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STEPS NEEDED FOR A SUCCESSFUL 2014 TRANSITION IN AFGHANISTAN

HEARING

BEFORE THE

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STEPS NEEDED FOR A SUCCESSFUL 2014 TRANSITION IN AFGHANISTAN

TUESDAY, MAY 10, 2011

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:13 a.m., in room SD–419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. John F. Kerry (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Kerry, Boxer, Shaheen, Durbin, Udall, Lugar, Corker, and Lee.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN F. KERRY, U.S. SENATOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS

The CHAIRMAN. The hearing will come to order.

My apologies to colleagues, witnesses, and audience, alike, for starting a little bit late today. We had some business, before the Finance Committee, that I needed to attend to. And I appreciate everybody's patience.

This is the third of six hearings on Afghanistan and Pakistan that we are holding this month.

Last week, we explored some aspects of the endgame in Afghanistan: what it might look like, how we might better engage with Pakistan on common interests and threats.

Today, we're focused on Afghanistan and on the specific steps the administration might need to take to shift security responsibility to Afghan security forces by 2014. It's my hope that these hearings will help us develop a roadmap and at least broaden the understanding and engagement of the American people and of policymakers as to how the United States can shift responsibility to Afghanistan in a way that still protects our interests and increases our ability to respond to the threats on a global basis.

We are fortunate to have a strong panel of witnesses. And I want to thank each of you for taking the time to be here today.

Osama bin Laden's death was more than a critical triumph in our fight against terrorism. It provides a potentially game-changing opportunity to build momentum for a political solution in Afghanistan that could also bring greater stability to the region, as well as ultimately enable the allies to bring their troops home.

Let me be clear, I don't know of any serious policy person who believes that a unilateral precipitous withdrawal from Afghanistan would somehow serve our interests or anybody's interests. I don't believe that that is a viable solution, a viable option. I do think that we ought to be working toward achieving the smallest foot-

print possible in Afghanistan. What is necessary is a presence that puts Afghans in charge, pressing them to step up to the task, at the same time secures our interests and accomplishes our mission, which hasn't changed, even with the death of Osama bin Laden. And that mission is to destroy al-Qaeda and prevent Afghanistan from again becoming a terrorist sanctuary.

I think one threshold needs to be restated as we consider the options, and that is that it is fundamentally unsustainable to continue spending $10 billion a month on a massive military operation with no end in sight. The good news is: I believe we don't have to. I'm convinced that we can achieve our core goals at a more sustainable cost, in both lives and dollars.

I hope our witnesses will really help us understand, today, the nitty-gritty details of how we can get there.

To begin with, we have to take a hard look at the capability and the sustainability of the Afghans to take responsibility for their own security. That is certainly the best course to transition, I think, in most people's judgment.

But, despite our best efforts, there are challenges: corruption, predatory behavior, incompetence still evident within the Afghan army and police; attrition rates, although slowly improving, still remain debilitating; a series of deadly attacks by uniformed Afghans against their own troops, their own government officials, and our men and women in uniform, has undermined trust and morale.

On top of these problems, there is the question, ultimately, of money, resources. I'm not sure that an Afghan security force of 350,000 people is sustainable, by either the Afghans or us. The estimates are that it would cost about $8 billion to $10 billion a year to sustain a force of that size after the transition of 2014. Even the most optimistic estimates are that the Afghan Government's tax revenue will be around $2 billion; $2.5 billion, tops. That's the total, my friends. So, who will pay the bills to avoid having those armed soldiers and police mobilized as part of the next insurgency?

The future of the security forces is only part of the discussion of what kind of Afghan state we can afford to leave behind. How democratic? How capable? How free of corruption? How national? How organized do Afghan institutions need to be to be able to provide the basic services and basic security? What is "good enough," a word we have heard applied to the standard by which we might transition? At every turn we have to ask what we can realistically accomplish in the next few years to build sufficient Afghan capacity, and focus on those areas.

Finally, as we did in Iraq, we need to determine how we can best support the political solution that everyone has agreed is ultimately the only way to resolve the crisis of Afghanistan. Again and again, from General Petraeus through ambassadors and other military leaders, and from the Secretary of Defense, all have confirmed that there is no military solution. So, looming large in front of us is the pregnant question: What is the political solution?

We need to make our ultimate goals absolutely clear, for the sake of the American people, Afghans, Pakistanis, and everyone else who has a stake in the outcome. The administration needs to send a clear signal, with respect to the direction on the reconciliation efforts. Our lack of clarity has perhaps caused Afghanistan and

Pakistan and many other players to persistently hedge their bets and plan for the worst rather than the best.

We have three distinguished witnesses today who are going to help us explore these issues.

Dr. David Kilcullen is an expert on counterterrorism and counterinsurgency. He was a civilian adviser to General Petraeus on the U.S. counterinsurgency missions in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Dr. Seth Jones is a senior political scientist at the RAND Corporation. He's a well-known expert on Afghanistan, and the author of the book, "In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan."

Stephen Biddle is a senior fellow for defense policy at the Council on Foreign Relations, and an expert in defense policy and strategy.

So, gentlemen, we look forward to your help in addressing many of the questions I've just posed.

Senator Lugar.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. RICHARD G. LUGAR, U.S. SENATOR FROM INDIANA

Senator LUGAR. Mr. Chairman, I join you in welcoming our distinguished witnesses. We look forward to a very important hearing with them.

Afghanistan has undeniable symbolic importance and can still be a source of threats to United States security. On that, we are all agreed. The question before us is whether Afghanistan is important enough to justify the lives and massive resources that are being spent there, especially given our Nation's debt crisis. Or, can we achieve the most important national security goals in Afghanistan—especially preventing the Taliban from taking over the government and preventing Afghan territory from being used as a terrorist safe haven—at far less expense?

At our first hearing on Afghanistan last week, I offered four observations as a prelude. First, we are spending enormous national security resources in a single country. Second, although threats to United States national security do emanate from within Afghanistan's borders, these may not be the most serious threats in the region and Afghanistan may not be the most likely source of a major terrorist attack. Third, the broad scope of our activities suggests that we are trying to remake the economic, political, and security culture of Afghanistan, but that ambitious goal is beyond our powers. And fourth, although alliance help in Afghanistan is significant and appreciated, the heaviest burden will continue to fall on the United States.

These observations, if accepted, call into question whether our vast expenditures in Afghanistan represent a rational allocation of our military and financial assets. This was true before Osama bin Laden was killed. His death has encouraged reflection on our policy in Afghanistan and may create some perceptual opportunities in the region. But a reassessment of our Afghanistan policy on the basis of whether our overall geostrategic interests are being served by spending roughly $10 billion a month in that country was needed before our troops took out bin Laden.

Our geostrategic interests are threatened in numerous locations, not just by terrorism, but by debt, economic competition, energy

and food prices, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and numerous other forces. Solving these problems will be much more difficult if we devote too many resources toward one country that has, historically, frustrated nation-building experiments.

The Obama administration has targeted July for decisions on initial troop withdrawals. The President should not just withdraw an arbitrary number of troops. Rather, he should put forward a new plan that includes a definition of success in Afghanistan based on United States vital interests and a sober analysis of what is possible to achieve. I continue to stress that such a plan should include an explanation of what metrics must be achieved before the country is considered secure. It should also designate and eliminate those activities that are not intrinsic to our core objectives.

In Afghanistan, measuring success according to relative progress has very little meaning. Undoubtedly, we will make some progress when we are spending more than $100 billion per year in that country. The more important question is whether we have an efficient strategy for protecting our vital interests that does not involve massive open-ended expenditures and does not require us to have more faith than is justified in Afghan institutions.

In this context Congress needs to know much more about the prospective strategic partnership agreement that is under discussion with the Afghan Government. The cancellation of bilateral talks scheduled for last March underscored that progress on this agreement has been slow. The President and his team also need to establish much greater confidence regarding coalition efforts to train Afghan security forces.

A DOD inspector general report from March of this year concluded that the NATO training mission "lacks enough specialized personnel to initiate, manage, and oversee the rapidly growing number of contractors and effectively manage the use of ASFF funds."

The United States spent $9.2 billion in 2010 and more than $10 billion this year on this project. President Obama has requested nearly $13 billion for training in 2012. The high cost of this program is evidence of its centrality to administration strategy. But doubts also exist about whether newly trained security forces can assume responsibility for providing security in the country anytime soon. Even if training begins to produce units capable of independent action, tribalism and the corruption inherent to the central government create complications that could undercut the success of this experiment.

In addition, after units are trained, what are U.S. obligations over the long term for sustaining them with equipment, pay, fuel and other inputs? According to some estimates, this could cost more than $6 billion per year.

I am hopeful that these hearings will provide greater focus to the mission and strategy in Afghanistan in the context of broader United States vital interests. We look forward to our discussion this morning.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Lugar, very much.

We will begin with Dr. Kilcullen and just run down the table from there.

Thank you.

If I could ask everybody to try to keep your openings to around 5 minutes, your full statements will be placed in the record as if read in full, and then we'll have more chance for exchange with the Senators.

Thank you.

STATEMENT OF DAVID KILCULLEN, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, CAERUS ASSOCIATES, WASHINGTON, DC

Dr. KILCULLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I'm honored to be here in such distinguished company.

I will keep my opening remarks fairly brief. And what I want to do is focus fairly narrowly, on the question of what actually has to happen on the ground inside Afghanistan in order to get to the point where we need to be in 2014.

The way that you see the problem depends very much on whether you think that the insurgency—the Taliban—is the problem, or whether they're actually a symptom of a wider set of problems. I tend to the latter point of view. Most of the work that I've done in country over the last 7 years or so suggests that actually we're looking at a much broader cycle of instability, of which the Taliban is only part. And, if you want to transition successfully, you need to address that whole cycle.

The first element in the cycle is corruption and criminality, which comes about, in part, because of the drug economy, but also, in large part, because of lack of accountability and corruption in international community assistance programs. What that does is, it creates a tsunami of illicit cash that washes around the Afghan system and creates incentives for abuse.

The abuse is the second part of the problem. And it sometimes takes the form of actual physical abuse and violence, but more often it's expropriation of property, shakedowns, bribery, taking people's assets away, denial of justice.

And that second part of the cycle creates the third part, which is rage. And that rage is directed from the population, not only against corrupt actors, but also against the international community, because they blame us for the behavior of corrupt people in their own districts.

And then, the final part of the cycle is the fact that that rage empowers the Taliban, or whatever other insurgency elements are operating in a given district, and creates the conditions that lead to the corruption and criminality in the first place.

And so, that cycle, if you want to address it, you need, essentially, four elements. You need a countercorruption element, you need a governance-reform element, you need some kind of political reconciliation element, and then, finally, you need targeted measures against the insurgency itself. So, counterinsurgency's very important in Afghanistan. But, it's really only one part of a much larger set of issues, which you could characterize as a stabilization problem.

Now, all those four elements, that I just mentioned, are present in the ISAF campaign today. It's a question of how heavily we invest in each part of the problem. Right now, we're investing very heavily in defeating the Taliban, as a military force, and actually

making very significant progress, I would argue, in that part of the problem. But, where we have really failed to engage fully in the issues that are going to confront us between now and 2014 is in the other parts; in particular, district-level reconciliation, anticorruption, and reforming the corrupt and abusive practices of a variety of power elites inside Afghanistan, not just government officials. Not all government officials are corrupt. There are some dedicated public servants within the Afghan Government. But, there are also a lot of power elites at the district level who are very exploitative of the population.

I see three pathways toward transition that we need to integrate and to effectively do at the same time if we want to get there by 2014.

The first pathway is what I would call the suppression path. It's a counternetwork approach or a counterterrorism approach. And it's about destroying the insurgents' ability to threaten the transition or to threaten the future stability of the Afghan state. It requires a lot of special forces, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance effort, but it's the one area of the campaign where I think we're doing particularly well.

The second element, or the second path, is the stabilization path. And that's essentially, at the district level, identifying all the inputs into what makes a stable district, and carrying out, basically, counterinsurgency operations to clear, hold, build, and then transition in each district. I think most members of the committee are very familiar with that aspect of the campaign.

The third pathway is reconciliation, not just at the senior level with high-level Taliban, but at the local level; and again, not fundamentally between the insurgency and the population, but among different power brokers at the district level, leading to a stability environment, when we pull out of the district, which remains stable.

I don't want to take any additional time to talk about those pathways. I would just make one final comment, which is that we have a constitutional crisis coming in 2014. The Afghan Government limits the term of the President to two terms. President Karzai is in his second term now. That term will run out in the middle of 2014. Who is our partner going to be toward the end of this transition process? I mean, it's an important factor to consider.

I'll stop there, in the interest of time, and leave it to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Kilcullen follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. DAVID J. KILCULLEN

Mr Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about this important national and international issue. I intend to keep my opening remarks brief in order to allow maximum time for discussion, and in order to do so I would like to focus narrowly on the question of what, specifically, needs to happen on the ground in Afghanistan in order to enable a transition in 2014.

NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

The answer to this question depends on whether you believe the insurgency in Afghanistan is the problem, or is a symptom of a wider set of problems. My work in and on Afghanistan over the past 7 years suggests the latter—that is, the insur-

gency arises from a wider set of causes, and just dealing with active fighters will be insufficient for effective transition.

In particular, I see the war as arising from a four-part cycle of instability:

- Corruption and criminality, arising in part from the drug economy and in part from the international presence and the contracting bonanza associated with it, creates a flood of illicit cash into the hands of elites, power brokers, local warlords and certain corrupt officials;
- This corruption enables and incentivizes abuse, in the form of expropriation of resources, denial of justice, physical abuse and violence, against ordinary members of the Afghan population;
- These abuses create popular rage, cynicism, and disillusionment with the Afghan Government, but also with the international community, whom many Afghans hold responsible for the behavior of abusive officials and elites;
- This empowers and enables the insurgents, who are able to pose as clean, just, incorruptible, and the defenders of the people, and can exploit popular rage to build support; and the insurgency in turn creates the conditions of instability, violence and lack of accountability that drive the cycle onward.

As I have previously testified, we have seen this cycle deepen and worsen over the past decade of the war, and our focus (at various times) solely on destroying the main forces of the enemy has been ineffective in addressing the wider drivers of the conflict, or has even made things worse.

To address this overall instability dynamic, we need four things: an anticorruption campaign, a governance reform campaign, a process of political reconciliation at the district and local level, and a robust security campaign to suppress the insurgency while these other elements have time to take effect.

All these elements are present in our campaign today, and we have seen some very real security progress in Afghanistan in the past year, as well as limited progress on governance and rule of law. Yet progress on corruption, abuses, and political reconciliation is lagging, and we have heavily emphasized fighting the insurgents, while investing far less in addressing the other elements of the problem. This means that progress in the campaign is not only mixed, but that we are somewhat unbalanced.

PATHWAYS TO TRANSITION

Based on all of this, and on recent developments in the campaign, I see three pathways to transition, which we might shorthand as suppression, stabilization, and reconciliation. These are not mutually exclusive, and in fact we need to integrate all three for transition to succeed.

The first pathway is what we might call the Suppression Path. This is a counternetwork approach, focused on destroying the insurgents' ability to threaten the transition and reducing their military capacity as a threat to the Afghan state. This requires a high concentration of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance effort, combined with a network of forward-deployed strike assets that can respond quickly to target the insurgents' leadership and specialist cadres, and can support and enable stabilization activities at the district level.

Ideally, in a transition process, counternetwork operations would be transferred to Afghan special operations forces, the National Directorate of Security, and specialized law enforcement and military organizations of the Afghan Government, and would continue with assistance, advice, and enablers from the international community after the transition to Afghan lead has occurred. This of course depends on the outcome of discussions with the Afghan Government about the status of international forces and security assistance after 2014. The suppression path is already in place in Afghanistan, and in fact is one area of the campaign in which ISAF is performing extremely effectively.

The second pathway is the Stabilization Path. This is a counterinsurgency approach, focused on stabilizing districts most heavily affected by the insurgency, reducing the insurgency's spread, and inoculating areas that have been stabilized in order to prevent the insurgents' return. This approach requires security operations and governance reform at the district level, and targets the three basic insurgent elements at the district level—the main force insurgent column, the part-time local guerrilla group, and the village-level underground or shadow district administration. In addition to destroying the effectiveness of the insurgency at the district level through targeted military and intelligence activity, the main tasks within the stabilization approach are to protect the population from insurgent intimidation, rebuild district and community-level political systems, and create self-defending communities that are resistant to reinfiltration by insurgents once our forces are no longer present. This process is often short-handed as "clear-hold-build-transition." I

think we all recognize, however, that it is an extremely time-consuming and resource-intensive process, and that it requires a high degree of international civilian and military engagement at the district level. It also requires an Afghan partner, in the form of the Government of Afghanistan, that is willing to actually undertake the hard work of governance reform and anticorruption at the local level, to help stand up responsive government, and put in place responsive and effective administrative structures.

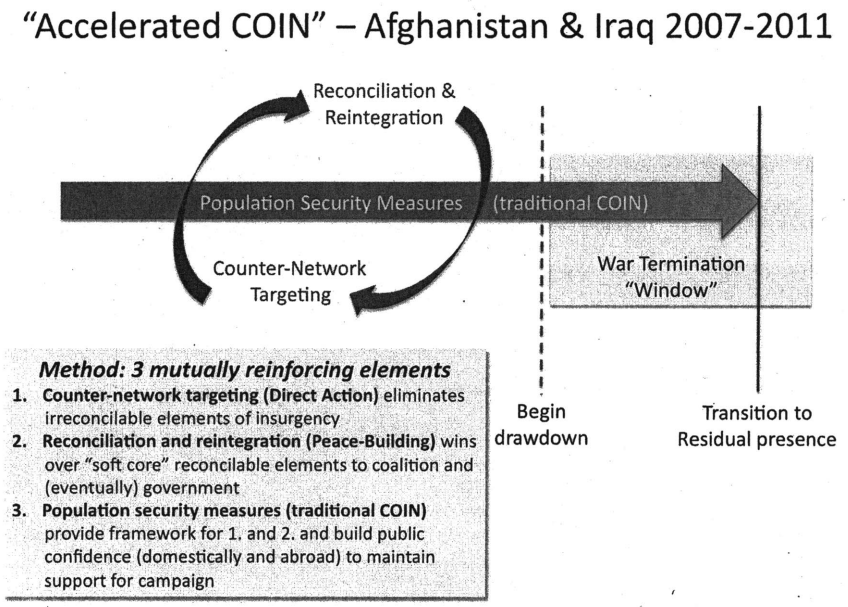
ISAF has made enormous progress in the last year, particularly in the south, in improving security at the district and village level. But the hard fact is that the other aspects of stabilization—countering abuse, governance reform, standing up viable local political institutions—are lagging significantly. Village Stability Operations (VSO) are one particularly promising program, but if we consider the work remaining, the lack of appetite for reform on the part of some local partners, the lack of appetite in this country and others for the expense and effort of nation-building, and—most importantly—the lack of time given the 2014 transition timeline, it is extremely hard to see how we can "get there from here" using a stabilization approach alone. There simply isn't the time, will, or resources for classical counterinsurgency to work in Afghanistan by 2014.

The final pathway is Reconciliation. This is a peace-building model, which recognizes that apart from a small committed hard core of full-time insurgents, the majority of people in the insurgency are local part-time guerrillas motivated in part by local abuses, in part by the presence of international forces in their area, and in part by community, ethnic and tribal affiliations and by ties of loyalty forged with members of various insurgent groups over decades of war. Much of the violence in Afghanistan is unconnected to the Quetta Shura, to Mullah Omar, let alone to al-Qaeda. Local peace deals, complemented by a reintegration program to bring less committed members of the insurgency back to their communities, and by a national-level reconciliation program to make peace with higher level leaders of insurgent groups, are already in place. Again, the VSO program also plays a valuable role here, as do security operations that make people feel safe enough to reconcile, and reform and governance programs that address key grievances.

In order for transition in 2014 to succeed, we need to make progress along all three pathways, so it is important to understand how they intersect. Strategically, the critical pathway that underpins everything else is stabilization. Stability operations at district and province level provide a basis for everything else we do, enable strike assets to be based far enough forward for counternetwork operations, and help the population feel safe enough to reconcile. Layered on top of stabilization, counternetwork strike reduces the insurgents' effectiveness and, by killing or capturing irreconcilables, makes it more likely that others will reconcile or reintegrate. Finally, reconciliation brings those who are willing to reconcile into a peace-building process, further reduces the strength of the insurgency, and improves district stability by reducing conflict.

These three approaches are mutually reinforcing—stabilization provides the firm base, and the better we do at counternetwork operations, the easier it becomes to reconcile with less committed insurgents, while the better we do at reconciliation, the fewer hard-core insurgents we need to target. Ultimately this can create a virtuous circle that leads to rapid and sustainable improvements in security, as we saw in Iraq in 2007, and this can accelerate the process of stabilization.

Thus, we could depict a workable transition strategy in Afghanistan as a process of "Accelerated COIN," which can be represented graphically as follows:



Beyond these three aspects, two other elements are critically important to transition. These are the buildup of Afghan Government capacity (especially, the creation of robust and representative security forces), and the reduction of the insurgents' safe havens in Pakistan. In the interests of time, I will discuss these issues in response to members' questions rather than in formal remarks, however I would like to note one other key element today, and that is the coming transition crisis associated with President Karzai's term of office.

THE COMING PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION CRISIS

The Afghan Constitution limits the President to two 2-year terms; President Karzai is currently in his second term, which commenced in November 2009. His previous term expired in April 2009. Depending on whether you date the term from its commencement, or from the expiration of the previous term, this means that President Karzai needs to leave office as early as April 2014, or as late as November 2014. There is very little prospect that the Afghan Parliament will agree to extend his term or to grant him a third term, and even though there are a number of Supreme Court judges favorable to the President, three of these have overstayed their terms and would need to leave by 2014. So we are confronting a coming succession crisis, right at the critical time in a transition to Afghan control in mid-2014. One of the critical issues in transition at the political level is to ensure an effective Presidential succession, or at least a peaceful and stable resolution of the coming crisis. It will be too late to start thinking about this in 2014—it needs to be a topic of thought, discussion, and deliberation right now, or we run the risk of undermining any political and security gains that we may make in the next few years.

Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss this important topic with you today; I look forward to your questions and comments.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Dr. Kilcullen.

Dr. Jones.

STATEMENT OF SETH JONES, SENIOR POLITICAL SCIENTIST, RAND CORPORATION, WASHINGTON, DC

Dr. JONES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senator Lugar, other members of the committee.

I've spent the last several years in U.S. Special Operations Command, so will try and give a perspective from much of my time on the ground, as well as back in Washington.

I'm going to lay out a couple of things: what I believe our objective should be, which are fairly limited; look at a range of options; and provide, in my view, costs and risks as we move forward.

I think our—especially with the death of Osama bin Laden, in my view, our objectives in Afghanistan should be limited to two key issues. First is disrupting, dismantling, and defeating al-Qaeda and allied groups in the Afghan/Pakistan region. I would obviously point out this is not just al-Qaeda. The Faisal Shahzad attempted attack in Times Square was Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan. So, there are some other groups in this region. And both he and Najibullah Zazi were trained on the border, on a border that is quite porous. So, this clearly is one issue that directly impacts homeland security.

And the second is denying al-Qaeda and its allies in Afghanistan both a safe haven but—and this is often under emphasized—an ally in Afghanistan. If we remember, the Taliban regime in the 1990s was not just provided a safe haven, but it was actually an ally of al-Qaeda, despite some differences.

At this point, I'm going to lay out what I consider three plausible options for moving forward. One of them is a counterterrorism option; the second is a comprehensive counterinsurgency; and the third is somewhere in between, which is where I will fall into.

The first is a counterterrorist option. As I said earlier, I'm just coming from Special Operations Forces. This really is a JSOC-type direct-action mission, to capture or kill al-Qaeda and other terrorists; CIA units on the ground, as well. And it would essentially limit our focus to a very small direct-action footprint, both in Afghanistan but also threats along the border.

I would warn that there are several risks in this strategy that are worth understanding. The first is, it will reaffirm a regional perception that the United States is not a reliable ally. Some people may consider that important, some may not. But, it certainly is a risk. Second is, it, in my view, fails to address the elimination of a sanctuary and an ally in Afghanistan, certainly does not prevent an ally of terrorist groups from emerging unless the Taliban and its allies are defeated or agree to a settlement.

Second, I suspect that a precipitous American drawdown will encourage Afghanistan's neighbors, including Pakistan, to increase their support levels to Afghan insurgent groups, the Haqqani Network and the Taliban, as a bulwark against a perceived Indian/Afghan access in Afghanistan. And as we will probably note in the question-and-answer session, my concern right now is with senior al-Qaeda leadership, from Zawahiri to Ilyas Kashmiri, Abu Yahya al-Libi and others. There is still a relationship with senior elements of the Taliban and the Haqqani Network. That is a concern.

The second option would be a comprehensive counterinsurgency option, which probably decreases the U.S. footprint somewhat, but is along the same lines as exists right now. I will not go into this in much detail, except to say that it is probably unsustainable, both from an American and from an Afghan standpoint, for a range of reasons, that I'd be happy to get into later.

What I'm going to very briefly, in about 30 seconds, outline is what I'm going to call an Afghan-led counterinsurgency option. And I think it leverages U.S. Special Operations Forces both for CT efforts, but also for counterinsurgency.

The specifics—and we can get into them later—would be: train and equip Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police forces; support what's now called Afghan local police and village stability operations from the bottom up—that is helping Afghan communities push back against the insurgency; conducting some direct-action operations; and then providing a range of enablers—intelligence, civil affairs, and other efforts like that. I've got numbers, in my written testimony, on what each of these options might look like, in terms of United States as well as Afghan forces.

Let me just summarize, real briefly, in conclusion, that I think there are several ways for the United States to achieve the limited objectives I noted earlier. One is if al-Qaeda is destroyed in the Afghan/Pakistan region and no longer poses a threat to the United States homeland. A second is if the Taliban breaks ties with al-Qaeda. And a third is if Afghan National Security Forces and its allies can sufficiently degrade the insurgency. At the moment, in my view, all three means should be pursued simultaneously until one of them, or some combination, adequately achieves core U.S. objectives.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Jones follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SETH G. JONES

The death of Osama bin Laden and the upcoming 10th anniversary of the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan have triggered several important policy issues. This testimony poses several questions. What should the U.S. objectives be in Afghanistan? Based on these objectives, what are America's military options (and what would the implications be for transition)? Finally, what are the political options, including the possibility of a peace settlement?

I argue that U.S. objectives in Afghanistan should be tied to narrow U.S. national security interests, and the U.S. military strategy should transition to an Afghan-led counterinsurgency strategy. This strategy would involve decreasing the U.S. military footprint and relying on an increasingly prominent role of U.S. Special Operations Forces to help Afghans conduct counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations. It would require assisting Afghan national and local forces degrade the insurgency and target terrorist leaders. Implementing this strategy would require decreasing the U.S. military footprint to perhaps 30,000 or fewer forces by 2014 and surging Afghan National Security Forces and Afghan Local Police. It would also include leveraging U.S. Special Operations Forces, CIA, and some conventional forces to conduct several tasks: train, equip, and advise Afghan National Security Forces; assist local communities improve security and governance from the bottom up (especially the Afghan Local Police and Village Stability Operations programs); conduct direct action operations against high value targets; provide a range of "enablers," such as intelligence, civil affairs, and military information support operations.

There are several ways for the United States to achieve its limited objectives in Afghanistan. The first is if al-Qaeda is destroyed in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region and no longer poses a serious threat to the U.S. homeland. The second is if the Taliban breaks ties with al-Qaeda. The third is if Afghan National Security Forces and local allies (such as Afghan Local Police) can sufficiently degrade the insurgency and prevent the return of the Taliban with minimal outside assistance. At the moment, the United States should pursue all three means simultaneously—targeting al-Qaeda and its allies, political negotiations, and Afghan-led counterinsurgency—until one of them, alone or in combination with the others, adequately achieves core U.S. objectives.

I. OBJECTIVES IN AFGHANISTAN

The U.S. objectives in Afghanistan should be limited and tied to narrow U.S. national security interests. They include:

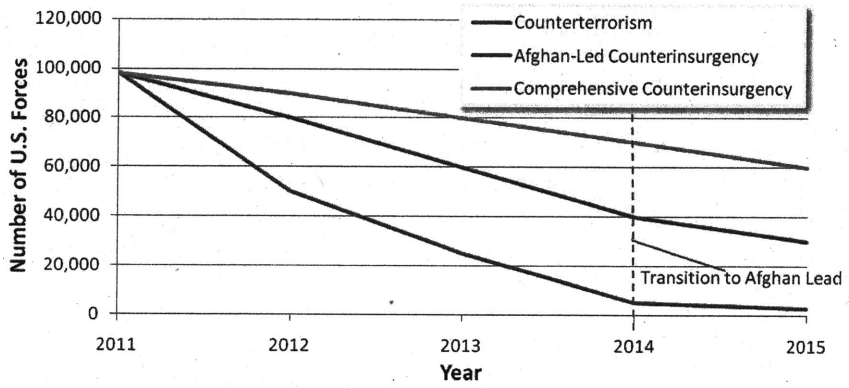
- Disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda and allied groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan that threaten the U.S. homeland and its interests overseas
- Deny al-Qaeda and its allies a safe haven and an ally in Afghanistan that threaten the U.S. homeland and its interests overseas

As illustrated on September 11, 2001, Afghanistan was not just a sanctuary for al-Qaeda, but the Taliban was an ally. There were disagreements between Taliban and al-Qaeda leaders, as there are between most organizations. But Osama bin Laden's decision in the late 1990s to move from Tora Bora to Kandahar, only a few miles from Mullah Omar's residence, and the Taliban's refusal to hand over bin Laden after September 11 indicated a viable relationship. Today, the United States cannot accept a situation in which al-Qaeda and its local allies have a sanctuary to plan and train for terrorist attacks against the U.S. homeland. Nor can the United States accept an Afghan Government that is an ally of terrorists. Al-Qaeda's continuing relationship with senior Taliban, Haqqani, and other militant leaders—including the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan and Lashkar-e-Tayyiba—suggests that a Taliban-led government would be a risky gamble for U.S. national security. A precipitous U.S. withdrawal and continuing Pakistan support to Afghan insurgent groups could certainly lead to Taliban control of part or most of Afghanistan over the next decade.

II. MILITARY OPTIONS

To achieve these limited objectives, there are several possible military options: (1) counterterrorism, (2) comprehensive counterinsurgency, and (3) Afghan-led counterinsurgency. All come with risks and benefits. They involve different strategies and require different force levels. Figure 1 outlines possible U.S. force levels over the next 5 years. They vary in several respects—including their overall strategy, the number of forces required for 2014, and the slope of the curve in reducing U.S. forces. These levels are meant to be illustrative. Actual planning would need to be based on a more fine-grained analysis of unit deployments, conditions on the ground, performance of Afghanistan national and local forces, and other factors.

Figure 1: Example of U.S. Force Reductions, 2011–2015



1. Counterterrorism: The first is a counterterrorism strategy. While there are several variants of this strategy, most agree on quickly withdrawing all—or most—military forces from Afghanistan and relying on U.S. Special Operations Forces and CIA units to capture or kill al-Qaeda and other terrorists that threaten the U.S. homeland and its interests abroad. It would involve rapidly decreasing the number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, leaving between several hundred and several thousand Special Operations Forces and CIA personnel to conduct direct action missions. The U.S. footprint in Afghanistan might more closely resemble the current U.S. footprint in Yemen: lean and lethal. In addition, a counterterrorism strategy would also require a range of support elements such as intelligence, surveillance, and reconnais-

sance assets; air support for combat patrol, close air support, and other missions; and perhaps a small number of conventional forces for logistics and force protection.

This strategy has the benefit of significantly decreasing the financial burden on the United States, minimizing the deaths of American soldiers, and allowing the United States to focus on other areas of the world where it may have strategic interests. The death of Osama bin Laden has already increased calls for such an approach.

But a counterterrorism strategy has several risks which likely outweigh its benefits. A rapid and large-scale withdrawal of U.S. forces reaffirms the regional perception that the United States is not a reliable ally. More importantly, a rapid U.S. withdrawal would fail to address the elimination of a sanctuary where al-Qaeda and its allies can reside. It treats the symptom and not the underlying disease. Indeed, a counterterrorism strategy would likely increase Pakistan's impetus to support the Taliban and other insurgent groups as a bulwark against a perceived Indian-Afghan axis in Afghanistan. The possibility of a Taliban victory in Afghanistan has serious risks since al-Qaeda leaders, including Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abu Yahya al-Libi, and Ilyas Kashmiri, retain an active relationship with senior Taliban and Haqqani Network leaders. Osama bin Laden would not have been killed if the United States had been unable to operate in Afghanistan. In the future, the United States will only be able to stay in Afghanistan if the Taliban is prevented from retaking power.

The United States should have learned its lesson from September 11, 2001: the Taliban would likely allow a range of terrorist groups to operate and train on its soil. Some of these groups, such as al-Qaeda, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, and Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, present a threat to the U.S. homeland. Indeed, on May 1, 2010, Faisal Shahzad, who was trained in Pakistan by Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan bombmakers, packed his Nissan Pathfinder with explosives and drove into Times Square in New York City on a congested Saturday night. Only fortune intervened, since the improvised explosive device malfunctioned.

Some have argued that al-Qaeda operatives primarily reside in Pakistan, not Afghanistan. But the 1,519-mile border, drawn up in 1893 by Sir Henry Mortimer Durand, the British Foreign Secretary of India, is largely irrelevant for militant groups. Locals regularly cross the border to trade, pray at mosques, visit relatives, and—in some cases—target NATO and coalition forces. Indeed, al-Qaeda migration patterns since the anti-Soviet jihad show frequent movement in both directions. Osama bin Laden established al-Qaeda in Peshawar, Pakistan in 1988, though he and other Arab fighters crossed the border into Afghanistan regularly to fight Soviet forces and support the mujahedeen. When bin Laden returned to the area in 1996 from Sudan, he settled near Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan and later moved south to Kandahar province. After the overthrow of the Taliban regime, however, most of the al-Qaeda leadership moved back to Pakistan, though some settled in neighboring Iran. This tendency to find safe havens in both Afghanistan and Pakistan will likely continue.

Based on historical patterns, al-Qaeda and other groups would almost certainly increase their presence in Afghanistan in a Taliban-run Afghanistan. A counterterrorism strategy will unlikely prevent this outcome, especially if Pakistan continues to back the Taliban and other insurgent groups.

2. Comprehensive Counterinsurgency: The second option would require keeping a fairly large U.S. military footprint in Afghanistan to conduct what some U.S. Government assessments refer to as "comprehensive, population-centric counterinsurgency operations."[1] As outlined in the U.S. Department of Defense's Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, the goal would be fairly broad: to protect the Afghan people, neutralize insurgent networks, develop Afghan National Security Forces, and support the establishment of legitimate governance and sustainable socioeconomic institutions. This strategy is most consistent with conventional counterinsurgency theories.[2] It would likely require continuing to keep fairly robust levels of American forces in Afghanistan through 2014, perhaps up to 60,000 U.S. soldiers, depending on conditions on the ground and other factors. These forces would continue to engage in combat operations, as well as train, equip, and advise Afghan forces.

But a comprehensive counterinsurgency approach has risks. To begin with, it is probably not sustainable over the long run in Afghanistan or the United States. In

[1] U.S. Department of Defense, "Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan and United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghan National Security Forces" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, April 2011).

[2] U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps, "Counterinsurgency," FM 3–24, MCWP 3–33.5 (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army and Headquarters Marine Corps Combat Development Command (December 2006).

Afghanistan, it does not adequately prepare Afghan national and local forces to fight the insurgency and secure their country. Afghan support for the U.S. military has declined every year since 2005, though it is still above 50 percent.[3] American support for the war has also been declining. As discussed in the next section, a range of initiatives—including the Afghan Local Police program—have shown serious potential, indicating that Afghans are willing to take the lead in counterinsurgency operations. In fact, large numbers of U.S. forces will likely inhibit the ability of Afghan forces to operate effectively, since most continue to use international forces as a crutch.

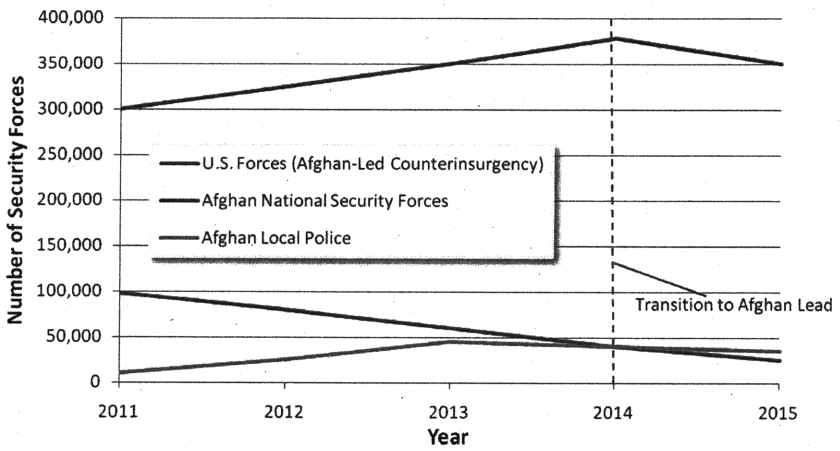
3. Afghan-Led Counterinsurgency: A third option would be to transition toward an Afghan-led counterinsurgency strategy that relies on a limited Special Operations Force footprint, aided by the CIA and a reduced number of conventional forces. On the military side, it would focus on two goals: (1) assist Afghan national and local forces degrade the insurgency and (2) target terrorist leaders. It is different from the counterterrorism strategy because it relies on U.S. Special Operations Forces and others to conduct counterterrorism and counterinsurgency. And it is different than comprehensive counterinsurgency because it would largely terminate U.S. combat operations by 2014 except for targeting terrorist leaders. An Afghan-led counterinsurgency strategy would involve using U.S. forces to conduct several tasks:

- Train, equip, and advise Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police forces (top-down counterinsurgency);
- Assist local communities improve security, governance, and development—including through village-level community forces such as Afghan Local Police (bottom-up counterinsurgency);
- Conduct direct action operations against high value targets (counterterrorism);
- Provide a range of "enablers," such as intelligence, civil affairs, and military information support operations.

This strategy would require decreasing the number of U.S. forces to perhaps 30,000 by 2014, depending on ground conditions and other factors. As illustrated in Figure 2, it would also require a robust Afghan National Security Force and Afghan Local Police presence for the near term, which could then decrease as security conditions improved. One of the critical parts of this strategy is supporting growth of the Afghan Local Police, a "bottom-up" component of the campaign plan that allows Afghan communities to stand up for themselves. The Afghan Local Police program, which was established in August 2010 by President Karzai, has undermined Taliban control in Helmand, Kandahar, Oruzgan, and other provinces by helping villagers protect their communities and better connecting them to district and provincial government. Despite some off-kilter media reports, the Afghan Government and NATO forces have been fairly meticulous in choosing locations where locals have already resisted the Taliban, vetting candidates using biometrics and available intelligence, and training and mentoring local villagers. They've also helped ensure Afghan Local Police are small, defensive entities under the supervision of local shuras and the control of the Ministry of Interior.

[3] ABC News, BBC, ARD, Washington Post, "Afghanistan: Where Things Stand," December 6, 2010.

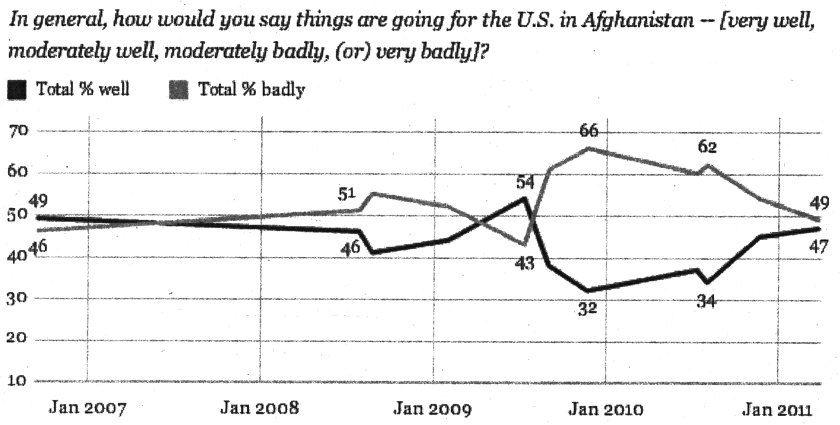
Figure 2: Example of Force Numbers for Afghan-Led Counterinsurgency



This strategy entails some risks. It assumes that Afghan National Security Forces and local allies, with assistance from U.S. Special Operations Forces and others, would be adequate to degrade the Taliban-led insurgency. Along with the comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy, it also assumes that Afghan central government institutions would be adequate to establish order and deliver services, at least in key urban areas. Current levels of corruption and incompetence raise long-term governance concerns. Finally, a lower U.S. footprint risks backsliding if Afghan National Security Forces and Afghan Local Police fail to degrade the insurgency.

But the Afghan-led counterinsurgency strategy has several benefits. It relies on Afghans to do the bulk of counterinsurgency, but with U.S. assistance and oversight. It also ensures a steady drop in financial costs of the war, though not at counterterrorism levels. At its core, it would involve a combination of top-down and bottom-up efforts. There is good reason to believe an Afghan-led counterinsurgency strategy could degrade the Taliban and other insurgent groups. U.S. intelligence assessments have indicated that the Taliban and its allies have lost control of some territory over the past year in the south, the Taliban's center of gravity. One of the primary reasons, according to several of these assessments, has been the introduction of Afghan Local Police and Village Stability Operations. In addition, a growing number of Americans believe the war is now going well, as illustrated in Figure 3. Now is not the time to abandon this promising effort.

Figure 3: American Perceptions of the War in Afghanistan[4]



III. POLITICAL OPTIONS

In addition to military options, there are also important political options. Some have argued that a political settlement to the conflict is critical to peace in Afghanistan. Peace negotiations would be desirable if they succeeded in a settlement. Opinion polls show high levels of support within Afghan society for a negotiated settlement, and a willingness to bring Taliban members back into the fold, though not to run the country. When asked who they would rather have ruling Afghanistan today, 86 percent of Afghans said the Karzai government and only 9 percent the Taliban, according to a December 2010 poll by ABC News, BBC, ARD, and the Washington Post. When asked who posed the biggest danger in the country, 64 percent of respondents said the Taliban, up from 41 percent in 2005.[5]

But there are good reasons to be skeptical of a political settlement, at least in the short-term. First, insurgencies often end with a military victory by one side, rather than a peace settlement. According to one study, military victory was the primary reason why civil wars and insurgencies ended between the 1940s and 1990s, though peace settlements became more common in the 1990s and 2000s.[6] According to another study, of the roughly 55 wars fought for control of a central government (as opposed to secession or regional autonomy) since 1955, 75 percent ended with a clear victory for one side. The government crushed the rebels in at least 40 percent of the cases, while the rebels won control of the center in 35 percent. Power-sharing agreements that divide up control of a central government among the combatants have been far less common.[7] This has been particularly true in Afghanistan—including during the 1990s—where peace efforts brokered by the United Nations failed in Afghanistan.

Second, a fairly robust body of research has found that several conditions present in Afghanistan make it difficult to establish a peace settlement. These conditions include a long history of conflict, the absence of a perceived winner, and geographic contiguity.[8] In addition, the ideological vision of Taliban leaders, which is based on an extreme interpretation of Deobandi Islam, is likely incompatible with that of the Karzai government and most Afghans. It's not difficult to see why the Taliban is unpopular. The group subscribes to a radical interpretation of Sunni Islam established in Deoband, India, in 1867. In the 1990s, the Taliban closed cinemas and banned music, along with almost every other conceivable kind of entertainment. Most Afghans don't subscribe to their religious zealotry, which the founders of Deobandism wouldn't even recognize.

Third, a peace settlement with the Taliban runs the risk of escalating conflict with Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara, and anti-Taliban Pashtuns in Afghanistan. Many current and former leaders, including former head of the National Directorate of Security Amrullah Saleh, have expressed alarm about a peace settlement. Such a settlement could trigger a military buildup among northern commanders, such as Atta Mohammad Nur, Abdul Rashid Dostum, and Mohammad Fahim, causing the war's center of gravity to shift north. Indeed, reports indicate that northern commanders are already discussing a military buildup if there is a settlement with the Taliban.

In the end, however, the benefits of continuing peace negotiations outweigh the costs—even if negotiations fail. The U.S. demonstrated during the cold war that direct dialogue with the Soviet Union could be helpful in passing information (including threats) and correcting misinformation. It may also cause fissures within insurgent ranks between those who support—and those who oppose—settlement talks. Negotiations with the Taliban and other insurgent groups should be supported, even if the probability of a settlement is low.

IV. ADDITIONAL FACTORS

At least three additional factors are critical over the long run, regardless of which strategy is pursued. The first is sustainability. The key is analyzing what needs to occur to make key economic sectors sustainable—or somewhat sustainable—without massive foreign resources. Some economists are concerned about the potential for a recession in Afghanistan when the international funding flow from the Inter-

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[4] Gallup, "Americans Divided on How Things Are Going in Afghanistan," April 8, 2011.

[5] ABC News, BBC, ARD, Washington Post, "Afghanistan: Where Things Stand," December 6, 2010.

[6] Monica Duffy Toft, Securing the Peace: The Durable Settlement of Civil Wars (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

[7] James D. Fearon, "Iraq's Civil War," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 86, No. 2, March/April 2007, p. 8.

[8] Virginia Page Fortna, "Peace Time: Cease-Fire Agreements and the Durability of Peace" (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

national Security Assistance Force (ISAF) decreases. This would not be a result of declining development aid, but rather a decrease of services from ISAF activity. How can security costs be sustainable—or at least partly sustainable—by the Afghan Government? How can the United States help the Afghan government grow its revenue and productive sectors to help pay for services, investment, and security? There are several options that should be more effectively implemented. Examples include long-term development of a mining sector that offers substantial benefits from Afghanistan's virtually untapped deposits of iron, copper, cobalt, gold, and critical industrial metals like lithium. In the shorter term, there should be an emphasis on artisanal projects and a shift from illegal artisanal mining to legal small-scale mining operations.

The second is good governance. To maintain and build legitimacy, the central government and local institutions need to more adequately provide justice and service delivery to the population, including countering high levels of corruption. How much is sufficient? In addition, how much legitimacy, order, and justice should come from the central government as opposed to informal government in rural areas? A key part of governance will be relaxing Western notions that stability must come only from the top down. Power has generally come from the bottom up in Afghanistan, especially in Pashtun areas of the country, the focus of today's insurgency. It is striking that when considering Afghanistan's recent history, U.S. policymakers often turn to the failed military exploits of the British or Soviet Union. A stronger focus needs to be placed on understanding what factors have contributed to Afghanistan's stable periods. The Musahiban dynasty, which ruled Afghanistan from 1929 to 1978, was one of the most stable periods in modern Afghan history, partly because the Musahibans understood the importance of local power. While they established a strong army and competent government technocrats, they also allowed a number of rural areas to police their own villages and establish rule of law through local shuras (councils). This model has a range of lessons for today.

The third factor is Pakistan. The failure to eliminate the insurgent sanctuary in Pakistan will cripple long-term efforts to stabilize Afghanistan. Every successful insurgency in Afghanistan since 1979 has enjoyed a sanctuary in Pakistan and assistance from individuals within the Pakistan Government, including the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI). Today, the Taliban and other insurgent groups enjoy a sanctuary in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Baluchistan province. Insurgent groups regularly ship arms, ammunition, and supplies into Afghanistan from Pakistan. Many suicide bombers come from Afghan refugee camps located in Pakistan, and improvised explosive device components are often smuggled across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and assembled at safe houses in such provinces as Kandahar. The leadership structure of most insurgent groups (such as Taliban, Hezb-i-Islami, and the Haqqani Network) is based in Pakistan. Finally, elements within the Pakistan Government, including the ISI, continue to provide support to such groups as the Taliban and Haqqani Network.

Pakistan and the United States have failed to target the insurgent sanctuary in Pakistan, especially in Baluchistan province. Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps forces have conducted operations in Pakistan's tribal areas to the north, and the United States has conducted numerous drone strikes there. But relatively little has been done in Baluchistan. The United States and Pakistan must target Taliban leaders in Baluchistan. The most obvious way is to conduct clandestine raids to capture Taliban leaders in Baluchistan; large-scale military force would be unnecessary and counterproductive. Most Taliban are in or near cities like Quetta and Karachi. These operations should be led by police and intelligence agencies, much like Pakistani-American efforts to capture Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and other al-Qaeda operatives after September 11. In response, the United States could support Pakistan efforts to stabilize Baluchistan and defeat Baluch insurgents, a long-term goal of the Pakistan Government.

What was mentioned at the beginning of this testimony bears repeating. Despite a range of difficult issues, there are several ways that the United States can achieve its objectives in Afghanistan. The first is if al-Qaeda is destroyed in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region and no longer poses a serious threat to the U.S. homeland. The second is if the Taliban breaks ties with al-Qaeda and other groups that threaten the U.S. homeland. The third is if Afghan National Security Forces and local allies (such as Afghan Local Police) can sufficiently degrade the insurgency and prevent the return of the Taliban with minimal foreign assistance. At the moment, the United States should pursue all three means simultaneously—targeting al-Qaeda, negotiations with the Taliban, and Afghan-led counterinsurgency—until one of them, alone or in combination with the others, achieves adequate results.

The CHAIRMAN. Very helpful. Thank you very much.

Dr. Biddle.

STATEMENT OF STEPHEN BIDDLE, SENIOR FELLOW FOR DEFENSE POLICY, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS, WASHINGTON, DC

Dr. BIDDLE. I'd, also, like to thank the committee for the opportunity to speak to you on this important issue.

I've long thought that Afghanistan is a close call on the analytical merits. If you're going to make the call in favor of waging the war, though, it seems to me, in order to realize the potential of securing the interests that we have at stake, I think we need to resolve some important ambiguities in the goals that we seek and the end states that we're after.

In 2001, we sought very ambitious end states, but committed very little resources. And the result was unhappy. In 2011, our resources are much increased, but the end state that we're seeking is still very ambiguous. It's unclear what success would look like. And that lack of clarity makes it hard to make good near-term decisions across the range of policy issues that face us.

My statement is an effort to reduce that ambiguity and try to describe in more detail what end state we actually require and what that implies for the definition of a reasonable success. The bottom line that that statement reaches is that our interests in Afghanistan are real, but narrow, and they focus on keeping Afghanistan from threatening the stability of an already unstable Pakistani neighbor. We tend to hear a lot about the ways in which Pakistani safe havens can destabilize Afghanistan. And they do. But, the bigger problem is the long run danger that if we should fail in Afghanistan, the result could be to tip an unstable Pakistan into collapse, with grave implications for United States security.

This limited conception of our interests, however, implies a variety of different end states that could suffice to meet them. My statement goes into more detail than I'll attempt now. For now, I'll just note that at least two such less ambitious alternative conceptions of an acceptable end state might be: one, a decentralized version of today's very centralized, but democratic, 2001 model Afghan Government; alternatively, what, for lack of a better term, I'll call an "internal mixed-sovereignty system" involving a series of bargains between Kabul and the periphery, in which local power brokers are granted a sphere of autonomy in exchange for the observance of several key redline restrictions on their behavior that are designed to cap the worst abuses of today's corruption while permitting lesser forms, and to limit the use of Afghanistan's territory as bases for terrorism or subversion.

These limited goals and less ambitious end states, I believe, make success possible in the Clausewitzian sense of realizing the political aims for which we're waging the war. They do not, however, permit a radical reduction to very limited means. Even modest aims in Afghanistan are going to be very hard to attain. If we couple a realistically limited ambition with unrealistically limited means and resources, we run the risk of duplicating the 2001 mismatch between ends and means that got us into the fix that we've faced in recent years.

And, in particular, I'm very skeptical that a small-footprint counterterrorist strategy can secure our real interests, whether in Afghanistan or in Pakistan, for reasons that my statement treats in some detail, and which I would be happy to discuss in response to your questions.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Biddle follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. STEPHEN BIDDLE

The Afghanistan debate often focuses, understandably, on near-term concerns. Sound policies in the near term, however, require a longer term vision to guide them. And for now, several key components of a long-term vision for Afghanistan are absent or underdeveloped. What would success look like? What does the United States require to secure our central interests there? What relationship do we want with Afghanistan or its region after 2014, and what role will that require us to play then—or now?

I argue below that core American interests in Afghanistan are real but narrow, and center on the security requirements of denying Afghan territory to terrorists as a base for attacking us or destabilizing Afghanistan's neighbors. These limited interests can be realized via a range of possible Afghan end states—we need not hold out for the highly ambitious political and economic development aims that the United States adopted in 2001. While desirable, these are not strictly necessary to meet our core requirements. But we cannot settle for just anything. There are limits on the acceptable that exclude outcomes such as partition or anarchy, and this limits the viability of approaches such as a counterterrorism (CT) strategy that would leave us unable to prevent a collapse of the current government. And it is hard to see any feasible, acceptable, Afghan political outcome that could function without sustained American and other international engagement. In the longer term, that engagement need not be primarily military (though some U.S. military presence ought not to be excluded as a possible means to the end of Afghan stability). But financial and technical assistance is likely to be needed on a sustained basis if Afghanistan is not again to suffer the fate that befell it the last time the West disengaged. To realize U.S. interests will require a long-term relationship with Afghanistan that accepts the need for continued assistance, albeit at levels far below today's, in the service not just of a better life for Afghans, but of a safer future for Americans.

This longer term vision implies a number of near-term requirements. Among the more important of these is a clear strategy for governance reform; meaningful, measurable progress before 2014 in restraining government predation; and a negotiated agreement with the GIRoA that provides concrete reassurance that our allies will not be abandoned to their fate even as the United States draws down.

To develop this argument I first identify and prioritize America's underlying interests in Afghanistan. I then discuss what these imply for acceptable end states there, and what this in turn implies for the required American role to sustain a stable Afghanistan that can meet our interests in the longer term. I then turn to some consequences of this long-term analysis for several near-term policy issues—especially the utility of permanent U.S. bases in Afghanistan as a part of a Strategic Partnership Agreement with the GIRoA, the attractiveness of substituting a counterterrorism (CT) strategy for today's counterinsurgency (COIN) approach in light of bin Laden's death, the attractiveness of negotiated settlement as a means of achieving an acceptable end state, and the appropriate sequencing and prioritization of security improvement and governance reform.

U.S. INTERESTS IN AFGHANISTAN AND SOUTH ASIA

Of course the United States has many interests at stake in Afghanistan and its region. From the emerging great power of India to the east, to the destabilizing influence of Iran to the west, south Asia and its environs pose a range of economic, humanitarian, and security concerns for the United States. For Afghanistan itself, a variety of American aspirations for human rights, democracy, and economic development are at stake.

But these are not of equal importance. In fact, the central U.S. interest in the region is its nearly unique potential for terrorist violence against Americans. This threat emanates chiefly from Pakistan. Its combination of a deepening internal insurgency, a growing nuclear arsenal, a diverse range of Islamist militant groups including the global headquarters of al-Qaeda, a weak and divided government, deep

sources of internal instability deriving from a growing population, a stagnant economy, and great asymmetries between wealth and poverty together give Pakistan a well deserved reputation as "the most dangerous place in the world," as Imtiaz Gul put it.[1] By many measures Pakistan's ongoing civil war is not going well for the government. If Pakistan eventually loses this war, the state collapses, the security services splinter, and the nuclear arsenal breaches containment, this would provide one of the few plausible scenarios in which al-Qaeda or its allies could obtain a usable nuclear weapon. Terrorists may gain bases in many ill-governed spaces around the world, including Afghanistan. But only in Pakistan do they pose a serious threat of overturning a nuclear weapon state and gaining access to its arsenal. This is a unique challenge of special magnitude.

In this context, Afghanistan is important to the United States chiefly in terms of its potential effect on its unstable neighbor across the Durand Line. Pakistan is not only a country of unusual peril for the United States, it is also one where we have unusually limited direct leverage to reduce the danger. U.S. aid to Pakistan can help at the margin, but it is unlikely to be decisive in defeating Pakistan's insurgency. Our ability to go beyond financial aid to training or military assistance is limited by our extreme unpopularity among Pakistanis. We cannot realistically expect to remove the threat by drone attacks on militants, which can eliminate key leaders and suppress terrorist activity if well designed, but are unlikely to defeat whole organizations of hardened militants and guerillas in the absence of a far more effective ground war than the Pakistanis have yet been able to mount. With our ability to make a bad situation much better so limited, it is especially important to avoid making it any worse than it needs to be.

And failure in Afghanistan could make the prognosis in Pakistan much worse. All states worry about instability on their borders. For a state as internally threatened as Pakistan, this danger is far greater than most. The Taliban are a transnational Pashtun movement that is active on either side of the Durand Line and sympathetic to other Pakistani Islamist insurgents. By many accounts, their links to anti-Pakistani militants are growing as these groups expand and seek allies to extend their reach and power.[2] The Afghan Taliban presence within Pakistan is thus already an important threat to the regime in Islamabad.[3] But if Afghanistan descended into chaos, the spillover effects would be far worse. A combination of refugee flows, safe haven in an anarchic Afghanistan beyond Pakistani state control, and the calling in of IOUs by anti-Pakistani militants who had assisted the Afghan Taliban in part to secure the latter's support against Islamabad could eventually be enough to tip an already unstable Pakistan into collapse. Much has been made of the threat Pakistani base camps pose to Afghan Government stability, but this danger works both ways: instability in Afghanistan poses a serious threat to the civil government in Pakistan, and the latter is a greater threat to U.S. interests than the former.

These security interests are real but they are not unlimited. Afghanistan's potential effect on its neighbor is genuine, but indirect. Nor does failure in Afghanistan predetermine failure in Pakistan: if Pakistan puts its own house in order and marshals the full resources of the state behind its own counterinsurgency effort then it could survive in spite of chaos on its border. A series of uncertain events would have to break in unfavorable ways for an Afghan failure to yield a nuclear-armed terror threat from south Asian militants. The consequences for our own security if this chain of events did unfold would be radically grave, but the likelihood of this should not be overestimated. Americans have invested major resources to combat unlikely but grave threats in the past (the cold war nuclear arms race had much the same quality), but that does not mean we should always do so, or that it necessarily makes sense to do so here. Reasonable people can thus differ on whether our interests in Afghanistan warrant American warmaking to secure, or whether they merit the scale of effort we are now expending.

But of the various interests we have at stake in south Asia, its unique terrorist potential is the only one that might merit conducting or continuing a war. And if one judges that the war is worth waging, then it makes sense to prioritize an

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[1] Imtiaz Gul, "The Most Dangerous Place: Pakistan's Lawless Frontier" (New York: Viking, 2010).

[2] See, e.g., Bill Roggio, "Pakistani Taliban Enlist 6 Local Groups in Wana Region of South Waziristan," The Long War Journal, November 8, 2010, accessed May 9, 2011. http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/11/pakistani_taliban_en.php; Shuja Nawaz, "The Perfect Storm in Af-Pak," The National Interest, May 9, 2011, accessed May 9, 2011. http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/the-perfect-storm-af-pak-5277?page=1; remarks of Daniel Benjamin, U.S. Department of State, at http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/rm/2011/161895.htm.

[3] Albeit one that at least some Pakistanis are willing to tolerate for now as a hedge against the prospect of U.S. failure in Afghanistan (more on which below).

acceptable outcome to that war above other economic or political interests in the region.

DEFINING "SUCCESS" IN AFGHANISTAN: END STATES THAT CAN MEET OUR CORE INTERESTS

Clausewitz taught that war is a means to political ends, which implies that the standard for measuring success in war should be whether the outcome secures the political interests at stake. If our interest in the conflict is partly that Afghanistan not again become a base for terrorists to attack us directly, but largely that Afghanistan not become a base for destabilizing Pakistan, then the right definition for success in the war is that it yields an Afghanistan which averts this. Of course there is a much wider set of ambitions America would seek for Afghanistan, as it would for any country. Americans would like Afghanistan to be ruled in accordance with the will of the governed, for its people to be prosperous, and for minority and women's rights to be respected. But the vital national security interests for which the waging of war might normally be justified are narrower, and focus on denying Afghanistan as a base for transnational terrorism and subversion.

Our original aims in Afghanistan were much more ambitious. The 2001 Bonn Agreement committed the United States to pursue a remarkably centralized democratic state with almost all meaningful governmental functions held by the national government in Kabul. This design would have minimized the danger of warlordism, enabled centralized protection of human rights even in Afghanistan's conservative south, and empowered a modernizing center with the authority to develop the country through rational investment in national economic infrastructure. If this agenda could be realized it would be an ideal outcome. But 10 years into a costly and destructive war, its very ambition has put it effectively beyond our reach.

This scale of ambition, moreover, is unnecessary to secure our core interests. A variety of less centralized, and possibly less democratic, alternative end states could still provide the critical requirement of an Afghanistan that does not threaten us or its neighbors. Two such alternatives are decentralized democracy, and internal mixed sovereignty.[4]

Decentralized Democracy

Decentralized democracy would delegate a variety of authorities now held in Kabul to the periphery. This would surely include the power to make and execute budgets, to utilize traditional alternatives to centralized justice systems for some offenses, to elect or approve key officials who are now appointed by Kabul, and could presumably extend to local revenue collection or regulatory authority.

Greater local autonomy would promote buy-in from populations who distrust distant Kabul, and would exploit a preexisting base of legitimacy and identity that's stronger at the local than the national level. Foreign policy and internal security, however, would remain with the central government, which would prevent more autonomous localities from using their territories to support international terrorism or insurrection against the State.

Accountability would be obtained chiefly via transparency, and electoral or legal sanction: as with centralized democracy, the will of the governed would be the ultima ratio, and governance would be designed to promote the people's ability to detect misbehavior and punish it by voting out miscreants in free and fair elections. To the extent that provincial and district governorships acquire significant additional powers, these offices would need to be elected, or subject to tight oversight by elected councils empowered to enact meaningful sanctions. And watchdog provisions would be needed to ensure that these elected bodies have the information they need to enforce the public will. Other matters, such as civil disputes and minor criminal cases, could continue to be handled by the traditional justice system if local communities prefer.

This option should be acceptable to the United States. Its core reliance on democracy and transparency is consistent with basic American values and ambitions in the international system. Localities with freedom to reflect local preferences may adopt social policies that many Americans would see as regressive, but the opposite could also occur, with some places implementing more moderate norms than those favored by a national majority. By promoting local acceptance of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA) by Afghans, this option removes much of the casus belli for insurgency. And it preserves a central state with the power and incentive to deny the use of Afghan soil for attacking the United States

[4] For a more detailed discussion, see Stephen Biddle, Fotini Christia, and J Alexander Thier, "Defining Success in Afghanistan: What Can the United States Accept?" Foreign Affairs, Vol. 89, No. 4 (July–August 2010), pp. 48–60.

or destabilizing Pakistan, thus securing the critical minimum U.S. security stakes in the conflict.

On balance, decentralized democracy should offer a significant improvement in the odds of success—because it exploits the greater natural legitimacy of local authority in Afghanistan and the greater availability of existing resources at the local level. Overall, though it offers no easy guarantee of success, decentralized democracy promises a real prospect of an acceptable outcome if the international community is willing to pay the price in the form of sustained counterinsurgency, major assistance in Afghan governance, and a vigorous anticorruption campaign.

Internal Mixed Sovereignty

An internal mixed sovereignty model would decentralize even further by allowing localities to adopt any system of government as long as they respect a handful of constraints imposed by the center. Like decentralized democracy, it would delegate many powers now held in Kabul to the provincial or district level. It differs in granting local authorities the additional power to rule themselves without transparency or electoral sanction as long as three key "redlines" are not crossed by the local government.

The first such redline would forbid local authorities from allowing their territories to be used in ways that violate the foreign policy of the state—and especially, it would ban terrorist or insurgent base camps that could threaten Pakistan, the United States, or its other allies. The second would bar local authorities from infringing on the rights of neighboring localities (such as seizing assets across provincial or district boundaries, or diverting water resources upstream in violation of covenants). The third would discourage localities from generating massive illicit revenues through land grabs, large-scale theft of international customs, widespread narcotics trafficking, or exploitation of state-owned natural resources without license. Beyond these limited restrictions, local authorities would be free to run their localities as they see fit, whether this reflected the expressed will of the governed or not, and to engage in lower level corruption without federal sanction. Central authorities in Kabul would thus retain absolute control over foreign policy and the ability to make war, limited authority over interprovincial commerce, and the ability to prohibit land grabs and enforce narcotics, customs, and mining laws, but almost all other powers and authorities would be ceded to the local government, including the power to rule without interference from the center on any matter other than the observance of explicit redlines.

This freedom to select the manner of government without interference as long as redlines are not crossed would potentially enable local strongmen to run provinces and profit from corruption. The absolute requirement that certain behaviors are off limits, however, restricts true sovereignty by ceding to the center some sacrosanct powers—especially, the control of foreign policy and the ability to make war internationally. Hence sovereignty is mixed in this variant to a much greater degree than in the other options explored above: many, but not all, of the ordinary powers of sovereign governance would be delegated to the provincial or district level.

This option would signal a much more serious break with the overall direction of the Afghan state as conceived in 2001. In many ways, it would be an acknowledgement of de facto arrangements since 2001 and acceptance of a delimited form of strong-man rule in various regions of the country. Many of the governors and other local officials appointed by Karzai have ruled not by virtue of legal authorities bestowed upon them by Kabul, but rather through their own local security and economic power bases operating outside the law but with the tacit acceptance of Kabul.

In areas such as Balkh and Nangarhar, this has resulted in relative security and drastic reduction of poppy cultivation. "Warlord governance" in such places has found a relatively stable equilibrium in which provincial authorities profit from rent-seeking behavior but keep their predation within limits so as to avert a mutually costly crackdown from Kabul.

In other areas, however, strongman rule has undermined stability. In Helmand for example, several years of bad governance that excluded and alienated significant population groups fueled insurgency. Even in the north, tensions have been stoked due to ethnically targeted violence and criminal impunity that marked strongman rule there. To be stable, mixed sovereignty thus cannot amount to partition by another name under local strongmen who can do whatever they wish in private fiefdoms—redline restrictions that preclude the excesses that fuel insurgency are essential.

The attractions of this option are obvious: it is less demanding of rapid institution-building, and offers a closer fit to Afghanistan's current environment.

However, this option carries risks that make it less consistent with U.S. interests than the previous two. First, governors would have considerable freedom to adopt

regressive social policy and abuse human rights. The degree of corruption would also be high—indeed, the opportunity for corruption is an essential part of the system's attraction for the prospective governors. Again, this is a limited departure from current practice, but would require acknowledging that only moderate change is coming—which in turn may deepen public grievances or promote renewed insurgency in the future if corruption is allowed to exceed public tolerance. There would also be a constant threat of instability as powerful governors periodically test the waters to see what they can get away with. The central government would thus presumably be called upon for periodic enforcement actions that could require violence if the system is to be kept within its limits of adaptation and tolerance.

This model could nevertheless be viable and meet minimum U.S. security interests, however, if the three key redlines can be enforced. The model offers two key means of enforcement, one being a stick, the other a carrot. The stick is the threat of military punitive action by Kabul to sanction governors in violation, or to destroy base camps when discovered (or both). The carrot is Kabul's control over foreign aid, and ability to direct it to some provinces but not others, as well as the profit potential from local autonomy if the rules are respected. The United States would retain influence through its control of foreign aid and its deep engagement with the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF); this influence can be used as leverage to keep local authorities' behavior within acceptable bounds.

Afghanistan itself was ruled under a similar model for much of the 20th century: the Musahiban Dynasty lasted for five decades as a nominally absolute monarchy with an ostensibly uniform national code but in which the periphery held a certain degree of autonomy with a modest state bureaucracy and a centrally controlled army and police force serving mainly to enforce a few key royal prerogatives. The rule of law was generally locally administered and some Pashtun tribes in the south and east were exempted from military service. Tax revenues were primarily levied from foreign trade, foreign aid (starting in the late 1950s), and sales of natural gas to the Soviet Union (starting in the late 1960s) rather than from rural agriculture and livestock. Kabul sought to leverage its international links for resources rather than extracting them from local power centers. But when local leaders were out of line, the center would forcibly intervene to police them. Over time, as government capacity and resources increased, the state was gradually able to extend its writ.

The mixed sovereignty model, however, faces implementation challenges all the same—especially the need to rein in the worst excesses of today's malign power brokers, and the need to constrain illicit economic activity. Without regulation, unrestrained abuse of power on today's scale is a major contributor to the insurgency. If mixed sovereignty is merely a gloss for more of the same, it will fail. The model requires a bargain in which power brokers refrain from destabilizing, grand-mal abuses in exchange for a share of foreign assistance and local revenues, and freedom from federal enforcement and sanction. Today's strongmen, by contrast, enjoy nearly complete freedom to exploit with little risk of sanction; even a mixed sovereignty model will thus require coercive effort to compel acceptance of its half-a-loaf relative to today's entire bakery for the corrupt. And for aid incentives to be meaningful, they must comprise a meaningful fraction of total economic activity. Today, the narcotics trade, for example, is so large as to threaten the power of outside aid as an incentive for compliance. It will require important effort to shrink narcotics trafficking, illicit natural resource exploitation, and other theft of public resources to a manageable scale.

Other significant drawbacks are its potential for instability and its consignment of many Afghans to nondemocratic rule. It would backtrack on nearly 10 years of U.S. promises for democracy, rule of law, and basic rights for women and minorities, with costs for U.S. prestige in addition to its effects on innocent Afghans. And it would require constant attention to sustain. Properly managed, the internal power balancing mechanisms of this approach keep it within bounds. But this is a dynamic process requiring continuous, potentially costly management; without this, it could slip into unconstrained warlordism and civil warfare. A workable mixed sovereignty model is thus not a recipe for Western disengagement: not only will it require a continued aid flow, but a sustained political and military engagement will be needed to help maintain internal equilibrium and to promote social justice where possible.

This need for external engagement highlights the importance of regional diplomacy. International consensus-building on Afghanistan is critical for stability under any approach. But the dynamic quality of internal mixed sovereignty and the particular weakness of its central government make it a potential magnet for foreign interference and a source of regional instability if Afghanistan's security is not embedded in a workable regional security framework with real buy-in from its neighbors.

Unacceptable Others

Many other outcomes are possible—but fail to meet core U.S. security requirements. Partition, whether de facto or de jure, would involve the country's breakup into ethnic substates. The likeliest such split would divide the Pashtun south from the largely Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara north and west. A poorly designed reconciliation deal with inadequate safeguards on Taliban authority in the south could closely approximate a form of de facto partition along these lines. Any such partition could easily yield safe havens for cross-border terrorism and insurgency, as seen elsewhere in such cases as Iraqi Kurdistan's use by the PKK to attack Turkey, or the use of Congolese border havens to attack neighboring Rwanda. Regional proxy battles, and internal competition for control of Kabul and key border areas add further incentives for instability to any partition scheme.

Alternatively, Afghanistan could return to the atomized civil warfare of the 1990s. An anarchic Afghanistan would resemble the conditions that led to the Taliban takeover and basing of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan in the 1990s, or present-day Somalia, where lawlessness has promoted al-Shabaab, a violent, al-Qaeda supported Islamist movement.

In principle, Afghanistan could become a centralized dictatorship, whether by the Taliban or someone else. But any real consolidation of power in the hands of a single strongman is a highly unlikely scenario in post-2001 Afghanistan where political, military, and economic power is dispersed among numerous power brokers backed by competing regional interests. In this environment, any prospective dictator, whether pro- or anti-U.S., would have great difficulty preventing a subsequent descent into civil war. A coup d'etat or other antidemocratic power grab is entirely possible, but is very unlikely to yield stability in its wake.

THE U.S. ROLE IN A STABLE, ACCEPTABLE AFGHANISTAN

What do these end states imply for the role the United States would have to play in order to obtain them and sustain them over time? Today, the U.S. role in Afghanistan is ubiquitous and central. If U.S. troops, money, and advisers were withdrawn the Karzai government would be unlikely to survive for long. Moreover, this view is widely held among Afghans, Pakistanis, and the Taliban—it is not just an American academic perception. Unfortunately, many in the region now believe that this U.S. role, though necessary, is unlikely to be sustained until a stable outcome is obtained, and that this will lead to an eventual collapse of the government and either a Taliban takeover or an extended civil war. Some have argued that this perception encourages the enemy to hunker down and wait us out. A bigger problem, however, is its effect on our allies: it encourages them to hedge their bets in ways that make success less likely.[5]

For Afghans, a critical example of this hedging is corruption and government predation. Corruption is common in the developing world, but not on Afghanistan's scale: Somalia is the only country on the planet that exceeds Afghanistan on Transparency International's corruption index.[6] This is not some deep product of ancient cultural norms or tribal social structure—the scale of this problem is the result of a recent, calculated response to the expectation that the government will soon fall.[7] Since the United States handed the war over to NATO in 2003, many Afghan officials and local power brokers came to the conclusion that they would be abandoned and that the government would then fall. This impression was reinforced by the President's announcement of a July 2011 date for the beginning of U.S. troop withdrawals, but the underlying perception was already widespread by the time the 2011 date was unveiled. This judgment that the government would fall and the system would collapse provides a powerful incentive for predation. On the one hand, it makes patient, long-term investment in an honest, democratic future very risky: the system could easily collapse before such patience bears fruit, leaving the honest

[5] Avoidance of moral hazard requires a balance between a credible promise to support one's ally if they do what is necessary themselves and a credible threat to sanction them if they do not. At the moment, the chief problem in Afghanistan is the lack of a credible promise, as can be observed in the scale of hedging behavior ongoing in the region. But success will require credibility in both directions: reassurance alone, without conditionality and a believable threat of sanction in the absence of reform, is insufficient. It is worth noting that the threat of withdrawal is not the only, or the best, form of sanction—in fact, any of the manifold forms of U.S. aid and assistance can be a source of leverage if made conditional on specific Afghan reforms.

[6] "Corruption Perceptions Index 2010" (Berlin, Germany: Transparency International, 2010).

[7] Plus, of course, the scale of foreign assistance and ill-managed contract money flowing into the country after 2001 and especially after NATO began reinforcing its military presence after 2005, which provided a rich target array on which corrupt power brokers could prey, with little real oversight to constrain the predation.

with nothing. At the same time it encourages the powerful to steal now while they still can: if the gravy train will end in 3 years, that leaves only a short time in which to amass enough wealth to build a comfortable exile abroad for the aftermath. These dilemmas make it very difficult to combat corruption and predation as long as Afghans expect abandonment and collapse. And no stable, acceptable Afghan end state is possible with today's scale of corruption: even internal mixed sovereignty requires an enforceable cap on the take. Without the ability to contain predation, success is impossible; bet hedging by Afghans makes predation extremely hard to contain.

For the Pakistanis, such hedging includes tacit support for the Afghan Taliban, whom the Pakistanis rely upon to ensure a friendly government in Kabul if the United States leaves too soon. An Indian-aligned Afghan Government would be a disaster in most Pakistanis' eyes; U.S. success might build a pluralist GIRoA that could prevent the country from becoming an Indian pawn, but U.S. failure would leave Pakistan badly exposed, and to many Pakistanis the latter looks more likely than the former. Hence they protect the Haqqanis, the Quetta Shura, and others. Most counterinsurgency theorists see outside havens as a major advantage for insurgents; as long as the Pakistanis protect the Afghan Taliban as a hedge it will be very difficult to end the violence.

We can try to reduce this hedging with pressure, oversight, or persuasion, and indeed we have tried all three for years now (albeit with varying seriousness). But as long as the underlying perception in the region remains the expectation of abandonment, there will be a strong rational incentive for self-interested actors to hedge via Afghan predation and Pakistani support for the Afghan Taliban. And this will make it very hard for the United States to change these behaviors.

This leaves us with a dilemma. We cannot sustain today's role forever. But the more emphasis we put on drawing down our presence, the more we fuel the perception that we'll leave too soon, the more bet-hedging we can expect as a result, and the lower the odds of success.

The administration has eased this dilemma somewhat by shifting its emphasis from the 2011 drawdown onset to the 2014 target for transition to Afghan lead security responsibility. This helps clarify that the United States is not in the midst of a precipitate rush to the exit, which eases the pressure on South Asians to hedge. A Strategic Partnership Agreement that codifies a longer term U.S. relationship with and role in Afghanistan can also help a great deal (more on this below).

Also necessary, however, is greater clarity on our long-term objectives and the end states we can accept. Today's ambiguity promotes confusion in the region, undermines the credibility of the commitments we are willing to make, and encourages pessimists to believe that our goals are misaligned with our willingness to pay and that we will eventually give up. Only if we can identify an end state whose resource requirements are bearable can we possibly commit ourselves credibly to provide the resources needed. And if we cannot make a credible commitment, we will promote hedging strategies that make any acceptable outcome nearly impossible.

What U.S. role would the end states described above require? Our original goal of a radically centralized democracy was so ambitious that it would now require an impractical U.S. investment—this is effectively beyond reach.

Decentralized democracy is less demanding, but would still require major exertions in population security and governance reform. It is difficult to be specific without a troop-to-task analysis that would be beyond my scope here. But it seems reasonable to expect that the U.S. resource requirements would be substantial, and would require a major U.S. troop presence for years to come.

Internal mixed sovereignty is less attractive but also less demanding, at least by degree. By accepting but regulating the existing practice of strongman rule in many parts of the country, this model would reduce the scale of governance transformation required and would be closer to historical experience. And strongly enforcing a restricted set of redlines against warlords and other power brokers would give them incentives to moderate the destructive excesses that today drive many Afghans toward the Taliban. A mixed sovereignty model would be less dependent on administrative transparency and efficiency, and hence less demanding of international mentoring, oversight, monitoring, and technical assistance. Even internal mixed sovereignty, however, would require hard fighting to secure. And it cannot succeed without a major effort to rein in the scale of today's predatory misgovernance and cap its virulence.

Internal mixed sovereignty would thus probably be less costly to obtain than decentralized democracy. But it could require a greater U.S. investment to sustain than a decentralized democracy would.

It is hard to see any stable Afghan outcome without some kind of sustained U.S. role. Afghanistan was at peace for most of the 20th century, but it was a major re-

cipient of international economic aid throughout that period, and given its limited revenue base for the foreseeable future it will surely require some degree of continued aid to be viable in the 21st.[8] A decentralized democracy would need continuing technical and financial assistance in governance and development, but the natural checks and balances it would feature would build in an important measure of stability. Such a system would be designed to enable local shuras or councils to oversee public expenditure, and popular dissatisfaction with the Taliban even in the Pashtun south could be expected to restrain local officials from the ideological extremes of the previous Taliban regime, or from empowering militants to engage in international terrorism. This would give Afghans with a natural incentive to oppose militancy the political power to constrain it.

Internal mixed sovereignty, by contrast, has weaker natural balancing mechanisms. In fact it should be assumed that Afghan power brokers will regularly test the limits of the bargains they have reached with Kabul, especially in the system's early years. Vigorous enforcement would thus be necessary to prevent predation from returning to today's intolerable levels. The sticks and carrots described above could, in principle, be sufficient to persuade profit-motivated strongmen to stay within their limits as long as violation does, in fact, yield sanctions painful enough to be bad for business, as it were. But this is a dynamic process requiring continuous, potentially costly management; without this, it could slip into unconstrained warlordism and civil warfare. And this management will require U.S. assistance for the foreseeable future—partly to provide (or catalyze) the aid flows needed as carrots, partly to provide the training and technical assistance needed for the ANSF to suffice as a stick, partly to help monitor compliance in the periphery, and partly to encourage Kabul to use both the carrots and the sticks energetically. A workable mixed sovereignty model is thus not a recipe for Western disengagement. It might enable a somewhat quicker U.S. military drawdown in the near term than other options, but it could demand a greater and more complex long-term economic and political engagement to sustain than other options would.

IMPLICATIONS: THE UTILITY OF A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT WITH THE GIROA

This assessment of long run U.S. interests and potential end states for Afghanistan poses a variety of implications for near-term policy questions. Among them is the utility of a Strategic Partnership Agreement with the GIRoA. The United States is now conducting negotiations with the Karzai government over such an agreement to frame the long-term relationship between the two states. A detailed analysis of preferred terms or negotiating positions in these talks is beyond my scope here. But the discussion above implies several important roles such an agreement should play, and some considerations for critical sub-issues.

In particular, it would be extremely useful if these talks could assure South Asians that a post-2014 U.S. troop drawdown will not leave Afghanistan abandoned and at the mercy of an empowered Taliban. As I argue above, many in the region (Pakistanis, Taliban, and other Islamist militants as well as loyal Afghans) now believe the United States and other foreign powers will leave Afghanistan before defeating the Taliban, and that this will lead to an eventual collapse of the government and either a Taliban takeover or an extended civil war. The hedging incentives this creates are deeply problematic; success probably requires some change in this widespread expectation of abandonment, and greater clarity as to America's long-term intentions for Afghanistan and the region. A more consistent, more explicit communications strategy would help—many Afghan officials are now confused about American intentions and objectives, and this confusion is aggravated by conflicting U.S. statements about our commitment to counterinsurgency or other state-support policies. But in the final analysis a real change in regional perceptions will probably require actions rather than just words.

One such action would be for the actual U.S. drawdown rate to be slow rather than fast. Many Afghans, for example, misinterpreted the President's 2009 West Point speech to mean that there would be no U.S. troops remaining in Afghanistan by 2012. This perception was remarkably stubborn; in a 2010 visit to Kabul, I found even members of Afghanistan's Parliament and analysts from Afghan think tanks convinced that we would be gone by 2012. For some, only the actual observation

[8] From 1960–69, Afghanistan received, on average, the equivalent of $247 million/year in international aid, in 2011 dollars; from 1970–79 it received an average of $269 million/year: OECD (http://stats.oecd.org/qwids/), assuming inflation figures taken from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm. By 1973, foreign grants and loans provided two-thirds of annual Afghan Government revenue: Thomas Barfield, Afghanistan: "A Political and Cultural History" (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 205.

that American troops remain will convince them that they are not on the brink of abandonment and collapse.

Another helpful action, however, would be to conclude a Strategic Partnership Agreement that committed the United States to a long-term role that could combat this perception of looming exit. This need not take the form of a commitment to permanent bases or a permanent military presence, though it could. But it would need to make it clear that the United States does not intend to repeat its policies of the 1990s, in which we left Afghanistan to its own devices after the Soviet withdrawal and did little to avert open civil warfare. A strong agreement with an explicit commitment to continued U.S. engagement could go a long way toward reducing the incentives to hedge bets that are now so corrosive in the region—and this in turn could substantially improve the prospects for near-term governance reform in Afghanistan or realignment of Pakistani policy toward the Afghan Taliban.

Should this agreement provide for permanent U.S. bases or a permanent U.S. military presence? While detailed prescription for negotiations is beyond my scope, some points are clear. First, given our interests in the region, the primary criterion for this choice should be stabilizing Afghanistan, not broader concerns with power projection or the conduct of counterterrorist missions beyond Afghanistan's borders. I treat the viability of an Afghan-based CT strategy below. For now, though, it is worth noting that Afghanistan is far from an ideal base for regional power projection. As a remote, landlocked nation with mountainous borders and unreliable and/or unstable neighbors astride the natural lines of communication to seaports, Afghanistan is a highly imperfect base for projecting power elsewhere. As the bin Laden raid showed, it can be useful, especially for small-scale raids of short duration, but the real issue is not whether it has some advantage under some circumstances but whether the difference between Afghan bases and the next-best alternative is large or small under normal conditions. Even for the bin Laden raid, alternatives were under active consideration that would have involved air attacks from bases far from Afghanistan; many, apparently including the Secretary of Defense, actually preferred these to a plan that relied on SEALs flown from Jalalabad. For most purposes in most scenarios, there are alternatives to Afghan bases for power projection missions—whether these be bomber strikes from the continental United States; missions flown from regional bases in places such as Diego Garcia or elsewhere; carrier-based aviation; or cruise missiles launched from submarines or other naval platforms offshore. And given the difficulties in maintaining logistical support for sustained action from Afghan bases, these alternatives are likely to look reasonably competitive for many contingencies. Afghanistan may be better for some purposes at some times, but it is unlikely to be so much better as to be indispensible as a base.

Second, and related, permanent bases should be seen as negotiable in the talks. An important argument in favor of permanent bases is their ability to reassure nervous Afghans. But some Afghans see permanent U.S. bases as intrusion and interference, or as an infringement on Afghan sovereignty. If the net result of an insistence on permanent bases is to inflame anti-American sentiment in Afghanistan and undermine Afghan support for the war, this downside would outweigh any plausible military benefit to the United States—and it could end up impeding, rather than advancing, the underlying logic of reassurance. The Taliban, for their part, will surely oppose any permanent foreign military presence and will present this as an obstacle to negotiated settlement of the war. Reconciliation negotiations pose complex challenges and may or may not prove fruitful (more on this below). But if they otherwise show promise, the cause of stability in south Asia could be better served by removing a barrier to negotiating progress than by retaining a power projection platform that is little superior to its alternatives. It is thus a mistake to view permanent U.S. bases as a redline requirement that must be preserved in any negotiations, whether with the GIRoA or with the Taliban.

The chief point is thus that permanent basing is a means, not an end. The end is a stable south Asia via a stable Afghanistan, and the primary role of any Strategic Partnership Agreement should be to serve that end by reassuring Afghans and others that they will not be abandoned. If in the course of the negotiations over the agreement such bases look useful as tools of reassurance, they should be offered. But they are not ends in themselves of any superordinate importance.

IMPLICATIONS: COUNTERTERRORISM, COUNTERINSURGENCY, AND THE DEATH OF BIN LADEN

Many have proposed the the United States shift from a counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy to one based on counterterrorism (CT). Whereas COIN is focused on sustaining the host government by securing its population, CT is focused on removing

threats to the U.S. homeland by killing or capturing terrorists and their leaders. And whereas COIN is labor intensive and expensive in lives and dollars, CT can in principle be much cheaper, relying on small numbers of drone strikes or special forces raids without the multibrigade, long-term ground commitments required for COIN. If our primary interest in Afghanistan is in fact to reduce the terrorist threat to America, would it not make more sense to pursue this directly and cheaply via CT rather than indirectly and expensively via COIN?

The answer is no, and the reason is that CT depends on the host government cooperation that COIN is designed to secure. The binding constraint on CT effectiveness is normally intelligence on the targets' whereabouts. This intelligence normally requires access on the ground. The raid that killed bin Laden, for example, depended on information gained from patient, long-term surveillance of the compound by human agents operating from a safe house in Abbottabad, and elsewhere in the country.[9] The Secretary of State has reported that we also relied upon cooperation from Pakistani intelligence, based on their own human source networks on the ground.[10] This access on the ground is vastly harder if the local government is actively hostile and seeks to exclude us. Moreover, our ability to use drones or other long-dwell airborne surveillance systems to complement ground-based sources depends heavily on permissive airspace; if a hostile government with access to an air force and ground based air defenses chose to close its airspace, then our ability to use platforms like UAVs would be greatly reduced and we would have to fight for aerial access in ways that would greatly increase the cost and difficulty of the campaign while reducing its effectiveness.

CT is also much more effective against small bands of terrorists or discrete sets of senior commanders than it is against large guerilla forces in the field; it is ill-suited to defend governments from broad insurgencies without a supporting COIN effort involving large friendly ground forces. If we shifted from COIN to CT in Afghanistan and withdrew the ground forces now critical to the COIN campaign, the Karzai government could collapse before the CT leadership targeting campaign bore fruit. And this would risk losing the ground and air access that effective CT requires.

An explicit shift to a CT strategy would also aggravate the hedging problems noted above. Many Afghans already fear that the United States will shift from COIN to CT; to them, a U.S. CT strategy looks like a plan to allow Afghanistan to fall into chaos while the United States flies above it all with drones hunting for terrorists. This is an extremely unpopular image among Afghans, for whom it offers nothing but the prospect of endless internecine warfare. Occasional comments by U.S. officials suggesting that a CT approach would be preferable to COIN are thus read by Afghans as evidence that abandonment is coming. Even if the Karzai government did not fall in the immediate aftermath of an actual U.S. shift from COIN to CT, we could expect limited cooperation with such an agenda from the Afghans, who would be strongly motivated to seek accommodation with the Taliban under such conditions, and disinclined to support an American CT campaign with intelligence or other cooperation on the ground.

As complementary elements of a joint campaign, COIN on the ground and leadership targeting from aircraft and special forces strengthen one another synergistically. But CT without COIN risks losing the prerequisites needed for its success. The ultimate purpose of our efforts is indeed to counter terrorism. But to do this well requires that we secure the governments whose support we need to conduct effective CT. Hence it is a mistake to see these as substitutes for one another: CT and COIN strengthen one another; CT without COIN is unlikely to work.

A related argument raised since bin Laden's death is that his removal might warrant a shift away from COIN that would otherwise be unwise but can now be tolerated. If our ultimate purpose is to combat an al-Qaeda terror threat to the United States, then the effort would become unnecessary if the threat were removed. More broadly, the investment warranted in Afghan COIN is surely a function of the virulence of the al-Qaeda threat: the lower the latter, the smaller the former. If al-Qaeda's effectiveness is attenuated enough, then eventually it must make sense to invest less in Afghan COIN even if this isn't as effective as a larger effort would be. If not, then we are committed to a permanent war with vast resource requirements and no conceivable way out. It must therefore be possible to identify a condi-

[9] Greg Miller, "CIA Spied on bin Laden From Safe House," Washington Post, May 6, 2011, accessed May 9, 2011. http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/cia-spied-on-bin-laden-from-safe-house/2011/05/05/AFXbG31F_story.html.

[10] David Gollust, "Clinton: Pakistan Cooperation Helped Find bin Laden," Voice of America, May 2, 2011, accessed May 9, 2011. http://www.voanews.com/english/news/usa/Clinton-Stresses-Pakistan-Cooperation-After-bin-Laden-Killing--121092289.html.

tion of "success" such that we can stand down from this scale of effort; some see this success in bin Laden's killing.

The problem here is twofold. First, it is too early to know what effect bin Laden's death will have on al-Qaeda. Most terrorist organizations survive decapitation. The United States, for example, killed the head of al-Qaeda's Iraqi affiliate, Abu Musab al Zarqawi, in 2006; he was replaced, and the violence continued. Israeli leadership strikes against Hamas and Hezbollah have hardly destroyed either organization. Russian efforts to kill Chechen separatist leaders failed to defeat the separatist movement. There are exceptions: the Shining Path in Peru withered after the arrest of Abimael Guzman in 1992; Aum Shinrikyo was greatly weakened by Shoko Asahara's arrest in 1995. In general, however, decapitation campaigns can weaken terror groups by replacing talented leaders with less able successors, but they rarely destroy the organization.[11] Perhaps al-Qaeda will follow the Shining Path exception; bin Ladenism was probably in some degree of general decline by 2011 given its reduced popularity in the Arab world as a result of its indiscriminate killing of Iraqi and other Muslims and its irrelevance in the ongoing Arab Spring uprisings. Maybe bin Laden's death will be the straw that breaks this camel's back and leads al-Qaeda into terminal decline. Certainly it is worth careful monitoring of al-Qaeda's operational tempo and internal unity in coming months to look for possible evidence. But this would be the exception rather than the rule, and it is far too early to know whether al-Qaeda will follow such a trajectory.

Second, the unique role of Pakistani instability and nuclear capability warrants special caution. Unlike most terror threats from most places, Pakistani militant groups have the potential to gain access to nuclear weapons if the host state collapses. A small remnant of an attenuated al-Qaeda somewhere else would pose a limited threat to the United States; a remnant that shared bin Laden's strategy of targeting America and got access to a usable nuclear weapon in the chaos of Pakistani state collapse could pose a threat far exceeding their numbers or nominal strength. Similarly, non-al-Qaeda groups pose unique perils in Pakistan. An organization like Lashkar-e-Taiba that has not heretofore been focused chiefly on the United States could nevertheless pose an exceptional threat if the Pakistani Government collapsed and lost control of its nuclear arsenal. The stability of Pakistan is especially worrisome with a healthy al-Qaeda posing an explicit threat to the United States from its territory, but Pakistani stability is unusually important to the United States even if al-Qaeda per se withers or dies altogether given the ongoing presence of other militants with the potential to shift their focus to the United States, and prospective access to nuclear weapons if Pakistan collapses.

This does not mean that al-Qaeda's fate is irrelevant to the case for COIN in Afghanistan, or that no attenuation in the Pakistani terror threat could warrant drawing back from COIN to CT (even if the latter proved less effective without the former). But it does mean that it is too early to conclude that such a shift is warranted now. And it does mean that unusual care is warranted in assessing a COIN to CT shift in Afghanistan given its potential effect on Pakistan and the latter's unique status.

IMPLICATIONS: THE UTILITY OF A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT

Many insurgencies end in negotiated settlements involving some degree of compromise on both sides.[12] As public dissatisfaction with the war has grown, interest in such a settlement has grown, too. The Afghan war poses a number of challenges to negotiated resolution, including the number of parties to any such talks, the likelihood of internal disunity within several key Taliban factions, opposition among northern Afghans, growing radicalization of actors such as the Haqqani network, ideological commitment by Mullah Omar and key leaders of the Quetta Shura, and the difficulty of knowing whether any given Taliban negotiating partner actually speaks for his faction or others. By the same token, however, President Karzai has expressed clear interest in pursuing a settlement. And the death of Osama bin

[11] On the effectiveness of CT decapitation campaigns, see Audrey Kurth Cronin, "How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns" (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Jenna Jordan, "When Heads Roll: Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation," Security Studies, Vol. 18 (2009), pp. 719–755; Daniel Byman, "Do Targeted Killings Work?" Foreign Affairs, Vol. 85, no. 2 (2006), pp. 95–111.

[12] Estimated historical frequencies of negotiated settlement range from as low as 20 percent to as high as about 50 percent; the rate of settlement appears to have been rising since the 1970s. See Ben Conable and Martin C. Libicki, "How Insurgencies End" (Santa Monica: Rand, 2010), RAND MG 965, pp. 18, 169; Jason Lyall and Isaiah Wilson, "Rage Against the Machines: Explaining Outcomes in Counterinsurgency Wars," International Organization, Vol. 63, No. 1 (Winter 2009), pp. 67–106.

Laden may remove some barriers to negotiation, whether by releasing Mullah Omar or others from oaths of loyalty to bin Laden that would have made reconciliation impossible, or by affecting Taliban morale and expectations.

Among the more important factors shaping the prospects for negotiation are our aims and ambitions. The original, highly ambitious U.S. goals virtually precluded settlement. Perhaps a Taliban on the verge of total military defeat might accept terms that would exclude them from any meaningful role in a centralized, strictly democratic government, but if so the settlement would be little more than the surrender instrument for a beaten insurgency. It is hard to imagine any major Taliban faction accepting such terms until the military tide turned clearly, decisively, and conclusively against them. To have any chance for hastening the war's end via negotiation, we will have to accept compromises even as we demand them of the Taliban.

We can, in fact, live with a degree of compromise relative to our original war aims while preserving the central security stakes for which we have fought. We do not require either the radical centralization or the strictly democratic system the 2001 model prescribed. There is room for some legal political role for the Taliban within the Afghan Government without undermining our fundamental security requirements as long as the limits and enforcement mechanisms discussed above are maintained. It should be possible, for example, to offer designated seats for some representatives of some Taliban factions in the Afghan Parliament, or in Provincial or District governments in the south or east, as long as there are practical, enforceable limits on their ability to use territory as a safe haven for militant violence.

The Taliban are not, and never have been, a popular movement with a broad base of support. In repeated polls over years of surveys, they have never drawn more than about 15 percent support nationally. Even in their birthplace of the conservative Afghan south they remain a minority preference, and elsewhere their support varies from modest to negligible.[13] This makes them unlikely to agree to lay down their arms in exchange for a chance to run for national office in free and fair elections; some extra democratic set aside of seats or offices or positions would probably be needed to persuade them to settle. But this also means that the prospects for containing their influence once brought into the government are reasonably strong as long as the non-Taliban GIRoA has something to offer its citizens as an alternative to freely elected Taliban rule.

And this in turn means that reining in government predation is a necessary component of any acceptable negotiating strategy. Corrupt predatory governance is the chief threat to public acceptance of the GIRoA. If a deal gave the Taliban a legal foothold in an Afghan Government too corrupt to command its people's loyalty, this could be tantamount to admitting a Trojan Horse: continued predation by non-Taliban officials could eventually swing public support to a legalized Taliban that promised honesty and justice even at the cost of its ideology and repression. If so, then an initially limited, constrained role could grow into one that threatened U.S. core interests by enabling Taliban officials the scope to foment terrorism from Afghan soil. If government predation can be brought under control—not eliminated but at least capped and constrained—then the Taliban can be given a legal role in Afghan politics with the natural unpopularity of militant ideology acting as a check to strengthen other constraints on their ability to foment terrorism. But if not then a settlement could leave us unable to ensure that our interests were met in the aftermath.

IMPLICATIONS: THE NEED FOR GOVERNANCE REFORM

Finally, this implies that the needed governance reforms cannot be put off indefinitely. It is tempting to assume that the near-term requirement for security can safely be allowed to push governance reform into the distant future. And there are near-term tradeoffs between security and reform that can encourage the former to displace the latter: many malign power brokers in Afghanistan maintain militias or other security forces that they make available to coalition commanders to reinforce our security efforts in exchange for our overlooking their economic exploitation of the population. Others use private security firms under their control to protect logistical convoys that supply coalition troops, or they make protection payments to

[13] The Taliban's strongest poll performance to date was a finding of 45 percent support in Kandahar that was reported in a Washington Post/ABC News/BBC/ARD survey of November 2010: see "New Poll Reveals Afghan Perceptions of the War," Washington Post, December 6, 2010, accessed May 9, 2011. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/world/AfghanPoll Results.html. More common is the figure of 11-percent support nationally in the same poll—or for Kandahar itself, the finding of 25-percent support in a Canadian survey of April 2010: see "Taliban Support Strong in Kandahar: Poll," CBC News, April 6, 2010, accessed May 9, 2011. http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/story/2010/04/06/taliban-support-poll.html.

the Taliban or other local militants to ensure safe passage; if we crack down on their economic predation, their continued security cooperation is unlikely, and they can be expected to turn on us instead. With an urgent need to reverse Taliban military momentum by contesting their control of important districts, there is constant pressure on coalition commanders to postpone the needed reckoning to a future when we hope we will have the flexibility to clamp down on corruption in a safer environment.

But in fact we cannot safely delay an aggressive governance campaign. Not only would this risk undermining any prospective reconciliation deal, as noted above. But it also undermines our ability to provide a degree of security that could actually permit us to drawdown our forces and hand off to a capable ANSF. Civilians systematically dispossessed by a predatory government will inevitably turn to the Taliban for succor (and the Taliban have been very astute in exploiting this to position themselves as the defenders of the dispossessed), even if they otherwise dislike the Taliban's ideology or politics. If civilians who have been wronged—or expect to be—continue to do this, no density of security forces will be sufficient to exclude the Taliban from victimized communities.

Worse, there may be reason to expect that the ANSF itself will be coopted in ways that undermine its ability to take over security duties as we drawdown. Security forces are products of the societies from which they are drawn. Where the society around them is dominated by the political and economic effects of malign patronage networks, it is unrealistic to expect that the security forces will somehow be hermetically sealed off and unaffected by this. Malign actor networks realize that they need top cover and protection for their activities; it would be dangerous for such predators to allow powerful armed forces in their midst to operate without some degree of control or cooptation by the network. And this gives Afghan power brokers a strong incentive to extend their reach and their influence into the police and the army.

Historically, where armies in the developing world fail it is normally not because they have not yet taken the right training courses or had sufficient rifle ranges, advisers, or equipment available. The most important cause of failure in developing-world militaries is their politicization and corruption at the hands of the regime and its patrons. When the officer corps is politicized and corrupted, its ability to motivate effective combat action by its troops is powerfully undermined. Troops know when their leaders value political connection and graft above professional competence and service to the mission. No soldier wants to die for a corrupt chain of command, and no soldier wants to put his life in the hands of an officer who cares more about his connections than his military skills. The result can easily be a hollow army or police force, whose size or equipment does not reflect its actual capability, and whose ability to hold ground or defend population centers is much less than meets the eye.

In Afghanistan today, police corruption is a known problem, and considerable efforts are underway to monitor this and remove corrupt leaders. The Afghan National Army (ANA), on the other hand, is commonly assumed to be mostly free of corruption and more effective in the field. This may well be true for now (though we know less than we might about the problem of politicization in the ANA today; since this has not been a high priority concern heretofore, it has thus received much less intelligence attention and command oversight than has the problem of police corruption). But the ANA is unlikely to remain unaffected if the surrounding society remains as dominated by corruption as it is now. Whatever the effectiveness of the ANA today, if we do not address and delimit the problem of corruption and misgovernance in Afghanistan soon we risk undermining the efficacy of the military tool that we are relying upon to take up the slack as we drawdown.

It is thus a mistake to assume that security and governance reform are separable, and that the former can safely precede the latter. The McChrystal assessment report argued that security and governance reform were coequally necessary for success; this is as true today as it was in 2009, and implies a need to ensure that progress in one is not allowed to outstrip progress in the other.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, indeed—thank you all very much. I think it's a good framing of the beginning of this discussion, which is very important and very tricky.

There's so much to focus on. And I hope, with all our colleagues here, we're going to get to all of it as we go forward. So, I guess my question doesn't have to cover all the bases.

Therefore, let me try to just focus on one of the most important components of this, which is really defining the mission. I've heard three different things from all of you. And you're the experts, and you all see a destabilizing threat to Pakistan, yet you've put forward different choices. Dr. Jones, you've sort of landed in the middle, between the counterterrorism and full-flown counterinsurgency. And, Dr. Kilcullen, I think you are a bit more limited.

But, I want to see if we can try to really define: Why should we be there now? What is our interest? Is our interest a stable Afghanistan, because of this threat to Pakistan? Is our interest simply to be able to sufficiently prevent the return of al-Qaeda, and destroy it, ultimately? I mean, I think two of you, at least, mentioned the destruction of al-Qaeda—or one of you mentioned the "disruption" and another, the "destruction." So, is it possible for us to agree on the mission?

I mean, it's going to be very hard for the American people to feel confident about where we're going if we can't give a pretty simple well-agreed-upon broad-consensus definition of what the mission is.

So, what exactly is the mission in Afghanistan, Dr. Kilcullen?

Dr. KILCULLEN. Well, thank you, Senator.

You know, I don't carry a brief for the administration, but I think the administration's actually expressed it relatively clearly, and that was what Dr. Jones echoed. The core goal that the White House has put forward is the idea to disrupt, defeat, and eventually—and—disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda in the AfPak region. And the goal in Afghanistan is to generate a stable enough platform to achieve that overall goal.

I think you could look at it more specifically in terms of transition. In one sentence, I think the mission of the moment now in Afghanistan is to make the country stable enough that we can reduce the United States footprint to a sustainable level without an unacceptable drop security. And, of course, there are two important soft adjectives there: sustainable and unacceptable. "Sustainable," I think, means politically, but also fiscally sustainable. And "unacceptable," I think, translates to the administration's core goal. An unacceptable drop in security is one that undermines our ability to eventually disrupt and defeat al-Qaeda in the region.

In other words, we're making Afghanistan stable as a means to the end of defeating al-Qaeda in the region. And I think that's a relatively low bar, compared to some of the very maximalist objectives that people have put forward in the past. But, just because it's a low bar strategically doesn't mean it's not going to cost a lot of resources to get there. And that's probably a separate question.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, let's go—we'll come back to that in a minute.

Dr. Jones, do you agree? Is that——

Dr. JONES. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. A full definition? And you're comfortable with it?

Dr. JONES. I am comfortable with Dr. Kilcullen's definition. I would say, just to support him, what we don't want is an attack on the U.S. homeland which emanates from this region. And we don't want, in my view, a government or a group that allows training camps and missions to be planned from this region. That is

what I think we can reliably tell the American public we are looking to prevent.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Biddle.

Dr. BIDDLE. I agree wholeheartedly with my colleagues on the panel. The only amendment I would offer is that I would be cautious about identifying the threat of terrorist attacks to the United States too narrowly around al-Qaeda, per se. It has been the primary source of such a threat in the past. If its destruction leads other organizations in Pakistan, however, to shift their aims in ways that they have not heretofore, and take up the banner of al-Qaeda's war against the distant enemy, the underlying identification of our interests implies that we would then have to broaden our target somewhat.

But, the focus of it is exactly as Dr. Kilcullen and Dr. Jones have suggested.

The CHAIRMAN. So, let me build on that a little bit.

How likely is it, with the death of Osama bin Laden, that Pakistan will decide to join wholeheartedly in this effort—i.e., to focus on the Haqqani Network, harness or tame the disparate instincts of the ISI, and make a wholehearted effort to go after the Quetta Shura and foreign nationals in their country? To what extent could their decision greatly alter the choices that we face, and indeed, the length of this struggle?

Dr. Kilcullen.

Dr. KILCULLEN. Sir, in fact, Dr. Jones's organization, the RAND Corporation, did a study last year which looked, in part, at what the effect might be of removing a sanctuary on chances of success in a counterinsurgency environment. I'm quoting from memory, but I'm pretty sure that you have a very significant improved chance if you can reduce the sanctuary. And I think it's roughly about 86 percent of cases, where you can successfully destroy the insurgent sanctuary in a neighboring country, the government wins. But, if you fail to destroy the sanctuary, you still win in about 60 percent of cases. So, it's actually not essential to destroy the sanctuary. It is very advantageous, but it's nonessential. So, I think we should bear that in mind, when thinking about what we expect from Pakistan.

I think we should also bear in mind the history of our relationship with Pakistan, which you know better than anybody else, and have some realism about our expectations of what they will actually do in response to this series of events. I don't think we're likely to see a significant drop of support, certainly not for the Haqqani Network, possibly not for Quetta Shura. I think they're going to continue to operate.

The CHAIRMAN. And that's because they perceive a very stable, strong central government, well-armed Afghanistan, as not in their interest. Isn't that accurate?

Dr. KILCULLEN. That may well be true. I think there's another sort of instrumental reason, which is, just because an organization like ISI can turn on an organization like the Haqqani Network doesn't mean that they can turn it off. So, the ability to create mayhem and disruption through sponsoring a terrorist organization doesn't necessarily mean that you still control that organization. I'm speaking hypothetically here, obviously. But, if indeed the

Pakistani Intelligence Service have had, in the past, some relationship with groups like the Haqqani Network and the Quetta Shura, just because they previously had a relationship doesn't mean that they can now decide to shut them down. And I think that's the problem that, in fact, a lot of Pakistanis are confronting now.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Jones, what kind of cost are you looking at in your "middle" strategy—which is neither a counterterrorism platform, nor a full-blown counterinsurgency? What's the annual nut on that strategy?

Dr. JONES. Well, it would vary by year, depending on the size of the footprint. What it comes down to, by 2015, though, is a smaller Afghan National Security Force presence, a smaller—depending on conditions and other factors—a smaller United States footprint and an Afghan local police footprint. This puts us—I can give you the numbers by year—or your staff—after the hearing. But, it puts us well below the $12.8 billion, for example, for Afghan National Security Forces, for fiscal year 2012. And it certainly varies by year.

The CHAIRMAN. Why—is it more than $6 billion a year?

Dr. JONES. It's, depending on the year, between about $6 and $10 billion per year. But——

The CHAIRMAN. For how many years?

Dr. JONES [continuing]. But increasingly decreasing.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Lugar.

Senator LUGAR. Well, the panel has suggested, in answer to our basic question, "Why Afghanistan?" that we will want to stop attacks on the United States emanating from Afghanistan, and that one way of doing this is to eliminate training camps or other means of support possessed by terrorists there.

Now, let me ask the following question, with two reflections. One is that some persons, long before the death of Osama bin Laden, were writing about the fact that the situation we face in Afghanistan today originated after the United States fulfilled Saudi Arabia's call for support following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. As we know, a lot of American troops were deployed to Saudi Arabia, and not only for the duration of the gulf war, but several years thereafter. Now, the American presence on Saudi soil lead Osama bin Laden and his associates to emphasize their view of America as their enemy.

Second, there was the situation, described by the Russians, of their attempt to do some of what we're attempting to do now in Afghanistan. Principally, that is to train Afghan police and military to bring about stability at the village level or the provincial level. They had some success for quite a period of time, although they had problems stemming from unrest among Afghanistan's different ethnic groups. However, in due course, the Russians ran out of money and time, and they never quite got the job done. Indeed, there remained the enduring historical problems in Afghanistan that were well beyond their efforts to put a centralized government in place there.

Now, I raise all of this because, once again, why is there the thought that we must dedicate so many of our finite resources to the situation in Afghanistan? Couldn't those who threaten us come from somewhere other than Afghanistan, such as Yemen or Somalia? Are there plans to set up forces in these countries that are the

size and shape of those we have in Afghanistan? And finally, given the Russian experience—maybe we'll do better, but there are many historians who simply would point out that the diverse constitution of Afghan society does not really lead to a good centralized government. So, you've pointed now to the fact that we might think, in a more sophisticated way, of something less than central, wherein we have local entities—bits and pieces of governance—that somehow negotiate a pact among each other, and with us, that brings stability. This seems very, very difficult to imagine, and very hard to describe in parts or in conclusion to the American people or anybody else.

So, my basic questions get back to: Why Afghanistan? Is it because, originally, we got crosswise with al-Qaeda, due to the earlier wars? And could we get uncrosswise with them if we were out of harm's way there? What you have described as one alternative is a very small group of people that do intelligence work, that do JSOC work, that, in fact, do this in Afghanistan plus Yemen plus Somalia plus a lot of places. That such an effort keep an eye on everybody in this manner, without getting into the governance of a situation that is proving to be very difficult, if not impossible, for us?

Does anybody have a comment about all of that?

Dr. JONES. I'll go first, Senator Lugar. I know my colleagues have comments, as well.

I would argue several things. First, al-Qaeda was created here, in the Peshawar area. Its strongest support base, in my view, is here, as opposed to any other place in the world—Somalia, Yemen. In particular, if one looks at the tribal structures, Pashtun tribal structures were the Mehsuds, the Waziris, the Mohmans, and a range of others. These are individuals who have fought with, for the last three decades, and provided sanctuary to, a range of al-Qaeda leaders. So, they have a long-term relationship.

They're also—in addition to the tribal/subtribe clan structures, there are also a range of militant groups, from Lashkar-e-Tayyaba to Jaish-e-Mohammed, that have supported al-Qaeda. So, I would strongly argue that this is a safe haven, in my view, that is different from Yemen, Somalia, and other places.

And, in addition, I would also say, if one looks at the bulk of the attacks over the past 10 years—the London attack, successful; the Madrid attack, successful; the 2006 Transatlantic plot, nearly successful; the Zazi attempted attack; Shahzad—they emanated from individuals operating here. Clearly, Yemen is a problem with Awlaki. But, I think this is an extraordinary threat.

Dr. BIDDLE. I would agree with Dr. Jones that Afghanistan is different, as a haven, than other prospective havens. I would frame the reasons a little bit differently.

I think the primary reason Afghanistan is different is its proximity to Pakistan because I think it's important to distinguish different varieties and classes of terror threat. The threat emanating from places like Yemen or Djibouti or Somalia or elsewhere is of important but nonetheless conventional terrorism. The downstream threat associated with failure, uniquely in South Asia, is the potential collapse of a nuclear-armed and very unstable state that's facing an internal insurgency of its own in Pakistan.

One of the very few scenarios I can think of that produces any plausible chance of terrorist access to a weapon of mass destruction that they could actually use against the United States would be if, as a downstream consequence of failure in Afghanistan, we were to tip an unstable Pakistan into collapse in such a condition that the military and the intelligence services split and the nuclear arsenal of the country breaches containment. That, it seems to me, is the critical distinction between our strategic interests in Afghanistan and our strategic interests in Yemen or in Somalia or elsewhere.

Senator LUGAR. But this then tips things back toward the idea of the central importance of Pakistan; in other words, that the primary importance of promoting stability in Afghanistan is to prevent nuclear proliferation out of Pakistan, which is another interesting twist in our hearing dialogue today.

Dr. Kilcullen.

Dr. KILCULLEN. Sir, I just want to note that all the examples that Dr. Jones gave came from Pakistan, not Afghanistan. The regional epicenter of terrorism is not Afghanistan. It's highly unlikely that we would see a terrorist attack on the United States emanating from Afghanistan.

The risk is somewhat different, in my view. It's that instability in Afghanistan contributes to a regional pattern of instability. And that can undermine the stability of Pakistan. And that can significantly raise the threat. And it isn't just the threat of terrorism. It's also the threat of nuclear confrontation with India, of state collapse, and of a variety of other problems associated with changes in the security environment in Pakistan.

So, I think the chances that al-Qaeda, for example, would move back to Afghanistan and set up a base, if we were to leave, are relatively slim. What's much more likely is that there would be increased asset available to both the Pakistani and Afghan Taliban, there would be increased reason for an alliance between those groups and remaining terrorist organizations, there'd be a much higher level of instability in Pakistan, and that could potentially lead to all these negative consequences.

So, I think the ultimate argument is correct, but the pathway to it is one of regional instability and, potentially, nuclear confrontation in South Asia. That's what we, I think, have to think of as the primary outcome of failure in Afghanistan. Not so much somebody from Afghanistan attacking the United States, but a threat to the United States emanating from that instability in the region.

Senator LUGAR. Well, my time is up. But once again, we're back to our problem. We have a hearing on Afghanistan, but, in fact, we're back to discussing Pakistan and the broader region. And maybe that's the correct analysis of where we ought to be having the discussion for this hearing. But, it does pose problems for all the questions we were raising initially regarding how we counter threats to our security on a day-by-day basis in terms of our budget and the disposition of our forces, and how many of these resources should be dedicated specifically to Afghanistan.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Lugar.

Senator Boxer.

Senator BOXER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for your testimony. It's very important, I think, for us to do this, because we are in Afghanistan, now, for a very long time. And I'd like to do kind of a reality check. And I'm going to end it with a question to Dr. Jones, because his statement that a large-scale withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan would reaffirm, "the regional perception that the U.S. is not a reliable ally," is very troubling to me. And so, I want to press you on that, Dr. Jones, if I might. Are you with me?

Dr. JONES. Yes.

Senator BOXER. OK.

So, we're talking about, What is the mission? I would like to go back to why we went there, because I think most of us sitting here, most of us, were either in the House or the Senate when we voted to go into Afghanistan. Why did we do it? We had no interest in doing that. I had talked about the Taliban for years. Women's groups had come to me, they talked about the burqa, they said we've got to get rid of the Taliban. Nobody was that interested. And we did pass legislation never to recognize the country of Afghanistan, as long as it was led by the Taliban. And I was proud to be involved with that, in a bipartisan way.

So, we went in there because of the horrific attacks on September 11. You remember exactly why we went in there. And we said, "We're going there to get Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda." That was the reason we went there. So, all of this expansion, I think, of our role there, I'd like to take it back to that.

Now, thanks to our President and the brave military forces, we know that justice was served on bin Laden, and we didn't do it with boots on the ground; we did it with counterterrorism, a lot of what Senator Kerry talked about during his Presidential campaign. That's how we did it. And we delivered, our troops did, overdue justice.

But, I also think it's a turning point. And, from intelligence information we gathered during the raid, we learned that bin Laden was playing a significant role in the organization's day-to-day operations. He wasn't just sitting there and doing other things; he was plotting and planning. As the New York Times—an American official quote in the Times said, "He wasn't just a figurehead, he plotted and planned to come up with ideas about targets, et cetera."

So, this important news comes along with significant progress we've made against other Qaeda figures in Afghanistan in recent years. In fact, the current director of the CIA, Leon Panetta, says that the number of Qaeda in Afghanistan is less than 50, and, in the region, less than 500. We talk about the region—and Senator Lugar's right to do that—less than 500. So, we have all these boots on the ground.

And so, here's my question, and I want to give you some facts, before it. I laid out the predicate. Talk about the region, saying, "Well, if we withdraw, they're going to think we're not committed, and they'll be upset with us; we're not a reliable ally."

So, here's the situation: Pakistan is now the second-largest recipient of U.S. foreign assistance, receiving $4.3 billion in FY 2010. We know that's now a little controversial, but I assume we're going to keep helping Pakistan; and I'm one who believes we have to, with more strings. And you know the United States has spent more

years fighting in Afghanistan than any other war. If anybody says, "Oh, we're not committed to the region," how about the 100,000 forces we still have on the ground, $½ trillion we spent, $10 billion a month. We can ill-afford it. Right now, let's be frank, there are certain military people who say the biggest threat is our debt. Well, we've got to look at all these things.

We've trained 125,000 members of the Afghan police and 159,000 members of the Afghan Army. They have less than 50 al-Qaeda. And we have spent $26 billion equipping these soldiers and these police that we have trained. Most tragically, we've lost 1,562 Americans; 11,191 have been wounded, and you've seen some of those wounds. Unimaginable injuries. Unimaginable injuries. And we know a growing number of our personnel suffering the loss of more than one limb or devastating groin injuries.

So, if 10 years of American sacrifice hasn't convinced the region that the United States is a reliable ally, and all this money that's going into that region, why are you confident that more time, more money, and the loss of more American lives will change that view? And do people there have a right to assume we're going to continue this level of assistance forever? Isn't there a time when every country has to say, "We believe in our country, we're going to defend ourselves," especially since we've trained all these troops?

So, I like the odds that we've done here. We've got 159,000—159,000 Afghan National Army trained, 125,000 police, against 50 al-Qaeda.

Dr. JONES. Thank you, Senator.

A couple of points. One is, it is an unfortunate perception—it was not the primary component of my critique of the counterterrorism strategy, but I think it is an unfortunate reality in the region and will certainly impact the way other countries, including Pakistan, will behave over the next several years.

I would add a couple of things. One is, on the numbers of al-Qaeda, I would point out—I'm going to disagree with Dr. Kilcullen for a moment. Almost every tribe, subtribe, and clan that I referred to operates on both sides of the Pakistan/Afghan border. Al-Qaeda, in general, its migration patterns have been on both sides of that border. They look for a vacuum. In my view, if we push out of Afghanistan, it allows—as we've seen up in Nangarhar, Kunar, Nuristan, they will push back. So, I would not draw a strong line along the Durand Line.

And, just to highlight it, my biggest critique of the counterterrorism strategy is that it does not, in my view—it is not an effective strategy to minimize Afghanistan from becoming a sanctuary or an ally. In my view, a Taliban government in Afghanistan would be a serious, serious problem for the United States, because U.S. intelligence assessments now indicate a relationship between al-Qaeda—senior al-Qaeda leaders, the Taliban, inner Shura, several key members in the Haqqani Network. That is not something I believe that we can look Americans in the eye and be OK with.

Senator BOXER. OK. Well, my time has run out. But I will say this to you, I don't think you give enough credit to the people of Afghanistan who don't want the Taliban and who have these trained police and who have these trained military. And nobody's saying we wouldn't have counterterrorism forces there. And I think

your critique of that is misplaced. That's how we got bin Laden. That's how we got the other leaders.

And, for me, to live by somebody else's reality or perception of reality is not the way to go. I've gone through my whole life. There's people who perceive a lot of things differently than I do. But, you have to fight for what's real. And what's real is the dead, the wounded, the cost, and the comments, I think, of Senator Lugar, of all the other places in the world. So, I think you paint way too drastic a picture as what would happen if we don't have the boots on the ground. And no one's suggesting we don't have a presence.

But, I think that your testimony is very disturbing to me. And I don't think America could say, "Oh, because they say that's true, we might as well have policy, based on their faulty perception." It's very risky business, because—I just went to China; they have a lot of misperceptions. And I don't expect to change our policy because of their misperceptions.

The CHAIRMAN. Did you want to answer?

Dr. JONES. Sure. Just briefly.

Well, one of the issues I've been involved in over the last several years is actually having Afghans stand up for themselves, the Afghan Local Police Program and village stability operations, I was involved in from the beginning, in 2009. And I would just say that what I am talking about is decreasing the footprint, but supporting Afghans' fight for themselves. What we've seen Uruzgan, Helmand, Kandahar, is Afghan communities who actively have fought for them. I have served—and I was one of the Americans serving in Afghanistan along those lines.

But, I would say I agree with you on—Afghans are willing to combat the Taliban——

Senator BOXER. Good.

Dr. JONES [continuing]. Both the central government——

Senator BOXER. Good.

Dr. JONES [continuing]. And locals. And we have seen that.

Senator BOXER. Good.

Well, I want to put in the record, from your statement, Dr. Jones, that you would have, in 2014, 40,000 troops—American troops, boots on the ground. I don't think that's the right footprint. We ought to get—stop this—the combat forces, and concentrate on the other ways.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Corker.

Senator CORKER. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

I appreciate your testimony; I've enjoyed all of it.

Let ask each of you—the issue of Pakistan has come up in each of your testimony, and certainly by questions from people here at the dais. Should we reach agreement with Pakistan on what our joint efforts are going to be, as it relates to Afghanistan, and let that be part of the equation, as it relates to our aid to that country? I mean, isn't this a moment where that sitdown should take place and we should absolutely, without any doubt, understand, with a fairly unreliable partner today, that our goals are going to be exactly the same, and let that be a component of the aid that goes to their country?

Dr. KILCULLEN. Thank you, Senator.

Look, I think we should. I think we already have. And, in fact, the Kerry-Lugar legislation of a couple years ago was designed to be part of a process of bringing that agreement to fruition. The problem we have is not that; it's that we don't have a trustworthy interlocutor that we can deal with on those kind of issues inside Pakistan. Not to say that the Pakistani Government necessarily is backing or supporting the opposition, but that it's very difficult to know at what level that support stops. It's pretty clear that some elements inside Pakistan and some elements of the national security establishment of Pakistan have taken a supportive attitude, not only to the Quetta Shura, Taliban, the Haqqani Network, and other terrorist organizations, but also possibly to groups associated with al-Qaeda. But, does that mean that somebody senior in the Pakistani Government has backed that? It's a bit of an open question. So, it's very, very difficult to actually get to an agreement that's going to stick with Pakistan.

I think that the best thing that we can to do limit our vulnerability there is to successfully prosecute the campaign in Afghanistan. The more stable we make the environment in Afghanistan, the more we damage the Taliban, the less use it is to anybody inside Pakistan to continue to support or enable the Taliban as a proxy instrument. I think that undermines the motivation, as well as the capability, on their part.

Senator CORKER. Anybody with a differing point of view?

Dr. BIDDLE. Well, I think the question, again, gets back to long run objectives. Part of the problem in our relationship with Pakistan right now is that they're hedging against an expectation that the United States has unrealistic aims which will ultimately lead us to disengage. They, therefore, in order to protect themselves against that possibility, maintain links with organizations that make success less likely, but that build in a second-best alternative for them if, in fact, success doesn't obtain.

Part of the process of coming to a relationship with Pakistan that's less pathological than what we have now, it seems to me, is a greater degree of clarity on our part about what we're seeking, about the ability to secure what we're seeking with the resources we're willing to provide, and our ability to negotiate actively with parties in the region to try and bring about some mutual condition that meets all of our interests.

We're in the process of trying to engage in talks with the Afghan Government now about the longer term. There may be reconciliation talks beginning. The complexity of those should not be underestimated. But, if we are going to engage, for example, in serious reconciliation talks in South Asia, it has to involve the Pakistanis and it has to enable them to try and realize some of their interests, as well as ours, in any settlement that emerges, else they will use their spoiler capacity to destroy any progress that can be made toward that.

But, if we don't arrive at some mutually agreeable understanding of what the end state looks like, such that Pakistan stops trying to undermine it because they don't think what they're going to get is something they can live with, the Pakistanis have a substantial and impressive capacity to hedge in ways that make it very unlikely that we'll receive an outcome we can live with.

Senator CORKER. How does the fact that, in essence, any kind of Afghanistan, if we are—if we get to "good enough"—and I agree with the testimony that it's not clear what "good enough" is, and that creates some of the problems that you're talking to—but, if we get to "good enough," Afghanistan will not exist without us, they're going to be our supplicant. There's no way that they can continue to take care of the army and the police on the ground. I mean, the budget—it's just not possible. So, they, in essence, will be our supplicant in a way that I don't think any country that I can remember in recent times has been.

How does that play into the equation, both on the Afghan side and on the Pakistani side, and, to Dr. Kilcullen, the rage that you were talking about that people have on the ground, as it relates to the many problems that exist there?

Dr. KILCULLEN. Let me pick that up first. It costs us roughly $12 billion, right now, per year to support the Afghan National Security Forces, police and military. Even if we were to still be supporting those forces at that same level, and be providing roughly the same amount of support in civilian assistance, in 2014, that's still an 85-percent reduction in the cost of the war now.

Senator CORKER. But, they're still our supplicant.

Dr. KILCULLEN. Absolutely. But, I think that there's a very important objective here, in reducing the overall cost of the war, and a lesser objective of reducing Afghan dependence on the international community. The way that counterinsurgency campaigns of this nature usually play out is that there is a heavy investment phase, up front, that sometimes goes for 10 to 12 years, followed by a very long, drawn-out tail that can go 20 or 30 years. Most successful examples of counterinsurgency involve that.

The trick is to get to that second phase, which is a much-reduced cost over a longer period of time. And I think that's what transition is all about, between now and 2014, getting ourselves to the position where the Afghans can continue to suppress incivility and terrorism in their area, with a lot of international assistance at first, but gradually reducing over time, but still 80 percent lower than it is today.

Dr. JONES. Couple of quick comments.

First, Afghanistan has always been what we call a "rentier state." It has always—during the cold war, it actually received both American and Soviet assistance.

But, I would say that the burden, I think, is on us to do two things, possibly simultaneously. The first one is to get others to help share the burden, whether it's neighbors—and one has to be careful, a little bit, of the zero-sum game, I think, between the Indians and the Pakistanis—but, how can neighbors and others with an interest, including the British, help share some of these costs?

The second is to put Afghanistan on at least the road where it can increase its revenue basis. If one looks at the lithium, copper, iron mines that are completely or largely untapped, frankly, except for the Chinese, in Afghanistan, there are ways, I think, one can begin to increase the government's ability to cover some of those costs.

Dr. BIDDLE. Just to add one minor point, it's important to note that, for most of the 20th century, Afghanistan was stable and at peace. During that time, when Afghanistan was stable and at peace, it was a ward of the international system. At no point in the 20th century was Afghanistan able to operate under its own revenue. At many points, the majority of all the government revenue in Afghanistan was coming from foreign assistance. That did not necessarily make Afghanistan a source of instability for its region.

So, to call them a supplicant is accurate, in some senses, but it implies that the Afghans will find it unacceptable. Whereas, I think there is a substantial historical record to suggest that Afghanistan is able to operate stably, in steady state, with substantial levels of foreign assistance, and not finding this to be a violation of their sovereignty or other conditions that would lead to instability.

Senator CORKER. Can I ask one more quick question?

I guess the difference, though—and maybe, historically, I don't remember correctly—I mean, have they ever had this large of a trained central military? In other words, the money that will need to go to them for years will have to go to them. If it doesn't go to them, those armed troops will do something with the arms if they're not getting paid. OK? So, it seems to me that dynamic will be very different this time, if we ever get to "good enough."

Dr. BIDDLE. But, it seems to me that it's important to distinguish between the wartime national security requirements of a state and the peacetime national security requirements of a state. Afghanistan is now waging a war, for which one would reasonably expect that a level of mobilized military effort that would be required would be much greater than would be the case if, in fact, this brings about a satisfactory resolution to the conflict.

It seems to me that part of the planning process for building up the ANSF, however, should be some thought to how we're going to build it down and demobilize it if and when we reach a point where, either through negotiated settlement or through simple decay of Taliban military capability, we get to the point where that's no longer necessary. If what we're doing is we're building an institution that cannot be built down, then it will be a destabilizing element within a state that will never be able to afford a military establishment on the scale that we are now constructing. But, normally one expects that there will be a process of demobilization.

So, it seems to me that when one thinks about the revenue stream required for Afghan security forces, one needs to differentiate between the waging of the war and what will be required in steady state once that's over.

Senator CORKER. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Senator Udall.

Senator UDALL. Senator Kerry, thank you for holding this hearing. I think it's very important.

One of the things we aren't getting to—and Senator Kerry asked that big overall question, How do we make the transition? It seems to me—and we used to talk about this some, and this is the issue of a flexible transition deadline. And President Obama, I think, in that national security order, talked about July 11 being the date for an accelerated transition. And he really emphasized that, "ac-

celerated transition." And somehow, now we've gotten ourselves to the position where we're not talking anymore about an accelerated transition to an Afghan-led operation in July 2011; we've now moved to 2014.

And I'm kind of trying to figure out, you know, how that all happened. What is it—you know, it appears that all three of you agree that we should be doing that, and that the reason is the mission, that I think's been pinned down here, to defeat, disrupt, dismantle al-Qaeda in the Afghan/Pak region. What I can't understand is, if we had, as our—and which the President laid out, accelerated transition deadline and move in that direction, What is it that has happened that keeps moving it down the road? Is it the failure of the Afghans to really step up to the plate? Is it the corruption? Is it the inadequate partnership? I mean, what's going on here that has caused that?

And I think that's the big question, back in my State. And the other question that comes up with people, Why do we keep moving this down the road? So, please——

Dr. KILCULLEN. I can give you the historical aspect to that, Senator.

Last November in Lisbon, in Portugal, the NATO countries involved in the campaign got together for a summit meeting, at which they reviewed progress and made the decision to—NATO, as a group, made the decision to put a peg in the sand of 2014 for completing transition.

I think—and I'd defer somewhat to Dr. Biddle on this—I think that we are entering, in July 2011, what I would characterize as a war-termination window, so that we're basically getting to the point, by this summer, where we need to be beginning that transition or glidepath to full Afghan control. The administration and NATO have always said that it's going to be conditions-based. It's going to depend on how things pan out on the ground.

But, I think you're going to start to see a process—it's already happening, actually, in Afghanistan—of provinces and districts and, in particular right now, town centers starting to transition to Afghan National Security Force control. Right now, Kabul province and Kabul City, itself, is already fully under Afghan Security Force control. ISAF has identified a ring of provinces around Kabul, the next ring out, to be next in the priority order for transition. And we're also seeing significant centers—for example, Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand, in the south, being prepared for transition to the Afghans.

So, there will certainly be some transition activity this year. I would caution members of the committee into thinking that—against thinking that that means we can immediately pull those troops out of country. Once troops have left Afghanistan, it's almost impossible to get them back in. But, transition is much like that children's game, Jenga, you know, where you have the stack of wooden blocks, and you pull one out, and the structure becomes unstable, and you sort of see if it stabilizes, and then you try and pull another one out. It's an experiment. And as you go ahead with the drawdown of forces, the security environment changes in unpredictable ways, at the district level.

So, I think we're going to see significant transition activity, beginning this year. We are already seeing very significant progress in security in the last 18 months. Whether and how that translates into a drawdown of troops, I think is a different matter. But, we should certainly expect to see some drawdown this year and very strong progress toward drawdown by 2014.

Senator UDALL. Dr. Kilcullen, doesn't it worry you at all—you talk about NATO, but it looks like the major NATO forces are coming out much sooner than 2014. The British and the Polish, aren't their deadlines this year or next year?

Dr. KILCULLEN. The British deadlines, actually, are April 2015, which is the next British election, so that—the British will be there, Australians have already said that they'll be there, the Canadians have——

Senator UDALL. All the way to 2014.

Dr. KILCULLEN. Absolutely, yes.

Senator UDALL. OK.

Dr. KILCULLEN. The Canadians have already pulled out. But, the——

Senator UDALL. The Polish?

Dr. KILCULLEN. I'm not aware of their specific deadline. Other members of the panel may be.

Senator UDALL. Yes, OK.

Dr. KILCULLEN. Yes.

Senator UDALL. OK.

Dr. KILCULLEN. But, I think it's not a matter of the coalition collapsing around us; it's a matter of very significant military progress not matched by the political and reconciliation progress that needs to go with it if you actually want to get to a sustainable state in 2014. The issue is not about military success; it's about sustainability of progress after the military forces begin to come out.

Senator UDALL. So, it's a combination of nation-building and the kind of effort we're talking about, that I think Dr. Jones talked about, the particular area, up on the border, where al-Qaeda is partnering with tribes in those regions. I mean, are we putting in the resources we need to put into that area? It sounds like you're saying this is the area where all of these folks are at. Why aren't all our resources focused on that area—and the Afghan troops and to—why aren't we having that be our primary focus, if this is what our mission is, is to defeat al-Qaeda and the people that are partnered with them?

Dr. JONES. Well, I think our forces are primarily focusing on two areas. One is RC East, Regional Command East, where these areas are. And second is the Taliban's command and control, down in Regional Command South. So, I think, in that sense, our priorities are roughly accurate.

What I would also note, in—and you refer to "nation-building"—is—and this goes back to a comment we had earlier—I would strongly, strongly suggest that, both historically and presently, the answer is not only a central government in Afghanistan. In my view, that is an ahistorical Westernized approach to understanding Afghanistan. And I would argue that, as we look at transition, some of the more successful areas, ones that don't get a lot of

media attention—Uruzgan—Uruzgan province has largely transitioned from Taliban control in most of the districts to allied control. These are allied, both Ghilzai and Durrani Pashtuns, with a very small special forces—these are Operational Detachment Alpha—footprint. They've rebelled against the Taliban. That's part of, I think, a transition. And, in that case, it's not a central government presence through all of Uruzgan or Arghandab, in Kandahar, or Panjwaii, now, in Kandahar; it's a notable local presence as well. In fact, that's, I think, what we missed, for 9 years, from our strategy in Afghanistan, that General Petraeus has more recently added.

Senator UDALL. But, isn't it true the central government doesn't like that trend? They see that as a threat.

Dr. JONES. I would say it was actually President Karzai that supported the creation of this program, in the summer of 2010.

Senator UDALL. But having militias and locally armed operations, I think he's very wishy-washy on that. I——

Dr. JONES. Well, I think that the concern, in my discussions at the palace, has been, if these forces are operating against the central government, that is the most significant concern, and if they are large and offensive. That has definitely not been the case in any of the areas I'm talking about. These are village-level, small, tribal/subtribe, community-level forces. These are not militias, as the term is generally turned.

Senator UDALL. Senator Kerry, sorry I've run over so much here.

The CHAIRMAN. No, no——

Senator UDALL. I know Dr. Biddle wants to say something.

Dr. BIDDLE. Notwithstanding what Dr. Jones pointed out, I think it is fair to say, as a general matter, that the Karzai government has not been as enthusiastic about decentralization as we have been, in various respects, which brings us back to the point that Dr. Kilcullen mentioned earlier, which is the relative priority we place on the security effort, as opposed to the governance reform effort. I think the political strategy in the theater to induce a Karzai government, which is currently substantially less enthusiastic than we are about decentralization, to move in the direction we would like them to move is a tremendous unmet priority right now.

I think, for understandable reasons, the theater command has tended to believe that it needs to show early progress in security; and that is indeed a requirement. But, I think if what we do is to prioritize security to the point where we simply kick the can down the road on the eventual requirement to deal with governance issues, we run the risk of undermining the security improvements that we're buying at such great cost today.

So, to the extent that we need to change priorities in the conduct of the campaign, a change I would like to see is an increased emphasis, and an earlier priority placed, on doing the things we have to do in order to fill in the missing implementation guidance on how we're going to improve governance.

One last point, in due defense of the administration on the 2014 date, I think one way of thinking about it is that the deadline has moved somehow from 2011 to 2014. But, if one's going to be fair to them, what this really represents, I think, is a greater degree

of specificity, still substantially lacking, on what the end state is supposed to be. The original announcement was that what was going to happen in July 2011 was the beginning of something; it was very vague as to what the end of something looked like. There was no indication, at the West Point speech, of whether what began in 2011 would end by 2013, 2014, 2050. I think what the administration has gradually been doing is painting a slightly more detailed picture of what happens later. I think, however, a substantially more detailed picture than that is needed, for all sorts of reasons, both strategic and, I suspect, political.

Senator UDALL. Thank you, Senator Kerry.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator.

Let me come back to a couple things. I want to check on some history here. Is it accurate that during the ramp-up to the initial beginning of the war, under George Bush, that Mullah Omar offered up Osama bin Laden, providing he was transferred to a third country, Arab country? Anybody?

Dr. JONES. My understanding is CIA chief of station in Islamabad sat down for talks along the border, offered that alternative, and that was rejected by the Taliban. That's my understanding.

The CHAIRMAN. And then, subsequently, when the bombing started, was there not an offer made, at that point, to give him up? You're not sure?

Dr. JONES. I'm not aware of——

The CHAIRMAN. OK.

Dr. JONES [continuing]. Such an offer.

The CHAIRMAN. By Mullah Omar? By the Taliban?

What I'm getting at is, some people in the region have suggested that the Taliban have been somewhat chastened by this dislocation and loss of power, and by the loss of personnel that has taken place. And there are arguments made, by some, that the Taliban would not, in fact, welcome al-Qaeda back, because they're more interested in their own political power and possibilities within Afghanistan itself. Can you comment on that?

Dr. KILCULLEN. I'd like to just offer some data. I want to add one historical point to your historical comment, Senator.

The Taliban, in fact, surrendered after the fall of Kandahar, in 2001. Roughly 20 al-Qaeda—I'm sorry, Taliban senior leadership of the Quetta Shura signed a letter, which was delivered to President Karzai, by people, including Mullah Baradar, Mullah Dadullah Lang, Haji Zahir, all pretty well-known names, in terms of leading the Taliban now. Mullah Omar moved into Pakistan, but the majority of the leadership of the Kandahar Taliban actually surrendered to the Karzai government, acknowledged the authority of the Karzai government, and went back to their properties inside Afghanistan and tried to live in peace for a period after 2001.

What happened after that was what I would characterize as a failed peacemaking activity, where we continued our focus on al-Qaeda, now in Pakistan, and a number of actors in the Afghanistan environment, who were former mujahideen leaders, longstanding enemy of the Taliban, went after these people who had surrendered to settle scores. And, over about a 2-year period, most of the people who signed that surrender document fled, under the threat of torture or execution or abuse by these power brokers, into

Pakistan and gradually reformed their organization. The Quetta Shura wasn't even formed until October 2003; that's 6 months after the invasion of Iraq.

So, there's an Afghan history, here, that we need to think about that's more recent than, you know, the 19th century, about why these guys are actually fighting. And——

The CHAIRMAN. That's what I'm—that's exactly what I'm trying to get at.

Dr. KILCULLEN [continuing]. It has a lot to do with the perception of injustice.

The CHAIRMAN. Right, lack of justice.

Dr. KILCULLEN. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Justice is really the framework of what drove the original Taliban, is it not?

Dr. KILCULLEN. It certainly is. The Taliban initially was an armed vigilante movement.

Some people may be aware of a Afghan Border Police officer, called Abdul Raziq, who currently runs operations down in Spin Boldak, in southern Kandahar. His father, Mansour al-Raziq, was a famous and famously abusive warlord in the Kandahar area. He was the first warlord to be executed by the Taliban, in the early 1990s; they hanged him from the barrel of a tank on the Kandahar Road. And I think that indicates some of the problem right now, in that the people that are working with us most effectively on the ground are, in some cases, longstanding enemies of the Taliban precisely because they abused the population and the Taliban attacked them in the early 1990s.

To your second question, I've actually had the opportunity, over the last 7 years or so, to speak with a large number of Afghans in the field, including some very closely aligned with the opposition. What you tend to get from them is a statement to the effect that, "We don't like the Pakistanis, we don't like living in Pakistan, we don't like al-Qaeda, the worst thing we ever did was bring these Arabs into our midst who caused this problem and brought the international community down on us like a ton of bricks." And they will say, "Look, we're willing to swear off allegiance to al-Qaeda, we're willing to promise not to be a threat to any other country, we're willing to consider all kinds of reforms to Afghan governance, but we need foreign troops to leave the country."

You've got to put a huge grain of salt on comments like that from people within an organization that's very diverse and disorganized, in the way that the Taliban is. But, you do get a similar kind of theme from lots of different people, who basically say, "Look, we recognize that we screwed up in bringing al-Qaeda into Afghanistan. We've learned our lesson. Can we come back, now, and be part of a future solution?"

The CHAIRMAN. So, just playing devil's advocate here, if you're looking at our interests, our interests are to prevent us from being attacked again—then we need to have a sufficient level of stability. But, that stability, it seems to me, is not going to come until you have some capacity for this justice and for different groups to be adequately represented in the power structure.

Dr. KILCULLEN. I think that's a very good way to characterize it. Another way to think about it is exclusive versus inclusive security.

If you try to exclude groups from the security process, then you create spoilers who are going to attack that security process. If you try to make it inclusive, that's a much more complicated and longer term, messier process, but it ultimately has a higher chance of success.

The CHAIRMAN. Why, then, is our current presence structured as it is, in support of Karzai and the central government, but not politically adept enough or inclusive of these other efforts? Is that not doomed? We are plunking down a whole bunch of money for a long, long period of time because we're basically backing one set of people within an internal civil conflict. But perhaps our interests could, in fact, be satisfied differently?

Dr. KILCULLEN. I want to defer to Dr. Jones, here, because the points that he's been making about the Afghan local policing initiative, I think, are very important.

There's a second component to it—the village stability operations—which is, in fact, a political component about village-level and district-level political stability. And I think that United States forces in Afghanistan have, for a very long time, been pursuing an inclusive security model, trying to get the majority of actors, at the village and district level involved in local-level peace deals involving security commitments on all sides to create, if you like, a resilient structure that resists the Taliban. The problem that we have is in connecting that to our Afghan Government partners who, as you noted, have different interests. And I think that's part of the problem.

The CHAIRMAN. To what degree could Iranian interests, which are not aligned with the Taliban and also don't appreciate the drug trafficking, and to what degree could Russian and/or some of the 'Stans be brought to the table here? Is that a possibility?

Dr. KILCULLEN. I think that it's certainly a possibility. And I would add China to that mix. China has——

The CHAIRMAN. China, too.

Dr. KILCULLEN [continuing]. An incredibly strong economic and geopolitical interest in the stability of Pakistan.

The CHAIRMAN. And how do you see them being able to play that role? What could you see, strategically, being the framework that brings people together?

Dr. JONES. Well, I think, on the Iranian front, the Iranians have been helpful, in some ways, in providing a range of development assistance in the west and in parts of Hazarajat, in the center of Afghanistan. They have a vested interest, over the long run, in my view—and they've showed this, historically—of developing a range of energy ties with Afghanistan, and of pushing strongly for the prevention of a Taliban-governed Afghanistan. So, I think the Iranians actually have a quite helpful role to play.

I would caution that the problems we're going to have in trying to bring everybody together are, their interests do diverge somewhat. So, if one looks at the Russian—the primary Russian support networks tend to be with the Uzbek and Tajik communities of the north, not with the Pashtun communities in the south, which largely are Pakistan's support networks. So, at some point, for example, reconciliation discussions may be supported by Pakistan, but generally aren't going to be supported by the Russians and

their Tajik and Uzbek support networks. So, in that sense, there are going to be clear friction points in some aspects of trying to bring regional countries together.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Lugar.

Senator LUGAR. As a followup to that, in the past, we've talked about warlords, and the respective areas in which they were the leaders, and the continuing impact of this on the ability to govern Afghanistan from the center. When discussing this, we've also kept in mind the difference between the Pashtuns of the south and east and the myriad other groups spread throughout the country. With this in mind, hypothetically, what does political Afghanistan look like? Is a stable Afghanistan one in which we return to more localized government of sorts, with the warlords—the regional leader—who are more akin to the countries north of Afghanistan? Or is it closer to an Iran or even to the Pashtuns in Pakistan, in control of specific parts of the country?

This apparently was the case in Afghanistan for a long time. And, as all of you pointed out, Afghanistan was never very self-sustaining, in terms of economic support or political support. It was always buttressed by these alliances across the various borders. We've favored President Karzai and a central government and the idea that there would be national elections, a national Parliament, and so forth, in a manner somewhat akin to our traditions. But, is the former situation one that is ultimately more promising, in terms of this political stability we're talking about today?

Dr. BIDDLE. Well, I think, when Afghanistan has been stable, it's because there was an equilibrium relationship between the periphery and the center that obeyed a set of deals such that each side had a realm of autonomy and each side had a set of limited obligations toward the other.

The problem we're in now is we have a substantial disequilibrium, in which the periphery is too little constrained and is preying upon the population in the areas in ways that give the Taliban access to population centers and undermine our efforts. Some degree of reestablishment of a more stable equilibrium is necessary.

Now, the original 2001 plan recast that equilibrium radically in favor of the center. And I think that's proven to be unstable. To recast it radically in the direction of the periphery is where we're going now, by default. And it's not working very well for us, either.

I think what we need to do is find something between the radical empowerment of local power brokers that we've fallen into by accident since 2001, and the insistence on an unreasonable degree of centralization that we adopted at 2001. I think there are a variety of ways to think about recasting those bargains in ways that would make them more sustainable. Part of making them sustainable, however, is going to be resource input from outside the system, which probably means from us. For the center to be able to enforce any set of redline restrictions on the behavior of local power brokers, it's going to have to have sticks at its disposal and it's going to have to have carrots at its disposal. Its ability to raise revenue sufficient to make the carrots sweet or the sticks harsh is very limited. I think, if what we're going to aim for is a reestablishment of a more plausible balance between the center and the periphery in Afghanistan, we or others in the international system are going

to have to empower the center in such a way that it can offer a mix of sticks and carrots that are persuasive enough to reestablish the kind of bargains that existed in the Musahiban era.

Senator LUGAR. Well, Dr. Biddle, what you're describing is a situation, which you all touch upon, and that is considerable continued economic support from the United States. As you've stated, the necessary revenues will not be forthcoming on the Afghan side. And so, as we discuss this situation with our constituents and the Congress, we're talking about a stream of expenditures well beyond 2014. And this isn't often discussed very publicly, except in this committee, when we bring it up, because it is difficult, politically, given the arguments that we're having with regard to our current budget. But, in any event, it's important to try to get an idea on what is likely to bring about this stability that we're talking about.

Now, you've all also raised the question of—which is not necessarily frightening—but President Karzai's term of office comes to an end in 2014. We don't really know, as we've discussed Pakistan and the impact there, when terms of office come to an end or, how power is sorted out there. So, even as we're talking about the stability, from our standpoint today, there is a potentially unstable political framework in terms of who runs these countries and their interactions with each other, to say the least. This is beyond our ability to solve, here in this hearing or in this committee, but it's an important factor to be considering as we discuss the future commitment of our own resources to the region.

We already have real problems, in terms of delivery from the Karzai government, not to mention the problems of Kerry-Lugar-Berman in Pakistan, which are so difficult. With regard to Kerry-Lugar-Berman, we've spent only $179 million out of $1.5 billion in the whole year, on four projects, due to lack of confidence in anybody administering these funds or more fundamentally, disagreements regarding what we should be spending the funds on to begin with.

So, I just raise this as background for a dilemma. We finally get back to the thought that we're involved in all of this because we don't want people plotting attacks on the United States of America in Afghanistan, Pakistan, or the surrounding territories. And so, the basic question still is: What is the best route to prevent this? How much involvement, how much expense, for how long?

Yes, Dr. Jones.

Dr. JONES. Sir, if I could make a brief comment on that and to come back to this justice issue.

I think one unfortunate reality, for much of the last 10 years, even on the justice front, is the choice we gave—and I sat in Shuras, in villages, giving Afghans this choice between central government justice—that is, a court system that was nonexistent in their areas—and a Taliban shadow court. Well, as part of—and Dr. Kilcullen mentioned this earlier—the village stability operations portfolio that President Karzai signed, General Petraeus has been a major supportive of, is—the choice now is what Afghans have been doing generations, and that is supporting justice, in rural areas, through Shuras, informal decisionmaking.

There is an answer here. This is the component that Dr. Biddle mentioned earlier. The 50 years of stability, between 1929 and 1978, that has been a key, key part of it.

And, even on the dollar sign, just to give you an example, roughly the average cost for Afghan National Security Forces, for an individual, that's a combined police and army, is about $32 million per year. For the local police it's $6,000 per year. We're actually talking about fairly small amounts of money: $10,000 Afghan local police, $60 million. That's actually—and we're seeing, I would argue, major progress in the south on this issue. The U.S. Government assessments indicate this.

So, I would say some of the progress we've had, in the south, is actually coming with a very small expense.

Dr. BIDDLE. By way of brief amplification, with respect to the cost of what would be required to keep Afghanistan stable in the long run, again, it's important to distinguish between wartime costs and peacetime costs. If we look back to what Afghanistan absorbed from the international system in aid during a period of stability in the mid-20th century, it was typically receiving something in the order of $200–$300 million a year, from all sources, in 2011 dollars. Relative to what we are now spending to wage this war, that is extraordinarily cheap.

Even if you raised that, to account for the needs of wartime reconstruction or a different Afghanistan or other requirements, by a factor of ten, it would still be at a small fraction of what we spend today. I think the investment required of us to sustain an Afghanistan in the long term, relative to what we're spending now to create an uncertain outcome militarily, would be a modest investment.

If we decide that we are unwilling to make that commitment, that we are unwilling to make that investment in the long-term post-conflict stability of the country, we will, I think, with high probability, get an opportunity to run the social science experiment and see what happens if Afghanistan collapses and if Pakistan is then affected.

Senator LUGAR. Well, I thank you, each——

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator LUGAR [continuing]. All of you, for tremendous testimony. This is very helpful to us.

The CHAIRMAN. I think, obviously, everybody would opt for that expense, if we knew we could get there. The question is, "Do we have the political framework to get there?" which we want to come back to.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I apologize for having missed most of this hearing. I had to preside. So, hopefully I won't repeat some of the questions that have already been raised.

And I think this follows the line of discussion that you were having with Senator Lugar. As we look at what it will take to sustain the Afghan security forces at their current levels, obviously we're on an unsustainable course, given that, at the current level—or the target level, it would require about $10 billion a year. And the

Afghan Government takes in about $100 billion in revenue a year, so obviously there's a disconnect there.

So, I guess I want to start with a couple questions. First of all, we heard, in—I think, both in this committee and in Armed Services, that there is consideration of increasing the target number of Afghan security forces from 305,000 to as high as 378,000. My first question is: Do we really need to do that? And is that a realistic number? And then, what are the prospects, given particularly what you said, Dr. Jones, in terms of funding that level of security forces, of the United States ultimately footing the bill, if that's what we do? And obviously that's a concern that I would have.

So, I don't know who would like to address that first.

Dr. Kilcullen.

Dr. KILCULLEN. Yes—yes, Senator.

I think we've covered this, to some extent, but just to rehash. I think that—do we need to do it? Yes, we probably do need to do it. Because, if we lose the war, then all the money we've spent so far will be to naught. Can we afford it? That's the purpose, I think, of focusing heavily on the drawdown right now. The war—roughly 80 percent of the cost of the war is the cost of U.S. combat involvement. Another 10 percent is ANSF development, and another 10 percent is civilian assistance. So, we could get to a much, much more sustainable position, by drawing down U.S. forces by 2014, that would allow us to buy some time.

The devil in the detail, from my perspective, is the issue of demobilization. If you expand the Afghan security forces to 375,000 in order to win the combat phase of the war, what are you doing with all those armed guys afterward? And what's the plan for actually putting them into productive economically fruitful labor, rather than having them on the street with weapons? That has traditionally been the Achilles' heel of most foreign security assistance programs of this type. It's something that people in Afghanistan are well aware of. But, it's something that we really need to engage with, I think, as a priority problem as we get closer to 2014.

Senator SHAHEEN. So, you, then, agree with the assessment that we need to increase the Afghan security forces to about the 375,000 level.

Is that something that everybody else on the panel agrees with?

Dr. JONES. Yes, I do, with two caveats. One is, assuming that also triggers an American drawdown in numbers of forces. That is, the Afghan National Security Forces are coming up as the United States numbers are going significantly down. And second, just to add to that, the additional part of that number was—and this is in addition—up to 30,000 Afghan local police. So, this is both a top-down national security force and a bottom-up local police.

Dr. BIDDLE. I believe it's appropriate and economically efficient to increase Afghan National Security Forces, given their cost advantages over ours, subject to provisos, of course; one being, to amplify Dr. Kilcullen's point, that demobilization needs to be planned for during mobilization. Postponing that as a consideration that we'll deal mañana is dangerous. And I think, to NTMA's credit in Afghanistan, they are now doing, for example, literacy training that is designed, in part, to enable an eventual reabsorption of this force into a productive economy as it builds down. But, more gen-

erally, I think a fair criticism can be made that we aren't devoting enough attention to systematically thinking about the build-down process, to avoid having this institution become a source of instability once the war turns less violent.

The other proviso I would offer, however, is that there's a strong tendency, both in the United States and in theater, to see the problem of building an indigenous military force in Afghanistan in quantitative numerical terms. Do we have enough police? Do we have enough soldiers? Do we have enough trainers? Do we have enough ranges?

When you look at the history of military performance of developing-world armies, I would submit that very rarely does failure occur, when it occurs, because they didn't have enough training courses or enough rifle ranges or enough advisers. When developing-world militaries fail, it seems to me, it's typically because the officer corps becomes politicized and corrupted, because the society with which they are embedded is politicized and corrupted, and militaries tend to be products of the society that produces them. A corrupt officer corps cannot command effective combat behavior from its troops.

I think, in general, it would be to our advantage to pay more attention to the problem of the politics of Afghan security force development, rather than simply the numerical issues of, "Do we have the training regime filled with the necessary number of trainers, or not?" and to devote the intelligence resources in theater that are required in order to understand the question of the political orientation of the officer corps that we're creating, and to fit it into the context of similar examples elsewhere, and understand whether or not we're headed toward the development of an institution that's as professional and politically disinterested as we hope it is, or whether we're headed toward an institution that looks more like the history of other similar organizations in other places and times.

Senator SHAHEEN. Let me change subjects, before my time is up, because last week, during our hearings, a few of the witnesses suggested that bin Laden's death would give some opportunity for further, or more, negotiations with Taliban members in Afghanistan to renounce al-Qaeda. Do you agree with that assessment? And is there any evidence, at this point, to indicate how they might be reacting?

Senator SHAHEEN. Dr. Kilcullen.

Dr. KILCULLEN. We saw some pretty immediate commentary, by Taliban in Afghanistan, about the killing of Osama bin Laden. And it's interesting to look at that commentary and see how it differs in different groups in the Taliban. The Taliban, or ex-Taliban, representative on the High Peace Council came out pretty quickly and said, "Look, this will create a sort of circuitbreaker, and this will create the opportunity for people who wanted to negotiate, but felt like they couldn't abandon al-Qaeda while Osama bin Laden was alive, to really see that as an opportunity to move on."

Some junior commanders, a Taliban commander in Loya Paktia, which is southeastern Afghanistan, at the, sort of, field level, called in and said, "Look, these guys are Arabs. We're Afghans. We have a different jihad from them. We admired and respected Osama bin Laden, but it doesn't make any difference, we're just going to keep

fighting." And I think there's a significant element in which the younger generation of fighters, forward in Afghanistan, have a different attitude than the leadership group back in Pakistan.

And then the third thing that happened was, Muttawakil, who's the former Taliban foreign minister, came out and said, "Actually this will increase our desire to fight."

So, there's actually very different point of view coming from different parts of the Taliban.

I think what we're going to see, however, is the acceleration of various processes that have already started in al-Qaeda, that the power of the central group will be diluted somewhat as we get into an internal power struggle, where people are struggling to see who will replace Osama bin Laden at the central leadership level. Dr. Jones already referred to some, but I'd add Saif al-Adel to that group, head of the military committee. Abu Yahya al-Libi's already been mentioned. It's not always appreciated quite how divisive a figure Ayman al-Zawahiri is within al-Qaeda. So, I think it's quite likely that they may turn inward and spend some time organizing themselves. And that actually does create a window of opportunity.

But, I think we also should recognize that a lot of people that support the Taliban—sorry, support al-Qaeda, in Pakistan, do so for economic reasons. These are business deals. And I think that there's a lot of other things that go into the mix, other than simply, you know, Pashtun honor and politics.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Dr. JONES. Very briefly. I think, one issue is, this is—this is partly an intelligence question, so that is—that is, I will pose this as, What does our intelligence now say about that relationship? The second part of that, and the more concerning element, is, when we say "Taliban," that obviously includes a range of different militant groups. The strongest ties have often been—especially recently, with the Haqqanis in North Waziristan, Siraj Haqqani and some of the senior al-Qaeda leaders, including Ilyas Kashmiri. So, elements of the Afghan insurgency, I suspect, will continue to keep a relationship—a senior-level relationship with al-Qaeda, despite the death of Osama bin Laden.

But, I think the onus is now on the Taliban itself and its inner Shura. Give them a chance to break—they have the opportunity now—are we giving them a chance to break ties and actually demonstrate that? And so, I would say they have an opportunity now. Show us.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

Unfortunately, I have a 12 noon meeting with Senator McCain and some others, and I need to leave. Senator Corker is going to close out the hearing, or Senator Shaheen, if they both want to continue.

What I'd like to do is leave one question on the table. And I would like you to answer it, for the record, with Senator Corker. And that is, I'd like each of you to speak specifically to the political solution. In the absence of a military solution, I want each of you to give your vision of what is the political solution and how you, specifically, arrive at it. And I'd like you to lay that out.

And again, I appreciate, enormously, your coming in today. It's been very, very interesting. It really scratches the surface in a number of areas. What I'd like to do is ask you if you'd be willing to come back sometime, to have a discussion with members who might like to take part in it. We could have a little more back-and-forth and really dig into some of this stuff, in a nonhearing atmosphere. So, if you'd be willing to do that, I think it'd be very helpful.

Thank you for doing that.

But, if you'd answer that question, for the record, about your vision of that political settlement, that'd be very helpful.

Thank you.

Dr. KILCULLEN. Nobody seems to want to go first, so I'll throw myself on that particular grenade.

I think we should look at the coming constitutional crisis, in 2014, as an opportunity as well as a problem. When President Karzai's last term ended, which was April 2009, there was a long hiatus before the elections in August 2009, and then a long period before he finally began his second term in November 2009. Depending on how you define the start and end of his term, his time as President either comes to an end in April 2014 or in November 2014.

So, at some point in 2014, he's gone as President of Afghanistan, unless there's a significant change to the Afghan Constitution. And it's quite likely that some people associated with the President may be thinking that that's a good idea at this point, that, for the future stability of Afghanistan, for the future interests of their part of Afghan politics, it makes sense to change the arrangement so that he can remain in office. There are other people—in the Parliament, in particular—who are deeply opposed to that idea. And I think that that actually creates the opportunity for us to revisit some of the aspects of the constitutional makeup of the Afghan state that have really contributed to the problems that we've seen.

When I say "us," I mean, however, Afghans. You know, we have to set the condition under which Afghans can have that discussion themselves. In 2002, at the time of the Bonn Agreement, the country was still smoking, and there just wasn't the ability to bring together a large enough group of people to represent the range of interests in Afghanistan, and to have a genuine discussion about what's the appropriate way forward.

And so, to some extent the international community imposed a solution, which centralized power in the hands of a person too weak to exercise that power on his own. And so, he had to make a series of deals with power brokers across the Afghan environment. And, having done that, it's now very difficult for him to make the structure work. I think we should have some sympathy for President Karzai, given the circumstances that he was handed.

But, I think there's an opportunity to change that now, to relook at those issues. Issues, like, for example, the failure to authorize the creation of political parties. There's no political parties in Afghanistan. The only thing that really represents the sort of large-scale mass social movement that generates leadership as an American political party does is the Taliban. Legitimate political parties don't exist in the environment in Afghanistan.

The other factor is the Northern Alliance. And I think it's all too easy to talk about a negotiated solution. But, if that solution leaves out the Northern Alliance, if people in the other ethnic groups believe that they're going to be sold down the river as the result of a cozy deal between the Taliban and the international community, that's a recipe for future civil war in Afghanistan. So, I think there's an opportunity coming to seize that constitutional crisis and turn it into a more of a review of the makeup of the Afghan State. And I think, to the extent that we can get Afghans to buy into that process, rather than imposing it from outside, we have a much better chance of creating a sustainable governance structure.

Dr. JONES. Couple of key points on—this a very important discussion.

First, let me just say, to preface my remarks, that I do not think we can assume a settlement will work. Both the history in Afghanistan, multiple efforts in the 1990s, brokered by the U.N., did not work and succeed in a successful settlement.

Second, as part of that, most of the serious works on the end of insurgencies and civil wars indicate, at best, a 50/50 chance that it ends with a settlement. Many end with a military victory, by one side or the other, depending on which work you look at.

Nonetheless, I believe it's important, actually, to push forward on settlement discussions. And a few comments along those lines.

First, what will be important is who is the third party that is helping broker the deal. I think, frankly, this is a role where some organizations, like the U.N., may be able to play a useful role, depending on who the individual is. Possibly somebody like Lakhdar Brahimi, who appears to have some support among both sides, maybe somebody viewed as trustworthy.

Second, and as part of that, Pakistan has to be involved in any discussion. Based on the amount of assistance, both direct and indirect, they give to insurgent groups, they have to be a participator in the discussions, as, obviously, does the United States.

In addition, I would argue and support the construction even of an overt Taliban political wing. This seems to have been a necessary component of any deals made in northern Ireland, in a range of other contexts, in El Salvador, of an overt political wing, whose individuals are identified as supported. They can travel. So, in that sense, that may rethink some of the U.N. and other blacklists with a political element. And then give them a chance.

Now, how a political settlement could transpire, there are multiple avenues, but I would say those are key steps that have to be thought through: a, assuming that it may not work, so the military front should still be pursued; think very carefully about the third party, including the role of other states in the region, including Pakistan; and then supporting a political wing. This is, in my view, actually would be quite helpful.

Dr. BIDDLE. I think there's an important relationship between the political end state that we seek in Afghanistan and what we can do with respect to negotiations. If we insist on something that looks like the 2001 design, that makes it very hard to see what's in it for the Taliban in any possible settlement. The Taliban are not a broad-based popular movement in Afghanistan. If the most they're offered, in any prospective settlement negotiation, is the op-

portunity, perhaps, to run for office on an equal basis with any other candidate in a highly centralized national system where they have to compete on a national basis, their ability to command seats will be very limited. And it's hard to see how they would see this as being worth making compromises to accept.

I think, almost certainly, the direction of change, with respect to Afghan political end states, is likely to be in the direction of decentralizing nominal authority, but centralizing actual power, relative to what it's become by 2011. At the moment, we have this radical dysjunction between a paper blueprint for how the country is supposed to be run, which assigns almost all governing authorities of any consequence to Kabul, and the actual distribution of political power in the country, which is mostly in the hands of peripheral warlords and power brokers that tend to tie the hands of Kabul to an important degree.

I think the right way forward, in terms of thinking about what we can live with as an end state, is shifting the nominal powers of governance outward, but establishing enforceable limits on the behavior of peripheral authorities, such that we can keep them within bounds that don't create radical public dissatisfaction with a predatory form of local governance.

And I suspect that the key bounds that we need to pay attention to are: first of all, with respect to our national security interests involved, we have to ensure that local authorities in Afghanistan obey the foreign policy of the state, which is designed to prevent them from establishing safe havens for cross-border activity by militants, insurgents, or terrorists.

Second, we have to prevent them from preying on their neighbors locally.

But, third, and importantly, we need to cap the corruption take by local officials in ways that remove what is currently often an existential economic threat directed at local victims by powerful networks of malign officials. And I think a key to doing that is establishing a redline restraint at the taking of land. In an agrarian society, land and its control represent the ability to feed your family or a threat of starvation. One of the most damaging forms of predatory governance behavior in Afghanistan today is land-taking by networks of corrupt officials for the benefit of the network, which then drives the victims into the arms of the Taliban.

I think that if we establish a series of what amount to reconfigurations, through deals, of the relationship between the periphery and the center that say, "As long as you avoid a collection of activities that will yield enforcement action, prominently including the illegal taking of land, we will allow you a sphere of autonomy to do what you wish in other domains, but that if you violate any of the explicit terms of the agreement, then you can expect enforcement activity from the center," we, then, need, again, to be able to provide the resources to the center to enable and to enforce that deal.

If we arrive at a more practically recast bargain between the periphery and the center, that, in turn, opens up opportunities for a reconciliation negotiation with elements of the Taliban in which, for example, they could be offered things like seats in Parliament, position as a legitimate political actor within the society, either as

a party or as individuals. And you could imagine there at least being the terms for a conversation with different Taliban factions about under what conditions might they be willing to renounce al-Qaeda, lay down arms, and come into the government.

As a final point, with respect to the nature of that conversation with the Taliban, I think it's important that we regard both the prospective political role of the Taliban in a possibly reconfigured Afghan state and the military presence of foreign powers as negotiable. At the end of the day, a permanent U.S. military presence in Afghanistan is primarily an instrument, or a means to an end, of a stable South Asia.

It seems to me that, if we regard it as a means to an end, and not as an end of superordinate importance because of the consequences for power-projection capability of a United States base in Afghanistan, we need to be able to treat it as part of a negotiation with the Taliban, especially given the centrality of concerns with long-term foreign military presence in Afghanistan, in at least the things that the Taliban have been telling us to date.

Senator CORKER [presiding]. Thank you.

I know time's limited. I do—the issue you're talking about, about, basically, redlining behavior—And, you know, it's—I think all of us who go there are frustrated by the sense, it feels like we're fighting the Mafia, in many ways. And our soldiers are really fighting criminality mostly on the ground. I mean, that's mostly what's happening. But, the cultural aspect that you're talking about, about the takings of land and all of that, is that something that is Taliban-bred, or is that something that's just part of theAfghan culture, in general?

Dr. BIDDLE. I don't think this is cultural. I think this is largely a response to fairly recent events in Afghanistan since 2001; and especially the handing off, from the United States to NATO, of responsibility for the mission in 2003, and Afghan perceptions, in more recent years, that the United States lacks the will to bring this to a successful conclusion and is heading for the exit. Those perceptions lead to an expectation of abandonment and create what political scientists sometimes refer to as a "negative shadow of the future," in which people who believe that, although they would prefer it to be otherwise, the government is likely to fall, and is likely to fall in a relatively short period of time, have powerful disincentives to make positive long-term decisions about how they run their province or about how they run their business, and have enormous incentives for corruption in the near term, to get while the getting's good and provide for a safe exile after a looming collapse that people worry is on the horizon. That has created powerful incentives for networks of officials to come together in exploitative predatory ways so as to provide for economic gain for themselves and the members of their network, while they still have the opportunity.

And the taking of land, again, I think is, in many ways, the most virulent of these. It's not by any means the only piece of it, but it's the piece that's most threatening to the victims and tends, as a result, I think, to be the most important accelerant of insurgent activity in the country.

I don't see anything in the society, political culture, or history of Afghanistan that says that it's an appropriate role for local govern-

ment officials to throw people off their land and engage in corrupt real-estate deals that will enable short-term windfalls to the officials involved. I think this is relatively recent in nature, and is potentially reversible if we put sufficient effort into it in multiple domains.

Senator CORKER. As we've evolved to this sort of "good enough" vision of Afghanistan that continues to change—and I know each of you have talked about how that needs to be defined more fully—you know, it really, when you spend time, as you have more than me, I'm sure—President Karzai—I mean, it's almost getting back to his vision. I mean, I think he wanted to make some accommodations with some of the warlords, early on, and wanted us to have less troops on the ground. And you're talking about local Shuras. Our State Department, on the other hand, was focused on a sort of a Western democracy-type system, with a judicial system and all types of things happening there. Is the State Department in sync with what the military is now envisioning as "good enough?" Are their activities in concert with that?

Dr. KILCULLEN. I think everybody's looking at me because I used to work in the State Department.

I would actually characterize history slightly differently. I think that a lot of the decisions that were made, early in the process, about focusing on the central government were international community decisions made in Bonn and enforced through a series of international decisions.

I do think that the State Department now is very aligned with what the military is trying to achieve in Afghanistan, primarily through the mechanisms of things like district support teams; the regional platforms, where we have senior civilian representatives out in each regional command, conforming what the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development is doing, alongside the military. We're also looking at a very substantial increase in the number of State Department officers and USAID officers deployed forward, from roughly 300, about 18 months ago, to nearly 1,200 now. So, I think we've seen the State Department aligning and working very closely, hand in glove, with the military.

The problem in the political environment, I don't think lies with our own civilian agencies; it lies primarily with Afghan officials, who—as Dr. Biddle said, their interests may be differently aligned from ours. And it's just beyond the ability of any foreign intervening actor to really change the calculus that local power elites have toward their own population, certainly in the time that we've been present in the country.

So, I think the State Department, to the extent that it matters, is very fully aligned and has put a lot of effort into its activities. But, frankly, ultimately, that doesn't matter as much as what the Afghans themselves, particularly Afghan politicians and Afghan elites at the local level, actually decide about the process.

Dr. JONES. I think the relationship between the military and civilian agencies, speaking from experience here, has definitely improved over the past 2 years, on this front, where especially organizations like the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Transition Initiatives, or OTI, has and is working, actually,

fairly closely with Special Forces team on bottom-up initiatives, these kind of initiatives we've talked about.

So, I think that Dr. Kilcullen is right, that this was an international issue for a long time. The military probably moved earliest on it, in around the 2009 period—but, I think, at this point, most everybody is on board.

The biggest challenge probably is, when you get into rural areas of Afghanistan, the military footprint is still the largest, by far. So, if civilian agencies are restrained, either because of their presence at the Embassy in Kabul or at very finite number of provincial reconstruction teams or other places, it's the military out in the field that is the one that generally executes a lot of these governance, development, and military missions, just because they're the only ones out there, in a range of places.

Dr. BIDDLE. I think a great deal of progress has been made in what is famously the hardest part of counterinsurgency. Unity of effort, even within the military, much less across the military and nonmilitary dimensions of the effort, is famously difficult in this sort of undertaking.

That said, there are still some important challenges that remain. And I think they tend to stem, in part, from the underdevelopment of the government side of the campaign plan for the conduct of operations in the theater.

There are a variety of tradeoffs between different parts of what we seek to do in governance development. Many of the local power brokers that we've been discussing earlier in the hearing, for example, have militias or other security services that we, from time to time, rely upon to augment our security effort in parts of the country. That creates a short-term security benefit and a long-term governance problem.

To resolve these kinds of tradeoffs, and, most importantly, to prioritize and sequence their resolution—we're not going to simultaneously be able to constrain every malign actor in Afghanistan—we need to have a sense of who to start with, and in what order to proceed with the others. In order to do that, and to coordinate the resolution of those dilemmas and tradeoffs, with the State Department and with other countries that are part of the coalition requires, I think, a degree of explicit planning that, at the moment, I think, is still underdeveloped, relative to the planning that we do for the conduct of security operations in the country. I would like to see the governance side of the campaign plan get the degree of detailed development that the security side has had now for some years.

Senator CORKER. Well, thank you all. I'm going to leave and turn it over to Senator Shaheen. But, your testimony has been outstanding, and thank you for your contribution.

Senator SHAHEEN [presiding]. I just have one question before closing.

And, as you all were talking about what a negotiated settlement might look like, one of the things that no one mentioned was what happens to protect the rights of Afghan women as part of any kind of settlement. And what should we be doing to ensure that those rights aren't negotiated away as we might be talking to the Taliban or any other forces within Afghanistan?

Dr. KILCULLEN. The Taliban, about 12 months ago, changed their position on the education of women so that the current position which they are putting forward is that, "It's perfectly okay for women to go to school. We want women to work productively and be part of the community. But, what's not acceptable is for foreigners to come in and tell us how to treat women in our community." And I think that was probably a tactical shift. It's hard to know whether they really——

Senator SHAHEEN. Right.

Dr. KILCULLEN [continuing]. Meant that or not. But, it certainly was a response to popular pressure from the Afghan population, where people were saying, "Well, hang on a second, if you guys come back in, what are the implications for us?"

So, I think one of the things that we'll see, if we do get into a negotiation process, is that there's now a fairly significant body of public opinion in Afghanistan in favor of increased freedoms and increased equality for, you know, 50 percent of Afghanistan. And I think that that's going to be a factor that any future settlement—all parties are going to have to take that into account, including the Taliban. Whether they really mean it or not, they'll have to engage with that desire at some point.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Anything?

Dr. JONES. Yes, I think this is an important issue. And I think what it comes down to, among other things, is, What is the vision, as part of a settlement, that the Taliban will agree to, in moving forward, in Afghanistan? If it's a vision that is much like the vision in the 1990s, with a whole range of issues—its treatment of women, which was, frankly, despicable; its treatment even of general forms of leisure activity, like kiteflying—that's the vision that is agreed on in a settlement; I don't think it's in the Afghan population's interest.

If, on the other hand—as I think Dr. Kilcullen has already indicated, their positions are changing, at least among some commanders; and so, what is agreed as part of a settlement, is a different vision than they have laid out in the past, I think that is something that is acceptable.

Now, the problem is, even on the protection of the rights of women, local Afghans across the country view this differently. So, in some areas of very conservative areas of the south, they may view it differently than in more progressive parts of urban Afghanistan, including Kabul. So, I would say, one has to proceed with some caution, here, that we're not pushing instability into some extremely conservative places too quickly.

But, I will say that, in much of urban Afghanistan, there has been a fundamental change on the protection of the rights of women, from 10 years ago, when I first walked into Kabul. And even measuring the percentage of women who are walking with only a veil, or at least are mostly uncovered, as a percentage of—versus those who are wearing the full burqa, it is fundamentally different from 2001, when I was first there.

Dr. BIDDLE. One of the arguments that's been made in favor of a more centralized system in Afghanistan is to allow for protections of minority rights and women's rights in ways that would not

necessarily be favored in conservative locales in the south. If one is going to decentralize, in the interests of aligning ends and means in Afghanistan, one is going to, therefore, allow for the possibility of greater variance in the way that these issues are resolved in localities.

Now, in exchange for a degree of acceptance of more conservative behavior in some parts of the south, however, one could also obtain a greater degree of liberalism among urban communities in parts of the country where attitudes toward, for example, women's education are more Western than what a national consensus could necessarily secure.

But, one of the things that we have to think about, as we think about decentralization, is that it's not a panacea and there are costs involved to values that we care about in walking down that road. It's not an accident that the 2001 Bonn system and the 2004 constitution were wired together the way they are. We do give something up when we abandon that and accept a degree of decentralization.

Now, one important protection that can mitigate the degree of loss to things that we value is if the system retains its democratic character as it decentralizes, inasmuch as the parts of Afghanistan in which a radical pre-2001 Taliban system of women's rights would be preferred are very, very few in number. As long as a Taliban representation in the Afghan Government has to compete, either for election to its seat or for influence over decided policies, with others in the Afghan public square, who are likely to represent true Afghan public opinion more accurately, we build in a degree of protection against radical oppression of women and minorities' rights.

But, as we decentralize, we are inevitably going to be moving into an area in which we permit a greater degree of variation within Afghanistan and the way they make these choices.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, that only works, though, if you've got an election or a system of democracy that actually works and is not corrupt in the way that the elections ultimately work. So, you don't see this as an issue that you would put in that redline category, where you put the taking of land, then.

Dr. BIDDLE. I think this gets to the question of, "How much are we willing to invest to get a better result?" I think a better result than a system tremendously reliant on brokered deals with local power brokers is a system that's much more reliant on democratic accountability and transparency as the way of controlling local behavior. That's probably going to be harder to obtain because the divergence between the interests of those who currently hold power in the periphery and that system is greater.

But, I think, in general, when we think about long-term results in Afghanistan, to some extent you get what you pay for; and the more ambitious an outcome we hold out for, the greater the investment that's going to be required of us to obtain it. In many ways, the ideal outcome, from the standpoint of the United States, is the 2001 Bonn system, if we could find a way to make it work. The level of investment required to make it work, I think, is beyond the reasonably practical. And, therefore, that alternative, I think, is unrealistic.

A decentralized democracy is more realistic, but will require greater investment than, for example, the alternative that I've been referring to as "internal mixed sovereignty," in which we accept a degree of extra democratic behavior in localities, as long as they agreed to delimit what they do. If we're unwilling to make the investment required to bring about a decentralized but still democratic system, then we are stuck with outcomes that we don't like as much. I think there is inevitably a relationship between our ambitions and our investments.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you all very much for being willing to stay. I wish I could have been here to hear the whole discussion.

So, at this time, I'll close the hearing.

[Whereupon, at 12:30 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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