terrorist organizations are more than just policy makers for the group. They occupy an enormously influential and important symbolic position at the head of a terrorist organization that is often inextricably connected to that organization's very existence. Therefore focused and sufficiently resourced public diplomacy and information operations campaigns to discredit these leaders and undermine images of their and their groups' omnipotence are a critical element in effectively countering terrorism.

6. Focus on disrupting support networks and trafficking activities. In tandem with point #5 above is the effective targeting of essential support and logistics networks. This tactic primarily entails focusing on the middlemen that help terrorist organizations access funds and purchase supplies in the black market: financiers and smugglers. Attention has mostly been focused on front organizations and individuals that provide money to terrorist organizations. However, experience has shown that it would be more advantageous to expand this approach

and target specifically the middlemen that, for instance, purchase diamonds from terrorists on the black market, or individuals that sell weapons to terrorist organizations. This tactic is a more effective way of disrupting the everyday activities that a terrorist organization must engage in to maintain its operational capabilities. It hinders the ability of a group to gather resources and plan sophisticated attacks in advance because they cannot rely on a steady stream of money or other essential resources.

7. Knowing the enemy is an essential prerequisite for any successful counterterrorism campaign. “If you know the enemy and know yourself,” Sun Tzu famously advised centuries ago, “you need not fear the results of a hundred battles.” Yet, what remains missing seven-and-a-half years into this struggle is a thorough, systematic and empirical understanding of our enemy: encompassing motivation as well as mindset, decision-making processes as well as command and control relationships; and ideological appeal as well as organizational dynamics. Too often, a “one size fits all” mindset has predominated in our approach to countering what is in fact a diverse, and often idiosyncratic, array of enemies. Indeed, without fully knowing our enemy we cannot successfully penetrate their cells; we cannot knowledgeably sow discord and dissension in their ranks and thus weaken them from within; nor can we think like them in anticipation of how they may act in a variety of situations, aided by different resources; and, we cannot fulfill the most basic requirements of either an effective counterterrorist strategy—preempting and preventing terrorist operations and deterring their attacks—or of an effective counterinsurgency strategy—gaining the support of the population through the dismantling of the insurgent infrastructure.

8. Equal emphasis has to be given to the importance of information operations, psychological operations and public diplomacy alongside kinetic approaches. The most effective

and lasting counterterrorism strategy will be one that effectively combines the tactical elements of systematically destroying and weakening enemy capabilities (the “kill or capture” approach) alongside the equally critical, broader strategic imperative of breaking the cycle of terrorist and insurgent recruitment and replenishment that have respectively sustained both al Qaeda’s continued campaign and the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan. Psychological operations that seek not only to kill and capture terrorists or insurgents but persuade them to surrender have a particularly important role in these efforts. Even if the results of such efforts require time to succeed, the suspicion and mistrust sown within terrorist and insurgent ranks might force our enemies to expend more time and energy on watching their backs and monitoring their comrades, than in planning and attacking us. The problem is that no agency or office has the lead for overseeing, coordinating and integrating information operations. Multiple agencies share this mission and within those agencies multiple offices claim responsibility. The result is duplication and redundancy and many voices speaking at once rather than one voice with one clear, authoritative message directing this process. Inadequate resourcing is an additional problem as information operations and public diplomacy remain a distinct secondary priority in the struggle against terrorism.

9. Playing an active and positive role in the resolution of iconic Muslim conflicts will accomplish more, have a greater immediate and long-term impact, and potentially will more decisively improve America’s image in the eyes of the Muslim world than foreign political reform, economic development, and agrarian programs applied to individual Muslim countries. The U.S. needs to be more involved in actively attempting to broker long-term resolutions of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the conflict between India and Pakistan in Kashmir. Although foreign aid, American-backed efforts to promote political reform and economic

development are important, arguably the most critical and beneficial element of U.S. foreign policy efforts in countering terrorism is an America that is seen as working for peace in particularly sensitive regions of the Muslim world.

10. Protecting and securing the United States from terrorist attack depends on state and local law enforcement officers who are both the first and last lines of homeland defense. Their familiarity with the communities which they patrol enables these law enforcement officers to observe and detect criminal activity that may indicate a terrorist plot and thus to thwart its commission. American police departments and law enforcement agencies—and especially their street cops and patrol officers—need more and better information about both terrorism and the most effective strategic and tactical responses. The cop on the street, for instance, may likely be the key player in disrupting and preventing a terrorist incident. But to do so, this officer needs training based on the experience and best practices of other jurisdictions both domestic and international who have long been involved in countering terrorism as well as the requisite knowledge of terrorist behavior, patterns, and modus operandi. Further, officers not only need to know what to look for but that what they are looking for may be a small piece of the larger puzzle that may reveal terrorist connections (e.g., investigations into crimes involving smuggling, human trafficking, fraud, extortion, narcotics that may also be terrorist activities).

11. Terrorism is more than a technical issue and requires a new political relationship between U.S. and European partners. Existing opportunities to learn lessons from respective experiences in counterterrorism and to develop best practices and common approaches with European law enforcement counterparts are insufficient. Such efforts would improve trust and information flow between those working terrorism issues on both sides of the Atlantic.

The U.S. and Europe have a strong common interest in countering terrorism, especially from Islamist groups like al-Qaeda. In addition, our European law enforcement counterparts already have long experience in combating homegrown terrorist threats and more recently acquired knowledge in countering Islamist threats. This confluence of interests provides the foundation to establish new political and counterterrorism relationships between the U.S. and Europe, and further build trust and cooperation and facilitate the exchange of information, through a broader and more coordinated program of secondment and exchange of law enforcement officers.

12. NYPD (New York Police Department) has played a leading role in facilitating cooperation with international partners on counterterrorism issues, but current federal efforts to broaden these programs and make them available to other jurisdictions on a national basis are inchoate as they have been inadequate. Unlike many other countries, such as the United Kingdom and Israel, terrorism is not necessarily a daily issue for the U.S. law enforcement officer. For that reason, American law enforcement requires regular awareness and education programs to keep pace with the terrorism threat and the knowledge needed to prevent, preempt or respond to an incident. Sufficient funding and resources should be provided to establish a program whereby state and local law enforcement officers could be deployed to overseas locations to observe the operations of foreign jurisdictions long involved in counterterrorism and with more recent experience in countering Islamist threats. Such deployments would enhance the knowledge of American officers, identify best practices and assist in the development of policies, practices and procedures relevant to U.S. law enforcement that could be adopted or emulated here. A parallel program could bring foreign law enforcement officers from key overseas jurisdictions to the U.S. on similar secondment assignments that would further enhance international counterterrorism

law enforcement cooperation and promote the identification and exchange of lessons learned and best practices.

Conclusion

In sum, the current threat environment posed by terrorism and insurgency makes a new strategy, approach and new organizational and institutional behaviors necessary. The non-traditional challenges to U.S. national security and foreign policy imperatives posed by elusive and deadly irregular adversaries emphasizes the need to anchor changes that will more effectively close the gap between detecting irregular

adversarial activity and rapidly defeating it. The effectiveness of U.S. strategy will be based on our capacity to think like a networked enemy, in anticipation of how they may act in a variety of situations, aided by different resources. This goal requires that the American national security structure in turn organize itself for maximum efficiency, information sharing, and the ability to function quickly and effectively under new operational definitions. A successful strategy will therefore also be one that thinks and plans ahead with a view towards addressing the threats likely to be posed by the terrorist and insurgent generation beyond the current one.

Afghanistan: The Continuing Challenge

Anthony H. Cordesman

Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy
Center for Strategic & International Studies

The Afghan War is not so much a forgotten war as much as it is a war that the U.S. has allowed to slip from apparent victory into serious crisis. To many the war seemed to be nearly over by 2002. The Taliban that had governed Afghanistan from 1996 until 2001 had had its leaders removed from power by the Northern Alliance and NATO forces when it refused to bring Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaeda to justice following the attacks of 9/11.

The U.S., Britain, Canada, and other NATO countries joined the Northern Alliance and began bombing the Taliban in early October 2001 and providing aid and special forces to support an offensive by the Northern Alliance. The Taliban government was forced to leave Kabul and Jalalabad by November and was driven out of Kandahar by December 2001—when it then dispersed to the countryside and Pakistan. U.S. forces continued to pursue Bin Laden and Al Qaeda, but could not stop them from relocating its operations to the tribal areas in the western frontier or Federally Administered Tribal Areas in Pakistan.

The Rebirth of the Taliban and the Rise of Insurgent Threats

As was the case in Iraq, a military victory against Taliban military forces was not followed by effective stability operations or credible plans for nation building. From 2002-2005, the U.S. and NATO treated Afghanistan as an exer-

cise in post conflict reconstruction that focused on creating and empowering an elected central government.

Northern Alliance forces were pressured to disband because they were controlled by warlords, yet only limited efforts were made to create an effective Afghan Army and national police. U.S. and NATO/ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) forces were kept at low “peacekeeping” levels that were incapable of securing the countryside. Security and aid efforts were divided into national zones, each of which was administered in very different ways with varying degrees of effort and levels of security. The only area where significant forces were deployed within the U.S. zone was in the east. Yet these forces were only strong enough to perform their mission if Pakistan had made significant efforts to secure its border.

The alliance did succeed in creating a democratically elected central government. The U.S. and its allies asked the UN to sponsor the Bonn Conference in 2001. This Conference established a process for political reconstruction that led to the adoption of a new constitution, a presidential election in 2004, and National Assembly elections in 2005. In December 2004, Hamid Karzai became the first democratically elected president of Afghanistan. An Afghan National Assembly was inaugurated in December 2005.

However, the manner in which the new government was created, which involved ambitious

goals for transforming the Afghan political system, justice system, and methods of governance into a modern state from the top down, did not hold the legislature significantly accountable at the local or provincial level. Only weak efforts were made to preserve and reconstruct the Afghan civil service, to provide adequate pay, and to both avoid and control corruption. Ethnic and sectarian rivalries were not effectively addressed, and the central government had only limited control and effectiveness in much of the country, particularly the Pashtun areas in the east and south of Afghanistan.

While outside countries provided major aid resources, this aid focused on medium- and long-term efforts to develop a modern state, rather than dealing with urgent needs. A fragmented combination of UN, NATO/ISAF, national, and NGO efforts took place with little coordination. A grossly inadequate effort was made to effectively administer this aid, establish effective financial controls, and ensure it would reach into the countryside. Worse, it was directed toward building a Western-style secular state with mid- and long-term goals, rather than reaching the ordinary Afghan and providing services in the countryside.

Counternarcotics efforts focused on eradication without creating adequate systems to avoid corruption and favoritism, and at a time when Afghan agriculture could not function because of the collapse of irrigation systems, drought, a lack of roads and transport to markets, population pressure on the land, and insecurity in rural areas. Afghanistan also lacked both the aid workers and Afghan staffs to credibly test and administrate programs to create alternative crops. These problems were compounded by a mix of sharecropping and loan programs that tied farmers to narco-traffickers, the growth of independent criminal networks, and corruption in a country where police and officials are paid token salaries.¹

The U.S. also gave clear priority to the Iraq War. Work by Amy Belasco of the Congressional Research Service shows that the total budget authority for the Afghan War totaled \$171.1 bil-

lion for expenditures over eight fiscal years (counting the FY2009 bridge funds as part of FY2008) versus \$653.1 billion for six fiscal years of the Iraq War.ⁱⁱ Accordingly, expenditures have been 3.8 times higher on Iraq. Total cost, however, is only part of the story.

The U.S. made the same fundamental mistakes in both wars. It entered both without any plan to conduct meaningful stability operations, to take on nation-building tasks, and to fight a major insurgency. This grand strategic failure occurred despite warnings from many experts in the military, State Department, intelligence community, and outside experts. This failure was a major contributing factor in U.S. and allied casualties in both wars as well as to the length, total cost, civilian casualties, collateral damage, and opportunity costs of both wars.

There was, however, a fundamental difference in the way that the Bush Administration reacted to the challenges it faced after the initial moment of conventional victory. The U.S. reacted almost immediately by making massive expenditures on forces and economic aid in Iraq. Total funding rose from \$53.0 billion in FY2003 to \$75.9 billion in FY2004, to \$85.5 billion in FY2006, \$133.6 billion in FY2007, and \$149.2 billion in FY2008. These figures radically differ in comparison to the case of Afghanistan. The U.S. effectively failed to resource its efforts against an increasingly serious insurgency as it developed from FY2002 through FY2006. The U.S. never committed anything even approaching the aid resources necessary to support a “win, hold, build” strategy. This was in spite of the fact that Afghanistan—unlike Iraq—did not have substantial funds left over from the previous regime or a major ongoing stream of income from oil exports. At no point in the history of the Afghan war has the U.S. made a major aid commitment like it did in FY2004 in Iraq, when it committed \$19.5 billion in funds for foreign aid and diplomatic operations.

Moreover, the U.S. wasted two critical years—FY2001 and FY2002—by providing only token funds for foreign aid and diplomatic operations

(\$800 million in FY2001 and FY2002). Given the fact that a start-up aid program takes at least a year to begin to be effective, often takes 14-18 months to go from authorization to a start-up on the ground, and then takes months to years to complete, this was a major failure. The Administration never seemed to realize that it needed to take the initiative to shape the broad politico-military battlefield, and dominate the situation before the Taliban-HiG-Haqqani-al Qa'ida could react. For all the U.S. talk of shaping the decision making cycle, it has been the U.S. that has reacted to enemy gains and actions since 2002.

The net effect created a power vacuum that allowed the Taliban to regroup inside the border areas of Pakistan and provided Al Qa'ida a virtual sanctuary in the FATA area. The traditional Taliban reasserted itself in the southern Afghan-Pakistan border area, or Baluchistan, under the leadership of Mullah Mohammed Omar. Other Taliban elements emerged along the eastern Afghan-Pakistan border and FATA. These were areas that had remained loyal to Omar but were under growing influence from Al Qa'ida and other groups. Taliban forces were given better military training and equipment, and other Islamist elements joined them.

These include forces under Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who had fought the Soviets as well as many other Afghan rival movements, and who rejected the formation of the Karzai government. Hekmatyar leads a group of Islamic extremist insurgents called the Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddinor (HIG) based in the FATA area and active in eastern Afghanistan. The other major additional faction is led by Mawlawi Jalaluddin Haqqani, who is sometimes credited with introducing suicide bombing to Afghanistan. Haqqani served as a Taliban military commander north of Kabul, and was responsible for Taliban operations in 2001 as well as the ethnic cleansing of local Tajik populations. He has also established bases in the FATA, and is reported to have helped create a local group in Pakistan that has sometimes been called the Islamic Emirate of Waziristan

and has several thousand Pakistani fighters. Hekmatyar and Haqqani are officially loyal to Omar and the Taliban.

U.S. intelligence officers believe that Hekmatyar and Haqqani often cooperate with the Taliban, but that there is no formal hierarchy or chain of command that binds them together. They also feel that the Taliban groups in the FATA area, while being loyal to Omar, evolved in ways that allowed them operate in an increasingly independent manner and thus to be far quicker in adopting new tactics.

The U.S. and NATO/ISAF were slow to react to these shifts, and initially focused largely on the outcome of military clashes—which were sporadic and which the U.S.-NATO/ISAF forces always won. They were slow to realize that the Taliban was steadily increasing its influence in the Pashtun areas in the countryside and was instead focusing on winning the battle for political influence and control. The U.S.-NATO/ISAF forces were far too small to control the countryside and Afghan forces were only effective where they had strong outside support—which was only possible for the larger U.S. forces in Eastern Afghanistan.

At the same time, the corruption, incompetence, and inaction of the Afghan government left large areas outside the control of “Kabulstan.” The aid process tended to be localized where small NATO/ISAF Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) were co-located with NATO/ISAF forces. Only a fraction of the aid (estimates of 10-14%) reached the countryside, where 70% of Afghans live, and the flow of aid was so corrupt and poorly managed that some Afghan officials estimate that only 40% went to actual program activity inside the country. U.S. and other aid workers often did have significant success in areas such as providing roads, electricity, and water—as well as schools and medical services—but these achievements occurred only in the relatively limited areas where aid workers and resources were allocated.

These conditions created a vacuum that the insurgents were quick to exploit, which was

compounded by years of drought in much of the countryside and an economy that increasingly relied on corruption, extortion, crime, as well as growing and selling narcotics. The counter-narcotics effort was executed in ways that encouraged corruption and buying Afghan officials and security officers off. It also pushed narcotics cultivation into southern Afghanistan and the areas influenced and controlled by the Taliban. The counter-narcotics effort failed to provide effective alternatives to drug cultivation. At the same time, the lack of central government services, development, and an effective rule of law opened up much of the country to criminal activity and to the *de facto* return of local warlords. The limited legitimacy of elected officials was often lost at the provincial and district level by the failure of these officials to provide effective governance.

The problem was not that the Taliban, Hekmatyar, and Haqqani grew so strong, but that the opposition remained so weak. This allowed the war to grow from a low-level insurgency to a serious regional conflict between 2004 and 2009. In the process, the war broadened to include Pakistan, and became closely tied to the broader struggle against Al Qaeda. It also became a war that the U.S. is now losing, along with the Afghan government and NATO/ISAF. The U.S. and its allies may win virtually every major military tactical engagement, but they are losing the real struggle: a political war of attrition.

Winning the Battles and Losing a War of Political Attrition

NATO still defeats the Taliban and other insurgent movements in virtually every clash, although it relies heavily on airpower to substitute for its lack of ground troops. Many of the national contingents do little more than defend their own bases. The International Council on Security and Development (formerly the Senlis Council) reports, however, that the

“Taliban now holds a permanent presence in 72% of Afghanistan, up from 54% a year

ago. Taliban forces have advanced from their southern heartlands, where they are now the *de facto* governing power in a number of towns and villages, to Afghanistan’s western and north-western provinces, as well as provinces north of Kabul. Within a year, the Taliban’s permanent presence in the country has increased by a startling 18%. Three out of the four main highways into Kabul are now compromised by Taliban activity. The capital city has plummeted to minimum levels of control, with the Taliban and other criminal elements infiltrating the city at will.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The increase in their geographic spread illustrates that the Taliban’s political, military and economic strategies are now more successful than the West’s in Afghanistan. Confident in their expansion beyond the rural south, the Taliban is at the gates of the capital and infiltrating the city at will. Of the four doors leading out of Kabul, three are now compromised by Taliban activity. The roads to the west, towards the Afghan National Ring Road through Wardak to Kandahar, have become unsafe for Afghan or international travel by the time travelers reach the entrance to Wardak province, which is about thirty minutes from the city limits.

The road south to Logar is no longer safe for Afghan or international travel. The road east to Jalalabad is not safe for Afghan or international travel once travelers reach the Sarobi Junction which is about an hour outside of the city. Of the two roads leaving the city to the north only one—the road towards the Panjshir valley, Salang tunnel and Mazar—is considered safe for Afghan and international travel. The second road towards the north that leads to the Bagram Air Base is frequently used by foreign and military convoys and subject to insurgent attacks.

By blocking the doors to the city in this way, the Taliban insurgents are closing a noose around the city and establishing bases close to the city from which to launch attacks inside it. Using these bases, the Taliban and insurgent attacks in Kabul have increased dramatically—

including kidnapping of Afghans and foreigners, various bomb attacks and assassinations. This dynamic has created a fertile environment for criminal activity. The links between the Taliban and criminals are increasing and the lines between the various violent actors becoming blurred. All of these Taliban successes are forcing the Afghan government and the West to the negotiating table.

The Taliban are now dictating terms in Afghanistan, both politically and militarily. At the national level, talk of reconciliation and power sharing between undefined moderate elements of the Taliban movement and elected government officials is commonplace. At a local level, the Taliban is maneuvering skillfully to fill the governance void, frequently offering a mellower version of localized leadership than characterized their last stint in power.

U.S. and NATO reporting are more optimistic—although largely because they focus on military incidents and not on the growth of insurgent control and influence. Leaks of U.S. and UN intelligence maps do show, however, that high-risk areas inside Afghanistan have increased by 50% every year since 2005. Bombings, IED (improvised explosive devices) attacks, suicide attacks, the number and intensity of tactical clashes, cross border incidents and infiltration, attacks in Kabul, and other metrics of violence have been sharply on the rise since 2004, and have increased by at least 30% in 2008.

The UN rates nearly half the country as unsafe for movement by aid workers not supported by troops, and security has deteriorated sharply in Kabul, particularly in the last year. The level of violence, incidents, and casualties continues to rise, as does the frequency and intensity of combat. A new threat has also developed to U.S. and NATO/ISAF lines of supply, as well as imports from Pakistan, during 2008. This is critical because at least 60% of all supplies come from ports in Pakistan across the border in the Khyber and FATA areas.

While maps that show the growth of Taliban, Hekmatyar, and Haqqani areas of influence are

classified, it is clear from unclassified briefings that these insurgent groups continue to expand their influence at the local level. At the same time, the Afghan government remains absent or ineffective in much of the country, most foreign aid has no practical impact on the security and stability of threatened areas, and the combination of U.S., NATO/ISAF, and Afghan security forces is far too small to secure the countryside. Refugee problems and poverty are made worse by the problem of both personal and organized crime. While narcotics output is down—largely because of a saturated market and dropping street price as well as drought issues—it remains a key part of the national economy and a force behind both crime and corruption.

These problems are compounded by the situation in Pakistan. Little unclassified or reliable data is available on the expansion of Islamist extremist influence and control in the FATA (tribal areas) along the Afghan-Pakistan border in the east, but it is clear that this region has become the center of Al Qa'ida operations. Furthermore it seems apparent that near sanctuaries exist for two increasingly independent centers of Taliban activity as well as the Hekmatyar and Haqqani movements.

Baluchistan has become a near sanctuary for the classic Taliban movement under Sheik Omar. Cross border operations and infiltration continue to grow, U.S. and Afghan lines of supply through Pakistan are coming under increasing threat, and Pakistan faces an ongoing political and domestic economic crisis. In addition Pakistan also faces threats from a variety of ethnic and sectarian groups, its own domestic Taliban and a range of Islamic extremist and terrorist movements—some of which have pushed it towards a confrontation with India.

Not a Forgotten War But a Hidden One

The seriousness of this situation is partly disguised by the fact that the U.S. government, allied governments, NATO/ISAF, and the UN do not provide meaningful reporting on the nature of the fighting, the growth of the insur-

gency, or the successes and failures of the Afghan government and outside aid efforts. None of the reporting and major indicators used in government releases on the Iraq War have been made available in unclassified form on the Afghan War, although some data has been leaked.

It is clear, however, that the draft National Intelligence Estimate on Afghanistan—that was effectively complete in October 2008—described the situation in crisis terms and saw 2009 as a critical year. The same is said to be true of the strategy exercise headed by Major General Douglas Lute, former Director of Operations of Centcom in the NSC, although no details have yet been released of its content. Secretary Gates, Admiral Mullen, and the U.S. and NATO theater commanders have all issued such warnings in broad terms. The same is true of General Jim Jones, the new NSC advisor, in his reporting on the war to the Council on Foreign Relations, “Make no mistake. NATO is not winning in Afghanistan.”

Meeting the Immediate Challenge in Afghanistan

The combination of insurgent forces remains relatively weak in military terms. It is unlikely that there are more than 30,000 full-time fighters, and some experts put the numbers at between 10,000-20,000. While it is increasingly dependent on airpower to make up for its lack of ground strength, NATO is able to win virtually every tactical clash, and no insurgent group has held a major town or city.

While polls show a trend in favor of the Taliban and striking differences by district, the Taliban and other movements are still unpopular in most of Afghanistan. Much of their influence comes from a lack of any Afghan government presence or activity. This commonly occurs as a result of the fact that U.S. and NATO/ISAF forces cannot secure the countryside, and because aid is not effective, or the Afghan government provides no meaningful services and/or is deeply corrupt.

Nevertheless, the U.S. faces an immediate challenge to find ways to reverse the course of the fighting in Afghanistan, and bring high-risk areas—and areas of Taliban influence—under control. It also must deal with the immediate threat posed by the Taliban, Haqqani, Hekmatyar, and Al Qa’ida in Pakistan, and guard against any form of spoiler operation by Iran.

The NATO/ISAF Challenge

These problems are compounded by the fact that the U.S. must deal with an awkward and divided command chain in NATO, which consists of three, three-star officers and often conflicting national caveats and command chains, and a U.S. command chain that presents serious problems. In December 2008, NATO/ISAF also consisted of 51,350 personnel. A total of 31,400 were allied, and they were a mix of allied forces from some 41 countries that are unlikely to make major reinforcements. They also are divided into “combat”—UK (8,745), Poland (1,130), Denmark (700), Canada (2,750), Netherlands (1,770), etc.—and largely “stand aside” forces—France (2,785), Germany (3,600), Italy (2,350), etc.^{iv}

This already has led U.S. commanders to talk about increasing the U.S. presence in Afghanistan of some 34,000 men and women by 20,000-35,000 more troops. It also led to the announcement of plans to nearly double the size of the Afghan Army, to try to reshape a failed police training effort, and to the consideration of creating new local militias.

The Afghan Forces Challenge

Until recently, the development of Afghan security forces has been a badly managed, grossly understaffed, and poorly funded mess. Although the Taliban forces were defeated in 2001, the U.S. did not seriously fund Afghan forces development until 2007. While there are different ways to total the figures, no serious funding came until 2005. Total U.S. security funding then leapt from \$2.4 billion to \$7.8 billion in FY 2007, only to drop to \$1.8 billion in

2008 and \$2.3 billion in 2009. Spending these funds involved substantial delays in disbursement and further worsened the problem.^v

Changing goals in terms of force levels, role and mission also presented a serious problem. In late 2008 the Afghan government, NATO/ISAF, and the U.S. increased its force goals for the ANA (Afghan National Army) from 70,000 to 134,000 men in an effort to give it much needed end strength. These goals were set, however at a time when the ANA had only 30-40% of the U.S. and NATO/ISAF trainers and embeds it required, and many of these trainers had little or no real qualifications or competence. There were far too few partner units in the field, and Afghan units were often committed to combat without adequate levels of support.

The near doubling of the force means that such assets are now even more inadequate. Equipment for the ANA is also limited, and efforts to give it sustainability remain uncertain. The ANA is still being trained largely in terms of battalion-equivalents, rather than as an integrated army, and the Afghan Air Force is only beginning to be revived as an active force. ANA units are relatively capable, but even after five years, no ANA unit has gained the Capability Monitoring 1, or CMI, status indicating it is rated as having the ability to operate independently without substantial support by U.S. or NATO/ISAF forces.

It also has led to U.S. strategy studies that examine plans to use the same “clear, hold, build” in high-threat districts that the U.S. used with some success in Iraq. These plans would seek to integrate military operations with aid in governance, development, and employment at the local level. They would shift from the top down, central government approach to security and aid used since 2002 to an approach that also built up security and development at the town, district, and provincial level.

It should be noted, however, that the lead times involved ensure that it can take months to more than a year to fully fund, deploy and exe-

cute such plans; that most cannot be executed during the winter campaign season; and that large-scale action may only be taken towards the end of the major summer campaign season in 2009. It is also far from clear if U.S. plans to strengthen the U.S. military forces in Afghanistan are matched by credible options to increase the flow of aid where it is needed and to provide the mix of military and civilian U.S. aid workers and trainers.

As for the Afghan police, serious questions exist as to whether the trainers and resources are available to create both an effective ANA and ANP at the same time. Moreover, the goals set for shaping the ANP continue to change and still seem more suitable to post-conflict construction than to active war fighting. A December 2008 report by the Crisis Group notes that authorized manning levels continue to rise, and that some 149,000 men are reported to have been trained, yet that actual manning only seems to range from 35,000 to 57,000:^{vi}

The Economic Aid Challenge

These military problems have also been worsened by a deeply divided and corrupt economic aid effort that continues to set unrealistic goals based on peacetime priorities. Furthermore the UN, NGOs, as well as the U.S. and its allies have failed to properly staff, protect, and administer the aid effort with any effectiveness. Since 2001, the U.S. has provided approximately \$32 billion in humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan.^{vii} In addition, the international community has provided a further \$25.3 billion.

There are many broad conceptual aid plans. The U.S. set vague goals in the Afghan Freedom Act in 2002. In January of 2006, 64 countries and 11 international organizations attended the London Conference on Afghanistan and approved the Afghanistan Compact which focused on three pillars: Security, Governance (Rule of Law and Human Rights), and Economic and Social Development. The most recent addition to the Afghanistan Compact is the Afghanistan

National Development Strategy which was signed by President Hamid Karzai on April 21, 2008. It contains another broad set of strategies for improvements in security, governance, economic growth, as well as poverty reduction based on both the UN's Millennium Development Goals and the Afghanistan Compact. It presents goals to be accomplished in the years 2008-2013.^{viii}

There are, however, no detailed plans, accounting systems, or meaningful measures of effectiveness for these efforts even eight years after their start. Some of these accounting and management problems may be corrected by the creation of a Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) in 2008, but the Congress did not fully fund the office and it will not be fully operational and able to begin its work until the fall of 2009.^{ix}

The Afghan Political Challenge

These challenges will be compounded by the fact that Hamid Karzai must run for reelection in October 2009, and there will be an election for the popular part of the National Assembly, which consists of the Wolesi Jirga or House of People (no more than 249 seats), in September 2009.^x A political campaign followed by major shifts in many positions in government will take place in the middle of a critical military campaign year, a year of global economic crisis, major problems with food supplies and food prices, as well as growing refugee inflows to both Afghan cities and population centers.

Furthermore, President Karzai is negotiating with elements of the Taliban and has been reported to have expressed a desire to meet with Hekmatyar and Haqqani to try to find ways to include "moderate elements" in the government and/or to split such movements and create local ceasefires and alliances. These types of political arrangements have failed in both Afghanistan and Pakistan in the past, and have effectively allowed extremist elements to dominate the areas where ceasefires and agreements took place. They have worked in other counterinsurgency campaigns, but almost always

where the government was already decisively winning, the insurgency was severely threatened, movements had already split, hard-line ideologues were at least partially isolated, and the government had offered credible incentives. These conditions do not yet exist in either Afghanistan or Pakistan.

Meeting the Immediate Challenge in Pakistan

The situation in Pakistan is even more complex. This is especially significant because the strategic center of gravity in the war may have shifted from Afghanistan to Pakistan. Regardless of Pakistani public statements, both public opinion polls and the private statements of Pakistani officers and officials show that much of Pakistan sees the Afghan War as a largely American War that is destabilizing Pakistan. It is also clear that Pakistan has other interests that it sees as having higher strategic priority.

The Pakistani government must deal with serious internal political problems, including a low-level insurgent movement in Baluchistan, a range of Islamic extremist and terrorist movements, a Taliban movement in the Swat valley, and Lashkar-e-Taiba (literally Army of the Good) in Kashmir and other parts of Pakistan—a movement whose attacks in Mumbai have created a new crisis in Pakistani relations with India.

Both the Pakistani military and Pakistani intelligence have Islamist elements—some with ties to Al Qa'ida, the Taliban, Haqqani, and Hekmatyar. While this is particularly true of elements of the Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), it also affects police intelligence and local intelligence services, which came heavily under the control of the military-directed ISI when Musharaf was in power.

The Pakistani government has never fully controlled the FATA areas, and military-led governments have previously attempted to exploit Pashtun Islamist movements in both the FATA and Afghanistan to maintain influence and gain control over the area. There has been little meaningful Pakistani government security

effort in Baluchistan other than that directed at preserving the security of the region's gas production and shipments. There also is little evidence that Pakistan has used U.S. military and economic aid effectively in either the FATA or Baluchistan.^{xi}

Pakistan also now faces a growing economic crisis, and serious challenges in restoring civil democratic control over the country and both the nation's military and security forces. Corruption is endemic, the police are both corrupt and heavily influenced by American forces. The intelligence and security forces have been penetrated by Islamist elements with ties to the Taliban and Islamist extremist elements.

The U.S. has sought to use political pressure, as well as both economic and military aid to make the Pakistani government take action against Al Qaeda, the Taliban, Haqqani, and Hekmatyar, but has only had sporadic success. Most of the aid it has provided has either disappeared into the pockets of a corrupt leadership and military, or has been used to improve Pakistan's warfighting capabilities against India.

The U.S. has also made repeated efforts to pressure the Pakistani government into deploying security forces into the border areas, and to conduct operations against Al Qaeda, the Taliban, Hekmatyar, and Haqqani groups. It has had limited success, but Pakistani forces have not conducted a steady or systematic effort. The local security forces have been largely ineffective, and the Pakistani Army has often performed badly in counterinsurgency warfare. These problems have been compounded by the lack of meaningful Pakistani governance and aid activity.

The U.S. and Pakistan have a "Strategic Partnership," which senior officials reasserted during a regular session of the U.S.-Pakistan strategic dialog in September 2008. In practice, Pakistan has opposed U.S. military operations against any threat of force operating on Pakistani soil, and this opposition has strong political, military, and public support. It has tolerated and sometimes tacitly supported low-

level and covert U.S. operations against key targets, but largely in the form of unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAVs).

The U.S. has offered to have special forces provide the training in counterinsurgency they need to meet the threats in FATA, has worked with the Pakistanis on improving border security, has developed tools for Afghan-Pakistani cooperation, and has worked with Pakistan to expand joint covert operations and the use of UCAVs. It is unclear at this point, however, how far such cooperation will go.

The Longer Term Challenge: "Where Does It End?"

The U.S. must reverse the course of events in Afghanistan during 2009 and 2010 to even have a mid- and long-term to worry about. The very term "post-conflict reconstruction" is now a grim, if not farcical, Orwellian oxymoron. The immediate issue is warfighting—although this is at least as much a matter of "hold"—in the sense of providing constant day-to-day local security—and "build"—in the sense of providing jobs, a livelihood, government services, a rule of law and material hope for the future—as it is "clear" or "win" and producing more tactical victories. It also is establishing the proper balance of "clear, hold, and win" in the most critical and threatened population districts and rural areas—not creating development at the national level.

It is vital, however, to ask the same question about the Afghan-Pakistan War that General David Petraeus asked about Iraq: "Where does it end?" It is clear that U.S. vital interests are centered around defeating the broader threat of international terrorism, not around the future of Afghanistan—which is at best a strategic sideshow of little more than humanitarian interest in every other way. The central issue of the war is Al Qaeda and any of its spin offs or affiliates, and the center of gravity for Al Qaeda—to the extent it has one center—is now Pakistan. Taliban control of Afghanistan would only be threatening to vital U.S. interests to the

point that the Taliban movement either became a source of international terrorism or gave Al Qa'ida an even better sanctuary than Pakistan does.

NATO and Pakistan are far more serious strategic interests than Afghanistan. Talking about Afghanistan as *the* test of NATO ignores the reality that Europe and Atlantic security are vital strategic interests, that they play a critical role in dealing with Russia and the Middle East. NATO should not be judged by the willingness of allied states to project large forces into a war that the U.S. let escalate from peacemaking to insurgency through its own mismanagement. Talking about pressuring or invading Pakistan to save Afghanistan misses the point that alienating and possibly radicalizing a nuclear armed-Pakistan would have an impact on vital U.S. strategic interests as well as create an even better potential sanctuary for Al Qa'ida.

These are not reasons, per se, to abandon Afghanistan. They are reasons to demand that any U.S. strategy combine the Afghanistan conflict with a strategy for Pakistan. This strategy must be directly linked to clear goals and plans which show it can deprive Al Qa'ida and international terrorist movements of a *de facto* sanctuary. U.S. strategy must also ensure that it does not overextend itself into Central Asia where it may best achieve its strategic interests by not becoming involved in a new form of the "Great Game" that Britain and Russia played during their struggle for control of Central Asia in the 19th Century. There also are reasons to avoid blaming our NATO allies for not fighting our war in the way we now want, having ourselves made the mistakes that have created the current level of conflict, and to remember that NATO is NATO and not some new Central Asian alliance.

The U.S. may be able to meet these criteria by shifting its strategic focus to working with Pakistan, particularly if it offers partnership and carrots rather than threats and sticks. This is a high-risk option. Pakistan's internal problems are too great for the U.S. to offer easy answers, or to hope that economic and military aid can

shift the Pakistani government's priorities, and win Pakistani military and popular support with high confidence.

Nevertheless, a hostile Pakistan, a truly unstable Pakistan, and/or an Al Qa'ida sanctuary are such serious risks that the U.S. must try. However, the question of "how does it end" in Pakistan truly matters. The Biden-Lugar aid program that authorizes \$7.5 billion in aid over 5 years that can be used for development purposes, such as building schools, roads and clinics would be one such tool if it can be effectively and honestly administered in what are effectively combat or high-risk zones by a government with a long history of both favoritism and corruption. The bill also calls for greater accountability on security assistance, to improve Pakistani counterterrorism capabilities and to ensure more effective efforts against the Taliban and Al Qa'ida.^{xii}

In Afghanistan, the U.S. needs to be far more realistic about what it can and cannot do. As is the case in Iraq, the U.S. may well be able to combine a limited surge in forces with the build-up of Afghan security forces and a shift to a local "clear, hold, build" strategy to defeat the Taliban-Hekmatyar-Haqqani inside most of Afghanistan. However, the current longer-term goals the U.S., its allies, and the UN have set for Afghanistan may be no more realistic or achievable than the goals the U.S. once set for a model democratic Iraq than would transform the Middle East.

Economic development may well have to be limited to meeting the most urgent Afghan needs over a 5-10 year period. The CIA summarizes the situation as follows, "Afghanistan is extremely poor, landlocked, and highly dependent on foreign aid, agriculture, and trade with neighboring countries. Much of the population continues to suffer from shortages of housing, clean water, electricity, medical care, and jobs. Criminality, insecurity, and the Afghan Government's inability to extend rule of law to all parts of the country pose challenges to future economic growth."^{xiii} This situation can only be changed by major shifts in outside aid

efforts that first meet immediate needs for roads, water, and power. This aid must be honestly and effectively administered to infrastructure and more advanced forms of development in ways that have the transparency, accountability, and measures of effectiveness currently lacking in virtually all aid efforts.

If such aid is forthcoming, it will probably take the remainder of the decade as well as continuing donor aid and attention to significantly raise Afghanistan's living standards from its current level—among the lowest in the world. International pledges made by more than 60 countries and international financial institutions at the Berlin Donors Conference for Afghan reconstruction in March 2004 reached \$8.9 billion for 2004-09. While the international community remains committed to Afghanistan's development, pledging over \$24 billion at three donors' conferences since 2002, Kabul will need to overcome a number of challenges such as budget sustainability, job creation, corruption, government capacity, and rebuilding war torn infrastructure.

It almost certainly will be impossible to totally halt the narcotics trade, which the CIA estimates generates roughly \$4 billion in illicit economic activity and looms as one of Kabul's most serious policy concerns. Even if elements of the Taliban and other extremists are not brought into the Afghan government as a result of negotiations, political development will probably leave the country deeply fractured on regional, ethnic, and sectarian lines. There will be large

elements of "Islamic" and tribal conservatism in both politics and the law as well as significant compromises with the more "moderate" Islamist extremists.

Human rights and the rule of law may take a decade longer or more to evolve than was planned at the Bonn Conference. Drugs and corruption may continue to endure at least at moderate levels in Afghanistan (as they do in the U.S. and Europe). Moreover, achieving these goals cannot be done on the quick or on the cheap. They will almost certainly require a major U.S. security and military/economic aid commitment for the next decade.

Finally, the U.S. must examine the possibility that it cannot achieve these goals in the face of numerous obstacles. It may be that only Afghanistan and Pakistan can now solve these problems on their own. It is also possible that these problems are simply not possible to fix. One should not exaggerate the strength of Al Qa'ida—or the Taliban-Hekmatyar-Haqqani insurgency. There is no immediate reason for pessimism if the U.S. is willing to make the shifts in strategy and the commitments necessary to give it a good chance to win. But limited wars do not always end well. The U.S. needs to approach the Afghan-Pakistan conflict with a ruthless degree of realism in analyzing both its progress and options. Finally, it must consider that it may be forced into a strategy of containment from outside both Afghanistan and Pakistan in the future.

Figure 1

Afghanistan vs. Iraq: The Basic Challenges – Part I

Category	Afghanistan	Iraq
Area in Square Kilometers	647,500	437,072
Border length	5,529	3,650
Pakistan	2,430	-
China	76	-
Tajikistan	1,206	-
Turkmenistan	744	-
Uzbekistan	137	-
Iran	936	1,458
Kuwait	-	240
Saudi Arabia	-	814
Syria	-	605
Jordan	-	181
Turkey	-	352
Maximum Elevation	7,485	3,607
Land Use		
Arable land:	12.13%	13.12%
Permanent crops:	0.21%	0.61%
Other:	87.66%	86.27%
Irrigated land: (sq. km)	27,200	35,250
Total renewable water resources: (cu km)	65	96.4
Population:	32,738,376	28,221,180
Age structure:		
0-14 years:	44.6%	39.2%
15-64 years:	53%	57.9%
65 years and over:	2.4%	23%
Median age (years):	17.6	20.2
Life expectancy at birth (years)	44.2	69.6
Ethnic divisions:		
Pashtun	42%	-
Tajik	27%	-
Hazara	9%	-
Uzbek	9%	-
Aimak	4%	-
Turkmen	3%	-
Baloch	2%	-
Arab	-	75-80%
Kurd	-	15-20%
other	4%	5%

Sectarian Divisions:

Sunni Muslim	80%,	32-37%
Shi'a Muslim	19%,	60-65%
other	1%	3%

Linguistic Divisions (no percentage data for Iraq, largely Arabic and Kurdish))

Afghan Persian or Dari (official)	50%	-
Pashto (official)	35%	-
Turkic languages (primarily Uzbek and Turkmen)	11%	-

Figure 2

Afghanistan vs. Iraq: The Basic Challenges – Part II

Category	Afghanistan	Iraq
30 minor languages (primarily Balochi and Pashai)	4%	-
Literacy		
Total	28.1%	74.1%
Male	43.1%	84.1%
Female	12.6%	64.2%
Economy		
GDP (purchasing power parity): \$USB (2007)	35	103.3
GDP (official exchange rate): \$USB	8.8	55.44
GDP - per capita (PPP):	1,000	3,600
GDP - composition by sector:		
agriculture:	38%	5%
industry:	24%	68%
services:	38%	27%
note: data exclude opium production (2005 est.)		
Labor force (Million)	15	7.4
by occupation:		
agriculture:	80%	-
industry:	10%	-
services:	10%	-
Unemployment rate:	40-53%	40%
Population below poverty line:	53%	NA
Budget: (\$US Billion)		
revenues:	0.715	43.2
expenditures:	2.6	48.4
Comparative Economic Metrics		
Electricity – production in million kWh	754.2	33,530
Electricity – consumption in million kWh	801.4	35,840
Oil – production in bbl/day	0	2,110,000
Oil – consumption in bbl/day	5,000	295,000
Exports in \$US billion (less opium)	0.274	38.11
Imports in US billion	3.823	24.81
Debt –External in \$US billions	8.0	100.9
Airports	46	110
With paved runways over 2,400 meters	6	58
Roadways (km)		
Total	34,782	45,550
Paved	8,229	38,339
Unpaved	26,553	7,151
Railways (km)	0	2,272

Note: Many data are estimated from past years, or highly uncertain.
Source: CIA, World Factbook, 2008, electronic edition, updated 4 September, 2008
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/>

References

- i UN reporting is more optimistic (UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Afghan Opium Survey 2008, August 2008, p. vii.), although it ignores much of the tie between drugs and the Taliban, and the fact that crop output dropped in large part because of over saturation of the international market and a drastic fall in farm gate prices as a result, “This year, the historic high-watermark of 193,000 hectares of opium cultivated in 2007 has dropped by 19% to 157,000 hectares. Opium production declined by only 6% to 7,700 tons: not as dramatic a drop as cultivation because of greater yields (a record 48.8 kg/ha against 42.5kg in 2007). Eradication was ineffective in terms of results (only 5,480 ha and about one quarter of last year’s amount), but very costly in terms of human lives.

...Since last year, the number of opium-free provinces has increased by almost 50%: from 13 to 18. This means that no opium is grown in more than half of the country’s 34 provinces. Indeed, 98% of all of Afghanistan’s opium is grown in just seven provinces in the south-west (Hilmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan, Farah, Nimroz, and to a lesser extent Daykundi and Zabul), where there are permanent Taliban settlements, and where organized crime groups profit from the instability. This geographical overlap between regions of opium and zones of insurgency shows the inextricable link between drugs and conflict. Since drugs and insurgency are caused by, and effect, each other, they need to be dealt with at the same time – and urgently.

The most glaring example is Hilmand province, in the south, where 103,000 ha of opium were cultivated this year – two thirds of all opium in Afghanistan. If Hilmand were a country, it would once again be the world’s biggest producer of illicit drugs. By contrast, Nangarhar, Afghanistan’s second highest opium producing province in 2007, has become poppy free. This is a remarkable accomplishment, the first time it happens in the country’s modern history.

...Success in 2008 can be attributed to two factors: good local leadership and bad weather. First, strong leadership by some governors, for example in Badakshan, Balkh and Nangarhar, discouraged farmers from planting opium through campaigns against its cultivation, effective peer pressure and the promotion of rural development. They deserve tangible recognition. Religious leaders, elders and shura also deserve credit for becoming increasingly effective in convincing farmers not to grow opium, not least because it is against Islam.

Second, drought contributed to crop failure, particularly in the north and north-west where most cultivation is rain-fed. The same drastic weather conditions also hurt other crops, like wheat, increasing significantly its domestic price. This, combined with the global impact of rising food prices, is creating a food crisis. Yet, higher farm-gate wheat prices (because of shortages), and lower farm-gate opium prices (because of excess supply) have significantly improved the terms of trade of food: this may provide further incentive to shift crops away from drugs.

- ii Amy Belasco, “The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11,” Congressional Research Service, RL33110, Updated July 14, 2008, pp. 16 and 19.
- iii See International Council on Security and development, *Struggle For Kabul: The Taliban Advance*, December 2008, pp. 3-5
- iv Source NATO/ISAF. Current as of December 1, 2008.
- v Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress. October 2008, pp. 12, 25-27.
- vi Crisis, Group, “Policing in Afghanistan: Still Searching for a Strategy, Asia Briefing No. 85, December 18, 2008, pp. 2-3.
- vii Estimates differ. These figures come from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), <http://www.sigar.mil/>.
- viii For a detailed description of these plans and US aid spending, see Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress. October 2008.
- ix PL 110-181 authorized a \$20 million drawdown from the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF) for the startup of SIGAR during 2008. However, these funds were never disbursed to SIGAR. Actual appropriations from the Supplemental approved on June 30, 2008 resulted in \$2 million being available through September 2008, with an additional \$5 million made available on October 1, 2008. Congress subsequently appropriated \$9 million from the Consolidated Security, Disaster Assistance, and Continuing Appropriations Act of 2009, which was signed by the President on September 30, 2008. With these funds, hiring has begun and conditions set for resourcing SIGAR’s long-term personnel, facilities, and logistics requirements

x The popular election is directly elected for five-year term. The Meshrano Jirga or House of Elders (102 seats) has a mixed composition: one-third elected from provincial councils for four-year terms, one-third elected from local district councils for three-year terms, and one-third nominated by the president for five-year terms.

xi Reporting on how bad the situation is controversial. Pakistani military claim sometimes describe valid military actions and other times seem to be little more than propaganda. There is no outside validation. As for aid, the State Department, Department of Defense, and AID do not provide meaningful accounting or measures of effectiveness. Press reporting (Declan Walsh, "Pakistani military 'misspent up to 70% of American aid.'" The Guardian, February 28 2008) is almost certainly correct in stating that as much as 70% of \$5.4bn in assistance to the country has been misspent. Since 2002 the US had for Pakistan's military operations in the tribal belt along the Afghan border, and for food, fuel, ammunition and maintenance. The cash payments averaged \$80m a month but American officials processing the payments at the US embassy in Islamabad are reported to have concluded that Pakistani expense claims have been vastly inflated, and only 30% of the money reimbursed paid for legitimate costs actually expended. Receipts are not provided to support the claims, and the money is paid directly into the finance ministry.

xii The key provisions of the bill (<http://lugar.senate.gov/record.cfm?id=300696>) are:

1. Authorizes \$7.5 billion over the next 5 fiscal years (\$1.5 billion annually) in non-military aid. Advocates an additional \$7.5 billion over the subsequent 5 years

2. Conditions military aid on certification by Secretary of State that Pakistani security forces are:

- making concerted efforts to prevent al Qaeda and associated terrorist groups from operating in the territory of Pakistan;

- making concerted efforts to prevent the Taliban from using the territory of Pakistan as a sanctuary from which to launch attacks within Afghanistan; and not

materially interfering in the political or judicial processes of Pakistan.

3. Urges a reorientation of engagement towards the Pakistani people rather than merely towards the Pakistani government (civilian or military).

4. Urges accountability and transparent reporting of Coalition Support Funds.

5. Directs the Secretary of State (in consultation with other named officials) to develop a comprehensive strategy for the Afghan-Pakistan border area.

The explanation of the accountability provisions affect all aspects of the aid programs to Pakistan and Afghanistan, "Currently, the U.S. supplies about \$1 billion annually in CSF to Pakistan. These funds are regarded by the Bush Administration and the Pakistani government as "repayment" rather than "aid." In fact, the accounting and transparency of this program makes a true reckoning impossible: How much of the \$6 billion we've spent on CSF so far has actually gone to its intended purpose (compensation for actual expenses incurred in combating Al Qaeda and the Taliban)? How much has been used for the normal operating expenses of the Pakistani military? How much has simply been redirected to purposes of little or no benefit to the U.S.? The bill urges transparent accounting and tightened Congressional oversight."

xiii Like most wartime economies that have major Western military spending and aid support, Afghanistan has had a high growth rate measures in purchasing power parity terms, but has had wretched income distribution and most of the money flows out of the country. The CIA reports a \$35 billion GDP for 2007 in ppp terms but only \$8.842 billion in market terms. Similarly the per capita income was \$1,000 in ppp terms but only around \$250 in market terms and these figures ignore income distribution and capital outflows. Some 14% of aid as of mid-02008 had gone to agriculture, which accounted for 38% of the GDP (excluding opium production) but 80% of the labor force. The Afghan budget in 2008 was based on \$715 million in revenues and \$2.6 billion in expenditures (expenses equaled 360% of income).

Islam's Civil War and Greater Central Asia

S. Frederick Starr, Ph.D.

Chairman, Central Asia Institute
Johns Hopkins University

Two Versions of the Truth

As with so many things, the answer to questions about mainstream Sunni and radical Islam in Central Asia depends on whom you ask. Predictably, there exists a variety of views, but they can be roughly grouped under two headings.

The first is the view of national leaders and the principal Muslim clerics in the region. In spite of stunning differences among them in other areas, they all insist that Islam, as practiced in their region for a millennium, is moderate and tolerant in outlook and far removed from the intra-confessional fighting that often defines the faith today. They acknowledge that Islam in their region is deeply committed to what Americans would call “traditional values,” and yet remind us also that the Muslims of Central Asia were for centuries the bearers of a great intellectual and scientific tradition based on free enquiry and openness to the world of ideas.

Arrayed against this region-wide religious community, in the view of Central Asia's political and mainstream religious leaders, are various currents of Muslim extremism. Where indigenous Islam offers moderation and tolerance, the radical Islamists present fanatical intolerance. Lacking serious intellectual underpinnings, they are at the same time contemptuous of the simple piety of the region's believers, considering their faith, with its cult of saints, to be a crude distortion of “true Islam.” Worse, the leaders continue, these extremist notions are being

imposed with help from abroad, notably from Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, and Pakistan. Some groups, like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, call for armed violence against the *status quo*. Others, including the London-based Hizb-ut-Tahrir (“Party of Liberation”), claim to be nonviolent but espouse an odious and fanatical intolerance of misguided Muslims and non-believers. The Turkey-based movement of Fethullah Guelen opens modern schools across Central Asia but is in reality a front for bringing about an Islamic state.

According to these political and religious leaders, their governments and communities of Muslim believers are up against powerful, externally-funded organizations that exploit religion for political ends. Echoing the words of the Sufi leader Hashim Kabbani, they speak of a “civil war” within Islam, and consider their opponents to be very serious indeed. The common goal of all these groups, they claim, is to destroy the secular governments that have been introduced in recent decades and replace them with Islamist rule based on Shari'a law, and to impose that law on the entire community of the faithful. This view has been explicitly advanced by rulers of all five former Soviet states of Central Asia, by President Karzai in Afghanistan, and by senior officials in neighboring Russia, China, and India. During the past two decades governments of most western countries, including the European Union (EU) and U.S., have also embraced part or all of this interpretation.

The second interpretation of the same evidence is offered by a diverse group of individuals and organizations in both the region itself and in the West. These observers acknowledge the existence of radical Islam within the region but deny that it is a foreign import. Rather, they insist, it is the natural and inevitable consequence of the repressive policies of the governments themselves, i.e., of the very people whose view we have just summarized. While a few are committed to violence, most are merely “especially pious Muslims” who are dissatisfied with what they consider the deeply compromised official clerics. Whatever foreign support the radical forces may receive pales in comparison with the support the governments themselves receive from the West or which, in the case of China, Russia, and India, they can mobilize against pious believers from their own ample resources.

Local oppositionists point to the near-impossibility of registering non-confirming religious groups and to the governments’ fiercely oppressive tactics directed against “the especially pious.” Capricious arrests and brutal prison conditions, they argue, belie the governments’ claims of fairness and lead directly to the further radicalization of peaceful Muslims. The problem, they conclude, is the governments themselves, and all those who would support their systematic war against the legitimate rights of their citizens.

Many in the West support this interpretation. European and American nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working in the human rights field have effectively championed it, and a large body of legislation in both the EU and U.S. is built upon it. Congress has charged the State Department to report regularly on the status of human rights and of religious freedoms in all the countries in question, the Helsinki Commission holds frequent hearings on the subject, and the State Department’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor issues its own detailed reports on a country-by-country basis. These have in turn led to the imposition of various penalties and punishments against the governments in question.

It is tempting at this point to try to adjudicate between these seemingly incompatible views. Certainly, the champions of each would prefer a clean decision in their favor and against the opposite camp. But if such an outcome has the advantage of clarity, it would also grossly simplify the complex reality. Worse, such an “either-or” approach, by ignoring both inconvenient details and the broader context, virtually guarantees that policies built upon it will be erratic, flawed, and ineffective. This has in fact been the case. It is therefore necessary to look more deeply into the matter.

A deeper look: What is “Central Asia” and why does it count?

First, what is the region with which we are concerned? Is it in any way distinct or is it simply a distant and peripheral part of the Muslim world? After the collapse of the USSR the U.S. viewed Central Asia as consisting of only the five former Soviet republics: Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Muslim unrest in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region soon reminded us that this western-most province of China had also been a cultural part of Central Asia for 2,000 years. The defeat of the Taliban in 2002 posed an even more fundamental question: Was not Afghanistan, too, a part of this region, and over the past three millennia had it not been considered its very heart?

By ignoring this larger region, U.S. policy was quick to subsume Islam in Central Asia either under a “post Soviet” rubric or under some vague notion of a larger and undifferentiated Muslim community based in the Middle East. Both views led to our considering Central Asian Islam as something peripheral, and certainly not as a distinctive center in its own right.

This sharply contradicts the view held by nearly everyone in the region since at least the ninth century. While conceding the Arab and Middle Eastern origins of the Muslim faith, Central Asians remind us that Islam was codified and given many of its most distinctive fea-

tures by Central Asians, not Arabs. Here the sayings (hadiths) of the Prophet were codified by the ninth century scholar from what is now Uzbekistan, al Bukhari; his work is second in importance only to the Koran in the Muslim world. Beginning around 1,000 AD Central Asians also launched the enormously important currents of Sufism, a form of Muslim mysticism that drew on Jewish, Hindu, and Christian traditions and eventually spread throughout the Muslim world. Here, too, appeared the first madrassa schools. Invented as a means of suppressing heresy and instilling orthodoxy, these eventually spread throughout the world of Islam. It was from Afghanistan and Central Asia, not from the Middle East directly, that Islam reached India. The great Moghul state that produced the Taj Mahal sprang from what is now Uzbekistan. The most moderate of the four main interpretations of Muslim law (Shari'a), the Hanafi school, was codified in Central Asia and spread thence to both India in the East and Ottoman Turkey in the West. All of the other three traditions, so-called Hanbali, Shafii, and Malaki, are more narrow in their orthodoxy and resort more quickly to harsh punishment. Central Asia's Muslim pilgrims, of course, go to Mecca, but they also pay their respects to the shrines of Daniel, Solomon, and many other Old Testament prophets, not to mention hundreds of local saints, all of which are to be found in Central Asia itself.

It is no wonder that Central Asians view their region not as a peripheral zone of Islam but its heartland, and that they consider themselves the true bearers of the faith, in need of instruction from no one. Against this background, it is not surprising that they react indignantly to other Muslims who dare teach them about Islam, let alone to non-Muslims who offer advice on how governments should treat their Muslim citizens.

Two further factors reinforce this view of Central Asia as a heartland of the Muslim world. First, it was here, no less than in the Arabic lands to the west, that many of the greatest scientists, scholars, poets, and writers of Islam's Golden

Age (800-1,100) were born. Because they often wrote in Arabic, we wrongly assumed they were Arabs. Ibn Sino (Avicenna), who single-handedly created modern medicine in both the West and India, came from Uzbekistan/Afghanistan; among his other achievements, he championed the view that other worlds besides ours may exist—five hundred years before Giordano Bruno. Ibn Sino's friend, the geographer Biruni, calculated the circumference of the earth more accurately than anyone before the 18th century and for good measure came up with an evolutionary alternative to creationist geology. Al Khorezmi, who invented algorithms and gave algebra its name, sprang from the border between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan a millennium ago. Farabi, from whom Thomas Aquinas learned about Aristotle, was born in what is now Kazakhstan. The list goes on and on. Even the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad, which saw the greatest assembly of genius between the fall of Rome and the Renaissance, was formed, staffed, and defended by Central Asians.

Related to this is the tradition of secular rule in a Muslim society. After the death of Mohammed and his immediate companions, religion and the state were increasingly separated. This tradition found its earliest and fullest expression in Central Asia. Beginning with the illustrious Samanid dynasty of present-day Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, rulers were expected to be pious and defend the faith, but without being themselves spiritual leaders. This tradition was reinforced by the appearance of a series of huge Turkic empires (the Karakanids, Ghaznivids, Seljuks, etc.) based in Central Asia. Newly converted, these former nomad leaders were content to protect whatever was considered at the time to be Islamic orthodoxy, but not to define it.

Today, the states of Central Asia, including Afghanistan and also Turkic Azerbaijan, across the Caspian, present the world's largest concentration of *secular* governments in predominantly Muslim societies. Afghanistan may call itself an Islamic Republic but its laws and institutions are overwhelmingly secular. Since 1923

the model of Muslim secularism has been Turkey. But at a time when Turkey appears to be moving inexorably towards becoming a more Muslim state, purging the civil service and police of anyone not considered sufficiently pious, the mantle of Muslim secularism has shifted decisively to Central Asia.

Stated differently, for all their shortcomings, the governments of this region remain for now the best laboratories for the development of secular states in Muslim societies, and of Muslim societies that fully embrace modern knowledge. Their populations are more literate and more numerate than any other Muslim societies, and they are more open to modern secular education and learning. Much is riding on their success. Conversely, their failure would discredit the secular state/Muslim society model everywhere.

Are both of those interpretations right?

Returning to our question, are both of those interpretations true? The starting point for any sensible U.S. approach to the issue of Islam in this vast region lies, first, in accepting that both views contain elements of truth and, second, that even together they do not provide a sufficient basis for policy.

Mainstream Sunni Islam in Central Asia *is* moderate. The Hanafi school of Muslim law is less harsh overall than the schools which prevail in Arabia, North Africa and Southeast Asia, but also the most accepting of worldly activity in commerce and business. True, the establishment of Shiism as the state religion of Persia in the sixteenth century put Central Asian Sunnis on the defensive and they reacted with ideological passion, but this zeal soon burned out. For centuries now, a solid traditionalism has prevailed, giving meaning to the main events of people's lives but otherwise coexisting comfortably not only with neighbors of different religions but also with modern knowledge. It is also true that the region is heir to an extraordinary intellectual tradition, of which every school child in the region is aware.

At the same time, the same currents of Islamic fundamentalism that are felt elsewhere are spreading here with the help of money and missionaries from abroad. Suffice it to say that thousands of Central Asian families have been induced to send their sons to the Gulf for religious study by the lure of free tuition, room and board, and also generous payments to the family for lost labor. Religious-based groups mounted a civil war in Tajikistan in the 1990s, as well as armed conflicts in Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and 2000, Kazakhstan in 2000, and Uzbekistan in half a dozen major incidents between 1992 and 2005. It is well and good for the State Department and NGOs to demand that regional governments lift their ban on groups like Hizb-ut-Tahrir. But local leaders reject the claims of these groups to be nonviolent, and point to the fact that Hizb-ut-Tahrir has been banned not only in all Arab countries but also in Germany.

At the same time, it is undeniable that all governments in the region have reacted to these confrontations and other perceived threats with what westerners and many locals consider undue force. Washington pundits have been quick to draw distinctions between what they consider the special brutality of Uzbekistan's policies towards fundamentalism and other forms of religious dissent and the purportedly milder responses of other countries in the region. But the distinction between Uzbekistan's actions and the actual practices of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan, and even Afghanistan is more of degree than of kind. Such harsh responses surely help polarize the situation and may lead to further radicalization. Acknowledging this, however, it is by no means clear that a more accepting approach would avoid conflict and cause the extremist movements to join the system or wither away. Central Asian countries have studied closely the recent tragedy in Mumbai and concluded that India's relatively open democracy proved no match for committed extremists and terrorists.

The U.S.: AWOL in Greater Central Asia

Even if one accepts that both interpretations contain important elements of truth, this provides no basis for a coherent policy. Quite the contrary. For more than a decade U.S. policy has veered between cooperating with regional governments and censuring them, between aid and finger-pointing, between collaboration and hectoring, between carrots and sticks. Often the two approaches have been pursued at the same time. The result has been a constantly shifting and utterly unpredictable non-policy from Washington. This, at any rate, is how regional governments view Washington's approach under both Republican and Democratic administrations. Faced with such a mercurial partner, the governments of the region proceed with extreme wariness, preferring to strengthen their ties with their neighbors who preach less, China and Russia, and, no less, with the two other democratic powers that are active in the region, Japan and the European Union. America's judgmental and manipulative approach to the religious issue in Central Asia has not worked. Just when the U.S. is realizing that Afghanistan must be approached as a regional issue, the U.S. is finding that it has failed to build the kind of relationships across Central Asia that would make such an approach possible.

It is worth noting that whereas Japan, the European Union, China, and Russia have all created high level and region-wide consultative bodies to manage their relations in Central Asia, the U.S. has failed to do so. Leading these bodies are the national presidents or prime ministers of the above-mentioned major powers, who regularly visit the region and preside over meetings there. Not surprisingly, the presidents, prime ministers and principal ministers of the Central Asian countries reciprocate this high-level attention by participating actively in Japan's "Japan Plus Central Asia," China's Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Russia's Eurasec and common defense organization, and the EU's new consultative bodies in economics and security.

By contrast, the U.S. has no region-wide consultative body in Central Asia and no U.S. president has ever visited the region. Poorly arranged visits by Secretaries of State under both Democrats and Republicans have sowed bewilderment and confusion, which numerous delegations from Congress have failed to dispel.

The Missing Element: Strategy

Unsettling though this may be, it is all more a symptom of America's confusion than its cause. The deeper problem that is reflected in America's handling of religious issues in Central Asia is that the U.S. has no overall goals for the region and no strategy for achieving them. In the absence of a broader strategic framework, important issues like the civil war of Islam tend to bump back and forth between opposite extremes of policy. Before 9/11 Washington viewed Central Asia as a subset of its Russian policy and not as a subject in its own right. Yet at the same time the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) bombarded Central Asian countries with projects, many of them ill-conceived and almost all of them benefiting Washington Beltway contractors more than the local societies. Worse, the U.S. utterly ignored Afghanistan: Madeleine Albright, when asked what to do about that country, advised "Build a fence around it and forget about it."

After 9/11 the U.S. focused all its attention on Afghanistan, cutting back assistance to the rest of Central Asia except to the extent that it helped support the Afghan effort. China and Russia moved quickly to fill the vacuum that was created by Washington's neglect, as later did Japan and the EU. The fact that the U.S.' stated goals in the region were essentially negative—the destruction of al Qaeda and the Taliban—caused all regional governments (and even most Afghans) to distance themselves from the U.S. project, even as they quietly wanted it to succeed.

Even if the U.S. were to focus once more on Central Asia as a whole, does it have a strategy

that will succeed? To some extent, it does. To the extent that U.S. assistance alleviates poverty and fosters economic development it is addressing the social context of religious extremism. It is worth remembering that even in the supposedly prosperous Soviet times sheer desperation drove more than 200 women in the Fergana Valley to immolate themselves. This occurred in precisely those areas of Uzbekistan that later gave rise to radical Islamic cells. Successful economic and social development may be the best way to “drain the swamp,” to recall a phrase from the immediate post-9/11 era.

Beyond this, the U.S. needs to embrace the implications of its own thesis that repressive governments exacerbate social alienation and fan the religious opposition they seek to contain. Here the choice is simple: Either the U.S. supports groups that seek to overthrow the governments and replace them with supposedly better rulers, or it works with the existing governments to foster gradual reform. Following the U.S.’s very public support for what turned out to be the feckless “Tulip Revolution” in Kyrgyzstan, governments across the region view the U.S.’ intentions with deep suspicion. In the past two years U.S. relations in Central Asia have somewhat improved, but the old suspicions remain. And to this day the U.S. has no strategy for working *with*, rather than *on* the governments in question.

It is a fact that nearly all repressive actions by governments in Central Asia (including Afghanistan) arise from the ministries of Internal Affairs. All local officials, including the police, fall under these ministries, as do most jails, penal colonies, etc. In every country in the region, including Afghanistan, the Ministry of Internal Affairs has its own armed forces, which are used to quell civil unrest. It is no exaggeration to say that, for most Central Asians most of the time, their national Ministry of Internal Affairs *is* the government. In every government, this ministry has more power than any other agency to curtail the free practice of religion, restrict human rights, suppress dissent, limit

democracy, thwart the development of market economies, and foster corruption. Conversely, reforms in these centrally-important ministries are the surest steps to real improvement in all of these vital areas.

Regarding the rights of religious groups and individuals, the U.S. has engaged in extensive discussions with ministries of religious affairs, religious dissidents, grand muftis, human rights advocates, and national presidents. All, including the presidencies, are beside the point if there is no serious contact with the ministries of internal affairs. But U.S. policy has considered these ministries to be the “bad guys.” As if fearing contamination, the State Department and other U.S. agencies have studiously avoided contact with the ministries of internal affairs. Typically, it worked successfully through NATO’s Partnership for Peace to reform the ministries of defense, but did nothing to retrain and reform the armed forces under the ministries of internal affairs. Not surprisingly, it is these forces, rather than the regular army, that have invariably been used against civilian demonstrators, whether religious or secular.

Local sympathy for religious extremists has many causes but above all it arises from utter frustration with the civil authorities. This refrain is heard across Central Asia and in every region of Afghanistan. It is a reasonable if desperate response to the reality on the ground. Local civil servants are uneducated and undertrained. The miserably low salaries they receive all but guarantee that they will become corrupt. National budgets focus on the needs of the region’s burgeoning cities but ignore the countryside and the civil servants toiling there.

U.S. and western policy has ignored the local civil services, preferring instead to work through NGOs that work outside the government and often against it. The presence in provincial towns of the sons and daughters of the national elites, driving Land Cruisers and receiving salaries from foreign-funded NGOs that are three times higher than what the local governors receive, further embitters local

authorities. Given all this, it is quite understandable that they take out their anger on the citizenry, and in so doing cultivate the soil in which religious extremism can flourish.

To summarize, if it really wishes to address the issue of religious extremism in Central Asia/Afghanistan, the U.S. must choose between working with governments across the region or against them, between engaging in the messy and long-term task of real reform or disengagement, which will inevitably isolate the U.S. and render its presence in Central Asia unwanted and irrelevant. Real engagement will require patience and tenacity, since the kind of institutions that citizens can trust are not built quickly. Instead of showering judgments on regional governments, the U.S. will have to take a more strategic approach, muting its criticism and focusing instead on training, communications, and the financial processes without which a professional and honest civil service is impossible. All this is as true for Afghanistan as for any other country in the region.

To bring civil service salaries to a level that will attract and retain competent people, the regional governments must acquire a reliable income stream. This problem is most acute in the mountain states of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and especially Afghanistan, where the U.S. is currently paying all civil service salaries. The best hope of these countries lies in the renewal of continental trade, which will enable farmers and mountain folk to get goods to market and enable governments to levy tariffs on long-distance shippers crossing their territories. This may seem a far cry from the issue of religious extremism but it is an essential component of any program to reduce its appeal in the region.

Equally important is to lend support to the modern sectors of education, culture, and information in the region. National, regional, and international sports, educational exchanges, school pairings, sister city programs, theater, dance, contemporary pop music, and the burgeoning world of communications are all elements of the modern world that have

been denied to nearly all residents of Greater Central Asia outside the national capitals. With only limited access to these accoutrements of modernity, local young people are more readily tempted by extremist ideologies. The U.S. could do much more than it does to support such activities. This, along with the improvement of governmental services, would show mainstream Sunni Muslim residents of Central Asia that the modern world offers them possibilities that were heretofore beyond reach, and that participation in that world can bring rewards and satisfactions far beyond those held out by backwards-looking fundamentalists and the political forces through which they operate.

Such an approach would be the most strategic and most effective way of dealing with the problem of terrorism. Immediately after 9/11 there was much talk about “draining the swamp.” This approach will do precisely that. It is an approach which plays on America’s strengths, which lie above all in the area of effective governance and in the spheres of culture and education. It is not a substitute for the military effort in Afghanistan but an essential accompanying program. Acknowledging the importance of these measures, does America have to “go it alone” on this front? The answer is that America can and must rely on active participation by a host of open and democratic countries, including members of the EU (especially those who have refused to take an active military role through NATO), Japan, and India.

Three other countries present more complicated pictures. China is pursuing an extremely active policy in the entire region, but is not notable for it has contributed nothing to governance, education or culture there. The same must be said of Russia, which will demand a role in everything connected with the “war on terror” on the dubious ground that it knows the Afghans, but will not have earned it in the specific areas in question. Pakistan’s modern sector could play a positive role, but only when its government is perceived in the region as no longer sponsoring armed Islamists. In short,

neither China, Russia, nor Pakistan should figure in the above program, at least in the first period of its existence. However, all three will have an interest in the program's success, even

if they choose to criticize it. The U.S. should proceed without them, but be willing to consider their participation whenever it considers the time to be ripe.

The Arab Democratic Moderates and U.S. Policy

Lisa Anderson, Ph.D.

Provost, American University in Cairo

As we have seen, the challenges facing the Arab world—and the United States in the Arab world—are not only external, however vexing those dilemmas may be. There are deep, barely concealed, fractures within and among Arab countries and societies. Cynicism about the intentions of any and all political authorities, including the United States and the regimes it supports, is widespread and growing. Although the democracy promotion efforts of both the Clinton and Bush Administrations were eagerly embraced in many parts of the world, U.S. efforts at democracy promotion in the Middle East in the two decades after the end of the Cold War had largely perverse effects. There, and despite very substantial enthusiasm among wide segments of the intellectual and political elite, regimes under pressure from the U.S. adopted the institutional facades of democratic politics—constitutionalism, parliaments, even elections—without endorsing their purposes: enhanced transparency, accountability and equity. Many of these regimes are widely unpopular with their own citizenry, and the frequent, and frequently disingenuous, deployment of the language of human rights, rule of law and democracy by those regimes has only exacerbated the resentment of populations who do not trust their governments.

The Tunisian government has perfected this false piety, but it is hardly unique. Morocco's King Hassan II argued that democracy was a gift from him to his subjects—"democracy is grant-

ed in Morocco because I am the first to demand it"—and complained that his munificence was not adequately appreciated: "Shouldn't my granting of democracy to my people be considered a noble deed?" Algeria's rulers justified the military intervention that canceled parliamentary elections in 1992 by saying that "we must stop the electoral process in order to safeguard the democratization process."

The willingness, even eagerness, with which Western powers have colluded with these and other regimes in the Arab world to take the appearance of democracy for its reality has profoundly handicapped local efforts to foster genuine democratization. As a result, there has been no peaceful regime change in the region, and the violent regime change in Iraq did not produce *bona fide* democracy. The vast numbers of citizens who feel themselves disenfranchised in political systems that are little more than cynical ploys have increasingly turned to political movements like Hezbollah and Hamas, which reject not only the incumbent rulers, but the very systems themselves.

For the United States, and thanks to its association with the promotion of these kinds of institutions, this poses a very serious quandary. The demands of U.S. interests in stability, in preventing terrorism, securing access to oil and guaranteeing Israel militate against encouraging the raucous political competition and policy debate of genuine democracy. Yet the American embrace of the autocrats of the

region is interpreted as a profoundly insulting betrayal by our erstwhile democratic allies: see, for a recent example, the deep dismay of the Libyan democratic opposition with the apparently cynical U.S. change of heart about Qaddafi's regime in Libya. Moreover, the American boycott of governments produced by democratic elections that we ourselves promoted— Hamas's electoral victory being a case in point—has further undermined confidence in the U.S. commitment to democracy. Because American policy appears to be hypocritical, it is also, as a result, largely ineffectual.

This essay outlines some of the reasons for, and mechanisms of, the "hijacking" of democracy by disingenuous regimes, examines popular reactions, and suggests some of the policy implications for the U.S.

Why are the regimes resistant to democratic change?

Obviously, the simple answer is that the incumbent rulers are well aware that they will likely be voted out of office in free and fair elections. There are two elements to this anxiety, neither of which is entirely trivial. On the first and perhaps most elemental level, there is very little for retired politicians to do in the Arab world. Unlike the U.S. or Europe, where the private sector is robust and there are ample and interesting opportunities for erstwhile policymakers to make a living and exercise influence, most of the modern economic activity of the region is concentrated in a relatively few sectors—oil, telecoms, real estate, construction, etc.—that are already deeply allied with, and reliant on, government connections. The distinctions between the Privy Purse and the public treasury are murky at best—think of Morocco or the Gulf monarchies, where both business and government are family affairs and "privatization" has usually meant little more than a change of the sign on the door. In a region where economic success requires intimate connections with the ruler—where, in other words, wealth grows from power—there is little incentive to leave government.

Perhaps more importantly, these governments know that they are deeply unpopular. For decades they have neglected the welfare of their citizens—the Arab Human Development Reports of 2002-2005 represented but one of the many very sophisticated internal indictments of the performance of regimes that grew corrupt and complacent during decades in power. Population growth rates remain high and social services have failed to keep pace. In some countries, the literacy rate has actually declined, and health provision, especially for the poor, is dreadful. In much of the Arab world, governments have little or no capacity to regulate their economies outside the sectors that are closely tied to the government itself: It is estimated that half of the Egyptian economy and perhaps as much as three quarters of Algeria's is comprised of the black market. Little wonder that shadowy "non-state actors" find fertile ground for political support and ample opportunity for economic activity.

In this kind of context, open political competition is unlikely to be an orderly, decorous affair. Decades of resentment, combined with weak and decaying institutions, are a recipe for civil strife. Even the most well-intentioned democratic ruler—and there are very few in this region—would be loathe to unleash a process as likely to bring down the state as to produce victory for loyal and well-established political parties.

If they are so resistant, why have the governments nonetheless adopted the façade of democracy?

Virtually since independence following World War II, the governments of the Arab world have relied unusually heavily on external sources of revenue. Foreign development assistance and military aid from both outside the region—from former imperial countries in Europe, the USSR, the United States—and within the region, from the major oil producers, has underwritten substantial parts of government budgets. At the same time, and partly as a result, the capacity to collect taxes domesti-

cally remained weak. Since taxation and representation are as intimately linked today as they were on the eve of the American Revolution, the governments that rely on external revenues are as likely to feel—and to be—accountable to their external patrons as to their own citizens.

This explains the very high priority that the regimes of the Arab world give to foreign and regional policy and it contributes to the particular character of political competition in the region. During the Cold War, the regimes played the Soviets and the Americans off against each other, and routinely cited the specter of communist subversion to elicit and sustain American aid. In the waning days of the Cold War and certainly since the war in Afghanistan of the 1980s, the Gulf oil producers, particularly Saudi Arabia, and their conservative brand of Islamic politics have played the “balancing” function once played by Soviet communism in relations with the U.S. Just as adopting the façade of Islamist piety seems to satisfy the oil producers and keep their aid flowing, so too adopting the appearance of democratic politics has seemed to mollify U.S. policymakers. In neither case is there a great deal of genuine ideological enthusiasm.

Why then has Islamist politics seemed to take stronger root than democracy in the popular imagination?

Islam is, of course, familiar to the vast majority of Arabs who are Muslim, and its idiom of social justice and its stipulations about the responsibilities of rulers are clear and well-known in the region. By contrast, democracy is predicated on an exotic and complicated system of procedural rules with no clear substantive outcome and that, confusingly, sometimes seems to support the rulers and sometimes constrains them. Some of the appeal of Islam over democracy, in other words, is simply a matter of familiarity.

That said, it is also true that the regional advocates of Islamist politics are much more steadfast in pursuit of their project than the internation-

al promoters of democracy. In spite of decades of rhetoric, the United States and its Western allies have been relatively restrained in their efforts to foster democratic institutions. Indeed, both the Clinton and Bush Administrations behaved as if they believed that democracy is the default condition of humankind, requiring only the removal of tyranny—whether Soviet or Iraqi—to flourish. In fact, of course, democracy is built, and it flourishes only where there is a strong market, robust and appropriate education, and varied and durable civic institutions. Yet the democracy promotion agenda has not typically included sustained efforts to foster small business, support literacy programs, or encourage scouting, athletics, business improvement districts, PTAs or any of the myriad other “schools for democracy” that Americans typically enjoy in civil society.

The supporters of Islamist politics, by contrast, have left little to chance. In their competitions with the Libyans in the 1970s and with the Iranians after the revolution, the Saudis, for example, have been both generous and targeted in their aid provision. Support of government budgets has been tied to access to popular venues and—as we now know—Saudi funding has been important in building mosques, underwriting schools, encouraging women’s auxiliaries and Qur’anic study groups, and supporting charities like clinics and orphanages throughout the Muslim world.

Where are the Arab moderates now? Where is there evidence of political reform, institution building and transparency in the Arab world?

To answer these questions we need to acknowledge that in this environment, neither the “democrats” nor the “Islamists” can be counted as “moderates.” For better or worse, these positions have been constructed as competing ideologies and, like their Islamist competitors, the democracy enthusiasts have vastly overstated their case. The watchword of the Islamists—“Islam is the solution”—is widely

mocked by the cosmopolitan intelligentsia in the region but, in fact, democracy has been marketed with the same kind of facile sloganeering; as an astute Arab commentator put it, democracy is “endowed with a virtually talismanic quality, as a protean force capable, when meaningfully put into practice, of solving all outstanding problems.”

As a result, many of the intellectuals and policy makers who might be counted as “moderate” in the Arab world today have given up on politics; they long not for democracy (and still less for Islam in government) but for competence. There is widespread exhaustion with ideological politics and an increasing focus on modest promises, successfully delivered. From this vantage point, few would argue that there are serious signs of political reform, institution-building and transparency at the national political level anywhere in the region.

The picture looks a little better when the focus is on sub-national arenas—local governments or social service sectors or particular economic initiatives. Some such sectors—education in Jordan, scientific research in Saudi Arabia, export agriculture in Egypt, for example—seem to be making genuine and perhaps unexpected strides, and in doing so, they are contributing obliquely to more robust government and civic society institutions.

Also cause for cautious optimism: many of the regimes of the region that thrived on extravagance, whether ideological or financial, in the recent past are finding that this is a time for parsimony and pragmatism—and this will be a very welcome development. Whether the impact of the global financial crisis in the Gulf obliges the business community there to reconsider its many irresponsible and improvident investments or a more restrained U.S. policy elsewhere in the region encourages more sober government, the era of undeliverable promises should be brought to a close.

One more question: How important is a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict to the cause of Arab moderates?

The Arab-Israeli conflict is corrosive. It demoralizes and embarrasses governments and citizens alike across the region and deflects attention from pressing issues at home—and everyone in the region knows it. Their inability even to address, much less end, the recent conflict in Gaza was deeply frustrating, indeed humiliating, to the Arab governments of the region. Most of these governments would be happy to move on and attend to the pressing issues elsewhere in the region, not to say at home, were it not for a sense of moral and political obligation to the Palestinians—a commitment not unlike the American responsibility to Israel.

Indeed, if the relationship between the Arab countries and the Palestinians were understood as symmetrical to that of the United States and Israel, it might permit a more collaborative approach to resolving the problem. Just as U.S. patronage of Israel is a permanent feature of American policy, so too, the Arab world sees itself as having an enduring responsibility for the Palestinians. The inability of the governments of the Arab world to discharge that responsibility effectively contributes to the humiliation and frustration that sustains symbolic politics, feeds popular unrest, and eviscerates efforts at genuine development. While some of that powerlessness may well be self-inflicted, there is little to be gained in letting everyone simmer in these toxic juices.

Policy approaches

This analysis suggests several principles that should guide U.S. policy in the region.

1. Silence is golden. The distractions occasioned by the global financial crisis, the war in Iraq, the confrontation with Iran, and the wars in Central Asia should be

seized as an opportunity to ratchet down the rhetoric. The U.S. should resist committing itself to producing democracy, defeating terror, supporting moderates, liberating the oppressed, ending tyranny, or any other high-minded and ultimately impossible tasks. These are all desirable aims but they are equally undesirable promises. Our commitment to democracy, including human rights and the rule of law, should be unwavering as we observe and practice it ourselves—the recent presidential election, including the generous concession of the defeated candidate and the gracious departure of the outgoing president, represent as good a tool of democracy promotion as has been invented—but we should not make rash promises about its export, nor use it to justify policies we undertake for other reasons.

2. Small is beautiful. Neither economic nor political reform efforts on the part of the U.S. should be primarily focused on national level initiatives. Small businesses, town councils, village clinics, local sports clubs, community school districts—these are where nearly everyone in the world who is community-minded and public spirited learned why that outlook is important and how to be effective. If U.S. non-military foreign aid is targeted at the local level, it is less likely to threaten or destabilize the national governments on whom we continue to rely in the region; and it is more likely to be effective both in fostering prosperity and in siphoning support from the Islamists. If it is true, as it seems to be, that as long as the war in Iraq, the crisis with Iran and the conflict in South Asia continue, the United States has no option but to work with autocratic rulers

in the Arab world, it can do so in such a way as to contribute productively to creating accountability and prosperity at the grassroots.

3. ‘Peace’ is win-win. A peace—or perhaps better, an end to belligerence, since we do not want to over-promise—between the Palestinians and Israelis is not (only) a good in itself, it is a necessary step to restoring ‘normalcy’ to a region that had been degraded by war and frustration for decades. The Israelis and Palestinians both need to give up dreams of a definitive victory in favor of arrangements which ensure long-term security and stability for both. To do this, and to ensure that it is durable, the Arab world needs to be brought into the negotiations as the guarantor of the Palestinians, much as the U.S. is the sponsor of Israel. This may require surrendering some of the “honest broker” role the U.S. has assumed since the 1970s to an institution—the European Union, the United Nations, a mechanism yet to be devised—that is less implicated in the conflict. In the long run, however, it is more important that the conflict be resolved than that the U.S. get all the credit.

If the United States were to pursue its policies quietly, modestly and without much of the high drama that has characterized its approach to the Arab world over the last several decades, the enormous regard in which American accomplishments—our political democracy, our civic virtues and personal freedoms, our technological inventiveness and our economic prosperity—are held virtually everywhere in the region would quickly reappear. And that would be enormously beneficial to the United States, and to the region.

Islam: Governance, Ideology and U.S. Policy for the New Administration and the New Congress

PARTICIPANTS

Amman/Sweimah, Jordan
February 14-20, 2009

Members of Congress

Representative Howard Berman
and Janis Berman
Representative Lois Capps
and Laura Capps
Representative Geoff Davis
and Pat Davis
Senator Tom Harkin
Representative Jane Harman
and Sidney Harman
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and Margaret Lancefield
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and Melinda Rahall
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and Robert Creamer
Representative John Tierney
and Patrice Tierney
Representative Zach Wamp
and Weston Wamp

Representative Henry Waxman
and Janet Waxman
Representative Ed Whitfield
and Connie Harriman-Whitfield
Representative Lynn Woolsey

Guest Speaker

His Majesty King Abdullah II
King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Scholars/Speakers

Abdel Monem Said Aly
Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic
Studies, Cairo

Lisa Anderson
American University, Cairo

Anthony H. Cordesman
Center for Strategic and International Studies

Vartan Gregorian
Carnegie Corporation of New York

Bruce Hoffman
Georgetown University

Ibrahim Saif
Carnegie Middle East Center, Beirut

S. Frederick Starr
Johns Hopkins University

Consultant and Rapporteur

Geoffrey Kemp
The Nixon Center

Foundation Representatives

Deana Arsenian
Carnegie Corporation of New York

Betsy Fader
Doris Duke Charitable Foundation

Nadia Roumani
Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art

Adele Simmons
Aspen Institute Congressional Program
Advisory Committee

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Dick Clark
Director, Congressional Program
The Aspen Institute

Aspen Institute Staff

Diane Anello
Bill Nell
Pat Walton

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AGENDA

Amman/Sweimah, Jordan
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Meeting with His Majesty King Abdullah II, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Confronting Terrorism: Lessons Learned Since 9/11

Bruce Hoffman, Georgetown University

The global war on terrorism precipitated by the 9/11 attacks has been praised and criticized over the past 7 years. There are competing explanations as to why radical terrorism has flourished in recent years. One school emphasizes the role of Islam in the Middle East in promoting radical ideologies. An alternate view focuses on more social and political explanations for contemporary terrorist groups, not all of them Muslim. Those who stress the successes of the Bush Administration's war on terror point to the fact that there have been no major terrorist incidents against the continental United States since 9/11 and that al-Qaeda has been routed in Iraq. Other successes can be identified in Southeast Asia and in much better cooperation and coordination among western intelligence and law enforcement agencies to identify and contain terrorist networks. Critics point to the terrorist attacks in Europe and the ongoing use of terror in the Middle East, including Iraq, but especially in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. Furthermore, some of the fundamental causes of terrorism have not been curtailed—madrassas still flourish throughout the Muslim world and poverty issues continue to provide fertile grounds for radical recruitment. Until there is more focus on education, development and political reform—including the emancipation of women in the Muslim world—the radical Islamist ethos will continue to flourish. Despite these different interpretations, there are a number of practical lessons that can be drawn from the intensive efforts of the United States to contain terrorism. These relate to tactics, strategies and technologies. In addition, there are questions whether the phrase “global war” is an appropriate term to use in the context of radical terrorism, which, although having some common themes, has very different roots and spawns different organizations that are often geographically specific and not all Islamic.

Discussion Questions

- What are the long-term answers to the radical threat? Is political reform and economic development the key?
- Is the phrase “global war on terrorism” an appropriate one for the threat we face?

- What have been the greatest achievements in the struggle against terrorism since 9/11?
- How should the United States improve cooperation with key Muslim states which face threats (e.g., Afghanistan and Pakistan)? Does the answer lie in part in addressing domestic needs such as health care and agricultural development?
- What new military and “soft power” operations are needed to counter terrorism and potential terrorists?

Afghanistan: The Continuing Challenge for the U.S.

Anthony H. Cordesman, Center for Strategic and International Studies

Until recently Afghanistan was considered the “forgotten war” while the United States focused its efforts and resources on containing the situation in Iraq and establishing stability in the Gulf region. However, Afghanistan continues to be an extremely dangerous conflict, particularly given its umbilical relationship with Pakistan, and the fact that many of the terrorists operating in Afghanistan do so from sanctuaries in Pakistan. Although there are many military innovations that can still be applied in Afghanistan, especially if more support is provided by NATO countries, the fundamental crises affecting both Afghanistan and Pakistan have as much to do with their socioeconomic conditions as ideological issues related to the United States and the West. For this reason, some argue that disproportionate resources have been allocated to military solutions. Instead, more resources should be allocated to development and education as counterweights to the seething discontent and anger that pervades both countries. A fundamental challenge facing the U.S. and its allies is how to allocate scarce resources to fight the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan while at the same time improving the day-to-day lives of ordinary citizens.

Discussion Questions

- Can the Taliban in Afghanistan be defeated by military operations alone?
- What are the prospects for negotiating with elements of the Taliban? What will be their demands?
- Will the new leadership in Pakistan facilitate cooperation on fighting terrorism in Afghanistan?
- What priority must be given to socioeconomic and political reform in Afghanistan?
- What is the best way to reduce Afghan drug exports and foster a viable agricultural sector?
- To what extent do radical elements in Pakistan benefit from official corruption and the failure of the government to provide adequate social services?

Islam and the Central Asian “Stans”: Implications for the U.S.

S. Frederick Starr, Johns Hopkins University

Concern about Islamic extremism in Central Asia, specifically Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, has prompted highly repressive responses by the governments of the region with the tacit support of both Russia and China, who also have their own problems with Islamists. Yet the thrust of American policy since the end of the Cold War has been to promote freedom, democracy and economic development in the Central Asian “stans.” It is assumed that achieving these goals means cooperating with Islamists rather than repressing them and making them more likely to resort to extremism. The United States has also had a policy of promoting economic develop-

ment, particularly energy infrastructure projects that are designed to bypass Russia and help the “stans” achieve more independence from Moscow. The evidence to date is that this policy has backfired, and the United States is probably in a weaker position in Central Asia than it was at any time in the early 1990s. Russia and China are reestablishing their presence there and infrastructure projects in the region, particularly from China, suggest that in the years ahead American influence may diminish while that of Russia, China, Iran, India and Pakistan will increase. Should the U.S. be making a greater effort to promote economic development in the region?

Discussion Questions

- How serious is the Islamic radical threat in the “stans?” How effective has the crackdown on Islamists been?
- What is the relative influence of the U.S., Russia and China in the “stans?”
- How important are Iran, Pakistan and India in the emerging dynamics of Central Asia?
- How will the burgeoning infrastructure and energy projects in the “stans” change the economic and geopolitical dynamics of the region?

The Arab Democratic Moderates and U.S. Policy

Lisa Anderson, Provost, American University in Cairo

There are a number of Arab intellectuals and nascent political parties in the Middle East who support the overall goal of American policy of achieving more openness and democracy in their societies. Yet they are confronted on the one hand by autocratic rulers, and at the other extreme by radical Islamists who are bitterly opposed to Western concepts of freedom, particularly those relating to women’s rights and transparency. The Bush administration’s efforts to nurture democracy in the region were welcomed by the moderates, but in practice U.S. policy has fallen back on the reality that so long as the war in Iraq, the crisis with Iran and the conflict in South Asia continues, the United States has no option but to work with autocratic rulers and, in turn, play down criticism of their repression of moderates. Yet there is some good news—Lebanon, Jordan and some of the Gulf States display more positive political trends. How the United States addresses this issue will remain one of the cornerstones of its foreign policy under the new administration.

Discussion Questions

- Where is there most evidence of political reform, institution building and transparency in the Arab world?
- How enthusiastic are Arab moderates to the call for democracy promotion in the Middle East?
- Would it strengthen Arab moderates if the U.S. were to put greater emphasis on improving the social and economic conditions in their countries?
- How important is a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict to the cause of Arab moderates?

