Graveyard of Empires: The Case for Withdrawal from Afghanistan

By Vance Trefethen

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It started out as a necessary reaction to the events of 9/11 -- destroying the enemy that attacked us and shutting down their operations. That mission was accomplished. Today, however, the ongoing war in Afghanistan benefits no one - not the American people and certainly not the Afghan people. Please join my partner and me in affirming that The United States should significantly reform its policy toward one or more countries in the Middle East.

OBSERVATION 1. Our DEFINITIONS

**Significant**: “large enough to be noticed or have an effect” *(Merriam-Webster Online Dict. 2014* [*http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/significant*](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/significant)*)*

**Policy**: “a high-level overall plan embracing the general goals and acceptable procedures especially of a governmental body”*(Merriam-Webster Online Dict. 2014* [*http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/policy?show=0&t=1402599657*](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/policy?show=0&t=1402599657))

**Middle East** is defined in the Turkish Journal of Politics in 2011 as:

Turkish Journal of Politics Vol 2 No. 2, 2011 (Osman Nuri Özalp, Kırklareli University) “Where is the Middle East? The Definition and Classification Problem of the Middle East as a Regional Subsystem in International Relations” <http://tjp.fatih.edu.tr/docs/articles/112.pdf>

In a broad meaning, we can state that the Middle East covers a region from Ethiopia in the south, Turkey in the north, Afghanistan and Pakistan in the east to Morocco in the west.

OBSERVATION 2. INHERENCY, or the conditions of the Status Quo.

One simple fact: 9800 US troops to remain in Afghanistan

Spencer Ackerman 2014. (journalist) 27 May 2014 “Obama announces plan to keep 9,800 US troops in Afghanistan after 2014” 27 May 2014 THE GUARDIAN (British newspaper) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/27/obama-us-afghanistan-force-2014>

President Obama announced Tuesday that he will leave 9,800 US troops in Afghanistan through much of next year and backed away from ending America's longest war until at least his final year in office. “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,” Obama said in a Rose Garden address. Obama’s announcement of US troop levels comes before a broader foreign policy speech he will deliver at the US military academy at West Point on Wednesday, where he announced his Afghanistan troop surge in 2009. Aides said the speech will contextualize a post-2014 mission in Afghanistan, which Obama said will last through 2016, within a framework for counterterrorism that looks from Pakistan to north Africa.

OBSERVATION 3. HARMS

HARM 1. American Lives & Money Lost. American lives and money are lost pursuing an unattainable goal.

Doug Bandow 2012. ( J.D. (law degree) from Stanford Univ; senior fellow at the Cato Institute, specializing in foreign policy and civil liberties; worked as special assistant to President Reagan) 6 Mar 2012 Why Are We Still in Afghanistan? <http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/why-are-we-still-afghanistan>

The initial U.S. intervention in Afghanistan was necessary to break al Qaeda and punish the Taliban for hosting terrorists. But those objectives were achieved a decade ago. Since then Washington has been attempting to establish competent and honest governance in Kabul. Along the way Americans have sacrificed more than 1,900 lives (U.S. allies have lost another 1,000) and $507 billion. However, the latest example of deadly intolerance in Afghanistan suggests that America's attempt at nation-building is a chimera, unattainable at least at reasonable cost in reasonable time.

HARM 2. Failed Strategy. Our counter-insurgency strategy is doomed to fail

Evan Munsing 2014. (*Marine Corps officer currently serving as a military advisor in Afghanistan*) FRONT ROW SEAT: WATCHING COIN FAIL IN AFGHANISTAN, 28 Jan 2014 <http://warontherocks.com/2014/01/front-row-seat-watching-coin-fail-in-afghanistan/> (brackets added)

The success of these local insurgents, as well as the likely reemergence of competing political, economic and social power structures after coalition forces leave Afghanistan, will make it impossible to implement anything resembling a national policy.  The Afghan government will only function in a very basic sense outside of Kabul and some northern cities once American military forces leave and foreign aid dries up.  After our departure, Afghan society will realign itself on the basis of tribal, religious, and regional ties or coalesce around strongmen funded by the opium trade or government corruption.  Attempts at exercising any sort of centralized authority or national planning along democratic lines will falter in the face of these obstacles. Thus, regardless of how much time and money we spend on training our allies in the ANSF [Afghan National Security Forces] before we depart, the weakness and incoherence of the Afghan state will doom this approach.

HARM 3. Incompetence & corruption. US-supported Afghan government is incompetent and corrupt

Dr. M. Chris Mason 2012. (*Navy officer from 1981-86 and is a retired State Department diplomat; master’s degree in military studies from Marine Corps University, Quantico, Va; PhD in military history from George Washington University, Washington, D.C. He wrote the Marine Corps guide on Afghan culture and served in Afghanistan*) 3 Apr 2012 The Lesson of Vietnam: Out Now , NEW YORK TIMES, <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2012/04/03/should-the-us-leave-afghanistan-now/learn-the-lessons-of-vietnam-out-now>

Afghanistan is Vietnam redux. Again the U.S. has never lost a battle and again that is irrelevant. As in Vietnam, the puppet government is incompetent, corrupt and illegitimate. It is a myth that the war was lost by invading Iraq. It was lost in the C.I.A. stage production called the “Bonn Process,” where a non-entity named Hamid Karzai was foisted on astonished Afghan leaders. When 75 percent of the delegates at the Loya Jirga petitioned to make the king the interim head of state, C.I.A. shenanigans and millions of dollars in bribes killed the indigenous process.

OBSERVATION 4. We have a PLAN. Congress and the President will do the following:

1. All US military forces are withdrawn from Afghanistan over the next 4 months.

2. Congress votes to cancel funding for any further US military presence in Afghanistan after 4 months.

3. Enforcement through the President and US military commanders through normal military discipline.

4. Plan takes effect the day after an Affirmative ballot.

5. Affirmative speeches may clarify the plan as needed.

OBSERVATION 5. ADVANTAGES

ADVANTAGE 1. Stop spending lives & money on a hopeless cause.

*Dr. M. Chris Mason* 2014. (*Navy officer from 1981-86 and is a retired State Department diplomat; master’s degree in military studies from Marine Corps University, Quantico, Va; PhD in military history from George Washington University, Washington, D.C. He wrote the Marine Corps guide on Afghan culture and served in Afghanistan) March 2014 “Afghanistan is a Failed State”* <http://content.yudu.com/A2qfj4/201403March/resources/100.htm>

It doesn’t matter how long we remain in Afghanistan, how many more American lives we sacrifice, or how many more hundreds of billions of dollars we add to the national debt. It will not change the outcome — not because we ever lost an engagement on the battlefield but rather because we tried again to create a nation where one does not exist and imposed upon it an alien political system the people who live there are not willing to fight and die for.

ADVANTAGE 2. Pathway to greater stability. US disengagement would lead to regional spheres of influence and greater stability in Afghanistan

Dr. Leon Hadar 2010. (MA degrees from the schools of journalism and international affairs and the Middle East Institute at Columbia University; Ph.D in international relations from American Univ.) 28 July 2010 What Happens If U.S. Troops Leave Afghanistan? Not the End of the World As We Know It, <http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/what-happens-us-troops-leave-afghanistan-not-end-world-we-know-it>

My guess is that a U.S. military disengagement would probably ignite a similar kind of civil war in Afghanistan as the largest ethnic group, the Pashtun fight with the Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras (the three groups that dominated the victorious Northern Alliance) as outside regional powers led by Pakistan, India, Russia and China providing support for their clients. Contrary to the dire warnings of members of Washington's War Party such a process could actually help create some level of stability in Afghanistan as Pakistan and India help establish sphere of influence there: Pakistan will maintain its influence in the so-called Pashtun-belt in the south where a the Taliban could emerge as the major local player, while India exert its own influence in the north of Afghanistan. In fact, the expectation for U.S. military pull-out from Iraq has helped produce similar incentives for regional powers like Turkey, Iran and the Sunni Arab states to establish a certain balance of power in that country, with Turkey establishing friendly ties with the Kurds in the North while cooperating with Iran to prevent the emergence of an independent Kurdish state. Similarly, Iran and the Saudis have a common interest in averting a full-blown military confrontation between the Shiites and the Sunnis. There is no reason why India and Pakistan would not cooperate in controlling their clients in Afghanistan in order to avoid a regional military conflagration.

ADVANTAGE 3. Afghan self-determination. It’s better to let Afghans decide their own future

**We see this in 2 subpoints:**

A. The Link: Accelerated troop withdrawal allows Afghanistan to develop on its own terms.

**In fact, Afghanistan is going to develop on its own terms anyway, it’s only a question of how many lives we will sacrifice while getting in the way. Doug Bandow explains in 2012:**

Doug Bandow 2012. ( J.D. (law degree) from Stanford Univ; senior fellow at the Cato Institute, specializing in foreign policy and civil liberties; worked as special assistant to President Reagan) 16 Mar 2012 Leave Afghanistan to the Afghans <http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/leave-afghanistan-afghans>

Afghanistan may eventually end up with a reasonably liberal society and effective government, but only on its own accord. There are, in fact, many Afghans, particularly women, who desire liberty and equality. However, the U.S. cannot turn Afghanistan into a modern nation-state, at least at reasonable cost in reasonable time. It is time for the Obama administration to recognize this and stop sacrificing American lives. Washington should accelerate its troop withdrawal.

B. The Impact: Blocking self-determination stirs anti-American violence and rejection of democracy.

Malou Innocent 2012. (Masters in International Relations, U of Chicago; member of the International Institute for Strategic Studies) 27 Feb 2012 It’s Time to Cut Our Losses in Afghanistan <http://www.cato-at-liberty.org/its-time-to-cut-our-losses-in-afghanistan/>

As I argued months ago, “Recent events in Afghanistan should be a wake-up call to how our 10-year occupation is actually being perceived. Rather than winning ‘hearts and minds,’ America’s civilizing mission has become increasingly associated with a Western cultural invasion.” Many Afghans see outsiders constantly changing their mayors, their governors, and their customs. They are told how to dress their women, what is culturally acceptable, and what is culturally repugnant. Americans are infuriated when their politicians redistribute their taxes, yet they ignore how intrusive their own military and civilian planners have become to foreign peoples. It’s no surprise that a report published last May by the Kabul-based Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit concluded that negative sentiments about democracy emerge from “the stated distaste among respondents for ‘Western culture’ and the potential threat it poses to ‘Afghan culture,’ traditional norms or values, and an Islamic identity.” None of this should imply that the Quran burning or the grisly violence meted out against innocent people was justified. But the fact remains that America is widely scorned throughout the region—in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

2A Evidence: Withdrawal From Afghanistan

OPENING QUOTES

Only the Afghans can make their future

Doug Bandow 2012. ( J.D. (law degree) from Stanford Univ; senior fellow at the Cato Institute, specializing in foreign policy and civil liberties; worked as special assistant to President Reagan) 16 Mar 2012 Leave Afghanistan to the Afghans <http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/leave-afghanistan-afghans>

Afghanistan is a tragedy. But it has been a tragedy for centuries. After more than a decade of attempted nation-building, the U.S. should accelerate its withdrawal. Only the Afghans can make their future.

INHERENCY

Armed conflict with the Taliban is not over and will not end with current troop reductions

Spencer Ackerman 2014. (journalist) 27 May 2014 “Obama announces plan to keep 9,800 US troops in Afghanistan after 2014” 27 May 2014 THE GUARDIAN (British newspaper) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/27/obama-us-afghanistan-force-2014>

Obama described both the counter-terrorism and training missions as “narrow.” But the parameters of those missions will likely be determined by the resilience of the Afghan forces against what experts expect to be a major Taliban challenge. In congressional testimony last week, senior Pentagon lawyer Stephen Preston said that while the 2014 drawdown was an “important milestone, it doesn't necessarily mark the end of the armed conflict with the Taliban.”

“US troops already withdrawing by 2016” – Response: Some will still remain even then. “Zero option” is not US policy

Emma Graham-Harrison 2014. (journalist) 28 May 2014 THE GUARDIAN (British newspaper) Afghanistan president welcomes US plan to withdraw troops by 2016 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/28/afghanistan-president-welcomes-us-plan-withdraw-troops>

Many Afghans are happy to see their forces in control after years living alongside heavily armed foreign soldiers, but also worry that the shaky national police and armed forces might struggle to hold off insurgents without foreign air power, intelligence and other help. The top US commander in Afghanistan rushed to assuage those concerns, saying the deal was not a "zero option" that would leave the country's security forces isolated after 2016, acknowledging critical components such as the fledgling air force would probably get intense and longer-term support. Funds and equipment would still flow, General Joseph Dunford said, and the handful of troops at the nearby embassy would do more than just guard diplomats inside, continuing with a long-term training mission.

HARMS

We spent $14 billion on improving Afghan security, and the result is increased insecurity and violence

Prof. Jonathan Goodhand and Aziz Hakimi 2014. (Goodhand - professor of conflict and development studies in the Development Studies department at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London. Hakimi is a PhD candidate at SOAS.) Jan 2014 “COUNTERINSURGENCY, LOCAL MILITIAS, AND STATEBUILDING IN AFGHANISTAN” <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW90-Counterinsurgency-Local-Militias-and-Statebuilding-in-Afghanistan.pdf> (brackets added)

Between 2005 and February 2013, the United States, the largest donor in this sector, spent some $14 billion to rain and equip the ANP [Afghan National Police] (Planty and Perito 2013). Efforts directed at restructuring and training the police achieved mixed success, and even by 2011, the uniformed police “was still more like a fragmented coterie of militias than either a paramilitary police or a civilian police force” (Giustozzi and Isaqzadeh 2011,18). This combination of protracted conflict and invasive international intervention has led to a militarized and volatile security landscape inseparable from the wider regional conflict system, given that both Afghanistan and Pakistan use asymmetrical warfare to pursue statebuilding goals. The decentralization of violence and remobilization has arguably accelerated in the run-up to the transition deadline. When General David Petraeus took over for McChrystal in 2010,the rules of engagement shifted from counterinsurgency back to counterterrorism. This shift was reflected in an increased reliance on night raids, aerial bombardment, and drones. Some argue that Afghanistan has increasingly become a dirty war whose brutality has increased insecurity, which in turn has been used to justify the arming of communities by U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOFs), the Afghan state, or regional strongmen (Boone 2011).

Retired Army general in charge of US forces in Afghanistan admits: US counter-insurgency strategy failed

Richard Sisk 2013. ( journalist) “COIN Doctrine Under Fire” 19 Nov 2013 <http://www.dodbuzz.com/2013/11/19/coin-doctrine-under-fire/>

The vaunted counter-insurgency (COIN) strategy promoted by retired Gen. David Petraeus that guided the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has come under renewed and caustic criticism from one of its reluctant practitioners, both as a general and diplomat. “In short, COIN failed in Afghanistan,” said Karl Eikenberry, the retired Army lieutenant general and former chief of Combined Forces Command Afghanistan who was later U.S. Ambassador to Kabul. Eikenberry dissected and dismissed the COIN doctrine as applied in Afghanistan in a recent article for Foreign Affairs, published by the Council on Foreign Relations, titled “The Limits of Counterinsurgency Doctrine in Afghanistan.” Eikenberry also took on what has come to be known as the “COIN Bible” – the Counterinsurgency Field Manual, or FM 3–24, co-authored by then-Lt. Gen. David Petraeus and then-Lt. Gen. James Amos, now commandant of the Marine Corps. The “clear, hold and build” strategy outlined in FM 3–24 called for individual soldiers and Marines with the qualities of a modern-day “Lawrence of Arabia,” versed in languages and attuned to the culture and politics of the host nation, Eikenberry said. “The typical 21-year-old Marine is hard-pressed to win the heart and mind of his mother-in-law,” Eikenberry said. “Can he really be expected to do the same with an ethnocentric Pashtun tribal elder? Moreover, T. E. Lawrence specialized in inciting revolts, not in state building.”

Gen. Karl Eikenberry explains details on why US counter-insurgency failed in Afghanistan

Richard Sisk 2013. ( journalist) “COIN Doctrine Under Fire” 19 Nov 2013 <http://www.dodbuzz.com/2013/11/19/coin-doctrine-under-fire/>

“When the Obama administration conducted a comprehensive Afghanistan strategy review in 2009, some military leaders, reinforced by some civilian analysts in influential think tanks, confidently pointed to Field Manual 3–24 as the authoritative playbook for success,” Eikenberry wrote. But “it was sheer hubris to think that American military personnel without the appropriate language skills and with only a superficial understanding of Afghan culture could, on six– or 12-month tours, somehow deliver to Afghan villages everything asked of them by the COIN manual,” Eikenberry said. The COIN advocates also assumed that the policy they favored “would be consistent with the political-military approach preferred by Afghan President Hamid Karzai,” who saw the insurgency as a “made in Pakistan” effort, Eikenberry said. The continuing dispute between Karzai and the Americans “made the counterinsurgency campaign increasingly incoherent and difficult to prosecute,” Eikenberry said.

Our counterinsurgency strategy is failing and only breeds more terrorism

Dr. Leon Hadar 2010. (MA degrees from the schools of journalism and international affairs and the Middle East Institute at Columbia University; Ph.D in international relations from American Univ.) 28 July 2010 What Happens If U.S. Troops Leave Afghanistan? Not the End of the World As We Know It, <http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/what-happens-us-troops-leave-afghanistan-not-end-world-we-know-it>

But the COIN strategy that General Petraeus and his Australian mate and their disciples in Washington think tanks which the U.S. failed to implement in Vietnam will certainly not work in Afghanistan. Indeed, the notion that the U.S. has the power and the will — not to mention the interest — to engage in a long and costly process of building a nation-state in Afghanistan — — rebuilding, remaking, restructuring, reconstructing, and reforming this failed state and its mishmash of ethnic, religious, and tribal groups — the Pashtun and Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara, and the Aimak and the Turkmen and the Baloch people, its underdeveloped economy, nonexistent military, and "civil society" — is nothing more than a fantasy. In reality, it could create — it is creating! — a series of "blowbacks" that could end-up igniting more and not less anti-American terrorism.

Afghan government is awful: Commits abuses against its own people

Doug Bandow 2012. ( J.D. (law degree) from Stanford Univ; senior fellow at the Cato Institute, specializing in foreign policy and civil liberties; worked as special assistant to President Reagan) 6 Mar 2012 Why Are We Still in Afghanistan? <http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/why-are-we-still-afghanistan>

Afghans are cynical about "their" government. However, they fear "their" security forces, particularly the Afghan National Police. When I visited Afghanistan people described being robbed by the latter, which is supposed to protect them. The latest State Department assessment on human rights reported that the "security forces committed arbitrary or unlawful killings." State cited "reports of serious abuses by government officials, security forces, detention center authorities, and police," including arbitrary arrests, unlawful trials, and illegal imprisonments filled with beatings, torture, and rape. Children are mistreated as well. Such is the government presided over by President Karzai.

Local models of governance are more effective than those imposed by the West, and they can resist the Taliban

Michael Hart 2012. (Royal Air Force (RAF) officer who served in Afghanistan from 2008–09 and former director of defense studies for the RAF) 28 Feb 2012 NATIONAL INTEREST “West's Afghan Hopes Collide with Reality” <http://nationalinterest.org/article/wests-afghan-hopes-collide-reality-6510>

Away from the Pashtun South and East, individuals such as Atta Muhammad Noor, governor of Balkh, have established security, provided the basis for local stability and economic growth, and denied the Taliban a foothold. This model of governance, rooted in local conditions and society, is inherently more sustainable than models imposed by the West. Governors such as Noor command respect and raise effective militias, and warlords such as Ismail Khan in Herat have sufficient authority and capacity to provide the basis for coherent resistance to Taliban encroachment. Crucially, they also have overriding personal and ethnic incentives to do so.

Afghans hate Americans because too many innocent Afghans have been killed or displaced

Doug Bandow 2012. ( J.D. (law degree) from Stanford Univ; senior fellow at the Cato Institute, specializing in foreign policy and civil liberties; worked as special assistant to President Reagan) 6 Mar 2012 Why Are We Still in Afghanistan? <http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/why-are-we-still-afghanistan>

In fact, there are reasons why Afghans might hate Americans. Even then U.S. commander Gen. Stanley McChrystal admitted that at checkpoints "We've shot an amazing number of people and killed a number and, to my knowledge, none has proven to have been a real threat to the force." Tens of thousands of Afghans have fled to Pakistan and more than 300,000 have been displaced within their own nation. While the Taliban is primarily responsible for the human carnage, Americans and Europeans are outsiders, who rarely have been welcomed fondly by people determined to govern themselves.

ADVANTAGES / ADVOCACY

**Remaking Afghan society is a hopeless task**

Doug Bandow 2012. ( J.D. (law degree) from Stanford Univ; senior fellow at the Cato Institute, specializing in foreign policy and civil liberties; worked as special assistant to President Reagan) 6 Mar 2012 Why Are We Still in Afghanistan? <http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/why-are-we-still-afghanistan>

Remaking Afghan society is a hopeless task. Social engineering is hard enough at home. Doing so abroad is far more difficult, especially when many Afghans are ready to kill when offended by those who believe differently than them. The problem runs far deeper than the loss of mutual trust between Afghans and allies, as some observers suggest. Afghan society may — and hopefully will — eventually evolve in a more humane direction, but it will do so on Afghanistan's, not America's, schedule.

We should exit Afghanistan to save lives & money

Prof. Stephen Walt 2012. (professor of international affairs at Harvard University) 3 Apr 2012 “Don’ t Prolong the Inevitable” NEW YORK TIMES, <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2012/04/03/should-the-us-leave-afghanistan-now/there-is-no-need-to-prolong-the-inevitable>

The United States should send soldiers in harm's way only when vital interests are at stake. The outcome in Afghanistan will have little impact on United States security and it makes no sense to squander more blood and treasure there. Our NATO allies have figured this out and are heading for the exits. We should join them.

We should immediately stop spending lives and money on the Afghan war that is not in our national interest

Malou Innocent 2012. (Masters in International Relations, U of Chicago; member of the International Institute for Strategic Studies) 27 Feb 2012 It’s Time to Cut Our Losses in Afghanistan <http://www.cato-at-liberty.org/its-time-to-cut-our-losses-in-afghanistan/>

According to a poll from last summer by the Pew Research Center, 59 percent of Americans want a withdrawal from Afghanistan immediately—not two years from now, not six months from now. Immediately. Americans may finally be realizing what George Mason University’s Christopher Coyne has argued, which is that the historical record indicates “that attempts to spread liberal democracy via military occupation will fail more often than they will work.” More money, more time, and more resources will not change these underlying realities. To continue to train and assist the Afghan national army and police when distrust remains this high risks more violent incidents like this, and this, and this. Rather than become Afghanistan’s perpetual crutch, Washington must cut its losses. The war is fiscally irresponsible and wasteful of U.S. taxpayer dollars. Most importantly, no more American or Afghan lives should be lost in pursuit of a strategy that is not in America’s national interest.

Quantification: Each US service member in Afghanistan costs between 500 thousand to 1.2 million dollars / year

Prof. Joshua Rovner & Prof. Austin Long 2011. (Joshua Rovner is assistant professor of strategy and policy at the U.S. Naval War College. Austin Long is assistant professor in the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia Univ) 14 June 2011 “Dominoes on the Durand Line? Overcoming Strategic Myths in Afghanistan and Pakistan” <http://www.cato.org/publications/foreign-policy-briefing/dominoes-durand-line-overcoming-strategic-myths-afghanistan-pakistan>

Estimates indicate that each U.S. service member in Afghanistan costs between $500,000 and $1,200,000 annually. With just under 100,000 troops in Afghanistan the bill will range between $50 billion and over $100 billion per year. The United States is pursuing a costly strategy in Afghanistan that is unnecessary for securing vital U.S. interests in that country.

Afghans will follow their own path - outsiders cannot change it

Michael Hart 2012. (Royal Air Force (RAF) officer who served in Afghanistan from 2008–09 and former director of defense studies for the RAF) 28 Feb 2012 NATIONAL INTEREST “West's Afghan Hopes Collide with Reality” <http://nationalinterest.org/article/wests-afghan-hopes-collide-reality-6510>

HISTORY SUGGESTS that Afghanistan ultimately always follows its own path, guided in arcane and often obscure ways by powerful competing forces of ethnicity, tribalism, religion, geography, regional feuds, a fervor of national protectiveness and unbending obstinacy. For centuries these forces have militated against a strong central government in Kabul and all manner of foreign incursion.

DISAD RESPONSES

“We’re building democracy” – Response: Afghan democracy is a fraud

*Dr. M. Chris Mason* 2014. (*Navy officer from 1981-86 and is a retired State Department diplomat; master’s degree in military studies from Marine Corps University, Quantico, Va; PhD in military history from George Washington University, Washington, D.C. He wrote the Marine Corps guide on Afghan culture and served in Afghanistan) March 2014 “Afghanistan is a Failed State”* <http://content.yudu.com/A2qfj4/201403March/resources/100.htm>

Holding an election or two doesn’t make a democracy. Democracy is not a coat of paint, and wishful thinking and messaging are not a substitute for literacy and centuries of social development. Over 90 percent of Afghans cannot read a ballot. The last “election” was a major embarrassment of massive vote fraud.

“We’re building Afghanistan’s security forces” – Response: The Afghan army is a failure

*Dr. M. Chris Mason* 2014. (*Navy officer from 1981-86 and is a retired State Department diplomat; master’s degree in military studies from Marine Corps University, Quantico, Va; PhD in military history from George Washington University, Washington, D.C. He wrote the Marine Corps guide on Afghan culture and served in Afghanistan) March 2014 “Afghanistan is a Failed (brackets added) State”* <http://content.yudu.com/A2qfj4/201403March/resources/100.htm>

After 12 years, not one single infantry battalion is able to operate without U.S. support. Our advisors say three-quarters of the men are on drugs, and nearly half the army (42 percent) evaporates every 12 months from desertions and non-reenlistments. The entire annual Afghan defense budget does not cover one month of ANA [Afghan National Army] expenditures. For every two square miles of South Vietnam, the ARVN [South Vietnam Army] had 18 soldiers. For every two square miles of Afghanistan the ANA has one. Its units already are cutting deals with the Taliban.

Decline of Afghan central state will not be a problem: Al Qaeda will not recreate safe havens and Pak militants won’t find sanctuary there

Prof. Joshua Rovner & Prof. Austin Long 2011. (Joshua Rovner is assistant professor of strategy and policy at the U.S. Naval War College. Austin Long is assistant professor in the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia Univ) 14 June 2011 “Dominoes on the Durand Line? Overcoming Strategic Myths in Afghanistan and Pakistan” <http://www.cato.org/publications/foreign-policy-briefing/dominoes-durand-line-overcoming-strategic-myths-afghanistan-pakistan>

The upshot of this analysis is that state building is not necessary to succeed in Afghanistan. The decline of the central state will not lead to a domino effect in the region. Al Qaeda will not be able to recreate its old safe haven there even if the government collapses. Pakistani militants will not find reliable sanctuary either, regardless of what happens in Kabul.

“Al Qaeda will take over” - Response: Al Qaeda will have to remain in hiding

Prof. Joshua Rovner & Prof. Austin Long 2011. (Joshua Rovner is assistant professor of strategy and policy at the U.S. Naval War College. Austin Long is assistant professor in the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia Univ) 14 June 2011 “Dominoes on the Durand Line? Overcoming Strategic Myths in Afghanistan and Pakistan” <http://www.cato.org/publications/foreign-policy-briefing/dominoes-durand-line-overcoming-strategic-myths-afghanistan-pakistan>

A state-building failure would not mean victory for al Qaeda or the Taliban. Even if the United States substantially reduces its ground forces in Afghanistan and the Kabul government remains weak and ineffectual, al Qaeda would not be able to recreate anything like the safe haven it once enjoyed. The original circumstances that made sanctuary possible no longer exist today. In the 1990s there was little domestic support for aggressive U.S. counterterrorism operations abroad, and the Clinton administration debated at length whether to strike large al Qaeda training camps. Today there would be little debate; indeed, the Obama administration would surely welcome the opportunity to conduct strikes against well-defined terrorist strongholds without having to cross over into Pakistan. The Afghan Taliban, which by now is very familiar with U.S. air power, has much to lose by inviting al Qaeda back. As the Afghanistan Study Group aptly concludes, senior al Qaeda leaders “will likely have to remain in hiding for the rest of their lives, which means Al Qaeda will have to rely on clandestine cells instead of large encampments.”

We don’t need a policy to block safe havens for Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, and no need to worry about securing Pakistan’s nukes

Prof. Joshua Rovner & Prof. Austin Long 2011. (Joshua Rovner is assistant professor of strategy and policy at the U.S. Naval War College. Austin Long is assistant professor in the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia Univ) 14 June 2011 “Dominoes on the Durand Line? Overcoming Strategic Myths in Afghanistan and Pakistan” <http://www.cato.org/publications/foreign-policy-briefing/dominoes-durand-line-overcoming-strategic-myths-afghanistan-pakistan>

Since the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom, policymakers have emphasized two basic national security interests at stake in Afghanistan. The first is preventing al Qaeda and its Taliban allies from reestablishing a safe haven. The second is preventing the violence in Afghanistan from destabilizing Pakistan, thus putting its nuclear forces at risk and increasing the likelihood of nuclear terrorism. Coalition strategy is based on the assumptions that the only way to deny al Qaeda safe haven is by building a strong central Afghan state and that Pakistan’s nuclear complex will become increasingly vulnerable to militant attacks if the Taliban succeeds in Afghanistan. Both assumptions are wrong. The United States does not need to build a state in Afghanistan because the conditions that allowed al Qaeda safe haven in the 1990s have permanently changed. Moreover, the steps needed to help Pakistan secure its nuclear arsenal have nothing to do with the war in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, we continue to operate on the bases of these mistaken beliefs, and the result is that American strategy has become incoherent.

We can still strike Al Qaeda effectively with air power

Prof. Joshua Rovner & Prof. Austin Long 2011. (Rovner is assistant professor of strategy and policy at the U.S. Naval War College. Long is assistant professor in the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia Univ) 14 June 2011 “Dominoes on the Durand Line? Overcoming Strategic Myths in Afghanistan and Pakistan” <http://www.cato.org/publications/foreign-policy-briefing/dominoes-durand-line-overcoming-strategic-myths-afghanistan-pakistan>

The U.S. military has recently demonstrated the vulnerability of al Qaeda in Afghanistan. In the Korengal Valley of eastern Afghanistan, an area where the United States has withdrawn conventional forces, al Qaeda attempted to reestablish a training camp in 2010. It was subsequently struck by U.S. aircraft, resulting in the deaths of dozens of al Qaeda affiliates, including two senior leaders. Some observers interpret this as demonstrating that al Qaeda will find sanctuary where U.S. conventional forces are absent, yet it actually demonstrates that U.S. intelligence collection and ability to strike are substantial, even in areas without conventional forces on the ground.

Taliban will not promote al Qaeda in Afghanistan

Prof. Joshua Rovner & Prof. Austin Long 2011. ( Rovner is assistant professor of strategy and policy at the U.S. Naval War College. Long is assistant professor in the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia Univ) 14 June 2011 “Dominoes on the Durand Line? Overcoming Strategic Myths in Afghanistan and Pakistan” <http://www.cato.org/publications/foreign-policy-briefing/dominoes-durand-line-overcoming-strategic-myths-afghanistan-pakistan>

Moreover, al Qaeda operatives still residing in Pakistan may believe that they can wait out the United States before it leaves the region. Pakistani militants, on the other hand, are enemies of the Pakistani state, which is not going anywhere. If the Afghan Taliban succeeded in retaking part or all of Afghanistan, it would risk losing ISI support if it offered a substantial sanctuary to Pakistan’s enemies. It is possible that some members of the Pakistani groups might find shelter there, but the Afghan militants would have a strong incentive to ensure that their numbers remained low enough to be plausibly deniable to the ISI.

“Pakistan nukes at risk” - Response: Taliban success/failure will not affect Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal

Prof. Joshua Rovner & Prof. Austin Long 2011. ( Rovner is assistant professor of strategy and policy at the U.S. Naval War College. Long is assistant professor in the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia Univ) 14 June 2011 “Dominoes on the Durand Line? Overcoming Strategic Myths in Afghanistan and Pakistan” <http://www.cato.org/publications/foreign-policy-briefing/dominoes-durand-line-overcoming-strategic-myths-afghanistan-pakistan>

In reality, success or failure against the Afghanistan Taliban will not affect the security of Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal. The issues are unrelated. The logic behind the administration’s concern is that militants will have a better chance of acquiring nuclear weapons if they operate from a secure foothold. The stronger the Taliban become in Afghanistan, the more dangerous they will become to Pakistan. And because political instability in Afghanistan is likely to spill across the border, the government in Islamabad will be less capable of stopping them. This logic is wrong. For the reasons discussed above, fear of a safe haven in Afghanistan is wildly exaggerated. Afghan militants may find some protection from U.S. forces by hiding in Pakistan, but Pakistani militants will find no similar refuge in an Afghanistan dominated by Islamic militants.

“Pakistan destabilizes” - Response: Pakistan instability is caused by forces within Pakistan, not Afghanistan

Prof. Joshua Rovner & Prof. Austin Long 2011. ( Rovner is assistant professor of strategy and policy at the U.S. Naval War College. Long is assistant professor in the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia Univ) 14 June 2011 “Dominoes on the Durand Line? Overcoming Strategic Myths in Afghanistan and Pakistan” <http://www.cato.org/publications/foreign-policy-briefing/dominoes-durand-line-overcoming-strategic-myths-afghanistan-pakistan>

This modern version of the domino theory ignores the fact that the root causes of Pakistani instability are found in Pakistan, not across the border. Nonetheless, recent attacks against Pakistan’s military and nuclear complex have led to fresh concerns about the security of its technology and fissile material. In addition to the bombing of a bus full of workers from the Kahuta Research Laboratories in 2008, militants also launched rockets at suspected nuclear facilities. In the aftermath of the attacks, one observer concluded that a nuclear-armed Taliban “may not be as far-fetched as it might first appear.” Yet closer examination of these attacks shows that the complex itself, much less the weapons, was never in any great danger. Two suicide bombings led to fears that facility defenses were vulnerable, but in both cases the outer perimeter held. In at least one case, the rest of the sprawling facility was immediately locked down when the attack happened.

“Pak nukes at risk” - Response: 1) Militants don’t have the capability to pull it off. 2) Afghan safe haven wouldn’t be of any help to attacks on Pak nukes

Prof. Joshua Rovner & Prof. Austin Long 2011. ( Rovner is assistant professor of strategy and policy at the U.S. Naval War College. Long is assistant professor in the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia Univ) 14 June 2011 “Dominoes on the Durand Line? Overcoming Strategic Myths in Afghanistan and Pakistan” <http://www.cato.org/publications/foreign-policy-briefing/dominoes-durand-line-overcoming-strategic-myths-afghanistan-pakistan>

Rather than attacking facilities directly, militants could conceivably try to intercept weapons or fissile material in transit. So far, none of the Pakistani groups have shown anything close to the sophistication and resources needed to pull off such an audacious attack. In any case, a safe haven far away in Afghanistan would not help militants seeking to mass forces inside Pakistan to intercept nuclear weapons.

“Need US presence to fight corruption in Afghanistan” - Response: International actors in Afghanistan are what fuel corruption

Dr. Luis Peral 2011. (PhD in law; was a lecturer in international law at the Carlos III University in Madrid; former Senior Researcher at the Center for Political and Constitutional Studies of the Spanish Government) European Union Institute for Security Studies, June 2011, Afghanistan 2011-2014 and beyond: from support operations to sustainable peace, <http://carnegieendowment.org/files/Afghanistan_2011-2014_Joint_Report.pdf>

Systemic corruption has weakened Afghanistan’s institutions to the point where the political realm has been largely captured by warlords and criminals, making it easy for officials to be corrupted by criminals. Unfortunately, international actors have exacerbated corruption and institutional weakness in Afghanistan. The reluctance of donors to channel aid through state agencies has contributed to weakening the state, instead of strengthening its capacity to deliver aid. Leaving aside petty corruption, which is endemic in many countries, large-scale corruption is in most cases connected one way or another with international private companies. This is particularly true of the security companies operating or acting as intermediaries of operations in Afghanistan.

“Need US presence to stabilize Afghan governance” - Response: Western governance reforms are not sufficiently rooted to endure

Michael Hart 2012. (Royal Air Force (RAF) officer who served in Afghanistan from 2008–09 and former director of defense studies for the RAF) 28 Feb 2012 NATIONAL INTEREST “West's Afghan Hopes Collide with Reality” <http://nationalinterest.org/article/wests-afghan-hopes-collide-reality-6510>

Away from the areas of direct Western military control, Taliban “shadow governance” is far stronger than the writ of Kabul. It is true that the surge of American forces in southern Afghanistan has produced significant tactical gains, and Afghan forces, mentored by Western soldiers, have begun to perform more effectively. But once Western military forces are removed, Taliban influence and control will likely expand once again. The models of provincial governance imposed or attempted by the West are not sufficiently deep or rooted to endure in Pashtun-majority areas.

“Narcotics trade” - Response: US troop presence doesn’t stop drug trade in Afghanistan

Maj. Keith Alfeiri 2011. (Major, Army national guard) thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE, Homeland Security, June 2011 <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA547238>

Regardless of the presence of U.S.-led coalition forces in Afghanistan, insurgents continue to traffic narcotics in and out of the country. Despite the highest troop presence of anywhere in Afghanistan, the drug trade originating in Helmand Province is still a leading source of revenue for the insurgency.

“Narcotics trade” - Response: Opium production is soaring in Afghanistan in status quo

David Williams 2012. (journalist) with British newspaper DAILY MAIL, “Afghan drug war debacle: Blair said smashing opium trade was a major reason to invade but 10 years on heroin production is up from 185 tons a year to 5,800” 17 Feb 2012 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2102158/Heroin-production-Afghanistan-RISEN-61.html>

A report by the UN Office of Drugs and Crime said revenue from opium production in Afghanistan soared by 133 per cent last year to about £900 million after the crop recovered from a 2010 blight and approached previous levels. Ban Ki-moon, in his opening comments, cited a 2011 UN survey saying that poppy cultivation has increased by 7 per cent and opium production by 61 per cent in the past year.

“Need to ensure orderly succession after Karzai” - Response: There will be no orderly political succession

Michael Hart 2012. (Royal Air Force (RAF) officer who served in Afghanistan from 2008–09 and former director of defense studies for the RAF) 28 Feb 2012 NATIONAL INTEREST “West's Afghan Hopes Collide with Reality” <http://nationalinterest.org/article/wests-afghan-hopes-collide-reality-6510>

Karzai raised concerns among American policy makers in 2010 when he sacked two top governmental officials—Interior Minister Mohammad Hanif Atmar and intelligence chief Amrullah Saleh—after they failed to prevent an attack on a Kabul peace council. Such actions belie any idea of an orderly political succession. Thus, the collective behavior of the Kabul polity is likely to revert to that of the early 1990s—jockeying for individual and ethnic advantage as well as the formation of unstable, shifting alliances susceptible to external exploitation and military pressure.

“NATO collapse” - Response: NATO would not dissolve if Afghan mission fails.

Col. Tarn Warren 2009. (US Army, instructor in the Department of Military Strategy, Plans, and Operations at the U.S. Army War College) ISAF and Afghanistan: The Impact of Failure on NATO's Future <http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ADA522047>

The question remains: If ISAF fails, would NATO go with it? Despite all the credible warnings by many respectable leaders, scholars, and observers, the answer is probably no. Not one NATO head of state or foreign minister, despite other grumblings, has suggested dissolving the Alliance. NATO was, is, and will remain critical for transatlantic security and for other reasons. NATO is the only institution in the world with the experience, structure, and capacity not only to handle large-scale security crises, but also to act as the hub of a global web of cooperative security initiatives. Despite occasional rhetoric to the contrary, Europeans will continue to support NATO not only because Russia is in their peripheral vision, but also because continuing to play the "burden-shifting" game gets them the best security at the cheapest price, far less than they would be forced to pay on their own. They would rather tolerate an alliance with a hard-to-heel America than go it alone.

“Afghan civilians will suffer / Human rights will be lost” - Response: Nothing we can do about it in Status Quo either

Prof. Stephen Walt 2012. (professor of international affairs at Harvard University) 3 Apr 2012 “Don’ t Prolong the Inevitable” NEW YORK TIMES, <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2012/04/03/should-the-us-leave-afghanistan-now/there-is-no-need-to-prolong-the-inevitable>

Staying longer will not lead to victory, because the Taliban have sanctuaries and allies in Pakistan and will simply wait us out. Their ideology may be deeply objectionable, but they are an integral part of Afghan society while we are intruders from afar. It would be nice if we could protect Afghan civilians from further strife or future repression, but trying to do so will cost additional hundreds of billions of dollars, take a decade or more, and could still fail. The sad truth is: we do not know how to create stable governance in that unhappy country.

US forces cannot prevent religious persecution in Afghanistan

Doug Bandow 2012. ( J.D. (law degree) from Stanford Univ; senior fellow at the Cato Institute, specializing in foreign policy and civil liberties; worked as special assistant to President Reagan) 6 Mar 2012 Why Are We Still in Afghanistan? <http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/why-are-we-still-afghanistan>

The group Open Doors ranked Afghanistan number 2 on its latest "World Watch List," up a spot from last year. Afghanistan outranked even Saudi Arabia and Iran in persecution. Explained Open Doors: "the situation remains desolate, especially for minority groups, including the small Christian community. Despite having signed all international agreements designed to protect the freedom of religion, the government in the current setting is not even able to guarantee the most basic tenants of this right. On the contrary, being recognized as a Christian immediately places any believer in a very difficult position." In its most recent report the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom concluded simply: "Conditions for religious freedom remain exceedingly poor for minority religious communities and dissenting members of the majority faith, despite the presence of U.S. armed forces in Afghanistan for almost 10 years and the substantial investment of lives, resources, and expertise by the United States and the international community." Recently "the small and vulnerable Christian community experienced a spike in government arrests, with Christians being detained and some jailed for the 'crime' of apostasy." Last year's State Department assessment of international religious liberty offered a similarly negative assessment.