

**Challenges and Opportunities for
US Strategy in Afghanistan: Some Illustrations
25 July 2011**

CHALLENGES

Evaluating US foreign assistance to Afghanistan

<http://foreign.senate.gov/>

Majority Staff Report, Committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate, S. Prt. 112-21, 8 June 2011, page 2: "Foreign aid, when misspent, can fuel corruption, distort labor and goods markets, undermine the host government's ability to exert control over resources, and contribute to insecurity. According to the World Bank, an estimated 97 percent of Afghanistan's gross domestic product (GDP) is derived from spending related to the international military and donor community presence. Afghanistan could suffer a severe economic depression when foreign troops leave in 2014 unless the proper planning begins now."

Cost of war in Afghanistan will be major factor in troop-reduction talks

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/cost-of-war-in-afghanistan-will-be-major-factor-in-troop-reduction-talks/2011/05/27/AGR8z2EH_story.html

Rajiv Chandrasekaran, The Washington Post, 30 May 2011: "In the Senate, influential members have said recently that the cost of the war merits a reexamination of the overall U.S. strategy in Afghanistan. "It is fundamentally unsustainable to continue spending \$10 billion a month on a massive military operation with no end in sight," Sen. John F. Kerry (D-Mass.), the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, said this month."

The insurgency in Afghanistan's heartland

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/media-releases/2011/asia/the-insurgency-in-afghanistans-heartland.aspx>

International Crisis Group, Asia Report Number 207, 27 June 2011, page ii: "With just three years left before the bulk of international forces withdraw, the window of opportunity to expand security outside Kabul is fast closing. It is unlikely that this can be achieved unless a better balance can be struck between taking the fight to the field and countering the causes of the insurgency."

Taliban add song to the armory

http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/MF29Df03.html

Hejratullah Ekhtiyar, Asia Times Online, 29 June 2011: "Taliban songs were "a thousand times" better than Afghan TV channels, he [a young man interviewed for this story] said, adding, "The children of this country are fighting for their country. They are our brothers and we listen to their songs unashamedly." Such comments suggest the Taliban have found a new way to reach out and touch people at a personal level – a tactic the Afghan

government and its international allies have largely failed to master, despite the substantial resources that have gone into hearts-and-minds work.”

Afghanistan’s last locavores

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/20/opinion/20mcardle.html>

Patricia McArdle, Opinion, The New York Times, 19 June 2011: “Sustainable development in Afghanistan has taken a back seat to “quick wins” that can be reported to Congress as indicators of success: tractors that farmers can’t repair and that require diesel fuel they can’t afford; cheaply built schools; and smooth but wafer-thin asphalt, which will never stand up to Afghanistan’s punishing climate without costly annual maintenance.”

Afghanistan: The impossible transition

<http://carnegieendowment.org/publications/?fa=view&id=44627>

Gilles Dorronsoro, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Carnegie Paper, June 2011, page 1: “A combination of two critical problems threatens to undermine the mission of the United States–led coalition in Afghanistan: the failure of the counterinsurgency strategy and a disconnect between political objectives and military operations. If anything, the current strategy is making a political solution less likely, notably because it is antagonizing Pakistan without containing the rise of the armed opposition.”

Among the costs of war: \$20B in air conditioning

<http://www.npr.org/2011/06/25/137414737/among-the-costs-of-war-20b-in-air-conditioning?ps=cprs>

NPR.org, 25 June 2011: “The amount the U.S. military spends annually on air conditioning in Iraq and Afghanistan: \$20.2 billion. That's more than NASA's budget. It's more than BP has paid so far for damage during the Gulf oil spill. It's what the G-8 has pledged to help foster new democracies in Egypt and Tunisia.”

The problems facing 40,000 Afghan villages

http://www.mccaffreyassociates.com/pdfs/AAR_november_2009.pdf

General Barry R. McCaffrey (ret), After Action Report – Visit to Kuwait and Afghanistan, 10-18 November 2009, page 7: “Afghanistan is still in the 14th Century. It is the fifth poorest nation on the face of the earth. Basic services are rudimentary or non-existent. The Afghans lack infrastructure, justice, resources and the most basic forms of local and national governance. Only 12 % of the land is arable and they face grossly inadequate potable water, soil degradation, massive deforestation, and severe overgrazing.”

SCO [Shanghai Cooperation Organization] steps out of Central Asia

http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/MF18Ag01.html

M. K. Bhadrakumar, Asia Times Online, 18 June 2011: “In sum, the SCO continues to insist that it does not aspire to be a “NATO of the East” or a military alliance. On the other hand, it is set on making NATO (and Pax Americana) simply irrelevant to an entire landmass, which with the induction of India and Pakistan will account for more than half

of mankind. NATO may face a piquant situation when it aspires to claim that it is the only global security organization available in the 21st century.”

OPPORTUNITIES

It takes the villages

<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/print/66327>

Seth G. Jones, *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2010, page 2: “Experts on state building and counterinsurgency in Afghanistan fall into two competing camps. The first believes that Afghanistan will never be stable and secure without a powerful central government capable of providing services to Afghans in all corners of the country. The other insists that Afghanistan is, and always has been, a quintessentially decentralized society, making it necessary to build local institutions to create security and stability.”

Afghanistan’s willing entrepreneurs

<http://www.cnas.org/node/5346>

Jake Cusack and Erik Malmstrom, Policy Brief, Center for a New American Security, November 2010, page 9: “Private sector development is not a quick or easy solution to Afghanistan’s ills. Moreover, it requires a fundamental shift: Afghan entrepreneurs must be empowered to be the key drivers. Outsiders must accept an enabling role while remaining aware of their potential to create harmful distortions. Importantly, this effort requires smarter policy and the right people, not necessarily more money.”

A new deal: A plan for sustainable Afghan stability

http://newamerica.net/publications/policy/a_new_deal_a_plan_for_sustainable_afghan_stability

Bijan R. Khian and Wayne Porter, White Paper, New America Foundation, November 2010, page 5: “The Afghan “New Deal” would select fighting-age youth from across the country and provide them an alternative – positioning them to be the *human* capital for sustainable economic development. The *financial* capital would be offered by Afghanistan’s strong balance sheet in terms of its natural resources.”

Could a ‘virtual surge’ fix Afghanistan?

<http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2010/01/could-a-virtual-surge-fix-afghanistan/>

Nathan Hodge, Danger Room, Wired.com, 20 January 2010: “Afghanistan, like Haiti, is a country in need of a major reboot. Yet despite billions in reconstruction dollars and an influx of civilian development experts, it remains at the bottom of every development and transparency index. But according to Ashraf Ghani, the country’s former finance minister and a onetime presidential contender, Afghanistan doesn’t need an army of consultants and contractors. It needs you and your laptop.”

Rockets to markets

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/iqbal-z-quadir/rockets-to-markets_b_423194.html

Iqbal Z. Quadir, *Huffpost World*, 14 January 2010: “With a thoughtfully implemented stimulus program, Afghans could go from lobbing grenades to exporting pomegranates. Entrepreneurs, armed with local knowledge, would emerge both within and outside of

Afghanistan, exporting Afghani goods and importing raw materials. The support for products from the region could be channeled to favor many small producers and traders, ensuring competition and dispersion of revenue.”

Afghanistan: Time to build

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/edward-corcoran/afghanistan-time-to-build_b_870333.html

Edward Corcoran, Huffpost World, 2 June 2011: “It is time to shift from battering down opponents to working to convince them that they can build better lives for themselves and at the same time stabilize the nation. Promoting stability in weak states is the core strategic challenge for the XXI Century and Afghanistan, for better or worse, has become the test case. It can provide a positive example for developing nations in general and for the Muslim World in particular of how the United States can promote stability in failing states, or it can demonstrate that the United States is simply incapable of providing such leadership.”

Can you help me now? Mobile phones and peacebuilding in Afghanistan

<http://www.usip.org/publications/can-you-help-me-now>

Sheldon Himelfarb, Special Report, US Institute of Peace, November 2010: “Nine years ago, Afghanistan had between 10,000 and 20,000 fixed lines, and mobile telecommunications were virtually nonexistent. Since then the country has seen explosive growth in mobile subscribers, network providers, and physical infrastructure. The total number of subscriptions is approximately 13 million for a total population of roughly 29 million people, and the annual growth rate of subscription is estimated at 53 percent (2009–10).”

Afghanistan beyond the fog of nation building: Giving economic strategy a chance

<http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/silkroadpapers/1101Afghanistan-Starr.pdf>

S. Frederick Starr, Silk Road Paper, Central Asia – Caucasus Institute, January 2011, page 8: “To upgrade Afghan agriculture takes more time than is available, is difficult to do in wartime, and provides no income for the government. Exploiting mineral wealth breeds governmentalization and corruption, and also takes time. And who will do the exploiting? China, ever ready to eat America’s lunch, shouldered its way past American and other bidders to claim the right to develop Afghanistan’s \$3.5 billion copper deposits at Aynak. Are American taxpayers prepared to do the dirty work for programs that will benefit mainly the Chinese? More to the point, neither the development of agriculture nor the exploitation of natural wealth is possible without the prior development of *transport*, both within Afghanistan and between Afghanistan and the broader world.”

How smart economic strategy could strengthen the Afghan counterinsurgency

<http://143.84.46.23/index.cfm/articles/How-Smart-Economic-Strategy-Could-Strengthen-the-Afghan-Counterinsurgency/2011/2/10>

Leif Rosenberger, Of Interest, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 10 February 2011: “At the moment, Afghan businessmen lack access to physical markets. No matter how productive Afghan farmers become, they are currently incapable of transporting their goods to the marketplace inside Afghanistan or outside the country.

Therefore, their increased production simply piles up in larger stockpiles of rotten fruit. By building more roads and railways, Afghan goods will not only flow through Afghanistan, but from Afghanistan.”

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