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AFTER THE VICTORY: AMERICA'S ROLE IN AFGHANISTAN'S FUTURE

JAMES PHILLIPS, JACK SPENCER, AND JOHN C. HULSMAN, PH.D.

The United States has scored a decisive military victory in Afghanistan against the al-Qaeda terrorist network and the radical Taliban regime. Now it must work to assure a stable peace. The Taliban and its al-Qaeda allies remain a potentially destabilizing force in both Afghanistan and neighboring Pakistan. The priority for U.S. policy must be to hunt down the terrorist leaders and bring them to justice. Long-term political stability will require secure international economic support and multilateral cooperation from Afghanistan's neighbors, particularly a reformed Pakistan.

In attempting to shore up the Afghan state, Washington must not succumb to the temptation of nation building. Afghanistan has long been divided by deep-seated geographic, ethnic, religious, and tribal cleavages, and it would be foolhardy to assume that these divisions can be overcome by foreign social engineering imposed by Washington or the United Nations. To create a stable political environment favorable to regional peace as well as U.S. interests, the quarrelsome factional leaders in Afghanistan must be convinced that they have much to gain by cooperating with the U.S.-backed central government and much to lose by opposing it.

Specifically, the United States should now:

- **Revise its strategy and reconfigure its military forces in Afghanistan for a low-intensity counter-guerrilla war.** To root out the remaining small contingents al-Qaeda and Taliban forces, the United States should rely increasingly on small, mobile, special forces units backed by air power and air-mobile ground troops. These units should work with Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) paramilitary units and the Afghan central government to cultivate intelligence sources among the local populations, and to help identify, locate, and capture fugitive al-Qaeda bands and the top Taliban leadership.
- **Provide military resources to support limited non-combat functions, as appropriate.** Though the United States should not commit

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its overburdened military resources to additional humanitarian, basic security, or peace-keeping functions, its resources could be used to support those activities in cases of emergency.

- **Help train the Afghanistan army.** Afghanistan's stability will depend largely on its ability to raise and maintain a self-sustaining army. The United States and a few of its allies are uniquely equipped carry out this vital mission.
 - **Provide expertise to the Afghan government on building infrastructure and civil institutions.** Limited teams of civil affairs, public affairs, and psychological warfare experts, as well as military engineers and American international development personnel, should provide their expertise to help rebuild Afghanistan's infrastructure and civil institutions.
 - **Make clear that America's primary interest is to prevent agents of international terrorism from using any part of the country as a base of operations.** The United States should maintain a limited but highly mobile force to prevent the reappearance of terrorist cells in Afghanistan.
 - **Create realistic timetables for the operation based on war aims.** Though the President has done an outstanding job in setting the war aims, he must not succumb to pressure to define victory by arbitrary time constraints. Doing so would result in a strategy driven by time rather than by objectives.
 - **Rule out committing U.S. combat troops to a U.N. peacekeeping effort.** At no time should the United States commit troops to the International Security Assistance Force, which could take limited resources away from the broader war on terrorism.
 - **Resist efforts to expand the mission of the international peacekeeping force beyond its present limited role.** The overused suggestion that the United States should replicate its efforts in postwar Germany and Japan is the wrong way to bolster the interim government in Kabul. The best approach is to win over regional leaders, not to bully or attack them head-on. This approach would limit the possibilities that the international force would get caught up in the bitter internal rivalries that dominate Afghan politics.
 - **Support a new political arrangement that conforms to the facts on the ground.** U.S. policy must be based on Afghanistan's political and ethnic conditions. The best framework for a new Afghan government would be stable but limited central authority with much power devolved to the tribal level. The United States should broker a settlement between the interim government and the country's powerful regional leaders. Such a confederalist approach would lock those leaders into the postwar settlement as positive forces for stability rather than as potentially disruptive agents.
 - **Offer limited technical advice and aid geared toward judicial reform to bolster Afghan economic opportunities.** The Karzai government and certain regional leaders will need technical assistance to establish a judiciary that safeguards property rights. Wherever possible, the United States should encourage regional free trade initiatives, particularly on textiles and agricultural products, to speed economic growth.
- Conclusion.** The United States decisively won the first phase of the war in Afghanistan, but now it must adjust its strategy and win the peace. To achieve this next victory, the United States should remain engaged militarily for several years to root out the pockets of al-Qaeda and Taliban forces that have burrowed into remote areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. But it should not commit military forces to an open-ended peacekeeping mission or a nation-building experiment. Washington should help the Afghans rebuild a stable political system and functioning economy, but only the Afghans themselves can build a nation.
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AFTER THE VICTORY: AMERICA'S ROLE IN AFGHANISTAN'S FUTURE

JAMES PHILLIPS, JACK SPENCER, AND JOHN C. HULSMAN, PH.D.

The United States has scored a decisive military victory in Afghanistan against the al-Qaeda terrorist network and the radical Taliban regime and must now work to assure a stable peace. Although the Taliban and its al-Qaeda allies¹ were forced to flee into hiding, they remain a potentially destabilizing force in both Afghanistan and neighboring Pakistan. The paramount U.S. goal must be to hunt down the top leaders of these Islamic terrorist movements and bring them to justice. The direct threat that they pose to Americans also has given the United States a clear stake in the establishment of a stable Afghan government that can actively block their return to power.

In cooperation with the multinational International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), U.S. military forces should play a role as the ultimate guarantor of the interim government under President Hamid Karzai. Though the priority of U.S. policy must be to hunt down the terrorist leaders, for long-term political stability it will be crucial to secure international economic support and multilateral cooperation among Afghanistan's neighbors, particularly in a reformed Pakistan.²

In attempting to shore up the Afghan state, Washington must not succumb to the temptation of nation building, as some suggest. Afghanistan is a country, but not a nation. Its territory has long been divided by deep-seated geographic, ethnic, religious, and tribal cleavages, and it would be foolhardy to assume that these divisions can be overcome by foreign social engineering imposed from Washington or the United Nations. Afghan Communists, backed by the military might of the Soviet Union, were unable to impose their rule after a 1978 coup despite 14 years of war that claimed over a million Afghan lives. The extremist Taliban failed to impose its will in northern non-Pushtun areas after coming to power in

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1. For an analysis of the relationship between bin Laden's al-Qaeda network and the Taliban, see James Phillips, "Defusing Terrorism at Ground Zero: Why a New U.S. Policy Is Needed for Afghanistan," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 1383, July 12, 2000.
2. See James Phillips, "Keys to the Endgame in Afghanistan," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 1507, December 6, 2001.

1996 despite the support of the Pakistani army, thousands of foreign Islamic militants, and hundreds of millions of dollars in aid from Saudi-born Osama bin Laden and other Islamic extremists.

Twenty-three years of continuous warfare have created a complex constellation of regional, tribal, and ethnic leaders, including some denigrated as “warlords” in the Western media. These stubborn and hardy survivors of Afghanistan’s kaleidoscopic politics will not meekly accede to foreign plans for nation building or bow down to a Kabul-based central government if they perceive that doing so threatens their personal power. To create a stable political environment favorable to regional peace as well as to U.S. interests, quarrelsome factional leaders in Afghanistan must be convinced that they have much to gain by cooperating with the U.S.-backed central government and much to lose by opposing it.

To this long-term end, the United States should make clear that its primary interest is to prevent international terrorists from using any part of the country as a base of operations in the future. It should revise its military strategy for fighting a low-intensity counter-guerrilla war and provide military resources for limited non-combat functions, as appropriate. The President should resist pressure to define victory in Afghanistan by arbitrary timetables instead of war aims. U.S. combat troops should not be committed to a U.N. peacekeeping or nation-building effort in Afghanistan, as some have suggested; nor should they be used to support the expansion of the mission of the international peacekeeping force beyond its current role.

The United States should provide expert help to train an Afghanistan army and build infrastructure as well as civil institutions. It should also consider limited technical advice and aid to Kabul to encourage judicial reforms that bolster economic opportunities for the Afghan people. And it should support a new political arrangement in Afghanistan that conforms to the political facts on the ground.

GROWING POLITICAL STRAIN IN AFGHANISTAN

The United States won an overwhelming military victory in the first phase of the war against terrorism in Afghanistan. The military operations, begun less than a month after the September 11 terrorist attacks on America, had successfully driven the Taliban out of power in Kabul by mid-November, even before the World Trade Center ruins in New York had stopped smoldering.

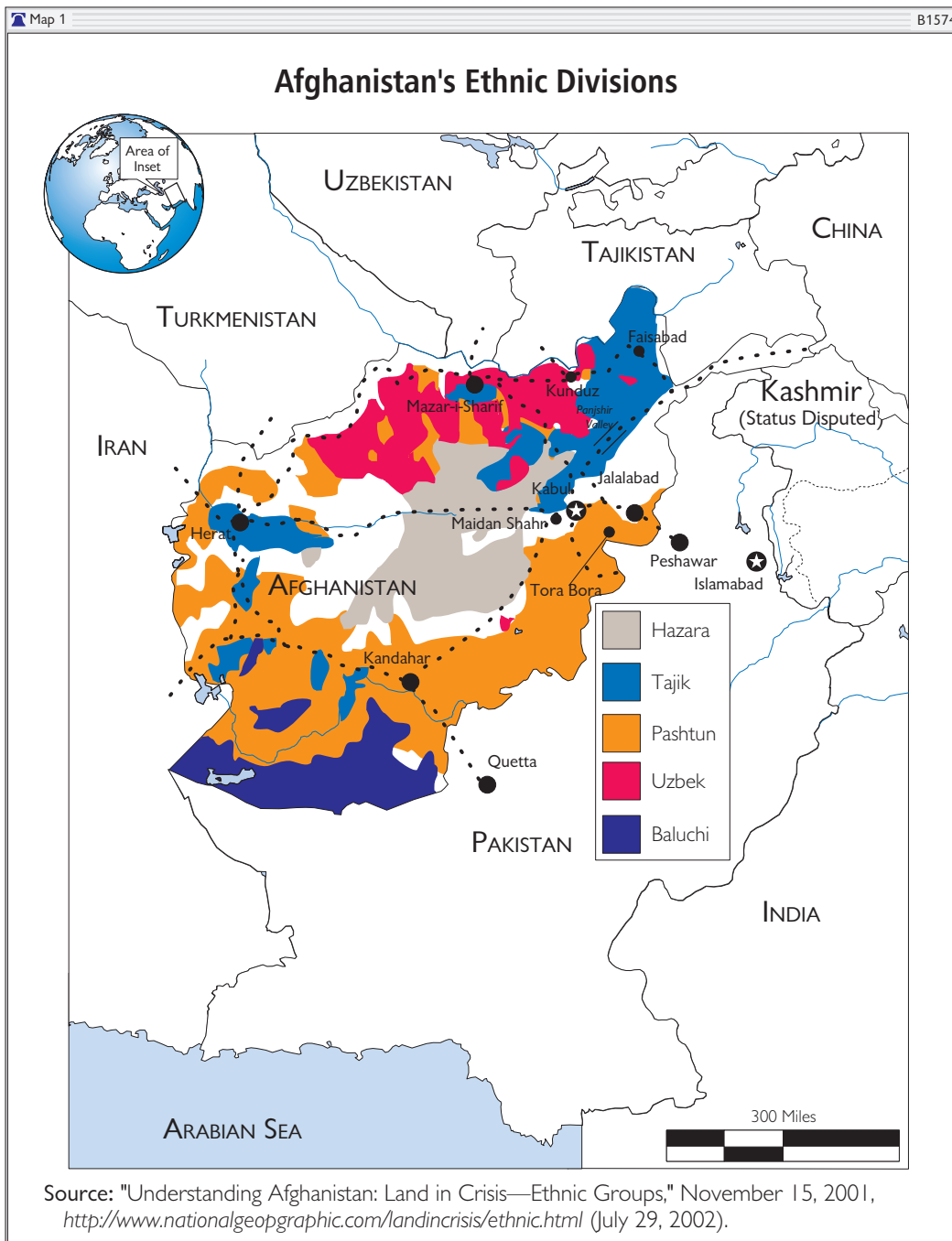
Today, the situation in Afghanistan is extremely favorable militarily for the United States and its allies. Approximately 7,000 U.S. soldiers have been deployed, along with 5,000 peacekeeping troops in the ISAF to maintain order in the capital. The al-Qaeda forces, after briefly trying to make a stand in their longtime mountain redoubt at Tora Bora and then vainly trying to regroup near Gardez, have been forced to disperse and go into hiding. Most of them are believed to have fled into Pakistan.³

In spite of the favorable military situation, however, the political situation in Afghanistan is increasingly troubling. Although U.S. troops have captured or killed roughly half of the top 30 leaders of the Taliban, they have not captured Mullah Mohammed Omar, its supreme leader, or many of his chief lieutenants. This is an indication that many Afghans, particularly the ethnic Pushtuns of southeastern Afghanistan, have refused to cooperate in hunting down these leaders. Some Pushtuns, particularly in the Taliban’s former strongholds in southern Afghanistan, have helped them to avoid capture. Many Pushtuns, members of the largest ethnic group that historically has dominated Afghan politics, clearly resent the ascendancy of Tajik leaders from the northern part of the country in the interim government formed in June. The Tajiks, along with members of the Uzbek and Hazara ethnic groups, had formed the backbone of the Northern Alliance opposition to the Taliban regime.

The current government is to rule for two years until elections are held to form a new one. Hamid Karzai, president of the interim government, is a

3. Many al-Qaeda members also crossed Pakistan to go into Kashmir after the defeat of the Taliban. Western diplomats estimate that about 300 members of al-Qaeda currently operate in that troubled region. See Thom Shanker and Celia Dugger, “Rumsfeld Sees Indications of Qaeda’s Operating in Kashmir,” *The New York Times*, June 13, 2002, p. A14.

Pushtun from southern Afghanistan who has sought to broaden his ruling coalition by including more Pushtun leaders. These efforts suffered a setback on July 6 when Vice President Haji Abdul Qadir, the second highest-ranking ethnic Pushtun in the government, was assassinated in Kabul. Qadir, a man who had many enemies, could have been the target of the Taliban, which he had fought for many years; al-Qaeda; or Afghan drug smugglers threatened by his efforts to eradicate the poppy crop, which the Taliban and al-Qaeda have relied on in part to help fund their operations.⁴ His unsolved assassination has ignited suspicions among Pushtuns that he fell victim to the Tajik-dominated intelligence and internal security services, which could drive a bigger wedge between Pushtuns and non-Pushtuns in the government.



Afghan domestic politics recently were roiled by a July 1 incident in the village of Kakarak 70 miles north of Kandahar. An American AC-130 gunship, providing fire support for a U.S. special forces team

that had been fired upon, reportedly killed over 40 Afghans, including 25 at a wedding celebration. This special forces operation was part of the U.S. campaign to hunt down Mullah Omar and several

4. Qadir, who oversaw the Western-financed campaign to halt the growing of poppy plants for the production of opium and heroin, recently had complained that some of the farmers who were slated to be paid \$500 per acre to uproot their poppy crops had not received the payments he had promised them. Qadir, who was suspected of past involvement in the drug trade, also may have made enemies by favoring one drug mafia over another one. See Dexter Filkins, "Afghan Killing May Be Linked to Drug Trade," *The New York Times*, July 8, 2002, p. A6.

of his lieutenants who reportedly are hiding nearby in their home province of Uruzgan.⁵

President George W. Bush called President Karzai to apologize for the incident, but the deaths prompted the first anti-American demonstration in Kabul since the fall of the Taliban. The incident also led the governor of the Kandahar province, Gul Agha Sherzai, to propose that U.S. military forces obtain the permission of provincial governors before launching military operations in their territories. Although the Karzai government and other provincial governors rejected that proposal, they are under intensifying public pressure to distance themselves from the U.S.-led war effort, which is becoming more unpopular among southern Pushtuns, the former power base of the Taliban.

Each tragic friendly-fire incident erodes the political standing of the United States and its relationship with the interim government in Kabul. Various Pushtun tribes could become more hostile to the U.S. military presence and to the Karzai government if they conclude that the efforts to capture Taliban leaders are part of a broader plan to assure the domination of non-Pushtun minority factions over the Pushtun tribal belt.

The window of opportunity in which many Afghans, even former Pushtun supporters of the Taliban, give the United States the benefit of the doubt may be closing. Afghanistan's bitter political rivalries are intensifying. The fragile Northern Alliance coalition is gradually dissolving amid tensions among the dominant Tajik Jamiat Islami faction, General Abdul Rashid Dostam's Uzbek faction, and the smaller Hazara factions. Warlords jealously guard their independence by playing one foreign power against another. For example, Ismail Khan, the governor of Herat province, has exploited Iranian aid to maintain an independent power base, while General Dostam receives heavy support from Uzbekistan and Russia.

The most dangerous trend is that the southern Pushtuns are becoming disenchanted with the interim government, which they believe does not adequately advance their interests. The recent

assassination of Pushtun leader Haji Abdul Qadir and continued friction over the government's support for the U.S. hunt for Taliban leaders in their Pushtun strongholds are likely to exacerbate this trend. More friendly-fire incidents like the July 1 attack are likely to stoke anti-American sentiments in the Pushtun areas of southeastern Afghanistan, the focal point of the ongoing U.S.-led campaign against the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

These troubling trends have prompted calls on Capitol Hill for increased U.S. involvement in peacekeeping operations and efforts to assure Afghanistan's internal security. On July 7, three well-meaning U.S. Senators—Evan Bayh (D-IN), Chuck Hagel (R-NE), and Bob Graham (D-FL), chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee—called for expansion of the U.S. military presence inside Afghanistan.⁶ Such an expansion of the U.S. military commitment, with its resulting mission creep, is ill-advised and could have dangerous consequences.

U.S. MILITARY INVOLVEMENT

The successful military campaign in Afghanistan is a testament to America's warfighting abilities, especially when one considers that on September 10 no war plan was on the shelf for an Afghan invasion and that General Tommy Franks, Commander in Chief of U.S. Central Command, had received the order to begin planning the action on September 20. The campaign began less than three weeks later. The success of the campaign thus far can be attributed to the fact that President Bush and his military planners followed a few simple rules about how and when to apply military force:⁷

RULE #1: Use military force to defend America's national security.

Following the September 11 attacks, the United States could no longer ignore the threat of terrorism against the homeland. Although Americans and U.S. territory have been targeted by terrorists repeatedly in recent years (such as in the 1993 World Trade Center

5. Pentagon officials noted that U.S. forces were fired on three times in the month before the incident by Afghans who later claimed that they were merely "celebrating." See Michael Elliott, "Are We Losing the Peace?" *Time*, July 15, 2002, at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/printout/0,8816,300648,00.html>.

6. "Senators Push for Active Afghan Role," Associated Press, July 7, 2002.

bombing, the August 1998 embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, and the October 2000 bombing of the USS *Cole*), the magnitude of the September 11 attacks underscored America's vulnerabilities. Furthermore, the September 11 attacks confirmed that some terrorists will use any means to inflict as much damage as possible on the United States.⁸

Combined with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the threat to national security posed by this radical form of terrorism is unlike any the nation has ever faced. All elements of national power need to be harnessed to defeat it, including the use of military force.

RULE #2: Military goals should be clearly defined, decisive, attainable, and sustainable.

The Bush Administration has been clear about what its objectives are and are not. The broad military objective of the war on terrorism is "to defeat those who use terrorism and those who house or support them."⁹ In Afghanistan, a training ground for global terrorism, the U.S. military goals are to "deprive the terrorists of a sanctuary...where they could safely plan, train, and organize—not only to capture and kill terrorists, but to drain the swamp in which they breed."¹⁰

Just as important is the clarity of the U.S. goals neither to occupy Afghanistan nor to dictate the final form of the post-Taliban govern-

ment. Forging democratic institutions in Afghanistan is not a requisite of success. The United States can accept a non-democratic postwar Afghanistan as long as that country no longer serves as a base for anti-American terrorists. Until this goal is assured, U.S. armed forces must remain present and active. Once that goal has been achieved, the United States must re-evaluate its continuing military contribution.

RULE #3: Military force in Afghanistan should not be committed at the expense of more important security commitments.

One of the flaws in U.S. foreign and military policy during the 1990s was an over-commitment of U.S. military forces to missions that had little or nothing to do with America's important national security interests. The result was an overextended and underfunded force, which spent much of its time on missions it was not designed to conduct, such as those in the Balkans, Somalia, and Haiti.

In contrast, the U.S. campaign in Afghanistan was directly tied to the defense of vital U.S. interests: self-defense against Osama bin Laden's lethal global terrorist network. The threat posed by al-Qaeda, backed by the Taliban, was so severe that the United States had no choice but to take whatever action was necessary to defeat it. Now that the threats posed by terrorists in Afghanistan have subsided, the

7. These rules are based on the Weinberger Doctrine that laid the groundwork for the Powell Doctrine, which was used by former Heritage analyst John Hillen to develop guidelines for U.S. military intervention. See John Hillen, "American Military Intervention: A User's Guide," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 1079, May 2, 1996. The Weinberger Doctrine stated that U.S. troops should be committed to combat abroad only if it is deemed vital to U.S. national interests or those of U.S. allies; if it is made wholeheartedly and with the clear intention of winning; if the political and military objectives and the ways to meet them are clearly defined; if, as conditions change, the commitment remains in the national interest; if, before a commitment is made, there is some reasonable assurance of popular and congressional support; and if the commitment to arms is a last resort. See also editorial, "The Weinberger Doctrine," *The Washington Post*, November 30, 1984. The Powell Doctrine added to these rules that the United States should use overwhelming force to defeat an enemy.
8. Many commissions and reports had warned that the terrorist threat was growing in magnitude. "Countering the Changing Threat of International Terrorism," the 1998 report of the National Commission on Terrorism (Bremer Commission) is one of the most comprehensive.
9. As described at http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Oct2001/t10072001_t1007sd.html (July 22, 2002).
10. Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense, statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, "Developments in Afghanistan," June 26, 2002.

President will need to make decisions about future military resource allocation as new theaters in the war on terrorism emerge.

RULE #4: The use of military force should enjoy public support.

Public support of military efforts in Afghanistan has not waned. An April 2002 Gallup poll shows that up to 88 percent of Americans believe the United States should keep troops in Afghanistan.¹¹ This is important because, without public and congressional support, prolonged military engagement will be extremely difficult to sustain. Public support will help keep troop morale high and give politicians the will to do what is right for the nation.

RULE#5: Allow the armed forces to succeed.

Unlike military operations of the recent past, President Bush gave America's military leaders the freedom to develop war plans for Afghanistan that were based on the best way to achieve the objectives, not the best way to appease opponents. With this freedom, General Franks was able to develop and execute a successful war plan on very short notice. He was allowed to use indigenous forces to the extent he deemed necessary, which in turn has allowed him to keep America's military footprint in Afghanistan relatively small.

By staying out of internal Afghan disagreements, the United States has been able to pursue relationships that best facilitate its military objectives. This is important in making sure that U.S. forces are not perceived as an occupying force. With this strategy, the United States has been able to advance its campaign rapidly with only around 7,000 troops, rather than the 100,000–200,000 many predicted would be needed.

Although the warfighting mission is far from over, the campaign to ensure that the “last

remnants of al Qaeda and the Taliban are flushed out and destroyed”¹² must evolve into a reconstruction mission. Indeed, in some respects it already has. America has come under greater pressure to commit more of its military resources to this effort. Given the importance to national security of helping to build an Afghanistan that does not export terrorism, some U.S. military resources may be legitimately committed to a reconstitution effort. The critical point is to avoid committing U.S. military resources to activities that can be accomplished by other nations, organizations, or even other U.S. government agencies.

THE U.S. ROLE IN REBUILDING A STABLE AFGHANISTAN

America's armed forces have done their jobs valiantly in Afghanistan. Organized and trained to fight the nation's wars, that is what they do best. Ultimately, however, the responsibility of guaranteeing a peaceful future belongs to the Afghan people, not to U.S. armed forces or policymakers. The United States should support the Afghan people in their efforts to rebuild their country, but the highest priority for the U.S. armed services should be to destroy the Islamic extremist groups that pose a continuing destabilizing threat to Afghanistan.

To that end, the United States should:

- **Revise the strategy and reconfigure U.S. military forces in Afghanistan to fight a low-intensity counter-guerrilla war.** The war in Afghanistan is evolving into a new phase. Al-Qaeda and Taliban forces have dispersed into small contingents after relatively heavy losses at Tora Bora in December and Shah-I-Kot in March. Searching for and destroying these small unit formations is a task better suited to special forces units backed by precise air strikes than to large conventional ground forces. Pentagon officials already have concluded that the combat mission of conventional troops has largely been accomplished in Afghanistan.¹³ The British Royal Marines, who were deployed along the

11. PollingReport.com, “War on Terrorism,” April 1–2, 2002, available at www.pollingreport.com/terror3.htm.

12. Richard Armitage, Deputy Secretary of State, statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, “Developments in Afghanistan,” June 26, 2002.

Afghan–Pakistani border for six months, recently were withdrawn after failing to engage in any major combat actions.

The United States should adapt to the new stage of the war by relying increasingly on small, highly mobile special forces units, backed by air power and air-mobile ground troops. These units should work closely with Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) paramilitary units and the Afghan central government to cultivate intelligence sources among the local populations, particularly in the southern Pushtun tribal belt, to help identify, locate, and capture fugitive al-Qaeda bands and the top Taliban leadership. Bolstering intelligence capabilities is critical to minimizing the risk of friendly-fire incidents, which undermine U.S. counterinsurgency efforts as well as the central government.

Once Mullah Omar is captured or killed, U.S. forces should turn primary responsibility for hunting Taliban leaders over to the Afghan government and focus almost exclusively on eradicating al-Qaeda units, which pose a greater threat to U.S. interests. By concentrating on hunting foreign terrorists rather than Afghans, the United States can reduce the risk of accidentally killing civilians and improve the chances of gaining local support for the war effort.

The critical theater of the war is now shifting from Afghanistan to Pakistan, where al-Qaeda remnants have found sanctuary along the border among Pushtun tribes that have long enjoyed considerable autonomy, largely free from Pakistani government control. Pakistani President Musharraf's government has started to crack down on al-Qaeda sympathizers along the border, particularly in south Waziristan where 10 Pakistani soldiers were killed in June in a firefight with al-Qaeda members and their Pakistani supporters.

On July 3, Pakistani soldiers killed four al-Qaeda terrorists—three Chechens and a Saudi.¹⁴ The United States has dispatched special operations troops, CIA officers, and reconnaissance equipment, including five surveillance helicopters, to assist Pakistani efforts. Washington must work closely with Islamabad to combat al-Qaeda not only along the western frontier but throughout Pakistan. It should hold the Musharraf government firmly to its pledge of full cooperation in the war against terrorism. To accomplish this, Washington should encourage Musharraf to purge the powerful Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) directorate, which helped create and support the Taliban, of its remaining Islamist officers.¹⁵ Pakistani cooperation is crucial to rooting out Islamic extremists in the Pushtun tribal belt that straddles the border with Afghanistan.

- **Provide military resources to support limited non-combat functions, as appropriate.**

Though the United States should not commit its overburdened military resources to humanitarian, basic security, or peacekeeping functions in Afghanistan, its resources could be used to support those functions if certain criteria are met. The activity, for example, should be one that only the United States can achieve, such as airlift or extraction of endangered people in cases of emergency. And the function must be consistent with the wishes of the Afghan people.

U.S. armed forces should not be held responsible for providing general security for Afghanistan and must not create expectations that they are responsible for rebuilding the country. Even if they were capable of doing so, the Afghan people would likely perceive the United States as overstepping its bounds. The international community can provide much of the help Afghanistan will need should the Afghans request such help. The Germans are taking the

13. Thomas Ricks, "War Shifts from Combat Sweeps to Small Units Probing Shadows," *The Washington Post*, July 7, 2002, p. A1.

14. John Lancaster, "Many in Pakistan Mourn Slain Al-Qaeda Militants," *The Washington Post*, July 7, 2002, p. A12.

15. Musharraf fired the head of ISI last fall after he was confronted with intelligence that ISI continued to send military aid to the Taliban three weeks after the September 11 attacks. See Peter Tomsen, "Post-Taliban Afghanistan and Regional Cooperation in Central Asia," *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. VII, No. 1 (March–May 2002), p. 34.

lead in training an Afghan police force, for example, and while the United States is also involved, U.S. military resources should not be committed to such a mission.

- **Help train the Afghanistan army.** Long-term security in Afghanistan will depend on many variables, including the success of the Afghan National Army. U.S. Army instructors began recruiting and training troops for this national army in May. The United States should continue to commit military resources to this effort. Many U.S. special operations units, for example, are fully prepared to train foreign militaries. The mission to train and build a self-sustaining army is something that the United States and a few of its allies are uniquely equipped to do. Because it will affect the long-term success of a new Afghan government, this mission supports U.S. national security. However, this commitment should be of limited duration, and when its objective has been reached, it should end. The current objective is to train 14,400 soldiers in the next year and a half.
- **Provide expertise to the Afghan government on building infrastructure and civil institutions.** Limited teams of Department of Defense personnel should remain in Afghanistan beyond the warfighting phase. Special operating teams made up of civil affairs, public affairs, and psychological warfare experts as well as military engineers and American international development personnel should work with the interim government, regional leaders, and tribal chiefs in key regions to provide advice and assistance in rebuilding Afghanistan's infrastructure and civil institutions. Military advisers should be integrated throughout the Afghan army to facilitate stability as well.
- **Make clear that America's primary interest is to prevent agents of international terrorism from using any part of Afghanistan as a base of operations.** To achieve this objective, the threat of massive and immediate U.S. military

retaliation must be credible. The United States should maintain a limited but highly mobile force over the horizon, prepared to strike quickly and decisively to prevent the reappearance of terrorist cells in Afghanistan. Politically, at both the central government and regional levels, the message should be clear: Anyone who harbors terrorists that target the United States will forfeit their political power and risk the loss of their own lives.

- **Create realistic timetables for operations.** Though the President has done an outstanding job in setting the war aims and allowing his military leaders to develop and implement a plan to achieve them, as the war wears on he will come under increasing pressure to establish a timetable for ending the operation. He must not succumb to this pressure, or time—rather than war aims—will define strategy. The President must be prepared to invest as much time as is necessary to achieve the objectives that he clearly stated after September 11.

Realistically, the United States may have to maintain special forces in Afghanistan for an extended period in order to systematically root out, in cooperation with the Afghan government, the pockets of al-Qaeda and Taliban forces. After all, al-Qaeda had a full decade to assemble its forces. A combined U.S.–Afghan rapid reaction force should be developed to conduct these search-and-destroy operations.¹⁶

- **Rule out committing U.S. combat troops to a U.N. peacekeeping effort.** At no time should the United States commit troops to the International Security Assistance Force, the U.N. peacekeeping body in Afghanistan. The ISAF consists of 5,000 troops from 19 countries who have been providing security in and around Kabul. Its objective is to “assist the Afghan Interim Authority in the maintenance of security in Kabul and its surrounding area,”¹⁷ not to protect U.S. national security interests. Committing U.S. troops to this force would take lim-

16. This recommendation is based on one by General David Grange, described in his testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on June 26, 2002.

17. Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General, Daily Press Briefing, December 21, 2001.

ited resources from the broader war on terrorism. In a nation like Afghanistan, Americans also could become political targets.

U.S. military resources also should not be committed to more humanitarian operations. It is true that humanitarian operations have contributed to the war effort from the earliest stages. The United States has provided many tons of food and health supplies to the ravaged Afghan people, and U.S. soldiers have been repairing hospitals, digging wells, and building schools. In fact, this campaign has been a war to liberate the Afghan people from one of the most brutally oppressive regimes in existence. But now that the Taliban has fallen, al-Qaeda is on the run, and public institutions are beginning to take hold, U.S. military resources can be better applied to other activities. Other U.S. agencies, other countries, and international organizations should now take the lead to provide humanitarian services.

- **Resist efforts to expand the mission of the international peacekeeping force beyond its present limited role.** The overused suggestion that the United States should replicate its efforts in postwar Germany and Japan is the wrong way to bolster the Karzai government in Kabul. In particular, ISAF troops should not be used to try to disarm warlords, as some in the United Nations have recommended. This kind of mission creep would be a prescription for an explosive and counterproductive backlash. Overly ambitious efforts to disarm warlords in Somalia in 1993 culminated in a disastrous commando mission that resulted in the deaths of 18 U.S. special forces troops and hundreds of Somalis, and eventually led to the failure of the U.N. peacekeeping mission.¹⁸

The best approach is to win over regional leaders by patiently co-opting them, not seeking to bully them or to attack them head-on. Rather than duplicate the failed Somali model of peacekeeping intervention, which led to a disastrous confrontation with clan warlords, the

United States should seek to bring Afghan warlords into a ruling coalition. They should be given a stake in cooperating with the central government by gaining access to international aid, government jobs for their sons, and the promise of government pensions. Over time, their armed supporters should be incorporated into the national army or pro-government regional militias.

It is unrealistic to expect that Afghans will soon abandon their traditional mode of tribal politics. The best that can be expected is that the political rules of the game can be changed incrementally as tribal leaders and regional warlords learn that they can gain more through cooperation with the U.S.-backed central government and with each other than they can by sticking to the old “winner takes all” spoils system.

Such an approach would limit the risks that the ISAF would get caught up in the bitter internal rivalries that dominate Afghan politics. As U.S. ground troops are withdrawn from Afghanistan, there may be a need to expand the size of the ISAF and increase its area of operations to help fill the security gap. But the ISAF’s mission should not be expanded to include disarming the warlords. This inevitably would backfire by triggering a xenophobic backlash against foreign domination.

Turkey, which has taken the leading role in ISAF and has contributed the largest contingent of troops, can play a particularly important role in stabilizing Afghanistan. Ankara’s ethnic and political ties with Afghanistan go back to the 1920s, when Turkey’s founder Mustafa Kemal (later Kemal Ataturk) helped the Afghan king organize his army. The model devised by Ataturk—of a secular, pro-Western, yet majority Muslim state—is precisely the kind of concept that the United States would like to extend in the region. It can obviously best be done by its

18. See James Phillips, “Somalia and Al-Qaeda: Implications for the War Against Terrorism,” Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 1526, April 5, 2002.

adherents rather than by well-meaning nation-builders in Washington.

Given their shrinking defense budgets, many of America's European allies are unable to contribute meaningfully to the warfighting effort against al-Qaeda. But their strong civil-military traditions would enable them (with the United States supplying the requisite lift, logistics, communications, and intelligence assets) to serve successfully in limited peacekeeping missions, such as in Kabul. The presence of the German peacekeepers, the second largest contingent in the ISAF, has helped enable U.S. forces to concentrate on their global military operations against al-Qaeda cells and prepare for a possible operation in Iraq without lessening their combat readiness or stretching them dangerously thin.

- **Support a new political arrangement that conforms to the facts on the ground.** U.S. policy must correspond with Afghanistan's on-the-ground political and ethnic conditions and not attempt to impose some sort of top-down diktat from Washington. The relevant political unit there is the tribe, and the central government traditionally plays a correspondingly weak role.

The best framework for a new government would be a stable but limited central authority, with much power devolved to the regional or tribal level. Afghanistan, a construct of 19th century British imperial policy, is not so much a nation as a haphazard collection of tribes. The structure reflects British administrative convenience more than ethnic or historical logic.¹⁹ Thus, a "one-man, one-vote" framework may be less important to the ordinary Afghan than his tribe's inclusion in the national decision-making structure. Bolstering a political solution that corresponds with these realities—a very limited quasi-confederal outcome—is the only political option that stands any hope of long-term success.

In line with this approach, the United States should broker a settlement between the Karzai government and the country's powerful regional leaders. Regional leaders should support U.S. training of an Afghan national army and acquiesce to that army's keeping internal order. In return, all the major tribes and their leaders should be scrupulously included in all major decisions throughout the emergence of the limited central government. In addition, the United States should encourage that political arrangements between the center and the country's periphery should leave tribes and regions with the lion's share of power.

Such a diplomatic approach would make stakeholders of the regional leaders in the settlement, giving them ongoing interest in preserving stability. Making clear that they would retain significant power would restore a measure of pluralism to the negotiations and force them to explain their decisions to their tribal populations. Such a confederalist approach would lock regional leaders into the postwar settlement, changing them from potentially disruptive agents into positive forces for stability.

- **Offer limited technical advice and aid geared toward judicial reform to bolster Afghan economic opportunities.** Beyond taking the decisive role in training the Afghan army, the U.S. should offer to provide the Karzai government and certain regional leaders with technical assistance to establish a judiciary that safeguards property rights. As a limited "trade and not aid" policy initiative, it would increase the likelihood that Afghans would see long-term economic growth and secure property rights. It would help them begin the arduous process of developing the rule of law that integrates Afghanistan into the international economy.

As explained in a recent *Economist* article, tailoring technical aid to bolster free trade, as a policy, answers critics of nation building; it allows countries to help themselves, setting them on the path to sustainable growth.²⁰ Wherever

19. See Marina Ottaway and Anatol Lieven, "Rebuilding Afghanistan: Fantasy versus Reality," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Policy Brief* No. 12, January 2002, pp. 1–2.

possible, the United States should encourage regional free trade initiatives, particularly on textiles and agricultural products. Lowering barriers to trade in these sectors is the most likely way to speed economic growth in underdeveloped countries.

CONCLUSION

The United States decisively won the first phase of the war in Afghanistan, but now it must adjust its strategy and win the peace. Continued U.S. engagement is critical to putting Afghanistan on the right track. Washington's disengagement from Afghan affairs following the 1989 Soviet withdrawal had contributed to the ability of the ultra-radical Taliban to seize power and eventually to threaten U.S. interests. U.S. policymakers must remember that lesson.

The United States should remain engaged militarily for several years to root out the pockets of al-Qaeda and Taliban forces that have burrowed into remote areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. But it should not commit military forces to an open-ended peacekeeping mission or a nation-building experiment. U.S. military troops are needed to eliminate the terrorists and crush rogue regimes that support them, not to undertake vague missions to "win hearts and minds." Such political goals are better pursued by other means, including diplomacy, economic aid, and technical assistance.

The United States owes many Afghans a debt of gratitude. They helped to block Soviet expansion at a critical time during the Cold War and helped to uproot Osama bin Laden's terrorists from sanctuaries in Taliban-controlled areas of Afghanistan. Washington should help the Afghans rebuild a stable political system and functioning economy, which would enable them to block the return to power of Islamic extremists.

U.S. policymakers should not succumb to the temptation of using thinly stretched U.S. military forces in an overly ambitious nation-building role. U.S. military forces are simply not designed for that mission, and it detracts from their effectiveness. Moreover, as Samuel Huntington, Director of the Harvard Institute for Strategic Studies, has noted, "to intrude from outside is either imperialism or colonialism, each of which violates American values."²¹

America can help create an environment in Afghanistan for the establishment of a stable government, and it can help the Afghans rebuild important state institutions, including a national army and a police force. But only the Afghans themselves can build a nation.

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20. Bill Emmott, "Building Countries, Feeling Generous," *The Economist*, June 29, 2002, p. 17.

21. Samuel Huntington, "American Ideals versus American Interests," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 97, No. 1 (Spring 1982), p. 20.