Losing the “Forgotten War”
The Need to Reshape US Strategy in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia

By Anthony H. Cordesman
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Request for comments:
This report is a draft that will be turned into an electronic book. Comments and suggested changes would be greatly appreciated. Please send any comments to Anthony H. Cordesman, Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy, at acordesman@gmail.com.

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Afghanistan finally has a new government and has signed the bilateral security agreement and a status of forces agreement. For all the burst of favorable political rhetoric that has followed, however, Afghanistan is still the forgotten war at a time when the Taliban is making steady gains, civilian casualties are rising, the Afghan economy is in crisis, and there still are no clear plans for any post-2014 aspect of transition.

Afghanistan is also only part of the story. Pakistan is in political chaos, has rising tensions with India, has made uncertain progress in its latest military campaign, and has made no progress in the mix of economic and educational reforms that are critical to a stable future. In Central Asia, while US forces have effectively left, the US still has not announced any strategy to deal with Central Asia in the future and adjust to the growing tension with Russia.

The end result is that United States has failed to define meaningful future strategies for Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia. It is cutting its presence in Afghanistan so quickly that its Transition efforts may well fail, and it has no clear future strategy for Pakistan or Central Asia.

The US needs to come to grips with the fact that strategy does not consist of concepts, good intentions, or public statements that will not be implemented in any meaningful form. It consists of the policies and actions that are already in place and practical plans that can be – and are – actually implemented.

Yes, it would be nice to see Afghanistan emerge suddenly in 2015 or 2016 as a unified, peaceful, developing democracy. It would be nice to seek Pakistan put on the same path. It would be nice to resolve the tensions and risk of conflict between India and Pakistan. It would be nice to see Central Asia develop as a region, and do so in ways that are peaceful, and involve the same progress towards democracy.

But, these are not meaningful and practical strategic objectives for the US, its European allies, or NATO. The current realities on the ground strongly indicate that the present US approach to Transition in Afghanistan will fail at the military, political, economic, and governance levels.

As for the broader US approach to Pakistan and the region, the most likely result is that the countries in South Asia will face at least another decade of uncertain development and stability – if not actual conflict – and that the situation in Central Asia will be all too similar. The end result is a near vacuum in US ability to form, resource and implement a strategy that offers a real hope of addressing the key challenges in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia.

The US currently lacks a real world strategy for dealing with Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia. It has an unworkable and under-resourced Transition plan for Afghanistan, no meaningful public strategy for Pakistan, and little more than statements of good intentions for Central Asia as it withdraws the forces that supported the war in Afghanistan.

The current state of the US experience in Afghanistan and the region also has far too many parallels in the failures and lessons of the Vietnam and Iraq conflicts. Every conflict must be addressed as a separate case study where the uniqueness of its own
problems and complexities is a constant warning about the false character of broad theories about counterinsurgency, stability operations, and “nation building.”

At the same time, each conflict represented a US failure to constantly reassess its strategic importance in both national and regional terms, and a failure to honestly address the fact that the weaknesses in the way the US approached and fought the war, and in the host country and US allies were often as much of a problems as the enemy. Each war was initiated on the basis of limited strategic analysis of overall US priorities, and each represented a worst case mix of counterinsurgency and armed nation building in which there were three threats and not just one: The enemy, the host country, and the threat to US created for itself.

Each was an attempt a transformational combat, rather than an effort to help the country do things its way. Each claimed to have some form of “whole of country” approach that in fact was deeply divided, had no coherent plans or resourcing, poor fiscal and contract management, and weak or no real measures of effectiveness –what one senior USAID official called a war fought by “golden silos.” All involved serious problems because of the rapid rotation of inexperienced military and civil personnel, an almost annual set of efforts to reshape key aspect of the effort with little real analysis of overall trends.

Each underestimated the level of internal tension and conflict, and the level of risk, and two – Iraq and Afghanistan – involved denial of a rising threat and the need to create an effective mix of local forces and governance until an insurgency reached the crisis level. Each involved a major escalation of cost and casualties far beyond the level estimated in going to war, and each involved a steady shift towards “spin” and exaggerate progress or success that helped lose the support of the American people, the Congress, and the media. The end result was a premature set of cutbacks in the US effort and one that helped lose the war in Vietnam and create yet a third US war in Iraq.

While this analysis focuses on the Afghan conflict, Pakistan, and the region, all of these factors should be kept in mind. In three wars the US failed to honestly address the key issues in going to war, the limits in the host country and US effort, the need to plan and manage an integrated war effort tailored to host country needs rather than US transformation, and create serious measures of progress and effectiveness and a sound and honest base of US domestic political support.
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I. The Developing Strategic Vacuum in Afghanistan, Central and South Asia

To the extent that the US has does have a strategy for Afghanistan, Pakistan, Central Asia, and South Asia, it has been driven largely by the real world impact of US decisions to leave Afghanistan. As Secretary Gates’s memoirs make clear, the Obama Administration’s priorities shifted away from Afghanistan even as the President approved a military surge in Afghanistan in 2010. He then assigned a deadline of 2014 for a US combat role over the uncertain objections of several members of his cabinet and senior military advisors.1

By that time, the US already saw Pakistan as a key center of gravity in the war, and as a source of aid and comfort to an enemy base in part on its soil. It was clear that the Pakistani Army was using its ISI to covertly support the Taliban and other Afghan insurgents, and as providing cover and sanctuary to both Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaeda, and to the Quetta Taliban and Haqqani network – views described in detail in Carlotta Gall’s The Wrong Enemy – a book broadly endorsed by a number of US officers and experts with actually working experience in Pakistan.2

It was also clear that Afghanistan lacked an effective government, was one of the most corrupt countries in the world, faced a prolonged budget and economic crisis the moment outside aid and military spending was seriously cut, and would be unable to create and sustain effective security forces indefinitely without major outside financial aid, military advisors, and military support.

US Strategy Writes Off Afghanistan Pakistan, and the Region

US rhetoric implied continued support for Afghanistan without really addressing either its weaknesses or its failures as a partner, and left the issue of Pakistan largely unaddressed because of its critical role as a route for US supplies and movements. The US reality was reflected by in the new Defense Strategic Guidance that it issued in January 2012. This Guidance made it clear that US intended to leave Afghanistan, focus on other regions of the world. It called for the US to only fight where its strategic interests were directly involved and only in proportion to the importance of those interests. It explicitly said the US should avoid fighting wars major like the ones in Iraq and Afghanistan in the future, avoid large-scale land force commitments to limited wars of limited strategic value, and focus on strategic partnerships where the partner would play a major role.

The US repeated key elements of this guidance in every Department of Defense and State Department budget request from FY2013 onwards. This was true of its FY2015 budget submission, of the new Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR 2014) the US issued in March 2014.

A QDR That Largely Wrote Off the Region

The executive summary to the 2014 QDR for, example, only provided a token reference to leaving Afghanistan, focused on the Middle East and Asia, and discussed virtually
every other region than Central and South Asia – which it effectively did not mention at all:  

Rebalancing and sustaining our presence and posture abroad to better protect U.S. national security interests. In striving to achieve our three strategic objectives, the Department will also continue to rebalance and sustain our global posture. We will continue our contributions to the U.S. rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region, seeking to preserve peace and stability in a region that is increasingly central to U.S. political, economic, and security interests.

Faced with North Korea’s long-range missiles and WMD programs – particularly its pursuit of nuclear weapons – the United States is committed to maintaining peace and security on the Korean Peninsula. As part of our broader efforts for stability in the Asia-Pacific region, the United States will maintain a robust footprint in Northeast Asia while enhancing our presence in Oceania and Southeast Asia.

As we end combat operations in Afghanistan, we are prepared to transition to a limited mission focused on counterterrorism and training, advising, and assisting Afghan security forces. The United States also has enduring interests in the Middle East, and we will remain fully committed to the security of our partners in the region. We will continue to maintain a strong military posture in the Gulf region – one that can respond swiftly to crisis, deter aggression, and assure our allies and partners – while making sure that our military capabilities evolve to meet new threats.

Given our deep and abiding interests in maintaining and expanding European security and prosperity, we will continue our work with allies and partners to promote regional stability and Euro-Atlantic integration, as well as to improve capacity, interoperability, and strategic access for coalition operations. Across the globe, we will ensure the access needed to surge forces rapidly in the event of a crisis.

The QDR did not mention Central or South Asia at all in the section on regional trends. They were only mentioned in a passing, and as a vague priority in the final passages of the section on Building Global Security towards the end of the document – as much because the authors had to say something as because of any serious strategic focus on any state other than India:

We will continue efforts to help stabilize Central and Southwest Asia and deepen our engagement in the Indian Ocean region to bolster our rebalance to Asia. The stability of Pakistan and peace in South Asia remain critical to this effort. The United States supports India’s rise as an increasingly capable actor in the region, and we are deepening our strategic partnership, including through the Defense Trade and Technology Initiative.

**President Obama’s Strategy Speech at West Point**

It was true of the strategy speech that President Obama gave at West Point speech on May 28, 2014. When President Obama delivered this speech one day after announcing he would maintain a significant US advisory role in Afghanistan only during 2015 and phase that presence out on 2016 – he stated somewhat ingenuously that,

Four and a half years later, as you graduate, the landscape has changed. We have removed our troops from Iraq. We are winding down our war in Afghanistan. Al-Qaida’s leadership on the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan has been decimated, and Osama bin Laden is no more…We need partners to fight terrorists alongside us. And empowering partners is a large part of what we have done and what we are currently doing in Afghanistan. Together with our allies, America struck huge blows against al-Qaida core and pushed back against an insurgency that threatened to overrun the country.

But sustaining this progress depends on the ability of Afghans to do the job. And that’s why we trained hundreds of thousands of Afghan soldiers and police. Earlier this spring, those forces -- those Afghan forces -- secured an election in which Afghans voted for the first democratic transfer
of power in their history. And at the end of this year, a new Afghan president will be in office, and America’s combat mission will be over.

He focused on Europe and Ukraine, the Middle East, and Asia, and touched upon Latin America and Africa, but never mentioned Central of South Asia at all.  

No Clearer Lead from NATO

The most NATO could do was to quietly discuss the fact that the estimated annual cost of providing aid to an undefined level of Afghan forces had rise, from $4.1 billion to $5.1 billion, and issue what it called the Wales Declaration on September 4, 2014. This document was yet another exercise in rhetoric with no real details or plans beyond those NATO had repeated since 2012, but that did highlight growing funding challenges and problems in Afghanistan’s ability to carry out a Transition after 2014.

With the end of ISAF, the nature and scope of our engagement with Afghanistan will change. We envisage three parallel, mutually reinforcing, strands of activity:

…In the short term, the Resolute Support Mission. As decided at the Chicago Summit in 2012, at the invitation of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and in the context of the broader international effort to help Afghanistan, NATO Allies and partner nations stand ready to continue to train, advise and assist the ANSF after 2014. This will be done through a new, non-combat mission with a sound legal basis. The mission’s establishment is contingent on the signing of the U.S.-Afghanistan Bilateral Security Agreement and NATO-Afghanistan Status of Forces Agreement. The Resolute Support Mission should ideally, in consultation with the Government of Afghanistan, be supported by a United Nations Security Council Resolution.

…In the medium term, our contribution to the financial sustainment of the ANSF. At Chicago, NATO allies and ISAF partners decided to provide support to the ANSF, as appropriate, through the Transformation Decade, on the understanding that the Afghan Government will make an increasing financial contribution to this endeavor. Today, nations renewed their financial commitments to support the sustainment of the ANSF, including to the end of 2017. We also urge the wider international community to remain engaged in the financial sustainment of the ANSF. We will maintain and strengthen the transparent, accountable and cost-effective funding mechanisms we have established since Chicago, including the Oversight and Coordination Body, which will ensure donors can confidently commit this support. Realizing the full promise of the pledges made at Chicago on the financial sustainment of the ANSF, which we have reaffirmed today, will require transparency, accountability, and cost-effectiveness of the relevant international funding mechanisms. We encourage the Afghan Government to continue and strengthen efforts to fight corruption. We look forward to working with the Afghan authorities to review the force structure and capabilities of the ANSF to achieve a sufficient and sustainable force. We restate the aim, agreed at Chicago, that Afghanistan should assume, no later than 2024, full financial responsibility for its own security forces.

…In the long term, NATO-Afghanistan Enduring Partnership. NATO Allies remain committed to the NATO-Afghanistan Enduring Partnership, agreed at the Lisbon Summit in 2010. The strengthening of this partnership will reflect the changing nature of NATO’s relationship with Afghanistan whilst complementing the Resolute Support Mission and continuing beyond it. Both the political and practical elements of this partnership should be jointly owned and strengthened through regular consultation on issues of strategic concern. NATO is ready to work with Afghanistan to develop this partnership in line with NATO’s Partnership Policy, possibly including the development of an Individual Partnership Cooperation Program at an appropriate time.

NATO also highlighted the lack of an effective security partner by issuing a press release asking the two rival Afghan Presidential candidates to reach some compromise in their struggle over the outcome of the election that had been held on April 5, 2014.
NATO Leaders at the Wales Summit reaffirmed on Thursday (4 September 2014) their commitment to supporting Afghanistan and called on the two presidential candidates to work together and to conclude the necessary security agreements as soon as possible, as they have said they will. The ISAF Heads of State and Government also asked the two candidates to “swiftly deliver a peaceful outcome of this election, acceptable to the Afghan people,” the NATO Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen said.

Leaders from NATO nations joined by ISAF partner countries reaffirmed their readiness to launch a non-combat mission in Afghanistan after 2014 to help train, advise and assist Afghan security forces, providing necessary legal arrangements are signed without delay. “I cannot stress too strongly how important this is,” Mr. Fogh Rasmussen said. “Without a signature, there can be no mission. Our planning is complete but time is short.” The post-2014 Resolute Support Mission is one of the three pillars of NATO’s long-term engagement in Afghanistan, along with a contribution to the long-term sustainment of the Afghan National Army and the strengthening of long-term political and practical cooperation with Afghanistan. “With the end of ISAF in December, we will change the nature and the scope of our involvement in Afghanistan,” said the Secretary General. “But our commitment will endure because stability in Afghanistan also means security for us.” This three-pronged engagement is aimed to build on the gains achieved throughout the thirteen-year long ISAF mission, particularly in the development of strong, professional and capable security forces, as well as in the fields of education, health, economic development, human rights and fundamental freedoms, notably for women.

During the meeting, ISAF leaders underlined the importance of continued support by the international community, and of sustained efforts by the Afghan Government, notably in continuing to increase its financial accountability and contribution, improve governance and rule of law, promote and protect human rights for all. The meeting also provided the opportunity to pay tribute to the men and women from Afghan and international forces who have served in the country and in other NATO operations. “This is the right time to remember what we have sacrificed and what we have achieved”, NATO Secretary General said. “Their courage, effort and sacrifice have made all our nations safer and improved global security.”

Afghan Defence Minister Bismullah Khan Mohammadi, leaders from Japan, Central Asian states, as well as representatives from key international community partners from the United Nations and the European Union also attended the meeting.
II. Higher Priorities and Commitments in US Strategy

It is a grim reflection on the Obama Administration and the US Congress, that there has never been a serious debate over whether the US should play a key role in meeting such challenges from 2015 onwards. It is also unclear what the outcome of an honest and meaningful debate would be. Even if the US focuses properly on the impact of its current actions and the consequences after 2014, and adequately assesses its options and their relative risks and benefits, it might well decide that the best solution to dealing with the complex problems in South Asia and Central Asia should be a minimalist approach.

Uncertain Value at a Time When US “Strategic Triage” is Critical

No vital US national security priorities seem to be involved that require a sustained major US presence or capability to intervene, and strategic triage indicates that other areas and problems have a higher priority for US resources. Such choices, however, should be made on the basis of hard analysis, and made openly and explicitly, and not through silence, neglect, or default.

The US cannot solve every problem or meet every challenge, and any effort to deal with the US strategic vacuum in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia must be judged in a broader global context. The US is scarcely reducing its overall strategic and defense commitments. The US may cutting the warfighting or Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) part of it military expenditures as it ends the war in Afghanistan, but it is re-engaging in Iraq and building up its forces in the Gulf. It is changing its force posture in the Pacific and strengthening its security partnerships in the region, and is giving new priority to its commitments in NATO as a result of the Ukraine crisis.

Major Resources, Uncertain Priority

Neither the FY2013-FY2014 actual spending nor the FY2015-FY2019 baseline defense spending plans – the spending not tied to war in Afghanistan– project a further decline. Moreover, the current levels of US national security efforts need to be kept in a global perspective. SIPRI estimates that the United States spent 37% of all world military expenditures in 2013 versus 11% for China, 5% for Russia, 3.5% for France, 3.3% for the UK, and 2.8% for Germany. In contrast, SIPRI estimates that Western and Central Europe cut military expenditures by 6.5% during 2004-2013.10

The Secretary General’s 2013 report for NATO sends the same message. Like the US QDR, it did not foresee any potential risk from Russia – in fact the one minor mention of Russia largely praises Russia for its aid in Afghanistan. At the same time, when the report talks about military spending, it has a graph showing that the US increased its share of total NATO military spending from 68% in 2007 to 73% in 2013. In contrast, NATO Europe dropped from 30.2% of the total to 25.5% during that same period. Germany kept spending constant at 4.7% of the total but made massive force cuts and shifted money to pay for the equivalent of an all-professional force. Britain dropped from 7.3% to 6.6%, France from 6.6% to 4.9%, and Italy from 2.9% to 2.0%.
The recent NATO ministerial summit called for all NATO countries to raise their defense spending to 2%. US defense spending is and will remain at nearly twice that level. The US is spending as much on its baseline military expenditures as it did before it began these wars in 2001, and doing so at a time it has a serious budget deficit, a massive federal debt, and faces steady rises in the cost of its domestic entitlement programs.

These fiscal pressures do not mean the US must or should back away from the world, but they do mean the US needs to exercise strategic triage. It must use its resources where they meet the highest priority in terms of American interests and they have the most effect. They must be used where the US has strategic partners that actually do their share, and US commitments and aid must be conditional and dependent on how well its partners actually perform.
III. The Uncertain Case for Afghanistan

In many ways, Afghanistan has been in limbo while Karzai has refused to sign a bilateral security agreement and status of force agreement, and as Afghan politics have dealt with a disputed Presidential election and a power struggle that has produced a divided government. Plans and decision that should have been made as early as 2012 had been on hold, only partially implemented, or simply forgotten under the pressure of other events.

In spite of a constant flow of reassuring political rhetoric, Afghanistan has become a nation with no clear plans for the future, and uncertain stability. It has effectively been “forgotten,” at a time when the Taliban and other insurgents are making steady gains, civilian casualties are rising, the Afghan economy is in crisis, and there still are no clear plans for any post-2014 aspect of Transition.

Inaugurating a deeply divided Afghan government months after a disputed election scarcely solves these problems. Signing bilateral security and status of force agreements is only a license to move forward more than a year after that license should already have been issue. Moreover, the US has made decisions about its future military presence in Afghanistan that may well lead to a major military crisis or defeat in Afghanistan during 2015-2016 almost regardless of what Afghanistan, Pakistan, and its allies in ISAF now do.

President Obama has chosen to limit the number, duration, and role of the US military advisory presence in Afghanistan in ways that that will place critical limits on the US role in Afghanistan at a time when the US is also sharply reduces its role in Pakistan and Central Asia.

The end result is a hear strategic vacuum in the Afghan War at precisely the moment US urgently needs to decide just how important any form of lasting strategic success in Afghanistan really is. The US does have many higher foreign and domestic priorities, and now operates in a world where Afghanistan presents only a relatively marginal threat of terrorism to the US and its ISAF allies relative to other extremist threats.

At the same time, this does not mean the should fail to deploy the limit advisory presence that Afghanistan needs, leave regardless of conditions on the ground, It does not mean it should not be ready to help Afghanistan through the economic strain caused by the cuts in military and aid spending, and not make explicit choices about its future strategy in the country.

Uncertain Afghan Leadership and Governance Two Years Too Late?

Much of the blame for today’s problems does lie with a failed Afghan leader. It is an open contest as to which leader did the most damage to his country in his second term, Karzai or Maliki of Iraq. The fact remains, however, that Karzai led his country though power brokering and corruption, and never seriously focused on the quality of his forces or the security dimension of the war. His failure to reach a security agreement with the US have also delayed many critical aspects of transition planning that originally were supposed to have been completed by the end of 2012 through the present.
Uncertain Host Country Governance

It is still unclear that an effective Afghan government will now come into being. Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani did not reach even a tentative agreement to share power between until September 21, 2014, and one that divided power by making Ashraf Ghani President and Abdullah Abdullah a kind of Prime Minister. It only came after US Secretary of State Ghani was forced to warn both Abdullah Abdullah and Ghani that,11

If you don’t come to an agreement now, today, the possibilities for Afghanistan will become very difficult, if not dangerous,” Kerry told them, according to the partial transcript. “I really need to emphasize to you that if you do not have an agreement, if you do not move to a unity government, the United States will not be able to support Afghanistan.

The agreement also only came after months of wrangling over a disputed election, threats by Abdullah Abdullah to form his own government regardless of the final vote count, and an agreement by Ahmad Yousuf Nuristani, the chairman the UN Independent Election Commission that there were “grave flaws” and its audit could not detect all of it, but said that the commission still had a duty to state that, ”The Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan declares Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmad as the president of Afghanistan.” 12

This statement still did not show when – and if – the Afghans could form a new government, what it would be like or whether it could provide reform, effective governance, and effective security forces. It meant that there still was no formal structure for Transition roughly three months before the end of 2014, and nearly two years after a structure was supposed to be in place that could make an effective Transition possible. It said nothing about the future role of Pakistan or NATO’s role in Central Asia.

An Election that Did More to Divide than Unite

As for the actual vote, the UN Independent Election Commission avoided reporting the results of the UN audit. Ashraf Ghani’s office released results that showed just how deeply the nation had divided during the two votes and the extent to which the north polarized around Abdullah Abdullah and the largely Pashtun areas coalesced around Ghani.

These results are shown in Figure 1, but members of the Independent Election Commission are reported to have said that it disguises a far higher level of false ballots than is shown in Figure 1. Abdullah Abdullah publically rejected this reporting once Ghani’s office made it public, and threatened not to attend Ghani’s inauguration. He then got into a dispute with Ghani over whether he should be inaugurated and sworn in and over office space with Ghani’s running mate as first vice president, Abdul Rashid Dostum.13

These events dramatize the risk that Afghanistan may take months to work out a new form of power sharing – if this proves any more possible than it did in Iraq – and to work out how to manage the budget and appointments in the provinces and district where the struggle against the Taliban, Haqqani Network, and other insurgent movements goes on.14

It also sets a grim stage for future progress regardless of the fact that the US and Afghanistan has finally signed bilateral security and status of forces agreements. Even if Afghanistan does eventually get a unified and effective government, and one that signs
all of the other agreements necessary for the US and NATO to stay, it will not mean that there will be credible plans to keep a meaningful US and allied presence, put an effective government in place and deal with ongoing corruption that reaches from the District and Provincial governor levels to the level of the current Attorney General. It will not mean there will be credible plans to shape, support, and fund the Afghan security forces.

It does not mean that there will be credible plans to deal with the budgetary and economic crisis that has already developed because of cuts in outside aid and military spending and capital flight. It does not mean that Pakistan in more of a security partner than the sanctuary for the threat, and it does not mean the US and NATO has even begun to seriously think about what the tensions over the Ukraine crisis mean for a strategy for Central Asia.

If the US is to cope with these problems, it needs to act during the remainder of the Obama Administration. It seems very unlikely that President’s successor can make the necessary changes. President Obama will remain in office until early 2017, and by that time, the US is scheduled to have removed its forces from Afghanistan, closed its remaining bases, have disposed of its stocks and equipment, and closed all major transit facilities in Pakistan and Central Asia.

It is also far from clear that any new US president will want to make a major ongoing commitment to Afghanistan and the region – or deal with any major new crisis over Transitions, given all of the problems and risks that will have emerged by 2017 and competing US strategic priorities. These include a steady shift in the terrorist threat to the US, Europe, and key US allies to the Middle East and Africa, the security challenge Iran still poses in every area of potential conflict from asymmetric warfare to a nuclear threat, the rising challenge posed by China, and the impact of the Ukraine crisis on US priorities in Europe.
Figure 1: Afghan Power Struggles: The Uncertain Results of the Election

elections final result after audit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Round 1</th>
<th>Round 2</th>
<th>Round 2 %</th>
<th>Round-2 Audit</th>
<th>Round-2 Audit</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr Ashraf Ghani</td>
<td>2,081,288</td>
<td>4,485,888</td>
<td>56.44%</td>
<td>3,952,596</td>
<td>55.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Abdullah Abdullah</td>
<td>2,970,582</td>
<td>3,461,639</td>
<td>43.56%</td>
<td>3,203,295</td>
<td>44.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5,051,870</td>
<td>7,947,527</td>
<td></td>
<td>7,155,891</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total votes calculator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dr Ashraf Ghani</th>
<th>Dr Abdullah Abdullah</th>
<th>Provisional total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid votes</td>
<td>3,952,596</td>
<td>3,203,295</td>
<td>7,155,891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invalid and disqualified votes</td>
<td>533,292</td>
<td>258,344</td>
<td>791,636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second round votes</td>
<td>4,485,888</td>
<td>3,461,639</td>
<td>7,947,527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisonal total</td>
<td>4,485,888</td>
<td>3,461,639</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% of votes each candidate has secured in the second round of elections:

- Dr Ashraf Ghani: 44.76%
- Dr Abdullah Abdullah: 55.24%

Gender segregation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male voters</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Female voters</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Ashraf Ghani</td>
<td>2,564,933</td>
<td>56.79%</td>
<td>1,397,863</td>
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<td>Dr Abdullah Abdullah</td>
<td>1,943,779</td>
<td>43.21%</td>
<td>1,259,516</td>
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<td>2,657,179</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grand total</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Male voters by candidate

- Dr Ashraf Ghani: 43%
- Dr Abdullah Abdullah: 57%

Female voters by candidate

- Dr Ashraf Ghani: 47%
- Dr Abdullah Abdullah: 53%

Creating a US Plan for Military Failure in Afghanistan

There has been little transparency in either US or ISAF plans as to what is really supposed to happen after the end of 2014, what the overall strategy will be for Transition and shaping Afghan forces, how the steadily declining advisory effort will work, how Afghan forces will be reshaped and funded, how the ISAF command will change, and how the many weaknesses in Afghan forces that have been addressed in the US Department of Defense semiannual “1230” reports will be dealt with.

The President’s “Sell By Date:” Slashing Advisors and Support Regardless on Conditions in Afghanistan

On May 27, 2014, the President made a statement at the White House that he would effectively end any major US role in the war by the time he left office, regardless of the conditions that emerged are Transition, and would only provide something approaching the number of post-Transition military advisors, enablers, and counterterrorism officers that the ISAF and CENTCOM commander had requested from a single year:

Now we’re finishing the job we started. Over the last several years, we’ve worked to transition security responsibilities to the Afghans. One year ago, Afghan forces assumed the lead for combat operations. Since then, they’ve continued to grow in size and in strength, while making huge sacrifices for their country. This transition has allowed us to steadily draw down our own forces -- from a peak of 100,000 U.S. troops, to roughly 32,000 today.

2014, therefore, is a pivotal year. Together with our allies and the Afghan government, we have agreed that this is the year we will conclude our combat mission in Afghanistan. This is also a year of political transition in Afghanistan. Earlier this spring, Afghans turned out in the millions to vote in the first round of their presidential election -- defying threats in order to determine their own destiny. And in just over two weeks, they will vote for their next President, and Afghanistan will see its first democratic transfer of power in history.

In the context of this progress, having consulted with Congress and my national security team, I’ve determined the nature of the commitment that America is prepared to make beyond 2014. Our objectives are clear: Disrupting threats posed by al Qaeda; supporting Afghan security forces; and giving the Afghan people the opportunity to succeed as they stand on their own.

Here’s how we will pursue those objectives. First, America’s combat mission will be over by the end of this year. Starting next year, Afghans will be fully responsible for securing their country. American personnel will be in an advisory role. We will no longer patrol Afghan cities or towns, mountains or valleys. That is a task for the Afghan people.

Second, I’ve made it clear that we’re open to cooperating with Afghans on two narrow missions after 2014: training Afghan forces and supporting counterterrorism operations against the remnants of al Qaeda.

Today, I want to be clear about how the United States is prepared to advance those missions. At the beginning of 2015, we will have approximately 98,000 U.S. -- let me start that over, just because I want to make sure we don’t get this written wrong. At the beginning of 2015, we will have approximately 9,800 U.S. service members in different parts of the country, together with our NATO allies and other partners. By the end of 2015, we will have reduced that presence by roughly half, and we will have consolidated our troops in Kabul and on Bagram Airfield. One
year later, by the end of 2016, our military will draw down to a normal embassy presence in Kabul, with a security assistance component, just as we’ve done in Iraq.

Now, even as our troops come home, the international community will continue to support Afghans as they build their country for years to come. But our relationship will not be defined by war -- it will be shaped by our financial and development assistance, as well as our diplomatic support. Our commitment to Afghanistan is rooted in the strategic partnership that we agreed to in 2012. And this plan remains consistent with discussions we’ve had with our NATO allies. Just as our allies have been with us every step of the way in Afghanistan, we expect that our allies will be with us going forward.

Third, we will only sustain this military presence after 2014 if the Afghan government signs the Bilateral Security Agreement that our two governments have already negotiated. This Agreement is essential to give our troops the authorities they need to fulfill their mission, while respecting Afghan sovereignty. The two final Afghan candidates in the run-off election for President have each indicated that they would sign this agreement promptly after taking office. So I’m hopeful that we can get this done.

The bottom line is, it’s time to turn the page on more than a decade in which so much of our foreign policy was focused on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. When I took office, we had nearly 180,000 troops in harm’s way. By the end of this year, we will have less than 10,000. In addition to bringing our troops home, this new chapter in American foreign policy will allow us to redirect some of the resources saved by ending these wars to respond more nimbly to the changing threat of terrorism, while addressing a broader set of priorities around the globe.

One can argue whether this is the right course of action, but it mirrors the decision-making behind the strategy to limit the US role on the ground that may hamstring the US effort in dealing with the Islamic State. It sets an arbitrary date for slashing and then ending the US military role in helping Afghan forces regardless of the conditions already emerging on the ground. It puts domestic politics before workable military plans and a capacity to provide a conditions-based response if this go wrong.

**The ISAF Command View in Late 2014**

In fairness, it is a course of action that the US military have not formally challenged, although the private views of some key officers and former commanders are different. General Joseph Dunford transferred command of ISAF to General John Campbell on August 26, 2014, and General Campbell gave a broad endorsement to the Presidents plans in a press conference on October 2nd.

It was an endorsement that said little about future plans for the Afghan forces, future funding, the limits to the US and allied advisory presence, and how the coming drawdown in the advisory effort would work. Nevertheless, General Campbell’s comments provided the first really substantive public statement about the Transition and drawdown plans that either the US or ISAF had issued in months.

If I had one word to tell you what I’ve seen so far in the six weeks, it's transition, transition, transition. And that is transition from ISAF to the mission of resolute support. It's the political transition with a new president, the BSA signing the SOFA signing, and this really complete political transition. We're currently with about 40,000 troops on the ground, just less than 40,000. We're moving to 12.5 by the end of this year. That's NATO forces and the United States. The number for the United States, you know, was 9,800. We continue to go there.

We're on a very good glide path to make that by the end of December, and I think that the BSA and the SOFA really has boosted the confidence of the Afghan people and -- also our coalition
partners provide the necessary forces for the Resolute Support Mission. I've seen huge difference just in the attitude since the last week since the BSA and the SOFA and the inauguration came this week.

I had the opportunity to be there at the inauguration with Ambassador Cunningham. And really, the two things that struck me immediately from President Ghani that I did not see prior to that date was: one, the appreciation for the coalition forces; and number two: the appreciation for the ANSF. And President Ghani has embraced the Afghan security forces, the police and the army, that made an immediate impact on them and their morale. And again, I think that's going to be a great window of opportunity for Afghanistan as we move forward.

I do look forward to continuing to work with the NATO forces as we move toward this resolution support set. It's a fundamentally different mission, as we really work at train, advise, and assist at the corps level, and we'll be on four of the six corps, and then really at the ministerial level. And that's different from when I was here last time, when we were all the way down to kandak level.

...But I've been focusing on the security institutions, the ministry of interior, the ministry of defense, the national security adviser, NDS, and then working with both President Ghani and the CEO, Mr. Abdullah, so that's been my focus here the first six weeks.

I do think there's going to be some challenges as we move forward, working through the national unity government. I look forward to working with both President Ghani and Mr. Abdullah on that. And, again, I will take any questions on that as we go forward.

...We continue to have great success on the ground in many areas, and I think a lot of that has been taken away from the news through the last several weeks with Iraq and Syria, and I really do want to emphasize that you have men and women out there that continue to be in harm's way, that do great things for all of our countries, working with the Afghan security forces, and I'm proud to be part of that.

... we're absolutely on glide path right now. We've been on a glide path to get to the resolute support set, probably by the 1st of November, and we're on that glide path and we're actually -- in some places, we're ahead of schedule, so I really have no concerns on the retrograde piece. There's been a lot of very hard work done by all the units here....We've gone from -- when I was here last time, about 300 COPs [combat outpost] and FOBs [forward operating base]. We're just a little under 30 at this point in time. And so, I feel very confident that we have a good glide slope and we'll make the resolute support set by the end of December.

When General Campbell was asked, “do you believe that 9,800 is enough troops for Afghanistan? And can you tell us what their new mission will be?”; he focused largely on recent reports of problems in the Afghan forces, rather than the adequacy of the planned advisory effort during 2015 and 2016:

Afghanistan is fundamentally different than Iraq, in almost -- you can't compare those two. We now have a great window of opportunity after signing the BSA and the SOFA where the entire country of Afghanistan wants the coalition, not just the United States, but over probably 38, 39 countries, once we hit resolute support. You got to remember, we've had over 50 countries tied into this ISAF mission in the last 13 years. I don't think -- that's unprecedented. I don't think we've ever had that many -- that many countries stick together in a time of conflict.

So this is fundamentally different where we're at. And, again, President Ghani, by signing the BSA, by signing the SOFA, has said they are a sovereign country but they do continue to want the assistance that the coalition provides. And I think we're in a different place than we were with Iraq....The military here, the Afghan security forces, completely different than when I left Iraq, and they're completely different than when I was here just a couple of years ago. They've taken on the security mission from last June of '13. They had it mostly entirely by themselves for the summer of '14. I think they've done very well, supporting both the elections and through some of the major events.
The last couple of weeks, there has been an uptick with the Taliban trying to make a statement as they close out the fighting season…What you may be getting in the -- in the media, probably in the Western part of Ghazni in a place called Ajristan, where you heard about potential beheadings, 250 houses burning, 150 people killed, that's absolutely false….And we've worked very hard with the Afghans to make sure they get that message out to show that the -- the Afghan security forces can hold the terrain. There's nowhere that we have Afghan security forces that the Taliban can get the terrain and hold the terrain.

The Taliban may take over a district center or something, but only temporarily. Once the ANSF understand that piece of it, they go after that, they get the terrain back. So I'm very confident in their abilities.

They do have some shortfalls that we'll continue to work on, and that's what part of resolute support is. We'll work very hard on their aviation, on their intelligence, on their sustainment, those things that are very, very hard for any army, especially hard here in Afghanistan. We'll continue to work with them on that…We have at least two years here to continue to build on the security for the Afghan people, to continue to work with the ministries, the MOI and MOD.

You mentioned 9,800. That's just the U.S. contribution. We'll be at about 12.5, 12.7 with the NATO contribution. And we will have forces in the north, in the west, in the east, and in the south, and then in Kabul center.

So we're going to really a spoke and hub, and come 1 January, in the east, we'll have forces in Jalalabad, in Gamberi, in Bagram. In the north, they'll be in Mazar-e-Sharif, in the west, they'll be in Herat, and in the south, they'll be in Kandahar….We'll be covered down on four of the six corps, and two of the corps will continue to advise, but just less frequently than we can the other four corps.

…we're not out on patrol with the Afghans; they've taken over the fight. We're focused on the systems and processes that they have at the corps level. We're no longer with the brigades. We're no longer with the Kandaks.

Again, I said earlier in the opening statement in a place called Ajristan, which is western part of Ghazni, very remote area, that was part of our RC-East, continues to be part of our RC-East. I had issues when I was here -- a very remote location. For about the past week, there's been an uptick in activity out there, but nothing near like what the local media has provided here.

The district governor, the provincial governor, the district police, the provincial police made some phone calls back into the capital. They made phone calls to the press. They were exaggerated. We've had both our special operating forces that are partnered with the Afghan special operating forces, which are probably the very best in this part of the world, have been down in the Ajristan area for about the last four days. All of the reports that I get back show probably six Afghan military killed, maybe 12 civilians. That was as of yesterday was the last update. I was out of the net most of today down in RC-South.

But again, there's no terrain down there in Ajristan that the Afghans do not control. And there are some very exaggerated reports. I very -- feel very confident that Ajristan, western part of Ghazni is not an issue.

And Helmand, for the last several week, there's been an uptick in the last four or five days. There's been a pretty substantial fight. And again, both the commandos, the 215th Corps and the police, I think you'll see in the next day or two with the Afghans coming out and reporting the success that they've had there.

The problem we've had in the past is we've encouraged the Afghans to go ahead and report this to show the success that they have. And quite candidly, they've been afraid to do that. And they've been inhibited in some places to -- to tell some of the good news stories. But I think, again, under President Ghani and Mr. Abdullah, you will see the police, the army, senior leadership, come out and speak with the media more and show you the great success that they're having.
There are casualties on both sides, but I think here in the next 24 to 48 hours, what you'll see in Helmand is that the Taliban do not own any of the ground that they've tried to get, and that they'll end the fighting season '14 here very discouraged, and that their leadership continues not even to be in Afghanistan and that their morale of the Taliban continues to be low.

They have, quite frankly, won the information war because I think -- all of you back there -- Taliban have made success, and they haven't. And so, we have not done a good job in telling that story. But I'm here to tell you in the six weeks I've been on the ground, I've been very, very confident of what the Afghan security forces can do. We'll continue to provide ISR close air support. Some of those things that we will build up their capabilities, but we're not there yet. And that's why we'll continue to do the train, advise, assist as part of resolute support in both '15 and into '16.

When General Campbell did address the problems in the ANSF, he did little describe the scale of current challenges or how they would be addressed.

The gaps and seams that were identified early on, aviation, close air support, intelligence, logistics, how to sustain their force are the processes that we continue to work on.

We've developed eight essential functions as we move into resolute support that will continue to work with the Afghan forces. Those include the joint fires piece. It includes working with their force generation....And again, I'm very confident that the Afghan forces have the capability to withstand the fight internally inside here in Afghanistan. They're very confident as well.

But quite candidly, the last couple years, there's been some impediments to them, based on maybe some political decisions within their own country that prevented them from even going further...And now, with a new administration in, with President Ghani, who has embraced the military here, that will probably change some of the directives that were out there that may have inhibited the military. I believe that they'll continue to grow...The Afghan military is the most respected institution in Afghanistan. Every poll taken in the last two years, they're at the very, very top.

And again, I feel confident that there's some areas and challenges that we'll have to continue to work on, but there is no place that once the Taliban or any other insurgents take over, that the Afghan military can't take that back from them.

And the places that the Taliban and the insurgents are going after are going after are very remote locations where we don't have a lot of police, we don't have a lot of army, and they're trying to make these very high-profile attacks, spectacular attacks. And once we have the security forces in those areas, then the Taliban are quickly defeated.

Will we be in a position to provide air support, medevac to the Afghans in '15? The number of platforms that we have, the amount of ISR, the amount of CAS, the amount of medevac we'll have will be greatly diminished from what we have today, in proportion to where we're going with the 12.5.

We continue to work through the Afghans what we will be able to provide and what we won't be able to provide to the Afghans starting on 1 January. And I have to have that discussion both with President Ghani, Mr. Abdullah. And I have to have that discussion with General Austin out of CENTCOM and General Breedlove, SACEUR.

General Campbell did note how uncertain the structure of the new government was and some of the issues in creating effective Ministries of Defense and the Interior,

… And we are working very hard with both the ministry of interior, the ministry of defense to strengthen the controls as we move into 2015 on how we leverage the funding….I just brought in Minister Atmar. He's the new national security adviser. I had Major Kevin Wendell in probably two days ago brief him on a change in business and how we will tighten those controls to give us better accountability and oversight of how we use the money.
I'll just -- in fact, I wrote down a couple of bullets here on the reporting requirements, new procedures to really minimize expenditure of the budget codes. There's a mandatory use of the electronic payroll system and the monthly reconciliation of the payroll submissions. There's a greater emphasis now on linking the payments to contracts. There's a simple thing like we're going to pay them in Afghans as opposed to dollars.

There is a new piece on contract transition and how we work that. We brought, again, the national security adviser in to give him a little bit of oversight on that. We're working now probably starting next week as we work through these commitment letters that I sign, and personally talk to the MOI and the MOD to make sure they understand how we will tighten up those controls.

And quite frankly, from Mr. Atmar, he was very appreciative of the increased scrutiny that we'll put on any oversight that we'll have both over the MOI and MOD. President Ghani has stressed many, many times about the issues of corruption. And we want to make sure that we continue to fall in line with that, learn from what we've done in the past, work with the SIGAR, work with both the MOI and MOD, and have a little bit better ability to see that.

Now, we're not going to be out in numbers that we were in the past, so we won't have the touch points out in the brigades, kandaks. We'll continue to have that at the corps, and we're actually increasing the numbers that we've ever had in the ministries. And because of that, I think that will really help us in really the central function number one which is plan, program, budget and execution -- really, the PPBE system which is, you know, really hard for U.S. to understand as well. But I think we've been working that very well with the Afghans.

We are trying to do something else that will help us, and that's really build up the civilian positions inside both ministries. The MOI is a little bit better than the MOD at this point, but to bring in young people that really understand the programming, the budgeting, and that execution, and to bring in that young talent as civilians so they continue to grow and have continuity.

The MOI has embraced that. I've had discussions with the MOD. I believe they will embrace it as well. And I think that also will help us with our transparency and the accountability oversight.

… And, again, I'm very comfortable at this point in time with the plan and the ramp of the drawdown and, quite frankly, the organization that's set up to leverage the folks that we'll have here, getting the right people with the right skill sets at the right level in the ministries. And, again, I feel comfortable that we're on the right -- the right path to do that.

I have to measure it in risk to the force and risk to the mission. And, again, some of that will change based on the new administration. Some of the policies that the new president puts out will -- will come into my mind as I take a holistic look on how to evaluate some of the gaps and seams that we identified and the goals and objectives that we wanted to get at in resolute support.

I think it's really, really early right now for me to be able to do that, because, again, we're just starting this political transition and we haven't even started resolute support yet. I think I have the ability to make those recommendations to the chain on command at the appropriate time, but right now, it's really way too early.

We're going to still try to figure out who the new governors are, who the new MOI or MOD, if they switched out, who within those ministries. So we've got to try to work toward that continuity and continue to work that base.

But, really, the advisers that we have, that's our new weapon system. And those are the folks that will be out there, engaged at the right levels to really work on the gaps and seams that we identified probably a year and a half ago with our Afghan partners here.

And I feel very confident that we have a good plan, but as any commander on the ground, you know, I reserve the right to be able to take a look at the risk to the force, risk to the mission, and then provide my assessments to my chain of command as we move forward.

He address the issue of rising Afghan casualties as follows
...there has been an uptick in the number of casualties that the Afghan security forces have taken. But that was expected because they're in the lead...There's much greater percentage rate on the police because that's really the first line of defense. The police are not trained. They're not equipped the same level that the Afghan army and the special operating forces are equipped. So they've probably taken the brunt of those casualties.

Helmand, again, for the last six weeks has been a pretty good fight, but I think, again in the next 48 hours you'll see reports from the Afghans that show that they've done very, very well there.

But the number of casualties for the Afghan security forces for the summer of '14 is just slightly higher, actually, than '13. But the last month or so, that percentage has gone up to kind of get it to where it was in '13. But that's because they've been in the lead almost completely this summer, more so than they were last year.

...I think the overall average of casualties, and this is probably both wounded and killed, is slightly higher, not very much higher, than the summer of '13. The last month or so it's spiked to reach that level, otherwise it would have probably been lower than '13....The number that's been floating around out there, and, again, sometimes hard to measure based on working through our Afghan systems, for overall casualties, this includes both wounded and killed, is in the neighborhood of 7,000 to 9,000 for '14. And, from '13, I think it's about the same number....So again, not -- not much higher than '13, in fact, the big spike here in the last couple weeks, because of the fighting done in Helmand and a little bit down in Ajristan.

When it came to the Afghan Air Force, a force that was originally only supposed to reach something approach full operational status in 2016, General Campbell limited his comments to the Mi-17,

... There's about 84 or so Mi-17s here in Afghanistan. The requirement's about 87, so we have three to go....We continue to work both with the Afghan air force and the special mission wing, which supports the special operating forces.

I had an opportunity to go on a flight line here a couple weeks ago and sit down both with the air force and then with the special operating -- or the special mission wing.

The capability that the special mission wing -- just think the comparison between -- that's their Task Force 160 -- and the ability they have to take Afghan soldiers, to fly with very low aloom and put them on an LZ to provide resupply is pretty incredible...And I think that they've been a force multiplier for the special operating forces. And for the conventional forces, the army and the police, they've been mostly moving forces and then providing resupply.

And I think that capability continues to build confidence in the Afghan security forces, in the Afghan people, but I've been really, really impressed....And they also have an ISR capability with an aircraft that provides them full motion video that they work with the special operating forces, and they've used that quite extensively in the last couple of days in Helmand.

...So the Mi-17s are a -- General Dunford used the word many, many months, a "game changer," and I absolutely believe that as well, that they provide them a capability that gives them confidence, boots their confidence to continue to -- continue to fight.

A Late and Erratic Effort to Create Effective Afghan Forces

To put the President Obama’s decisions in perspective, it is important to note just how erratic the entire history of the US presence in Afghanistan, and US efforts to build up Afghan forces have been. Figure 2 shows that the Bush Administration kept troop levels so low during 2002-2009 – largely because of the war in Iraq, that it virtually gave the Taliban and other insurgent a free ride in recovering their capabilities in Afghanistan – while taking advantage of the massive further advantage given them by the sanctuary in Pakistan described in the next chapter.
Figure 3 shows how equally late and erratic the effort to build effective Afghan combat forces was in terms of money, force, goals, and training resources. It helps explain many of the problems in Afghan forces that are now unfairly blamed on the Afghan government and ISAF/NTM-A training effort, but that were driven by US policy and funding decisions.

Both Figure 2 and Figure 3 help provide the continuity to show why key US commanders initially recommended that the US leave some 16,000 troops after 2014, and stay at conditions-based levels until Afghanistan was secure. This troop level was later dropped to some 9,500-9,800 as a result of political pressure from the White House, but was still supposed to be conditions based and assumed that significant additional Manning from German and Italian cadres would be in place and add to the US total.

It means cutting a 9,800 level in half at the end of 2015 – without a clear schedule or plan for how this will be carried out during the first campaign season Afghan forces will really be on their own. It then means leaving by 2016 regardless of the conditions involved – while the US will be in Transition to a new President – and without clear military or civil aid plans or even a clear plan for the future development of Afghan forces – is scarcely a recipe for success. The end result seems highly likely to be premature and poorly planned withdrawal, and Vietnam and Iraq scarcely set a reassuring precedent.

No matter how good the trainers and advisors who generate new forces are – and the US and other advisors in NTM-A have been rushed into creating key elements of Afghan forces nearly two years ahead of schedule, the US experience in Vietnam and Iraq is warning of just how dangerous it can be to take an optimistic view of force development, and focus on the ratings given by trainers and “force generators,” and combat experience before a force actually has to stand on its own over an extended period of time.

In case after case, the US military has a history of underestimating the level of outside support an entire military structure needs to become an effective war fighting structure, the problems in sustaining combat operations, and the problems in moving from officers and NCO that can “ticket punch” their way through the formal training process, but cannot make the transition to combat leader – particularly in a country with high levels of corruption and divided and uncertain civil government.

This underestimation has partly been the result of high rates of military rotation and constant changes in the plan and resources. Nothing seems to have changed since the warning that, “Every year was the first year in Vietnam. It also, however, is the fact that Afghanistan will be third war in which it was politically convenient to leave too soon, and the US military had little choice other than to accept the mission on those terms.

Developing forces need combat advisors to be deployed with their forward elements for at least several years to help them acquire the leadership skills, ability to operate complex systems and tactics in combat, coordinate effectively, and advise when combat leaders need to be replace or retrained. The fact Afghans often are excellent fighters does not make them excellent warfighters.

The President effectively prevented this kind of advisory effort from remaining after 2014, and even effective advisory efforts at the Corps level after 2015. He limited the number of enablers and intelligence support to levels below what his senior military
commanders had advised. The end result is that Afghan forces will be badly short of effective advisors at the start of 2014, and then concentrate many of the remaining 4,800 to 5,500 personnel at one base at Baghram by the end of 2015, with only a few hundred advisors at the embassy and an office of military cooperation after the end of 2016.\textsuperscript{16}

Similar cuts were taking place in the US military counterterrorism force and CIA and civilian intelligence. The CIA was to go from the largest CIA station in the world, with a staff approaching 1,000 to one below 200, ands virtually eliminate its drone strike capability – which had already dropped from a peak of around 122 in 2010 to 72 in 2011, 48 in 2012, 28 in 2013, and only seven through mid-September 2014. It was far from clear that the US would either have an meaningful counterterrorism capability to operate in either Afghanistan or Pakistan after mid-2015, or the ability to support Afghan army and police forces with the technical intelligence they would desperately need at the Corps level and in the field.\textsuperscript{17}
US surge came several years after insurgent surge reflected in following graphs, and US troops will actually drop in a downward curve in 2015-2016, not steps.

Original US plans called for substantial conditions-based US advisory presence through 2016, and US commanders recommended higher levels than President decided upon.

According to the Washington Post, US forces will only be based in Kabul and Bagram air base after end 2015. They will be further reduced in size by end 2017 to an advisory component at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, “most likely numbering several hundred.”

Erratic US Aid Funding of Afghan Security Forces Cripples Development

Delays between appropriation by Congress and ability to spend effectively in Afghanistan mean that major US funding only had an impact from 2010 onwards and then dropped sharply after 2011.

Figure 3: Equally Late and Erratic Efforts to Create Effective Afghan National Security Forces – Part One

Suitable ANSF Force Growth and Adequate Training Capacity Do Not Occur Until 2011


Source: SIGAR, Quarterly Report to Congress, July 30, 2014, p. 76.

Only Doubling the Army Force Goal After 2008: Air Force Readiness Left to 2016

The ANA force goal was revised to 171,600 personnel for 2011. As shown below, growth occurred in spite of high attrition levels, much of which came from experienced fighters who left after not being given leave or retraining.

Critical Shortfalls in ANSF Trainers Existed Before Decision to Create Effective ANSF Forces in 2010 and Continued Through 2012

Following the September 23, 2010 NATO Force Generation Conference, in-place trainers and pledges increased by 18 percent and 34 percent, respectively, which decreased the remaining shortage of trainers by 35 percent. The total requirement in CJSOR v10 is 2,796, a net growth of 471 personnel.

To address the NATO CJSOR v10 shortfall temporarily, the United States is providing an additional 868 personnel with skills not found in the deployed units. For the fielded ANSF Force, the current shortfall is 16 Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (OMLTs) and 139 Police Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (POMLTS). In 2011, the shortfalls will increase with the departure of the Canadian brigade in Kandahar and the additional growth of the ANSF. By 2011, the shortfall is projected to be 41 OMLTs and 243 POMLTS.

The Depth of the Security Challenge

Afghanistan has only limited capability to help itself even with outside aid. Separate CSIS studies show that the military situation in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate and the Afghan security forces face major challenges even if the country preserves political unity. (The Security Transition in Afghanistan, http://csis.org/files/publication/140708_Security_Transition_Afghanistan.pdf.)

The so-called surge in Afghanistan did produce at least temporary gains in the more populated areas of Helmand and more important gains in securing Kandahar, but had no meaningful overall impact on Afghan security, contrary to the effectiveness the Iraq surge had on security. Data from ISAF, US Department of Defense, and UN shown in this report make it clear that casualties continued to rise, and violence spread steadily more widely in Afghanistan during 2010-2014. These data are summarized in Figure 4.

Signing a Security Agreement is Only a Limited Beginning

It is also increasingly clear from these trends in violence that the long and still ongoing political struggle over the election between Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah made things worse. They will grow still worse if the power sharing arrangements between the two men fail. It will take far more than Presidential clichés of the kind the President issued after a newly-elected President Ghani signed the bilateral security and status of forces agreements on September 29, 2014 to change this situation.

Today we mark an historic day in the U.S.-Afghan partnership that will help advance our shared interests and the long-term security of Afghanistan. After nearly two years of hard work by negotiating teams on both sides, earlier today in Kabul the United States and the new Afghan Government of National Unity signed a Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA). This agreement represents an invitation from the Afghan Government to strengthen the relationship we have built over the past 13 years and provides our military service members the necessary legal framework to carry out two critical missions after 2014: targeting the remnants of Al Qaeda and training, advising, and assisting Afghan National Security Forces. The signing of the BSA also reflects the implementation of the Strategic Partnership Agreement our two governments signed in May 2012.

Today, Afghan and NATO officials also signed the NATO Status of Forces Agreement, giving forces from Allied and partner countries the legal protections necessary to carry out the NATO Resolute Support mission when ISAF comes to an end later this year.

These agreements follow an historic Afghan election in which the Afghan people exercised their right to vote and ushered in the first peaceful democratic transfer of power in their nation’s history. The BSA reflects our continued commitment to support the new Afghan Unity Government, and we look forward to working with this new government to cement an enduring partnership that strengthens Afghan sovereignty, stability, unity, and prosperity, and that contributes to our shared goal of defeating Al Qaeda and its extremist affiliates.

Rhetoric and Spin Do Not Win Wars, and Cause a Successful Transition.

No public plan exists for shaping and funding any element of the ANSF after 2014. The statement say that there are “two critical missions after 2014: targeting the remnants of Al Qaeda and training, advising, and assisting Afghan National Security Forces. Cuts in US military and intelligence personnel strongly indicate that the first mission will only have marginal support, and it is unclear what caveats will exist on US operations and whether
the kind of caveats included the letter transferring responsibility for security and limiting US operations that the US and Afghanistan signed in June 2013 will have a major impact. As shown earlier, US force levels will almost certainly be too low to adequately support the mission of assisting Afghan National Security Forces.  

*Figure 4: The Afghan Problem: A Failed Surge and Rising and Spreading Violence – Part One*

The Surge in Iraq vs. the Surge in Afghanistan

![Graph](image_url)

Steady Rise in UN Estimate of Civilian Casualties in Inflicted by Taliban, Haqqani Network, and Other Insurgents

Steady Expansion in UN Estimate of Key Areas of Violence

Figure 4: The Afghan Problem: A Failed Surge and Rising and Spreading Violence – Part Three

Rise in State Department Data Base Estimate of Total Terrorist Incidents


Equally Important Governance and Economic Challenges

A separate study shows the range of governance and economic challenges. ([The Civil Transition in Afghanistan](http://csis.org/files/publication/140630_Gov_Econ_Transition_Afghanistan_0.pdf)).

This study highlights the fact that economic and governance challenges are at least as serious as the military challenges. It shows a steady rise in poverty, failure to collect revenues and manage the budget, the lack of realistic goals for economic development, critical problems in governance and corruption, and supports the SIGAR and World Bank conclusion that much of the aid effort has been waste and or distorted the economy.

**Corruption and Incompetence**

Transparency International ranks Afghanistan as the third most corrupt country in the world, and Figure 5 shows World Bank scale of the problems in Afghan governance. The full report on [The Civil Transition in Afghanistan](http://csis.org/files/publication/140630_Gov_Econ_Transition_Afghanistan_0.pdf) shows that World Bank, UN, and IMF estimates provide equally serious warnings about Afghan capability for economic and human development.

A December 2013 poll by Democracy International of the single most important issue the new President should focus upon found that 29% of Afghans said corruption was versus only 21% for security – a measure that also included abuses and corruption by the police and government. Another 7% said reconciliation with the Taliban, 5% said roads, 4% education, and 3% medical care. Only 5% gave defeating the Taliban top priority.

The Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction (SIGAR) has found the overall situation in terms of aid, the Afghan budget, corruption, and narcotics to be so bad that John F. Sopko, the Special Inspector General stated in a speech on September 12, 2014 that,

> To date, the United States government has provided over $104 billion for Afghanistan reconstruction which has been intended: to build the Afghan government and its security forces, bolster Afghanistan’s economy, build its infrastructure, expand its health and education sectors, and improve Afghanistan’s quality of life and rule of law. …That’s an extraordinary amount of money, but in many ways it has gone unnoticed almost hidden in plain sight. When was the last time you heard mention of the massive amount of money being spent on reconstruction in Afghanistan? Or what have we gotten for the investment?

Let’s put that figure in some context …Let’s just state this simple fact that’s more money than we’ve spent on reconstruction for any one country in our nation’s entire history. For those of you who are historians, at the end of this year we will have committed more funds to reconstruct Afghanistan, in inflation-adjusted terms, than the U.S. spent to rebuild Europe after World War II under the Marshall Plan… In relative terms to current foreign policy hot spots, we’re spending more money just this year to rebuild Afghanistan than we will spend for the next four largest countries that receive U.S. foreign assistance, Israel, Egypt, Pakistan, and Iraq combined.

… As you well know, by December of this year, the President plans to leave just 9,800 U.S. troops in Afghanistan, and by the end of 2015 just around 5,000. As a result, many people believe America’s involvement in Afghanistan will therefore end. That is wrong. Despite the drawdown, our reconstruction mission is far from over and I would say will continue at a high tempo for some
years to come if we want to keep the Afghan military and government afloat and protect our reconstruction successes.

In that regard, right now there is nearly $16 billion in the pipeline, money that Congress has appropriated, but that U.S. agencies have not yet spent…That’s right $16 billion in the bank waiting to be pushed out the door for Afghan reconstruction projects and programs. Furthermore, it is widely believed the U.S. will continue to fund reconstruction at another $5 billion to $8 billion annually for years to come….As an example, just last week at the NATO conference in Wales, the Coalition agreed to fund the Afghan security forces alone at the rate of $5.1 billion a year through 2017, a $1 billion commitment increase, with the U.S. shouldering the majority of that cost…It’s a tremendous amount of money. Ensuring it’s spent correctly is not only important to American taxpayers it’s critical to advancing our foreign policy goals. That is why it’s essential that someone is tasked with overseeing these efforts and ensuring that money is being spent appropriately.

…. Reconstruction programs must take into account a recipient country’s ability to operate and sustain the assistance provided. If they don’t, we put the programs and tax dollars at risk. There’s no real benefit in setting up projects or programs that the Afghans cannot or will not sustain once international forces depart and international aid declines. Unfortunately, Afghanistan is a case study in projects and programs set up without considering sustainability.

The sheer size of the U.S. government’s reconstruction effort has placed both a financial and operational burden on the Afghan economy and its government that it simply cannot manage by itself. …For example, last year the Afghan government raised about $2 billion in revenues. Next year, it hopes to raise $2.4 billion, although recent reports we have received put this goal in serious doubt. With stated budget needs of approximately $7.6 billion, unfortunately the Afghan government will not be able to meet its budget without continued and significant donor assistance.

Currently, the United States and other international donors fund more than 60% of the Afghan national budget, as well as countless reconstruction programs and projects that currently operate off-budget. With the troop withdrawal, greater responsibility for those off-budget programs and projects is being given to the Afghan government.

Looking at the Afghan National Security Forces or ANSF it’s clear why this problem is so immense. The latest independent assessment, by the Center for Naval Analysis, concludes that the ANSF will require a force of 373,000. This would cost roughly $5 billion to $6 billion per year, at a time when the Afghan government struggles to raise $2 billion a year.

At these levels, if the Afghan government were to dedicate all of its domestic revenue toward sustaining the Afghan army and police, it still could only pay for about a third of the cost. Moreover, all other costs from paying civil servants to maintaining all roads, schools, hospitals and other non-military infrastructure would also have to come from international donors.

While paying for Afghanistan’s security forces will be challenging, the cost of ongoing non-military development aid is also a major contributor to the ballooning expenses the Afghan government is responsible for. Each new development project that the U.S. and our allies funds, increases overall operation and maintenance costs that the Afghan government will ultimately be responsible for.

The bottom line: It appears we’ve created a government that the Afghans simply cannot afford.

Corruption is another enormous inter-agency challenge facing reconstruction in Afghanistan. The consensus among everyone I speak with is that if corruption is allowed to continue unabated it will likely jeopardize every gain we’ve made so far in Afghanistan….Corruption destroys the populace’s confidence in their elected officials, siphons off funds that would be used to combat insurgents or build infrastructure, and ultimately leads to a government that is ineffectual and distrusted.

The threat from unabated corruption is especially exemplified right now in light of the ongoing election crisis. A crisis spawned from corruption, which many fear is putting Afghanistan’s entire
future in jeopardy. …However, the problem of corruption isn’t new. Experts and SIGAR have been highlighting concerns about corruption for a long time.

Top U.S. officials are very much aware of Afghan corruption. A report commissioned by General Dunford last year noted that “Corruption directly threatens the viability and legitimacy of the Afghan state.” USAID’s own assistant administrator for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Larry Sampler, told Congress that Afghanistan is “the most corrupt place I’ve ever been to.” And Retired Marine Gen. John Allen identified corruption as the biggest threat to Afghanistan’s future an even bigger threat than the Taliban.

The Afghans are also concerned with corruption. In June, Integrity Watch Afghanistan (an Afghan NGO) issued their latest national corruption survey. It found that corruption tied for second as the greatest challenge facing Afghanistan, after security. While 18% of respondents in the 2012 survey said they faced corruption within the last 12 months, 21% of respondents said they faced corruption in the 2014 survey.

The survey also noted that Afghans believe corruption in most public sectors undermined their access to services. The same services the U.S. invested billions in establishing….For example, 28% of respondents believed that their households were deprived of access to electricity because of corruption and 18% said corruption blocked their access to higher education. The exact same areas where U.S. agencies commonly claim great success. In fact, the corruption percentages for electricity and education are not only up from 2012 but they are also higher than for justice by the courts and security by the police.

In June, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace singled out Afghanistan as an example of a state where governing systems have been bent to benefit one or a very few networks. According to the report, President Karzai regularly calls his attorney general to influence cases or personally orders the release of suspects from pre-trial detention, quashing the cases against them.

This is the same Attorney General that recently threw a respected New York Times reporter out of the country because he didn’t like his reporting. The DOD and the State Department have repeatedly noted that the Afghan AG has deliberately avoided prosecuting either senior officials or individuals with ties to senior officials and stymied the work of the investigatory arm of his own internal-control and monitoring unit….SIGAR has also had problems with the Attorney General. In one case, SIGAR worked to freeze and seize nearly $70 million in funds, stolen from the U.S. government, that was sitting in Afghan banks. For months we pressed the Attorney General’s Office to freeze the money and begin the legal process to seize the cash. At first, we were told the bank account was frozen and the money protected. Unfortunately, as is too often the case, we later learned that the money was mysteriously unfrozen by some powerful bureaucrat in Kabul.

SIGAR has issued a number of reports on U.S. efforts to combat corruption. These reports have continually pointed out that the United States lacks a unified anti-corruption strategy in Afghanistan. This is astonishing, given that Afghanistan is one of the most corrupt countries in the world, and a country that the United States is spending billions of dollars in….Yet there has been no progress made toward developing a unified anti-corruption strategy. In fact, things could get worse with the drawdown.

We cannot shy away from the challenge of corruption. We need a strategy, and we need to hold the Afghans feet to the fire on this issue. SIGAR will continue to point out how well or poorly not only U.S. officials but also Afghan officials perform in their promises to reduce corruption.

…Directly tied to corruption is the final inter-agency challenge I wanted to talk about today countering the growth of the drug trade. This challenge is no secret to anyone; the U.S. has already spent nearly $7.6 billion to combat the opium industry. Yet, by every conceivable metric, we’ve failed…Production and cultivation are up, interdiction and eradication are down, financial support to the insurgency is up, and addiction and abuse are at unprecedented levels in Afghanistan.

During my trips to Afghanistan I’ve met with U.S., Afghan and international officials involved in implementing and evaluating counternarcotics programs. In the opinion of almost everyone I’ve met, the counternarcotics situation in Afghanistan is dire, with little prospect for improvement.
As with sustainability and corruption, the expanding cultivation and trafficking of drugs puts the entire Afghan reconstruction effort at risk. The narcotics trade poisons the Afghan financial sector and fuels a growing illicit economy. This, in turn, undermines the Afghan state’s legitimacy by stoking corruption, nourishing criminal networks and providing significant financial support to the Taliban and other insurgent groups. There are already signs that elements within the Afghan security forces are reaching arrangements with rural communities to allow opium poppy cultivation even encouraging production to build local patronage networks and generate illicit income.

Given the importance of this problem, I was astonished to find that the counternarcotics effort isn’t a top priority during this critical transition period and beyond. For example, the latest U.S. Civil-Military Strategic Framework for Afghanistan, which articulates the “vision for pursuing U.S. national goals in Afghanistan,” barely mentions counternarcotics. It notes that the U.S. counternarcotics strategy for 2010 “informs” the framework, but for the first time since the U.S. government began outlining its reconstruction goals, it didn’t include counternarcotics as a major focus area.

When I’ve met with Department of Justice, State Department and DOD officials, no one’s been able to convincingly explain to me how the U.S. counternarcotics efforts are making a meaningful impact on the narcotics trade or how they’ll have a significant impact after the 2014 transition. That’s troubling. Without an effective counternarcotics strategy and

A failed election and unstable Afghan politics, an incompetent and corrupt Afghan government, an uncertain mix of Afghan security forces that are nearly half police and with many corrupt and incompetent elements, and an Afghan government that cannot honestly and effectively administrate aid and carry out economic reform or use aid to stabilize the economy add to both the risk and costs involved. So do Pakistan’s willingness to offer the Taliban and other extremist forces de facto sanctuary in Pakistan.
Figure 5: The Afghan Problem: One of the Most Corrupt and Worst Governed Countries in the World

The Failure to Win US Domestic Political Support

It is also unclear that there is anywhere near the level of US domestic political support necessary to sustain a serious US military and civil aid effort that might well have to last to 2018-2020 in response to the real world conditions on the ground.

President Obama also made his decision at a time when he faced opposition from many members of Congress and a steadily more negative U.S. public opinion. The Administration, the Congress, and the American people would probably like to “win” in Afghanistan in the sense some form of relatively stable Afghanistan free of Taliban and extremist control emerges after 2014. It is unlikely they are willing to spend a great deal to achieve this.

As Figure 6 shows, US public opinion polls provide a clear warning about the limits to popular support for continued US intervention in Afghanistan – although they do not show any commensurate reduction in support for strong US military forces and American’s support the President in taking a strong stand on Iran and there was no popular objection to the US building up its role in Iraq in June 2014:

Figure 6: US Public Opinion on the Afghan War


"From what you’ve read and heard, do you think Barack Obama is removing U.S. troops from Afghanistan too quickly, not quickly enough, or is he handling this about right?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Too quickly</th>
<th>Not quickly enough</th>
<th>About right</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
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<tr>
<td>6/24-30/14</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
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"When it comes to Afghanistan, do you think the war was worth it or not worth it?"

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<th>Worth it</th>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>1/12-15/13</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>51</td>
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"Obama has said he will reduce U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan to 9,800 by the end of this year, half of that next year and near zero by 2016. Do you support or oppose this troop-reduction plan?"

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<td>5/29 - 6/1/14</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>19</td>
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"Most U.S. troops are expected to leave Afghanistan by the end of 2014. From what you know, how likely do you think it is that Afghanistan will be a stable country after U.S. troops leave: very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not at all likely?"

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>Very likely</th>
<th>Somewhat likely</th>
<th>Not very likely</th>
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"Looking back, do you think the United States made a mistake sending troops to fight in Afghanistan in 2001?"

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<th>Yes</th>
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<td>2/6-9/14</td>
<td>49</td>
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<td>3/7-10/13</td>
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"In view of the developments since we first sent our troops to Afghanistan, do you think the United States made a mistake in sending troops to Afghanistan, or not?"

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<td>10/30 - 11/6/13</td>
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5/2/11: Co-sponsored by The Washington Post.

"Do you think the U.S. made the right decision or the wrong decision in using military force in Afghanistan?"

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"All in all, considering the costs to the United States versus the benefits to the United States, do you think the war in Afghanistan has been worth fighting, or not?"

10/9: "All in all, considering the costs to the United States versus the benefits to the United States, do you think the war in Afghanistan was / has been worth fighting, or not?" -- "was" and "has been" each asked of half the sample.

9/09 & earlier: "All in all, considering the costs to the United States versus the benefits to the United States, do you think the war in Afghanistan WAS worth fighting, or not?"

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"Overall, do you think the United States has mostly succeeded or mostly failed in achieving its goals in Afghanistan?"

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<th>Mostly succeeded</th>
<th>Mostly failed</th>
<th>Unsure/Refused</th>
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Source: [http://www.pollingreport.com/afghan.htm](http://www.pollingreport.com/afghan.htm)
**Economic and Budgetary Crisis and a Massive Waste of Aid**

As SIGAR John Sopko pointed out in his September 2014 speech, the US has already spent an immense amount of money on trying to secure and reshape Afghanistan. The US government has never issued an official estimate of the cost of the war, but Amy Belasco of the Congressional Research Service has estimated that the U.S. spent $557.1 billion on the Afghan War as of FY 2011. Later requests for OCO funding totaled $254 billion between FY2012 and FY2015 budget request, for a total of $811.1 billion. The cost in blood for *U.S. alone* at the beginning of June 2014 was 2,320 dead plus 19,784 wounded in action.

In the process, the US alone appropriated approximately $103.2 billion in reconstruction aid through FY2014, and still budgeted $6.5 billion in civil and military aid in FY2014. The US and its allies funded both the vast majority of Afghan reconstruction and development efforts with what the World Bank has assessed was marginal success in a country it sees as extremely corrupt, badly governed, and still largely reliant on agriculture in areas unaffected by aid and outside spending.23

In spite of hopes for reform and improved governance, SIGAR estimates that Afghanistan’s domestic revenues for the Afghan FY 1392 (December 21, 2012–December 20, 2013) missed Ministry of Finance budget targets by 11.9%. Domestic revenues paid for only 37% ($2 billion) of Afghanistan’s total budget expenditures ($5.4 billion) in FY 1392; donor grants covered the remainder.”24

The flow of recent U.S. aid through FY2014 is shown in Figure 7 below. SIGAR reported at the end of July 2014 that US aid would drop further from a total appropriation of $6,417 million in FY2014 to $5,827 in FY2015. The money available to the Afghan security forces was cut from about $5.2 billion to $4.4 billion, although economic and governance aid rose from $852 million to $1.2 billion. Many other categories of aid were largely eliminated and counternarcotics funding was cut by more than 50%.25

**No Public Plans or Analysis to Help Shape the Future**

The US, USAID, and other donors have pledged to keep up a smaller flow of military and civil aid after 2014, but there are no public plans that show the level of aid needed, how aid money would be spent and managed, what measures of effectiveness can be developed and reported, and that explore what would happen if the fighting continued to serious intensity or Afghanistan faced a truly serious economic crisis after 2014-2105, as past aid money and military spending ran out.

This is all too real a prospect. Reporting by the World Bank made this clear in April 2014:26

Economic growth slowed considerably in 2013 despite robust agricultural production as heightened uncertainty surrounding the political and security transition led to a slump in investor and consumer confidence. Agricultural output reached record levels for a second consecutive year in 2013 due to favorable weather conditions, with cereals production increasing 2.7 percent over the bumper crop of 2012. On the other hand, uncertainty surrounding the political and security transition led to a slump in investor and consumer confidence, thus resulting in a sharp slowdown in private investment and growth in the non-agricultural sectors. Economic growth in 2013 is estimated at 3.6 percent, down sharply from strong growth of 14.4 percent in 2012. Uncertainty remains over the security outlook after most international forces withdraw in 2014 and over...
whether a cohesive and broadly accepted government will take hold within a reasonable period of time following the April 2014 elections. Growth is projected to remain weak in 2014. A smooth political and security transition would help restore confidence in the economy and enable a pickup in growth in 2015. Revenue collection weakened in 2013, while Afghanistan’s large security expenditure obligations and high aid dependence pose the risk of crowding out important civilian operating and development spending. After a decade of strong revenue growth, domestic revenues declined to 9.5 percent of GDP in 2013 from 10.3 percent in 2012 and the peak of 11.6 percent in 2011. In nominal terms, revenues amounted to Af 109 billion in 2013, almost level with the pro-rated figure for 2012. The decline in revenue collections is a result of the economic slowdown as well as weaknesses in enforcement in both tax and customs administration. In order to preserve fiscal sustainability, a concerted effort will be required going forward to improve revenue mobilization by strengthening tax and customs enforcement and by expediting introduction and implementation of the planned value-added tax. At the same time, given Afghanistan’s extraordinary security expenditure obligations, safeguarding important civilian operating and development expenditures is a priority. As security expenditures have continued to grow, austerity measures in 2013 disproportionately affected civilian expenditures and the 2014 budget projects a considerable further increase in recurrent security expenditures.

The situation was far worse in September 2014. An Afghan Finance Ministry official gave a press statement indicating that the government needed $547 million more in aid immediately to meet its expenses. Alhaj M. Aqa, the Finance Ministry’s director general of the treasury, said that while the government could cover the September payroll for more than 500,000 national and provincial employees, it lacked the funds to cover the October’s payroll obligation, and cited the ongoing political crisis that had slashed foreign investment and cut expected revenues by 25%.

While this particular budget crisis did not threaten most security spending, it did affect money to feed the security forces, and came at a time when outside aid was already covering 65% of the Afghan budget. It also meant that Afghanistan did not have the money to pay its civil servants and contractors in October 2014 – almost immediately after the inauguration of its new president.

Alhaj Mohammad Aqa, the treasury director general of Afghanistan stated that its treasury had less than the 6.5 billion Afghans ($116 million) needed to start paying these salaries, and refused to say how much money the Afghan government now had. He announced that Afghanistan had asked the US for $537 million more in emergency funds to cover its commitments through December, but the US had not yet approved the request.

It was also a time when Afghanistan was still dealing with the fact that the *New York Times* had a reporter expelled from the country in August 2014 for pointing out high level corruption, and US experts confirm that corruption by District and Provincial governors in critical Districts and Governors – coupled to poor governance – remains a major security threat.
Figure 7: US Aid to Afghanistan FY2007-FY2014

Notes: Numbers have been rounded. Updated data for State and USAID Dollar Operations accounts resulted in a higher appropriation figure for FY 2014 than reported last quarter. DOD reprogrammed $1 billion from FY 2011 AIDT. DOD reprogrammed $1 billion from FY 2012 AIDF. PL 113-6 reauthorized $1 billion from FY 2012 AIDF. DOD reprogrammed $178 million from FY 2013 AIDF. DOD transferred $101 million from FY 2011 AIDF to FY 2011 ESF to fund an infrastructure project to be implemented by USAID.

Conditions-Based Support or Keep Rushing for the Exit

If there is feasible policy recommendation, it is that the President Obama must act quickly to convince the American people and the Congress that the US advisory presence and US military and civil aid should be sustained at a conditions-based level well beyond 2016, and that Afghanistan has sufficient strategic value to justify this.

This would require a level of objectivity, honesty, transparency, credible planning, and risk-benefit analysis that US has failed to develop since 2001, and failed to provide in Vietnam, the Balkans, and Iraq. It would also require the President to act before the US loses so much basing capability, personnel, and access to Afghan forces and government facilities to make effective US action difficult to impossible.

It would also require a successful resolution of the paralyzing and divisive mess that has emerged out of the Afghan election, a credible degree of national unity, and Afghan leadership that is interested in meaningful leadership rather than power brokering and corruption. No case can be made for reversing current US policy without a shift in the quality of Afghan governance that now seems all too improbable.

Afghan leaders must take responsibility for both success and failure, and do so with the clear understanding that the US commitment to Afghanistan will be steadily more conditional and is of comparatively minor strategic importance to the US and the US has no plans for lasting bases or a major role in Central Asia.

Thus, much depends on the new Afghan President, the future degree of Afghan unity, how well Afghan forces do as US advisors phase down below a critical minimum in 2015, and whether Afghanistan proves able to deal with the economic impact of the coming cuts in aid and military spending. While no US political leader can openly state just how conditional US support is becoming, the risk of some form of Afghan failure is now acceptable to the US in de facto terms.

As noted earlier, Afghanistan has not shown itself to be a meaningful partner in terms of effective leadership and unity. World Bank estimates indicate that it has extremely poor governance even by the low standards of South Asia. It has no clear future force goals for its regular armed forces or police, and no real future budget that reflects the military necessities that will evolve after outside forces depart in 2014-2016, the cost of the forces it needs, and the resources it can both fund and obtain from the outside to support them.

As yet, Afghanistan has not set forth a meaningful plan for future aid needs for either maintaining economic stability or moving towards post-Transition economic stability development that it can show it can implement or fund. It has not shown it can reduce corruption to acceptable levels or provide the quality of governance needed to become the “other half” of an effective counterinsurgency effort.

The US and its allies have not presented a clearly defined, practical and fundable plan for providing the military and civil aid Afghanistan actually needs and can absorb beyond vague pledges of total aid. Worse, no functional organization yet exists for trying to shape and coordinate aid and development. NTM-A and ISAF must be replaced, and the
US has chosen a level and duration of its advisory effort that is so limited that it may well be as much of a threat to success as the Taliban and Afghan military incompetence.

The near total failure of UNAMA to ever address aid planning and coordination has not led to any plan for replacement, Afghanistan has made no serious progress in the economic and governance reforms it pledged at Tokyo in 2012, and has not addressed corruption, waste, capital flight, or the real market impact of the Afghan narco-economy.

So far, the closest thing to a real world plan for dealing with the civil elements of Transition is the World Bank report on *Islamic State of Afghanistan: Pathways to Inclusive Growth*, and this report can only have meaning if the World Bank and Afghan government can find a meaningful path to cooperate and implement it. (See [http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSCContentServer/WDSP/IB/2014/06/18/000456286_20140618113748/Rendered/INDEX/ACS82280WP0v2000Box385214B00PUBLIC0.txt](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSCContentServer/WDSP/IB/2014/06/18/000456286_20140618113748/Rendered/INDEX/ACS82280WP0v2000Box385214B00PUBLIC0.txt).)

Yet, there are also enough positive trends in Afghan forces, governance, and economics to show that that a still limited but more realistic level of effort might produce a relatively stable Afghanistan. Accordingly, dealing with these critical issues in Transition all represent the clear real world priorities for Afghan, US, and other donor nations. The Afghan forces are making real progress, and a recent study by the World Bank has indicated that there are credible options for improving Afghan governance and stabilizing its economy.31

*But*, they also require Afghanistan to develop a more honest and effective government within the limits imposed by Afghan standards, and the US and other donors and an understanding that that such efforts need to be shaped by the realities that emerges after US and ISAF forces leave.
IV. Dealing with the Façade of Alliance: The Bill Comes Due in US-Pakistani Relations

Ever since 2001, the US and Pakistan have been caught up in the tensions caused by the fact that they have had different objectives in Afghanistan and the region, and the real world tensions between the US and Pakistan over Pakistan’s tolerance of Taliban, Haqqani, and al Qaeda sanctuaries in Pakistan. While public opinion polls show that many Pakistanis see the US as more of a threat than India, the private US official view of Pakistan is equally negative.

The US sees Pakistan as a deeply divided and unstable country whose economy and social infrastructure is drifting towards the status of a failed state, and whose military presents a constant threat of taking power. While Pakistan finally made a peaceful transition in a democratic election in May 2013, that election has led to divisive and nearly paralyzing political tensions between Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and two opposing political leaders seeking to push him out of power -- Imran Khan and Tahir ul-Qadri.

A Rising Tide of Internal Violence

The military and Pakistan’s divisive and dysfunctional politics are only part of the problem. The annual US State Department Country Reports on Terrorism issued in April 2014 reported that Pakistan was making efforts to improve its counterterrorism programs but that no progress had been made in reduced the rising level of violence in 2013.32

In 2013, Pakistan continued to confront terrorist groups, including al-Qa’ida (AQ), Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Punjabi Taliban, and Lashkar I Jhangvi (LJ), all of whom mounted attacks against police, military and security forces, or engaged in sectarian violence and criminal activities against all sectors of society. Pakistan did not confront Lashkare-Taibya, however, who continued to operate, rally, and fundraise in Pakistan with its front organizations.

…In 2013, terrorists used remote-controlled improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in bicycles, motorcycles, parked cars,rickshaws, donkey carts, and alongside roads, used vehicle-borne IEDs, suicide bombers (including females), targeted assassinations, rocket-propelled grenades, and other armed combat tactics in attacks on mosques, churches, markets, journalists, aid workers, government institutions and officials. AQ and HQN continued to plot against U.S. interests in the region, including U.S. diplomatic facilities. TTP posed a threat to both U.S. and Pakistani interests, and carried out numerous attacks against Pakistani armed forces, Pakistani civilians, and government institutions.

The May 2013 national elections brought in new civilian leadership, which was reviewing a new counterterrorism strategy at year’s end. In the pre-election period, some terrorist groups forged alliances with certain political parties, including religiously-based political parties. Some violent extremists conducted election-related terrorist attacks against political parties, candidates, and government officials. Pakistan’s government has pursued negotiations with TTP while also targeting the group militarily. Pakistan continued to support the Afghan peace process.

Karachi continued to suffer from political and ethnic violence inflicted by different groups, including militant organizations, fundamentalist religious groups, and the militant wings of political parties. Some militant groups worked to assert control over political parties and criminal gangs operating in the city and surrounding areas of southern Sindh. The security situation in Karachi was a priority concern for Pakistan’s president, prime minister, parliament, Supreme Court, and the military and law enforcement agencies.

…During 2013, terrorist groups targeted the Pakistani government and military, engaged in
sectarian violence, and perpetrated attacks against civilians. Terrorists organized armed assaults on police stations, judicial centers, border check posts, military convoys, and polio vaccination teams. Terrorists plotted against and attacked judges, prosecutors, police officers, defense lawyers, anti-TTP peace committee members, intelligence officers, and elected officials. In the months leading up to the May national elections, terrorists attacked and killed political party workers and candidates, bombed political rallies, and, after the elections, killed newly elected and appointed officials. Terrorists mounted an armed attack on a Pakistan military and Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) office in Sukkur, and days later stormed a major prison, releasing several dozen imprisoned high-profile terrorists.

In separate incidents, terrorists assassinated a high-ranking Army general in the tribal areas, the Karachi Chief of Police, and the president’s chief of security. Terrorists targeted Shia and other religious minorities in all areas of Pakistan, especially in Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), and Balochistan. Terrorists killed an international team of mountain climbers, including one U.S. citizen, on Pakistan’s famed Nanga Parbat Mountain.

As of mid-December, over 1,025 civilians and more than 475 security forces personnel had been killed in terrorist-related incidents in Pakistan during the year. The presence of AQ, TTP, and other militant groups continues to pose a threat to U.S. citizens throughout Pakistan. The TTP claimed responsibility for the majority of the frequent attacks that targeted civilians and security personnel. Terrorist incidents occurred in every province.

The terrorism database attached to the report showed a sharp rise in in the number of terrorism incidents in Pakistan from 2005 onwards and nearly vertical rise from 2010 to 2013, rising from less than 800 incidents in 2010 to nearly 2,300 in 2014. Changes in the management of the data base, and reporting made it difficult to make some of the comparisons provided in the text of the previous year’s report, but Figure 6 also shows that the 2012 report found Pakistan to be the most violent of the ten countries with the highest level of terrorist attacks in the world. Pakistan had 1,404 attacks in 2012, with 1,848 killed, and 3,463 wounded. Other leading countries did have more casualties, but fewer attacks: Iraq had 1,271 attacks, and Afghanistan had 1,023 attacks. No other country exceed 1,000, India was the fourth ranking country and had only 557 attacks.

Independent analysts see the same trends. A study by Saira Yamin and Salma Malik of the US Institute for Peace found the patterns of violence that are also shown in Figure 8, and concluded that:

- Over the past decade, Pakistan has experienced a significant rise in violence in terms of frequency, scope, and magnitude. The origins and intensity of violence vary regionally and involve both longstanding conflict actors and new groups.

- Violence is most concentrated along the Afghan border in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). Other regions of Pakistan lying along the border with Afghanistan, including Balochistan and Gilgit Baltistan, have also experienced a significant escalation in violence. This escalation is in part a result of the nexus between sectarian militants and terrorist outfits.

- In Sindh, most of the violence is concentrated in Karachi, which witnessed a tenfold increase in violence between 2006 and 2013. The security landscape there has become increasingly complex over the years with the addition of many types of actors, including sectarian militant groups, terrorist outfits, political parties, and criminal gangs.

- The scale, scope, and magnitude of violence in Balochistan, the largest province in Pakistan in terms of territory, remain unprecedented and unabated. Sectarian and terrorist activities targeting the Shia Hazara community have compounded the effects of a high intensity conflict between a secessionist insurgency and the military that has been under way in the province since 2006.
Balochistan also provides safe haven to the Quetta Shura, a key Afghan Taliban group headed by Mullah Omar.

- For the past decade, Punjab has experienced the least violence of any province in Pakistan. However, the province is increasingly a breeding ground for terrorist and militant recruits engaged in violence in other regions.

- Given the diverse and broad spectrum of conflicts affecting Pakistan, it is important to analyze and address each conflict in its own context and plan for comprehensive states stabilization and peace building processes entailing both short and long-term measures.
Figure 8: The Broadening Patterns of Internal Violence in Pakistan – Part One

State Department Data Annex Trend Analysis Terrorist Incidents

GTD, Global terrorism Data Base, “Pakistan,”

USIP Map of Terrorist Incidents

**Figure 8: The Broadening Patterns of Internal Violence in Pakistan – Part Two**

State Department Estimate of Ten Countries with Most Terrorist Attacks: State Department Statistical Annex for 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total Attacks</th>
<th>Total Killed</th>
<th>Total Wounded</th>
<th>Average Number Killed per Attack</th>
<th>Average Number Wounded per Attack</th>
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<tr>
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<td>1404</td>
<td>1848</td>
<td>3643</td>
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<td>Iraq</td>
<td>1271</td>
<td>2436</td>
<td>6641</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>5.23</td>
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<td>2632</td>
<td>3715</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>3.63</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>1386</td>
<td>1019</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>1.87</td>
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<td>Thailand</td>
<td>222</td>
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<td>897</td>
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<td>203</td>
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<td>2.10</td>
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<td>270</td>
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<td>Syria[a]</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>1787</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>13.44</td>
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An Ally that is Also a Threat

While US officials, officers, and experts will not say so publicly, many also see Pakistan as much as an ally as they do a threat. Many US officials see Pakistan as a country whose military refused to take advantage of US efforts to help it in counterinsurgency warfare, and whose military is still committed to aiding Islamist extremist elements that threaten Afghanistan and Pakistan while increasingly fighting a domestic Islamist threat it has done much to generate. The US has seen Pakistan create a de facto sanctuary for the Taliban and Haqqani Network, somehow fail to detect Bin Laden’s presence near a key military base, and be “unable” to find Omar and the headquarters of the Taliban in Quetta.

They do not believe that Pakistan made any serious effort to find Bin Laden, deal with the Al Qaeda presence on its soil, limit the flow of arms and volunteers into Afghanistan, capture or expel the Quetta Taliban, or conduct counterinsurgency campaigns that were not limited to threats against Pakistan.

They have equally little tolerance for Pakistani arguments that the US has illegally attacked targets in Pakistan territory. Nations must either secure their territory and borders or see outside states counter the enemy forces on their soil. At the same time, US officials note that Pakistan has often attacked the US for the UCAV strikes shown in Figure 9, even when Pakistan provided some of the targeting data, lacked the capacity to act on its own, and the strikes occurred against extremist elements threatening Afghanistan that the Pakistani government claimed it did not tolerate or support. Pakistan has not secured its borders or denied the Afghan Taliban and Haqqani Network effective sanctuaries on its territory.

Figure 9: US Air and UCAV Strikes in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia: 2002-9/2014

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<td>117</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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Source: The Long War Journal and New York Times, September 12, 2014,

US officials and officers see Pakistan’s claims to having fought Islamic extremists and insurgents as having focused almost exclusively on insurgents that threatened Pakistan, while tolerating the presence of Al Qaeda leaders like Bin Laden, and the Afghan leaders, cadres, training camps and bases of Afghan insurgents. They see the ISI as a threat and not as an ally, and still as a major political force in Pakistan. It is also interesting to note that Chinese experts now see the ISIS as a major problem in allowing the training of Islamic extremist from China to take place in Pakistan.36

This helps explain why tensions between the US and Pakistan approached an open break in 2011, when Admiral Mike Mullen, then Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs, publicly
described the Haqqani network as “a veritable arm” of the ISI. No currently serving US senior official or official has publicly gone so far making such charges, or as Carlotta Gall has in *The Wrong Enemy*, but several privately make it clear that they do not regard Pakistan as a meaningful ally and see its conduct as having sustained the threat in Afghanistan. It is also interesting to note that Chinese experts now see the ISIS as a major problem in allowing the training of Islamic extremist from China to take place in Pakistan.

It also helps explain why there is little – if any – real world US tolerance of Pakistani arguments that the US has somehow failed to support a Pakistan making sacrifices for the US. The US sees Pakistan as serving its own interests in ways that have ended in supporting Islamic extremism and making the war in Afghanistan far worse. A CRS report issued in 2013 reflected the private views of many US officials in noting that, “Pentagon officials have for some time been frustrated by the allegedly feckless counterinsurgency efforts of the internally squabbling Islamabad government.

The election of Sharif as Prime Minister made some improvement in US-Pakistani relations, and the new Pakistani military campaign in the FATA area in 2014 has had some US intelligence aid and support in the form of drone strikes. However, Pakistan’s current campaign in the FATA area has only had a limited impact on US perceptions, and Afghanistan has increasingly seen Pakistan as part of the enemy.

The campaign has had uncertain execution, has displaced Taliban and Haqqani elements rather than really defeated them, and has turned many civilians into IDPs. Several US experts feel the Pakistani military has been far too slow to slow to shift away from a conventional war strategy focused on India, and has focused on a rising nuclear and missile arms race at a time it badly needs United States assistance in reorienting its army for counterinsurgency efforts.

Many Afghan officials see this campaign as having pushed some insurgents back into Afghanistan, making things worse in Afghanistan’s troubled east, and see Pakistan as likely to launch growing efforts to control the region once the US leaves. President Karzai raise such charges to ridiculous extremes on leaving office in September 2014, accusing Pakistan and the US as being the cause of the fighting in Afghanistan, “One of the reasons was that the Americans did not want peace because they had their own agenda and objectives…Today, I tell you again that the war in Afghanistan is not our war, but imposed on us and we are the victims…No peace will arrive unless the US or Pakistan want it.” He also had his National Security Council publically say that Pakistan was deliberating pushing fighters out of the FATA and to attack Afghan government targets in a de facto “declaration of war.”

These statements came days after the new Pakistani military chief, Gen. Raheel Sharif, had made Lt. Gen. Rizwan Akhtar, a close ally the new head of the Inter-Services Intelligence agency. Akhtar had a reputation as a strong opponent of Islamist extremist forces and had led the paramilitary Sindh Rangers. He was to replace Lt. Gen. Zaheer ul-Islam, who had headed the ISI since 2012, and was a sign that the Army recognized at least some of the problems in the ISI.

There was at least some truth, however, in the charges made at roughly the same time by figures like Mohammad Umer Daudzai, the Afghan Minister of the Interior. He Stated
that, “We know they have not given up their dream of controlling Afghanistan…They want Afghanistan to be their satellite.” Afghanistan had lost some 2,000 sliders and police in the previous year – roughly twice the total in the same period in 2013. Part came as a result of the US and ISAF withdrawal, but others were killed in the border area and Afghan intelligence officers felt that Pakistan’s ISI and Army had sent in Advisors and commandos to train and aid the Taliban and Haqqani fighters.\footnote{42}

It was also clear that the campaign that Pakistan had started in the Waziristan area in June 2014 had pushed both Pakistani and foreign fighters across the border – including Maulana Fazlullah, the commander of the Pakistani Taliban. Pakistani forces had not tried to secure the border, and had fired extensively into Afghanistan to push fighters out of Pakistan, while failing to do anything to limit the operations of Al Qaeda central in Pakistan, check the operations of the Haqqani network, or those of Mohammed Omar, the head of the Afghan Taliban.\footnote{43} Few US experts doubted that Ayman al-Zawahiri, the head of Al Qaeda central operated out of Pakistan, and he raised new questions about the Pakistani ties to al Qaeda when he announced a new Al Qaeda affiliate in India in September 2014.\footnote{44}

The US also sees a nation where Pakistan now has growing political chaos, rising tensions with India, and has made little progress in the mix of economic and educational reforms that are critical to a stable future. As a result, tensions are still at a point where “strategic partnership” is still hollow rhetoric. Some US officials and officers still hope that Pakistan will turn upon the Afghan Taliban and Haqqani Network as part of its fight against its own terrorists, but others believe that Pakistan will keep up its ties to the insurgents and increasingly try to shape an Afghanistan that serves its own interests.

**Bribery Rather than Alliance**

US aid to Pakistan has increasingly been seen in the US as a necessary bribe to keep overflight and land transit rights – a more than $26 billion bribe. The US also privately recognizes that far too much of this aid has actually been used to build up Pakistani conventional warfare capabilities against India at a time when the steady increase in the nuclear armed missile forces on both sides, and steady increases in the number of Pakistani tactical nuclear weapons are sharply increasing the risks and costs of any future war.

As a Congressional Research Service report notes,\footnote{45}

> The Defense Department has characterized F-16 fighters, P-3C patrol aircraft, and anti-armor missiles as having significant anti-terrorism applications. The State Department has claimed that, since 2005, FMF funds have been “solely for counterterrorism efforts, broadly defined.”\footnote{54} Such claims elicit skepticism from some observers, and analysts who emphasize the importance of strengthening the U.S.-India strategic partnership have called U.S. military aid to Pakistan incompatible with U.S. strategic goals in the region.

Moreover, U.S. officials are concerned that Pakistan has altered some conventional U.S.-supplied weapons in ways that could violate the Arms Export Control Act. Such alleged modifications include expanding the capability of both Harpoon anti-ship missiles and P-3C naval aircraft for land-attack missions. The Islamabad government categorically rejects the allegations.\footnote{55} Indian observers were unsurprised by the claims; New Delhi’s leaders continuously complain that Pakistan diverts most forms of U.S. defense assistance toward India. Some more suspicious
analysts even see purpose in such a dynamic: a U.S. wish to maintain Pakistan’s viability as a regional balancer to Indian hegemony

The report also lists aid and EDA related arms transfers, plus Pakistani arms purchases, whose value in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism is questionable at best:

- Eight P-3C Orion maritime patrol aircraft and their refurbishment (valued at $474 million; four delivered, but three of these were destroyed in a 2011 Islamist militant attack on Pakistan Naval Station Mehran);
- 2,007 TOW anti-armor missiles ($186 million);
- Six AN/TPS-77 surveillance radars ($100 million);
- Six C-130E transport aircraft and their refurbishment ($76 million);
- the USS McInerney, an ex-Perry class missile frigate (via EDA, $65 million for refurbishment, delivered and now the PNS Alamgir);
- Up to 60 Mid-Life Update kits for F-16A/B combat aircraft (valued at $891 million, with $477 million of this in FMF; Pakistan’s plans are to purchase 45 such kits, 8 have been delivered); and
- 115 M-109 self-propelled howitzers ($87 million, with $53 million in FMF).
- 18 new F-16C/D Block 52 combat aircraft (valued at $1.43 billion);
- F-16 armaments including 500 AMRAAM air-to-air missiles; 1,450 2,000-pound bombs; 500 JDAM bomb tail kits for gravity bombs; and 1,600 Enhanced Paveway laser-guided bomb kits, also for gravity bombs ($629 million);
- 100 Harpoon anti-ship missiles ($298 million);
- 500 Sidewinder air-to-air missiles ($95 million);
- six Phalanx Close-In Weapons System naval guns ($80 million).
- 14 F-16A/B combat aircraft;
- 59 T-37 military trainer jets.

The US recognizes that significant portions of its aid has been wasted or effectively stolen by a government and military that rival Afghanistan in terms of corruption and a failure to meet the needs of its people. Once again, World Bank, IMF, and UN reporting raise deep concerns about the degree to which Pakistan is becoming a failed state.

The key trends and conclusions involved are summarized in a report called Pakistan and Afghanistan: International Indicators of Progress (http://csis.org/files/publication/140820_afghan_pakistan_indicators.pdf).

It is important to note that Pakistan does have considerable potential. Pakistan is better off in many metrics of human development than India and Bangladesh, and far better off than Afghanistan, but as Figure 10 still shows, it desperately needs economic growth, jobs, and social infrastructure, rather than arms. It is all too clear that even if US military aid was focused on Pakistan’s need to fight terrorism and fully secure its FATA and other troubled areas, this could not bring stability or security.

Moreover, these can only come with fundamental improvements in governance and security. Transparency International ranks Pakistan as the 127th most corrupt country in the world, and Figure 11 shows that the World Bank ranks it only marginally higher than Afghanistan in the overall quality of governance.
To put it bluntly, US tolerance of -- and interest in -- Pakistan has become steadily more tenuous beyond the limited number of diplomats and military that actively deal with Pakistanis, and they are increasingly divided. There is little belief that Pakistan is a meaningful partner in counterterrorism, that the US can really change Pakistani behavior in Afghanistan or dealing with terrorism, that US aid will be used where Pakistan really needs it, or that Pakistan will be a meaningful strategic partner in the future. Actions like Pakistan’s offensive against its own Islamist extremists are not seen as any substitute for ISI and other efforts that have been a constant source of problems since 2002.

In spite of some reporting to the contrary, there is little belief among senior US military planners that US ties to Pakistan affect the security of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons, or that bases and forces in Afghanistan can play any role in the unlikely event that Islamist extremists somehow acquire control of some weapons. There is equally little belief that any form of US civil or military aid -- or aid from any other power -- will materially affect Pakistan’s tensions with India, ties to China, or ongoing dance on the edge of becoming a failed state.
Figure 10: Pakistan and the Human Development Challenge – Part One

Trends in Key Elements of Pakistan’s HDI: 1980-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Life expectancy at birth</th>
<th>Expected years of schooling</th>
<th>Mean years of schooling</th>
<th>GNI per capita (2005 PPP$)</th>
<th>HDI value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1,320</td>
<td>0.337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>4.2</td>
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<td>1,543</td>
<td>0.387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1,639</td>
<td>0.383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1,795</td>
<td>0.403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>63.1</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1,826</td>
<td>0.419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>64.1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>2,190</td>
<td>0.415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>2,505</td>
<td>0.512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>65.4</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>2,526</td>
<td>0.513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>2,586</td>
<td>0.515</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trends in Key Elements of Afghanistan’s HDI: 1980-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Life expectancy at birth</th>
<th>Expected years of schooling</th>
<th>Mean years of schooling</th>
<th>GNI per capita (2005 PPP$)</th>
<th>HDI value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1,002</td>
<td>0.208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1,271</td>
<td>0.226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0,948</td>
<td>0.246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0,589</td>
<td>0.241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0,435</td>
<td>0.236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0,750</td>
<td>0.222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0,853</td>
<td>0.368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0,979</td>
<td>0.371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>0.374</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10: Pakistan and the Human Development Challenge – Part Two

Trends in Pakistan’s HDI 1980-2012

Figure 11: The World Bank Assessment of Pakistan: One of the Most Corrupt and Worst Governed Countries in the World

Transition in Afghanistan Means Transition in Pakistan

Pakistani anger at the US is matched by more quiet US anger with Pakistan, and by a near total lack of real world tolerance for Pakistani rhetoric about its role in counterterrorism, sacrifices, and the lack of continued US support. Figure 2 shows a sharp decline in US aid is already taking place, and seems likely that US relations with Pakistan will be reduced to little more that diplomatic norms by the end of 2016. Barring radical shifts in Pakistan’s conduct, the US will not be see it as a real strategic partner, and Pakistan’s failures to develop and tensions with India will be seen as unfortunate but fully acceptable risks. Put bluntly, the US is a fed up with Pakistan as Pakistan is with the US, and the US will have ceased to have major strategic interests in the country.

This does not mean the US will totally write off Pakistan, cancel all aid, give up on diplomatic efforts to bring an end to the India-Pakistan conflict, cease cooperation of some kinds in counterterrorism and military aid. Pakistan will continue to play a critical role in shaping the success of Transition in Afghanistan given the critical role that Pakistan plays as a trade route, giving the United States and NATO air-sea-land access to Pakistan, and in providing a sanctuary to the Taliban and other Afghan rebels.

It is hard to see how this situation will change once the US phases out its presence in Afghanistan unless Pakistan directly takes on the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani Network, and the elements of Al Qaeda that still remain in Afghanistan, and establishes good relations with the new President and government of Afghanistan. Any major flow of US aid would also require Pakistan to serious deal with its overall extremist and terrorist threats, and see its government actually make good on decades of promises regarding reform. The Sharif government may make a start in such efforts, but unless it does, the US has no particular reason to help a Pakistan that will not help itself.
### Figure 12: US Aid to Pakistan: FY2002 to FY2014

Direct Overt U.S. Aid and Military Reimbursements to Pakistan, FY2001-FY2012 (available funds via appropriations, with disbursements in parentheses, rounded to the nearest millions of dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1206</td>
<td>28 (25)</td>
<td>14 (26)</td>
<td>131 (72)</td>
<td>139 (25)</td>
<td>— (n/a)</td>
<td>— (n/a)</td>
<td>— (n/a)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>312 (159)</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CN</td>
<td>32 (25)</td>
<td>49 (27)</td>
<td>54 (25)</td>
<td>47 (25)</td>
<td>43 (n/a)</td>
<td>39 (n/a)</td>
<td>1 (n/a)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>265 (159)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMF</td>
<td>971 (971)</td>
<td>297 (298)</td>
<td>290 (300)</td>
<td>294 (148)</td>
<td>295 (n/a)</td>
<td>296 (n/a)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>2,751 (2,097)</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMET</td>
<td>7 (7)</td>
<td>2 (2)</td>
<td>2 (2)</td>
<td>2 (2)</td>
<td>5 (5)</td>
<td>4 (4)</td>
<td>5 (4)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>27 (18)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCLE</td>
<td>224 (140)</td>
<td>24 (33)</td>
<td>22 (35)</td>
<td>88 (16)</td>
<td>170 (n/a)</td>
<td>114 (n/a)</td>
<td>75 (n/a)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>717 (263)</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAIR</td>
<td>32 (28)</td>
<td>10 (6)</td>
<td>10 (5)</td>
<td>13 (5)</td>
<td>24 (14)</td>
<td>25 (14)</td>
<td>20 (14)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>135 (57)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFC/PCCF</td>
<td>— (125)</td>
<td>— (160)</td>
<td>— (376)</td>
<td>— (n/a)</td>
<td>— (n/a)</td>
<td>— (n/a)</td>
<td>— (n/a)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>2,352 (641)</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Security Aid Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,395</strong></td>
<td><strong>396</strong></td>
<td><strong>517</strong></td>
<td><strong>989</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,236</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,277</strong></td>
<td><strong>849</strong></td>
<td><strong>n/a</strong></td>
<td><strong>6,559</strong></td>
<td><strong>397</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSH/GHCS</td>
<td>105 (63)</td>
<td>22 (23)</td>
<td>30 (18)</td>
<td>34 (31)</td>
<td>30 (21)</td>
<td>28 (19)</td>
<td>— (19)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>249 (157)</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DA</td>
<td>161 (93)</td>
<td>95 (29)</td>
<td>30 (32)</td>
<td>— (32)</td>
<td>— (45)</td>
<td>— (19)</td>
<td>— (19)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>286 (218)</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF</td>
<td>1,693 (1,419)</td>
<td>347 (269)</td>
<td>347 (209)</td>
<td>1,114 (672)</td>
<td>1,292 (658)</td>
<td>919 (3,213)</td>
<td>905 (3,213)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>6,610 (766)</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Aid</td>
<td>133 (133)</td>
<td>50 (50)</td>
<td>55 (55)</td>
<td>124 (25)</td>
<td>51 (51)</td>
<td>96 (53)</td>
<td>63 (53)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>972 (572)</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRDF</td>
<td>6 (53)</td>
<td>1 (9)</td>
<td>— (6)</td>
<td>— (6)</td>
<td>— (27)</td>
<td>— (245)</td>
<td>— (127)</td>
<td>— (127)</td>
<td>17 (521)</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDA</td>
<td>70 (53)</td>
<td>50 (9)</td>
<td>50 (6)</td>
<td>103 (27)</td>
<td>232 (245)</td>
<td>45 (127)</td>
<td>54 (127)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>704 (121)</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRA/ERMA</td>
<td>38 (38)</td>
<td>4 (4)</td>
<td>60 (10)</td>
<td>91 (61)</td>
<td>43 (49)</td>
<td>12 (45)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>248 (219)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Aid Total</td>
<td><strong>2,152</strong></td>
<td><strong>576</strong></td>
<td><strong>507</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,346</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,769</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,186</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,067</strong></td>
<td><strong>63</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,686</strong></td>
<td><strong>766</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSPs</td>
<td>4,947 (38)</td>
<td>731 (4)</td>
<td>1,019 (10)</td>
<td>685 (61)</td>
<td>1,499 (49)</td>
<td>1,118 (45)</td>
<td>688 (45)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>10,687</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,394</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,703</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,043</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,040</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,504</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,581</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,604</strong></td>
<td><strong>63</strong></td>
<td><strong>25,932</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,163</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V. Strategic Minimalism in Central Asia

US forces have effectively left Central Asia, but the US has not announced any strategy to deal with Central Asia in the future and adjust to the growing tension with Russia. The war in Afghanistan no longer requires the US to seek basing and transit rights through Central Asia, and the days in which the Central Asian “front-line” states provided easy over-flight support and Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan hosted coalition forces, provided airbase facilities, and, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan supported military action in Iraq are long over.

Uzbekistan ended U.S. basing rights to support operations in Afghanistan in 2005 after United States criticized the government for killing civilians and Kyrgyzstan notified the US it would not extend its basing agreement and use of the “Manas Transit Center” after mid-2014. mid-2014 and move operations to other locations in June 2013. The US and its allies have no clear need for the Northern Distribution to move supplies into and out of Afghanistan after the end of 2014.48

As for US strategic and economic interests in Central Asia, the near vacuum in current US strategic statements seems to reflect the fact that in spite of all its usual diplomatic activity and rhetoric, the US increasingly sees Central Asia as of marginal interest to the US. The US will not maintain a military presence in Central Asia, and limited interest in regional trade. It has even less to gain in the real world from US investment in pipelines and mines, developing the region’s natural resources, or from encouraging the now largely discredited myth of a “New Silk Road.”

Making Central Asia a Routine US Diplomatic Interest

The recent and current levels of US aid to Central Asia shown in Figure 13 seem to represent the practical limit of what aid may do to serve US interests, if not exceed them
Unstable and Unpleasant Regimes

The US has little incentive to tie itself closely to any current Central Asian government. As Figure 14 shows, the authoritarian character of the regimes in all of the Central Asian states, and their internal tensions, make relations with existing regimes uncertain at best. The US should continue to make human rights an issue in each country, and an important aspect of its annual State Department Country Reports on Human Rights, but it is all too clear that deeper US involvement and more US aid will not make any Central Asia regime give human rights a new precedence over its perceived desire to maintain itself in power, or move that state towards added stability.
Figure 14: The Uncertain Regimes of Central Asia

State Department Country Reports on Human Rights for 2013, summarized by Jim Nichol of the US Congressional Research Service

- **Kazakhstan:** the president and his Nur Otan Party dominated the political system. Significant human rights problems included severe limits on citizens’ rights to change their government and restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly, religion, and association. There was lack of due process in dealing with abuses by law enforcement and judicial officials. Other reported abuses included: arbitrary or unlawful killings; detainee and prisoner torture and other abuse; arbitrary arrest and detention; prohibitive political party registration requirements; restrictions on the activities of NGOs; sex and labor trafficking; and child labor. Corruption was widespread, although he government took modest steps to prosecute some officials who committed abuses.

- **Kyrgyzstan:** the constitution established a parliamentary form of government intended to limit presidential power and enhance the role of parliament and the prime minister. Some security forces appeared at times to operate independently of civilian control in the South and committed human rights abuses. Significant human rights problems included abuses related to continued ethnic tensions in the South; denial of due process and lack of accountability in judicial and law enforcement proceedings; law enforcement officials’ use of arbitrary arrest; and various forms of mistreatment, torture, and extortion against all demographic groups, particularly against ethnic Uzbeks. The following additional human rights problems existed: harassment of NGOs, activists, and journalists; pressure on independent media; restrictions on religious freedom; pervasive corruption; discrimination and violence against ethnic and religious minorities; child abuse; trafficking in persons; and child labor. The central government allowed security forces to act arbitrarily, emboldening law enforcement officials to prey on vulnerable citizens, and allowing mobs to disrupt trials by attacking defendants, attorneys, witnesses, and judges.

- **Tajikistan:** an authoritarian president and his supporters, drawn mainly from one region of the country, dominated the political system. The government obstructed political pluralism. Security forces reported to civilian authorities. Significant human rights problems included torture and abuse of detainees and other persons by security forces; repression of political activism and the repeated blockage of several independent news and social networking websites; and poor religious freedom conditions. Other human rights problems included arbitrary arrest; denial of the right to a fair trial; corruption; and trafficking in persons, including sex and labor trafficking. Officials in the security services and elsewhere in the government acted with impunity. There were very few prosecutions of government officials for human rights abuses.

- **Turkmenistan:** an authoritarian president and his Democratic Party controlled the government. Significant human rights problems included arbitrary arrest; torture; and disregard for civil liberties, including restrictions on freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and movement. Other continuing human rights problems included citizens’ inability to change their government; interference in the practice of religion; denial of due process and fair trial; arbitrary interference with privacy, home, and correspondence; and trafficking in persons. Officials in the security services and elsewhere in the government acted with impunity. There were no reported prosecutions of government officials for human rights abuses.

- **In Uzbekistan:** the authoritarian president dominated political life and exercised nearly complete control over the other branches of government. Significant human rights problems included torture and abuse of detainees by security forces; denial of due process and fair trial; and widespread restrictions on religious freedom, including harassment of religious minority group members and continued imprisonment of believers of all faiths. Other continuing human rights problems included: incommunicado and prolonged detention; arbitrary arrest and detention; restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly, and association; governmental restrictions on civil society activity; restrictions on freedom of movement; and government-organized forced labor. Authorities subjected human rights activists, journalists, and others who criticized the government, as well as their family members, to harassment, arbitrary arrest, and politically motivated prosecution and detention. Government officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity.
CIA World Factbook

- **Kazakhstan**: authoritarian presidential rule, with little power outside the executive branch… Non-Muslim ethnic minorities departed Kazakhstan in large numbers from the mid-1990s through the mid-2000s and a national program has repatriated about a million ethnic Kazakhs back to Kazakhstan. These trends have allowed Kazakhs to become the titular majority again. This dramatic demographic shift has also undermined the previous religious diversity and made the country more than 70 percent Muslim. Kazakhstan’s economy is larger than those of all the other Central Asian states largely due to the country’s vast natural resources. Current issues include: developing a cohesive national identity; managing Islamic revivalism; expanding the development of the country’s vast energy resources and exporting them to world markets; diversifying the economy outside the oil, gas, and mining sectors; enhancing Kazakhstan’s economic competitiveness; developing a multiparty parliament and advancing political and social reform; and strengthening relations with neighboring states and other foreign powers.

- **Kyrgyzstan**: Kyrgyzstan became a Soviet republic in 1936 and achieved independence in 1991 when the USSR dissolved. Nationwide demonstrations in the spring of 2005 resulted in the ouster of President Askar Akaev, who had run the country since 1990. Former prime minister Kurmanbek Bakiev overwhelmingly won the presidential election in the summer of 2005. Over the next few years, he manipulated the parliament to accrue new powers for the presidency. In July 2009, after months of harassment against his opponents and media critics, Bakiev won re-election in a presidential campaign that the international community deemed flawed. In April 2010, violent protests in Bishkek led to the collapse of the Bakiev regime and his eventual fleeing to Minsk, Belarus. His successor, Roza Otunbaeva, served as transitional president until Almazbek Atambayev was inaugurated in December 2011, marking the first peaceful transfer of presidential power in independent Kyrgyzstan’s history. Continuing concerns include: the trajectory of democratization, endemic corruption, poor interethnic relations, and terrorism.

- **Tajikistan**: Tajikistan became independent in 1991 following the breakup of the Soviet Union, and experienced a civil war between regional factions from 1992 to 1997. Tajikistan endured several domestic security incidents during 2010-12, including armed conflict between government forces and local strongmen in the Rasht Valley and between government forces and criminal groups in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast. The country remains the poorest in the former Soviet sphere. Tajikistan became a member of the World Trade Organization in March 2013. However, its economy continues to face major challenges, including dependence on remittances from Tajikistanis working in Russia, pervasive corruption, and the major role narco-trafficking plays in the country's informal economy with impunity. There were very few prosecutions of government officials for human rights abuses.

- **Turkmenistan**: defines itself as a secular democracy and a presidential republic; in actuality displays authoritarian presidential rule with power concentrated within the presidential administration… President for Life Saparmurat Nyyazow died in December 2006, and Turkmenistan held its first multi-candidate presidential election in February 2007. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow, a deputy cabinet chairman under Nyyazow, emerged as the country’s new president; he was chosen as president again in February 2012, in an election that the OSCE said lacked the freedoms necessary to create a competitive environment.

- **Uzbekistan**: authoritarian presidential rule with little power outside the executive branch… Independent since 1991, the country has lessened its dependence on the cotton monoculture by diversifying agricultural production while developing its mineral and petroleum export capacity and increasing its manufacturing base. However, long serving septuagenarian President Islom Karimov, who rose through the ranks of the Soviet-era State Planning Committee (Gosplan), remains wedded to the concepts of a command economy, creating a challenging environment for foreign investment. Current concerns include post-Karimov.

Investment, Trade and Strategic Linkage: The Real Silk Road Doesn’t Go Through Afghanistan or Serve UN Interests

The strategic geography of Central Asia is shown in Figure 15, and is key feature is that the Central Asian states are former FSU states caught between Russian and China, and whose key infrastructure is based on links to Russia and growing trade to the north.

To the extent there is any new major link to the south, it consists of road and potential rail links that India is partially funding and that go from Iran’s port of Chah Bahar to Mashhad in northeastern Iran, with links to Ashkabad and Mary in Turkmenistan, and potentially to Shindand and Herat in Afghanistan. These improved road links, and any rail links, seem likely to have only marginal increased impact on Afghanistan’s economy and Central Asian independence from Russia even when and if they are completed.49

The US can certainly encourage Central Asia trade with Afghanistan, and gas pipelines and other measures that would make such states less dependent on Russia, and potentially encourage cooperation between Pakistan and India in securing such pipelines. The US has no reason, however, to offer any investment incentives or guarantees to US or any other firms in supporting such efforts, and the timescales and political tensions that affect the real-world creation of such pipelines make any arguments about ending or containing Iran’s nuclear weapons efforts moot.

US trade and investment may grow as a result of natural market forces, but scarcely seem likely to achieve the kind of volume that will give the US major strategic leverage. The occasional efforts of Central Asia states to use the US and play it off against Russia seem unlikely to give the US any serious strategic leverage in either the region or in dealing with Russia, and the US needs to focus its tensions with Russia on resolving the Ukraine crisis, and securing the Baltic States, Poland, and other members of NATO. The US role in Central Asia is more likely to be a strategic irritant to Russia in an area of the “near abroad” of marginal practical interest to the US that will play out negatively in other more important areas.

As for the US trade volume shown in Figure 16, it certainly justifies normal US diplomatic support, but scarcely any subsidies, guarantees, or special strategic emphasis.
Figure 15: US Imports and Exports from Central Asia in 2013
(Millions of Current Dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>U.S. Imports from</th>
<th>Main Categories of U.S. Imports</th>
<th>U.S. Exports to</th>
<th>Main Categories of U.S. Exports</th>
<th>Total Turnover</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>1,390.4</td>
<td>petroleum refinery products, iron &amp; steel, inorganic chemicals</td>
<td>1,095.7</td>
<td>civilian aircraft, railroad rolling stock, other engine equipment, poultry</td>
<td>2,486.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>paper, textiles, fish, coffee, liquor</td>
<td>106.1</td>
<td>automobiles, poultry</td>
<td>109.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>measuring devices, dried food</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>poultry, communications equipment, civilian aircraft</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>agricultural products, linens, fabrics, petroleum refinery products</td>
<td>260.8</td>
<td>poultry, industrial valves, oil &amp; gas field machinery, turbines, air &amp; gas compressors, civilian aircraft</td>
<td>291.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>inorganic chemicals, spices, dried foods</td>
<td>320.9</td>
<td>poultry, petroleum refinery products, pharmaceuticals, turbines, air &amp; gas compressors, industrial furnaces, civilian aircraft</td>
<td>347.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The reality is that Afghanistan and Pakistan are not going to be critical trade partners with Central Asia states, and the volume of Afghan trade with Central Asia will only have a limited impact in aiding Afghan development and stability. The central focus of trade and transit is not a new Silk Road based on rail or road transit through Afghanistan. It will be trade and transit to Russia and China with developing links between them and with Central Asia states to the north.

Minimal Strategic and Security Interests

The most the US seems to have to gain is the uncertain support of Kazakhstan as it tries to play the US off against Russia, and Kazakhstan formally recognized the referendum that annex the Crimea to Russia in March 2014. The US does have an incentive to offer low-level cooperation in counterterrorism and in helping Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan work with Afghanistan, but it scarcely seems to have a reasons to provide them with serious aid to meet their own strategic needs, and it is far from clear that any amount of aid or US strategic involvement will have a material impact on how they treat developments in Afghanistan after Transition occurs at the end of 2014.

In practical terms, the US should see Central Asia as a region with uncertain authoritarian leaders and that is primarily of interest to China and Russia. It can virtually count on Russia and China to intervene in dealing with extremism and terrorism, to compete to some extent in terms of trade and influence, and have each state in the region try to play Russia, China, and other states off against each other in an effort to serve its own interests.
Once again, this does not mean the US should write off the region, or fail to encourage development and democracy. It does mean that Central Asia is a region where a limited US role seems suitable and where the US can best serve its interests by shifting as much of the strategic burden as possible to other states and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

**Figure 16: The Strategic Geography of Central Asia**

The US has a strong strategic interest in India’s emergence as a successful and major part of the world’s economy, and as a strong and secure voice for democracy in Asia. It shares a common interest in fighting terrorism and religious extremism, and in India’s security.

In contrast, the US has no strategic interest in tilting towards India at the expense of Pakistan, and should not give up on diplomatic efforts to bring an end to the India-Pakistan conflict. It is important to note, however, that years of past efforts, and attempts to create some kind of broad regional security negotiations, have had no more success than the repeated direct negotiating efforts between the two countries.

As Figure 17 and Figure 18 show, the India-Pakistan arms race continues, and so does the destabilizing impact of deploying more nuclear weapons and nuclear-armed missiles. Their competition for influence in Afghanistan also remains yet another divisive and disruptive aspect of an already uncertain Transition.

Limiting the US Role in Easing India-Pakistani Tensions and the Role in Afghanistan

The US should only make peace efforts a major US diplomatic effort if (a.) India and Pakistan reach a point of confrontation where giving such action such priority becomes vital in spite of the chances of success, or if events should create a major new opportunity in which to act, and one where the US can do so while avoiding avoid any serious strategic risks or military involvement in the tensions between the two states.

For all of the reasons discussed earlier, the US is also unlikely to be able to play more than a largely diplomatic role in limiting the continuing Indian and Pakistani struggle for influence in Afghanistan if this accelerates after 2014. The US expects Afghanistan’s neighbors to take a more active role, and sometimes to compete with each other and the government in Kabul.

The US has moved a long way in real world terms from the statement Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Minister of External Affairs S.M. Krishna issued at the U.S.-India Strategic Dialogue in June 2012. The two leaders stressed the importance of sustained international commitment to Afghanistan as it assumes full responsibility for governance, development and security. They intend to explore opportunities to work together to promote Afghanistan’s development, including in areas such as agriculture, mining, energy, capacity building and infrastructure. Noting the importance of women’s economic empowerment for Afghanistan’s economic success, they plan to work to further increase their ongoing vocational training and empowerment initiatives.

To support their efforts in Afghanistan, they agreed to hold a trilateral dialogue with the Government of Afghanistan. They welcomed the announcement at the 2012 NATO Summit in Chicago of progress in the security transition process and the participants’ commitment to supporting Afghanistan’s security and development needs into the “transformation decade” (2015-2024). The two leaders discussed the vision for enhanced regional connectivity through South and Central Asia. They reiterated the importance of taking concrete steps to promote expanded private investment and trade in Afghanistan.

They acknowledged the critical importance of improving Afghanistan’s integration and linkages within the South and Central Asia region . . . They acknowledged that success in Afghanistan requires, in addition to building up Afghanistan’s capacity to defend itself, an Afghan-led and
Afghan-owned reconciliation process. They reiterated that success in Afghanistan and regional and global security require elimination of safe havens and infrastructure for terrorism and violent extremism in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The US also has many higher priorities than India-Pakistani relations or their role in Afghanistan. It will support efforts at “regional solutions” and development in the abstract, but do little above the level of working diplomacy unless the chance of real progress is far greater than it seems today. It will be more than happy to leave “bright ideas” that do not have such support in the inbox of conference building measures and diplomatic indifference.

Focusing on the Real US Strategic Interest

The most important single US strategic interest in India is the possibility that India may emerge as a major counterweight to China, and that its increasing air and sea power in the Indian Ocean will help stabilize and secure maritime and air traffic throughout the Indian Ocean Region. Some US policymakers hope for close strategic and military relationship, but the history of such efforts to date indicates that India will pursue its own strategic interests in ways that may help bring broader stability in Asia but will not make the US a direct strategic partner in dealing with China or other regional security issues.

If one looks beyond the issue of the war in Afghanistan, it is still clear that the US should be careful about the extent to which the US can and should try to form a direct and meaningful strategic partnership with India. While former US Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta may have described it as a “linchpin” of US strategy in Asia in 2012, India has so far seemed more determined to treat the US as one more country that can sometimes serve India’s interests than as a partner.

A report by the US Congressional Research Service puts the issue as follows:

...although considerable enthusiasm for deepened security engagement is found in both capitals—and not least in the U.S. Congress—there is also a persistent sense that this aspect of the bilateral relationship lacks purpose and focus. Some observers argue that the potential of the relationship has been oversold, and that the benefits either hoped for or expected may not materialize in the near future. While Obama Administration officials variously contend that India is now or will be a net provider of security in its region, many independent analysts are skeptical that this aspiration can be realized, at least in the near-term.

Nongovernmental analyses of the course and pace of U.S.-India security relations are oftentimes incompatible or even conflicting in their assumptions and recommendations. Such incompatibility is frequently the result of the differing conclusions rooted in short-term versus long-term perspectives. The Obama Administration—along with numerous pro-India analysts in Washington—has tended to emphasize the anticipated benefits of long-term engagement as opposed to a short-term approach that seeks gains derived through more narrow transactions. This latter tack can have the effect of raising and then thwarting expectations in Washington, as was the case with the ultimate failure of U.S. defense firms to secure the multi-billion-dollar contracts to supply new combat aircraft to India. At the same time, frustrations among many in the United States have arisen from the sense that India’s enthusiasm for further deepening bilateral security cooperation is limited, and that New Delhi’s reciprocity has been insufficient.

Looking ahead, there is widespread concurrence among many officials and analysts that the security relationship would benefit from undergirding ambitious rhetoric with more concrete action in areas of mutual agreement. In their view, defining which actions will provide meaningful gains, even on a modest scale, appears to be the central task facing U.S. and Indian policy makers in coming years.
A Good Strategic Ally Does not Necessarily Make a Good Military Partner

Indian forces and arms imports do not yet reflect any meaningful ties to the US in spite of considerable US efforts to sell such arms and strengthen US and Indian military ties. US estimates indicate that India ranked second in the world new arms transfer agreements during 2008-2011, with $21.3 billion (in current dollars), or 10.3% of the value of all developing-world arms-transfer agreements. Many came from Russia, although a report by the Congressional Research Service notes that.

India, while the principal Russian arms customer, during recent years has sought to diversify its weapons supplier base, purchasing the Phalcon early warning defense system aircraft in 2004 from Israel and numerous items from France in 2005, in particular six Scorpene diesel attack submarines. In 2008 India purchased six C130J cargo aircraft from the United States. In 2010, the United Kingdom sold India 57 Hawk jet trainers for $1 billion. In 2010 Italy also sold India 12 AW101 helicopters. In 2011, France secured a $2.4 billion contract with India to upgrade 51 of its Mirage-2000 combat fighters, and the United States agreed to sell India 10 C-17 Globemaster III aircraft for $4.1 billion. This pattern of Indian arms purchases indicates that Russia will likely face strong new competition from other major weapons suppliers for the India arms market, and it can no longer be assured that India will consistently purchase its major combat systems. Indeed, India in 2011 had eliminated Russia and the US from the international competition to supply a new-generation combat fighter aircraft, a competition won by France.

An estimate by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) is 2014, indicated that India was spending some $11 billion a year on arms and had some $39 billion in outstanding arms orders. It also estimated that Russia had provided 79% of India’s arms imports during 2008-2012, Britain had provided 6%, Uzbekistan had provided 6%, Israel 4% and the US only 2% -- although SIPRI also felt that India wanted to reduce its future dependence on imports from Russia.

India’s current order of battle reflects this lack of dependence on the US. The CRS estimates that:

- The Indian army, comprised of 1.13 million active duty personnel, operates some 3,300 main battle tanks (the vast majority of them Russian-built T-72s and outdated T-55s, but also including at least 444 modern T-90s, along with 124 indigenously designed Arjuns); 3,000 towed artillery tubes; 1,500 armored infantry fighting vehicles; and 232 multirole helicopters.

- The Indian air force (IAF) flies 798 combat-capable aircraft. Of these, 698 are ground attack jets, more than one-third of which are deteriorating Russian-built MiG-21s, but also including 153 late-model Su-30 MKI Flankers, as well as 52 French-built Mirage and 106 Anglo-French Jaguar aircraft (the MiG-21s are to be phased out by 2017). The 64-plane fighter fleet is entirely MiG-29 Fulcrums. The IAF also possesses modest airborne early warning (AEW) and in-flight refueling capabilities, the latter provided by six Russian-made Il-78 Midas tankers. Russian-built Il-76 platforms have been fitted with advanced Israeli-supplied suites to provide three Phalcon airborne AEW planes.

- India’s navy has grown rapidly in recent years, currently operating 21 principal surface combatants (1 aircraft carrier, 10 guided-missile destroyers, 10 missile frigates) and 15 tactical submarines, one of which is a nuclear-powered acquisition from the Russian Navy. There are more than 60 patrol and coastal combatants, nearly half of them missile-capable corvettes (the coast guard operates another 63 smaller patrol boats). The IN also has a significant amphibious capacity: 17 landing ships (the largest acquisition from the U.S. Navy) can carry 4,000 troops or 88 tanks. The navy is developing an indigenous nuclear-powered attack submarine (INS Arihant) to be armed with nuclear-tipped cruise missiles, as part of its “sea-based strategic deterrence.”
The same CRS analysis shows that India’s major arms import agreements had little US content as of 2013. More recent work by SIPRI, IHS Jane’s, and the 2014 edition of the IISS *Military Balance* all indicate that this remains the case. The US also needs to be careful about arms transfers to India for the same reason it needs to be careful about arms transfers to Pakistan. It does not want to be seen as either taking side or exacerbating the arms race between the two states, or become caught in the middle politically and strategically between two powers whose political efforts at accommodation are offset by a steady rise in their nuclear forces.

Moreover, India’s long history of seeking outside aid in creating what is probably the least competent and most wasteful defense industry per dollar in the world, and in playing off one arms supplier against another, is not a game the US has great incentive to play. The US needs to be very careful about arms deals with India, and to avoid deals that do more to profit India’s defense industry than India’s security.

Finally, it is one thing for the US to encourage India’s rise as a counterweight to China in a multipolar world, and another to create links that China may sees as a conspiracy to contain it and reason for confrontation with the US, and India may see as some form of US commitment to supporting it in boundary claims and other India disputes with China.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>China</th>
<th>India</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Troops</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Paramilitary</td>
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<td>3,874,150</td>
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<td><strong>Total Land Forces:</strong></td>
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<td>Mine Warfare/ Countermeasures</td>
<td>53</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patrol and Coastal Combatants</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Principle Surface Combatants</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submarines</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support</td>
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<td>55</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Naval Forces</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fighter</td>
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<td>Bomber</td>
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<td>Fighter/Grnd Attack</td>
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<td>748</td>
<td>174</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>1,056</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>143</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support Helicopters</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>63</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISR</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Air Forces:</strong></td>
<td>3,340</td>
<td>1,501</td>
<td>656</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 18: The India-Pakistan Nuclear Delivery System Balance**

**India**

**Combat Missile Units**
- 1 gp with Agni I
- 1 gp with Agni II
- 1 gp (reported forming) with Agni III
- 2 gp with SS-150/250 Prithvi I/II

**Missile Strength**

**Strategic:** 54

**IRBM/ICBM:** Agni V (in test)

**IRBM:** 24+: 12 Agni I (80–100 msl);

12 Agni II (20–25 msl); some Agni III (entering service);

Agni IV (in test)

**SRBM** 30+: 30 SS-150/250 Prithvi I/SS-250 Prithvi II;

Some SS-350 Dhanush (naval testbed)

**LACM** Nirbhay (likely nuclear capable;)

**Pakistan**

**Strategic 60**

**MRBM** 30 Ghauri/Ghauri II (Hatf-5)/Shaheen-2; (Hatf-6- in test)

**SRBM** 30 Ghaznavi (Hatf-3 - PRC M-11)/Shaheen-1(Hatf-4);

**LACM** Babur (Hatf-7 - in development);

Ra’ad (Hatf-8- in development)

**ARTY • MRL Nasr (Hatf-9 - likely nuclear capable in development)**

**Aircraft**

1-2 sqn of F-16A/B or Mirage 5 may be assigned a nuclear strike role

**Space**

**Satellites** ISR 3: 1 Cartosat 2A; 2 RISAT

**Aircraft**

Mirage 2000H or Su- 30MKI) may be tasked with a strategic role in development


**The Need to Focus on Other Aspects of US Relations with India**

President Obama provided a more realistic focus for US relations with India in a speech to a Joint Session of Indian Parliament in 2010, and one that focused far more on common interests than strategic partnership – although he could not resist such a reference:58

...India is not the only emerging power in the world. But the relationship between our countries is unique. For we are two strong democracies whose constitutions begin with the same revolutionary words—“We the people.” We are two great republics dedicated to the liberty and justice and equality of all people. And we are two free market economies where people have the freedom to pursue ideas and innovation that can change the world. And that’s why I believe that India and America are indispensable partners in meeting the challenges of our time

There is a case to be made for close diplomatic US relations with India, close cooperation in counterterrorism in fighting extremism, US efforts to help India emerge as a modern economic power, and for maintaining what has become a regular US and Indian Strategic Dialogue.

There may well, however, be an equal case avoiding policies that appear to try to create a formal alliance with India, particularly one that focuses India’s development as natural counterbalance to the emergence of China. It seems doubtful that the US can ever create a
strategic partnership with India as distinguished from being one more outside power that India seeks to exploit for its own strategic interests. It is also very possible that such efforts would increase tension between China and the US without increasing regional stability.

Much will depend in the near term, however, on how Narendra Modi and the Bharatiya Janata party approach Indian strategy in the future. Modi made it clear he wanted better strategic relations during his May 2014 campaign, and for all the near silence on India in the 2014 QDR and the President’s West Point speech, the US clearly sees India as a critical power in Asia and the Indian Ocean Region in ways that go far beyond its limited strategic interest in Afghanistan, Central Asia, and South Asia per se.

The US might do best by responding to Indian initiatives of the kind that Modi discussed in broad terms in his speech to the UN and visit to the US in September 2014, and in the statement he issued on the US and Indian strategic partnership.

Modi’s speech at the UN stated that,

I am prepared to engage in a serious bilateral dialogue with Pakistan in a peaceful atmosphere, without the shadow of terrorism, to promote our friendship and cooperation. However, Pakistan must also take its responsibility seriously to create an appropriate environment. Raising issues in this forum is not the way to make progress towards resolving issues between our two countries. Instead, today, we should be thinking about the victims of floods in Jammu and Kashmir. In India, we have organized massive flood relief operations and have also offered assistance for Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.

The world is witnessing tensions and turmoil on a scale rarely seen in recent history. There are no major wars, but tensions and conflicts abound; and, there is absence of real peace and uncertainty about the future. An integrating Asia Pacific region is still concerned about maritime security that is fundamental to its future. Europe faces risk of new division. In West Asia, extremism and fault lines are growing. Our own region continues to face the destabilizing threat of terrorism. Africa faces the twin threat of rising terrorism and a health crisis. Terrorism is taking new shape and new name. No country, big or small, in the north or the south, east or west, is free from its threat. Are we really making concerted international efforts to fight these forces, or are we still hobbled by our politics, our divisions, our discrimination between countries. We welcome efforts to combat terrorism's resurgence in West Asia, which is affecting countries near and far. The effort should involve the support of all countries in the region. Today, even as seas, space and cyber space have become new instruments of prosperity, they could also become a new theatre of conflicts.

His statement on the US-Indian “Strategic Partnership” – ‘Chalein Saath Saath: Forward Together We Go’ – deserves even closer attention.

As leaders of two great democratic nations with diverse traditions and faiths, we share a vision for a partnership in which the United States and India work together, not just for the benefit of both our nations, but for the benefit of the world.

We have vastly different histories, but both our founders sought to guarantee freedoms that allow our citizens to determine their own destiny and pursue their personal aspirations. Our strategic partnership rests on our shared mission to provide equal opportunity for our people through democracy and freedom.

The currents of kinship and commerce, scholarship and science tie our countries together. They allow us to rise above differences by maintaining the long-term perspective. Every day, in myriad ways, our cooperation fortifies a relationship that matches the innumerable ties between our peoples, who have produced works of art and music, invented cutting-edge technology, and responded to crises across the globe.
Our strategic partnership is a joint endeavor for prosperity and peace. Through intense consultations, joint exercises, and shared technology, our security cooperation will make the region and the world safe and secure. Together, we will combat terrorist threats and keep our homelands and citizens safe from attacks, while we respond expeditiously to humanitarian disasters and crises. We will prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction, and remain committed to reducing the salience of nuclear weapons, while promoting universal, verifiable, and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament.

We will support an open and inclusive rules-based global order, in which India assumes greater multilateral responsibility, including in a reformed United Nations Security Council. At the United Nations and beyond, our close coordination will lead to a more secure and just world.

Climate change threatens both our countries, and we will join together to mitigate its impact and adapt to our changing environment. We will address the consequences of unchecked pollution through cooperation by our governments, science and academic communities. We will partner to ensure that both countries have affordable, clean, reliable, and diverse sources of energy, including through our efforts to bring American-origin nuclear power technologies to India.

We will ensure that economic growth in both countries brings better livelihoods and welfare for all of our people. Our citizens value education as a means to a better life, and our exchange of skills and knowledge will propel our countries forward. Even the poorest will share in the opportunities in both our countries.

Joint research and collaboration in every aspect—ranging from particles of creation to outer space-- will produce boundless innovation and high technology collaboration that changes our lives. Open markets, fair and transparent practices will allow trade in goods and services to flourish.

Our people will be healthier as we jointly counter infectious diseases, eliminate maternal and child deaths, and work to eradicate poverty for all. And they will be safer as we ensure the fullest empowerment of women in a secure environment.

The United States and India commit to expand and deepen our strategic partnership in order to harness the inherent potential of our two democracies and the burgeoning ties between our people, economies, and businesses. Together we seek a reliable and enduring friendship that bolsters security and stability, contributes to the global economy, and advances peace and prosperity for our citizens and throughout the world.

We have a vision that the United States and India will have a transformative relationship as trusted partners in the 21st century. Our partnership will be a model for the rest of the world.

The US should not ignore India’s critical role in establishing a broader balance of security in Asia, and the value of India’s growing security ties to a US ally like Japan, and both countries set the right tone in dealing with security issues in the statement the White House issued after the two leaders met on September 30, 2014, 61

The Prime Minister and the President stated their intention to expand defense cooperation to bolster national, regional, and global security. The two leaders reaffirmed that India and the United States would build an enduring partnership in which both sides treat each other at the same level as their closest partners, including defense technology transfers, trade, research, co-production, and co-development.

To facilitate deeper defense cooperation, they welcomed the decision to renew for ten more years the 2005 Framework for the U.S.-India Defense Relationship and directed their defense teams to develop plans for more ambitious programs and activities. The two leaders also agreed to reinvigorate the Political-Military Dialogue and expand its role to serve as a wider dialogue on export licensing, defense cooperation and strategic cooperation.

The leaders welcomed the first meeting under the framework of the Defense Trade and Technology Initiative in September 2014 and endorsed its decision to establish a Task Force to expeditiously evaluate and decide on unique projects and technologies which would have a
transformational impact on bilateral defense relations and enhance India’s defense industry and military capabilities.

The President and Prime Minister welcomed cooperation in the area of military education and training, and endorsed plans for the United States to cooperate with India’s planned National Defence University. They also decided to expand military-to-military partnerships including expert exchanges, dialogues, and joint training and exercises. They also committed to enhancing exchanges of civilian and military intelligence and consultation.

The leaders agreed to intensify cooperation in maritime security to ensure freedom of navigation and unimpeded movement of lawful shipping and commercial activity, in accordance with accepted principles of international law. To achieve this objective, the two sides considered enhancing technology partnerships for India’s Navy including assessing possible areas of technology cooperation. They also agreed to upgrade their existing bilateral exercise MALABAR.

The leaders reaffirmed their deep concern over the continued threat posed by terrorism, most recently highlighted by the dangers presented by the ISIL, and underlined the need for continued comprehensive global efforts to combat and defeat terrorism. The leaders stressed the need for joint and concerted efforts, including the dismantling of safe havens for terrorist and criminal networks, to disrupt all financial and tactical support for networks such as Al Qaeda, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, the D-Company, and the Haqqanis. They reiterated their call for Pakistan to bring the perpetrators of the November 2008 terrorist attack in Mumbai to justice.

They pledged to enhance criminal law enforcement, security, and military information exchanges, and strengthen cooperation on extradition and mutual legal assistance. Through operational cooperation through their law enforcement agencies, they aimed to prevent the spread of counterfeit currency and inhibit the use of cyberspace by terrorists, criminals, and those who use the internet for unlawful purposes, and to facilitate investigation of criminal and terrorist activities. The leaders also committed to identify modalities to exchange terrorist watch lists. President Obama pledged to help India counter the threat of improvised explosive devices with information and technology. The leaders committed to pursue provision of U.S.-made mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicles to India.

The President and Prime Minister looked forward to easing travel between their two countries, as India introduces visa-on-arrival for U.S. citizens in 2015 and works toward meeting the requirements to make the United States’ Global Entry Program available to Indian citizens.

At the same time, their statement focused on climate change and other aspects of US and Indian relationships – a focus that was stressed in an op ed that Obama and Modi placed in the Washington Post just after Modi’s visit. Strategic partnerships do not have to have a military focus, and may sometimes work better if they define security in broader terms and also put their focus on other areas.
VII. Iran, China, Russia, and Other External Powers

The US needs to be careful about extending its strategic tensions and problems with states outside Afghanistan, Central Asia, and South Asia into Afghanistan and the region. Iran has never confronted the US at more than the most marginal levels in Afghanistan, and the US has much to gain if Russia and China are forced to engage more deeply at the security and economic level in Afghanistan and deal with the broader threat of violent Islamic extremism. The interests of other states like Turkey do not conflict with US interests, and having bodies like the Shanghai Cooperation Council expand their role may help both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The US does need to be careful in evaluating how outside powers deal with Afghanistan and the region in the years beyond Transition. Iran, however, has so far played a stabilizing role in northwest Afghanistan, is a key route for grain and food shipment into Afghanistan, and has a strong interest in trying to stabilize western Afghanistan and counter its narco-trafficking. Unless US and Iranian tensions in the MENA region lead to Iranian actions that threaten Afghan stability, this may well be a case where both the US and Iran can benefit from acting in parallel at a time they cannot formally cooperate.

Russia and China have an obvious interest in regional and Afghan stability, and China is the most likely nation to place major investments in Afghan mines if Afghanistan becomes more secure. Both countries are reluctant to expand their security and aid roles in Afghanistan, and have tended to try to put the focus on action by the “international community.” Both, however, seem likely to be forced to expand both their regional counter-terrorism role and their role in supporting Afghanistan to protect their own strategic interests – which are far more direct than those of the US. They also seem far more likely to try to expand their influence and role in states actually in the Indian Ocean than to try to create some kind of direct route south in seeking ports or other facilities – if indeed these should become a goal.

These are not estimates that can be taken for granted, or where the interest of key states like Iran, China, and Russia may not change over time in ways that may change US priorities. At least for the present, however, the US seems to have more to gain from open or tacit cooperation that anticipating problems. It also seems probable that all three states – as well as other outside regional powers – will be natural competitors with each other in many ways, even though they will cooperate in others. At least in the near term the resulting checks and balances may again serve US interests – as well as those of Afghanistan and the other states in the region.
VIII. Is the Best Strategy to Openly Limit the US Role and Level of Commitments?

The US now seems all too likely to fill the present strategic vacuum in its policies towards Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia by default. It will end most of its combat presence in the region by the end of 2014, and end virtually all of its military commitments in the region by the end of 2016. It will then focus on a set of limited strategic goals – using diplomacy and sharply cut levels of aid -- with the possible exception of encouraging India’s emergence as a major regional power and counterweight to China.

Is Strategy by Default a Good Strategy?

There are reasons to limit the US role in the region. The US does needs to use its resources far more carefully, it must apply strategic triage to its military commitments, and the region seems to offer limited opportunity and limited cost-benefits. As the current US involvement in Yemen and Iraq makes all too clear, the legacy of 9/11 has shifted to other threats in other areas and countries.

The case for minimal involvement seems strongest in Central Asia. Central Asia is a marginal US strategic interest at best, and one that may well be left to the internal competition between Central Asian states as well as the competition for influence and bring some form of stability and security between Russia, China, and its other neighbors. To paraphrase the US film “Wargames,” the best way for the US to win any new Great Game in Central Asia is not to play it.

Pakistan is not an ally today and is far less useful or necessary as the US withdraws from Afghanistan. It is unclear what the US has to gain from more than correct diplomatic relations until –and if – Pakistan achieves effective political stability, focuses on its rising internal violence, creates meaningful reasons to provide military and economic aid, and shows it will secure its border with Afghanistan.

The US does see India as a potential counterweight to China, but has not seen its efforts to build closer strategic relations produce major results or benefits. Accordingly, the US is focusing on “rebalancing to Asia” on Pacific states, and less on the Indian Ocean. It is unclear that the US has a role to play beyond encouraging India military and economic development and better Indian and Pakistani relations – a role that is largely diplomatic and where the US seems unlikely to have more impact than in the past. Hope lies with the choices made by regional actors, not in some dramatic US intervention

While the US does want to see peaceful and stable relations between India and Pakistan, it has little reason to maintain a major role military or aid role in the region beyond its maritime and air presence in the Indian Ocean or to make further major expenditures in aid.

These are not the choices desired by US and European area specialists. Area experts and diplomats inevitably focus on their own areas of interest. But if the US is to make different choices, they need to make a much better and more realistic case for different options. They also need to take full account of the challenges the US faces in strategic
triage given Russian actions in the Ukraine, and challenges in the Middle East because of events in Iraq, Syria, Iran and other states.

**The Afghan Dilemma**

Afghanistan -- and the related role of the Taliban, Haqqani Network and other insurgent sanctuaries in Pakistan do present urgent security challenges, but past involvement is not a reason for future commitment. Afghanistan and Pakistan are no longer the key centers of terrorist threats to the US. The US has already said it will not maintain bases in Afghanistan, and US planners have never seriously believed that a forward US presence could somehow effectively secure Pakistani nuclear weapons against internal upheavals in Afghanistan.

At the same time, the previous analysis has shown that the US played a critical role in Afghanistan present lack of readiness to deal with the security aspects of Transition, and that there are critical weaknesses in the US approach to Afghanistan and key uncertainties in what will actually happen in Afghanistan once US and allied combat forces are gone. While the US is formally committed to maintaining a military presence in Afghanistan through 2016 that presence is probably going to be too small and to short to help Afghanistan through Transition. The lack of clear plans to ensure the effective use of US military and civil aid present equal problems, as do the prospects for Afghan unity and ability to make the necessary reforms.

There is a need for an honest debate over the current US approach to Transition and what may be unacceptable risks. Some US policymakers argue strongly for a more serious involvement in Afghanistan. They feel the new Afghan government needs a fair chance, that far more cost-effective levels of aid would be enough, and that the US must avoid the embarrassment of being defeated in two wars. This case should not be ignored.

Events could also strengthen the case for the US to stay longer and provide more support. This would, however, requires the new Afghan government to remain unified, and be proactive in both reform and making Afghan forces effective. It would require fundamental adjustments in the Afghan economy to far lower levels of outside spending, effective governance and economic planning, and progress in reform.

It would also require the Obama Administration to be willing to make a fundamental shift in US plans and to provide adequate advisors and enablers for as long as it takes on a conditions-based timetable.

Such a shift is questionable unless the new Afghan government moves remarkably quickly to make the necessary changes. Many other US policymakers do tacitly support ending US involvement rather than oppose the President’s plan to cut advisors and leave by 2016.

The American people also seem to agree. There is little US or allied public support for the war. As for the political cost of a “defeat” in Afghanistan, other voices note that the world already effectively sees the US as having lost in Afghanistan and argue that the world is far more concerned with US involved in Iraq and other regions. They argue that ending the conflict will cost the US little and will free it to better pursue its interests in other areas. Barring a major reversal in leadership from the White House, the US seems
determined to ease its way out of Afghanistan by doing too little and ending even that too soon.

It is still far from clear that a more objective analysis and policy debate would be so sanguine in estimating both the cost-benefits and risks involved, but it would take major progress on the part of the Afghan government to make such a debate possible before the US has effectively reduce its presence to unworkable levels at the end of 2015.

America’s European allies face the same challenges, and no one now seems to give much credence to the idea that Afghanistan is a critical test of NATO. Once NATO ministers have papered over NATO’s departure with suitable rhetoric and vague promises, it is increasingly unclear that that the last NATO country will even bother to shut the door on the way out.

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10 Anders Fogh Rasmussen, NATO Secretary General, The Secretary General’s Annual Report 2013, NATO, Brussels, 2014, p. 19; Matthew Rosenberg.


24 SIGAR, Quarterly Report, April 30, 2014, p. 66.


36 Based on background briefings, and private interviews in august and September 2014.


38 Based on background briefings, and private interviews in august and September 2014.


