

A Report of the CSIS Hills Program on Governance

AUTHOR **Gerald F. Hyman**

Afghanistan after the Drawdown

*U.S. Civilian Engagement
in Afghanistan Post-2014*

APRIL 2014

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INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

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Executive Summary

In his 2013 State of the Union speech, President Barack Obama announced that by the end of 2014 “our war in Afghanistan will be over” and, a month earlier, that “by the end of next year, 2014, the transition will be complete—Afghans will have full responsibility for their security, and this war will come to a responsible end.” The military transition, successful or not, is in full swing. Of course the war will not come to an end in 2014, responsible or otherwise. Even if the military drawdown goes as planned, “America’s commitment to a unified and sovereign Afghanistan will endure, but the nature of our commitment will change,” the president said. On the military side, our enduring commitment will focus on training, equipping, and funding the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and “some counterterrorism efforts that allow us to pursue remnants of al Qaeda and their affiliates,” presumably the Taliban. As the United States draws down, so too will the remaining coalition countries of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) under North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) command.

But the United States and its ISAF allies also have massive civilian programs as do multilateral institutions like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. At the July 2012 Tokyo international assistance conference, the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) and the donors forged a new partnership, the Tokyo Declaration Partnership. The coalition partners and other donors pledged \$16 billion over four years through 2016 (an amount each year equal to Afghanistan’s entire gross domestic product) subject to several serious but not very specific performance commitments by GIROA, especially better governance and the reduction of corruption. Neither side is likely to deliver on its commitments, although very sizeable civilian assistance programs are likely to survive.

What should be the nature of those programs? What objectives should define them, and what strategy should be pursued in achieving them? Presently, the donors have individually and collectively included programs in dozens of areas, including infrastructure, health, education, democracy, governance, economic growth, food security, minority rights, environment, and many others, all supporting GIROA’s Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and its 22 national priority programs. But with reduced funding, the full array will not be possible. Funding aside, conditions on the ground may not even make them workable. Choices will need to be made, objectives defined, and priorities established, preferably pursuant to some coherent strategy. The natural inclination of civilian agencies, at least those in the United States, will be to avoid strategic choices by doing somewhat less among all of the existing programs because “they are all necessary” to

complement one another and for the kind of Afghanistan “we have all been working for and the people of Afghanistan have been promised and have come to expect.” That would be the wrong choice and it is the wrong objective.

The real objectives need to be not just more modest but more strategic: plans need to derive from objectives, resources, and obstacles. Three areas are most critical for the survival of an independent, coherent, reasonably decent Afghanistan: security, governance, and economic growth, in that order. Each is necessary for the next and although they are linked, that is the logical order. Other areas and objectives are desirable, no doubt, but these three are essential, and the essential should define the assistance strategy with the desirable added if possible. Moreover, each of the three essential areas is itself uncertain. With heavy concentration on these three, the resulting country will still be suboptimal, no doubt, but optimality is not in the cards in Afghanistan notwithstanding (unrealistic) expectations.

With a few minor exceptions (for example, perhaps some circumscribed work with the police and the courts), the security dimension (keeping the Taliban at bay or even defeating them, establishing personal security for ordinary Afghans, establishing and retaining ANSF command and control while preventing internal factionalism, external warlordism, and sectarianism within the security forces) is the responsibility of the GIRoA, ANSF, and ISAF. It is beyond the core civilian writ. Although ANSF have been performing well beyond expectations (or fears), these are early days; Afghans remain still very much in doubt about their security. To date, the U.S. civilian programs have been adjunct to and supportive of the security and counterinsurgency effort. They have been revised in response to the changes in the counterinsurgency environment, strategy, and targets. A clear connection will and should remain but it will be a looser connection.

The remaining two areas—governance and economic growth—should be the primary prongs of the civilian side. Their success will depend on the context of post-withdrawal Afghanistan and on the performance, not the promises, of the government and people of Afghanistan. A large number of contexts are possible, but it may be useful to think of three simple (perhaps simplistic) and obvious ones, together with the strategic implications of each for assistance, especially governance and economic growth.

Optimistic Scenario

According to plan, the ANSF will succeed in holding almost all current territory, institutionalize real command and control, win Afghan loyalties, and establish the conviction among Afghans that they can ultimately defeat the Taliban or at least confine them to a chronic but not existential problem, and certainly that they can prevent a Taliban victory. Assuming they perform as expected, it would temper, even reverse, the hedging strategies by which Afghans, uncertain about their futures, play all sides of the possibilities, including emigration, support for the Taliban, simultaneous support for the government, and enormous capital flight.

Within a relatively secure envelope, governance will depend on the policies and performance of the next government. President Hamid Karzai's term will end with the 2014 elections. He cannot stand again. The race among a large number of registered candidates has narrowed. A successful presidential election is crucial for the legitimacy of the ensuing government. Equally important are successful parliamentary elections in 2015 and perhaps less so, depending on what happens, on various provincial and local elections. These are necessary, but insufficient conditions, for decent (note: decent, not necessarily good and certainly not excellent) governance. If the elections produce a credible albeit far from perfect result, if the ensuing government does provide decent governance with limited but very basic and reliable public services, if it reduces corruption, and if it establishes and implements reasonable policies, then continued economic growth is quite possible.

Even then, economic projections are modest, especially with the drawdown of foreign troops and civilians and declining donor spending. Many optimistic scenarios for economic growth depend on a breakthrough in resource extraction, but the conditions for that are daunting and certainly unrealizable in the next half decade. With a declining foreign presence and funds, Afghanistan will, at best, revert to a very-low-income country (surely in the lowest decile) with few comparative advantages. It will struggle to provide some economic opportunity to its burgeoning population. Afghans' expectations are higher than that, so the government will also be struggling to contain the balance between expectations and realities. The new generation of Afghans, better educated and with expanded experiences and horizons, have hope and commitment. They are perhaps Afghanistan's greatest assets and also its greatest critics.

Still, under these optimistic assumptions, a large number of assistance programs are possible. To maximize impact, they should be centered on governance and economic growth. With better performance in these areas, all other areas of assistance are more likely to be productive and fundable, especially with increasing proportions of domestic revenues; they will more likely be successful programmatically as well. However, the donor funding for Afghanistan will almost certainly decline as a combination of domestic needs in the donor countries, Afghanistan fatigue, and skepticism about GIROA performance. Much stricter conditionality should be imposed with clear targets to accompany funding tranches. Unless the three critical areas (security, governance, economic growth) are reasonably successful, programs in health, education, infrastructure, civil society, women's empowerment, and the rest are financially unsustainable and unlikely to succeed even if funded. But even optimistically, if the Taliban reconciliation program succeeds, including Taliban participation in the government, which donors would be willing to align their programs with, say, the new Taliban minister of justice or public health or education, let alone women's affairs? And which Taliban ministers would agree to be mutually accountable to the coalition donors?

Muddling Through Scenario

If the ANSF do not contain the Taliban, if the Taliban mount limited successful campaigns and control additional territory but not the roads, major cities, utility grids, and strategic areas and elements, in short if there is a kind of strategic stalemate with tactical successes and setbacks on both sides, the ANDS and the 22 national priority programs would need to be reconsidered. More important, the national governance project—the strong, central, unitary state instead of Afghanistan’s historically localized and loosely connective governance and economy—would be unworkable. Local authorities would necessarily have greater authority with more modest and formalistic nods toward the center that would, in turn, have to settle for more modest plans. The more uncertain security environment and reversion toward the historical mean would be accompanied—even cause—a decline in the economy and its prospects. Life generally would once again become more community based, including health, education, and gender. Afghan anxieties about the future and hedging behavior would grow as, probably, would a reassertion of more traditional social, religious, and government practices, including warlordism. Some parts of the country would be no-go zones, others would be uncertain. Many of the social, political, and economic gains of the past decade would be at risk. A downward spiral of expectations and performance is possible, even likely. Assistance programs would follow suit. Systematic planning would be difficult and execution would become more tenuous. The full array of assistance projects would be almost impossible to implement, certainly in their current configuration. Contingent planning would become more necessary. Again, concentration should be on the three core areas but with greater urgency and uncertainty: reestablishment of security; work on governmental performance with significantly greater emphasis on the local level; and some kind of economic strategy that encompasses the uncertainties of investment and return as well as marketing. The Taliban momentum would need to be contained and, if possible, reversed. If security, governance, and the economy do not recover, everything else will also muddle through, at best. Afghanistan has lived for centuries in just such a world, but not with the current level of consumer goods and expectations.

Pessimistic Scenario

The more pessimistic scenarios are daunting. If the ANSF fare poorly or even collapse the Taliban will begin to recapture considerably more territory and gain momentum. Even a rolling, consistent series of limited Taliban successes would probably trigger a set of defensive responses, probably self-fulfilling, toward communal preservation, away from a single polity and national institutions, and (even among some Pashtuns) a flight to ethnic, religious, and ideological safety in alternative, non-Taliban sanctuaries. Those who could would emigrate or at least send wives and children abroad. If the Taliban gains become extensive and sustained, some form of the Northern Alliance among the non-Pashtun populations would probably attempt to carve out a part of the country with a possible civil war between the minorities and the Pashtuns, among the minorities, and possibly among the

Pashtuns themselves. The Afghan national state and the national economy would implode. A resurgence of religious and social fundamentalism would ensue, notwithstanding the statements from Mullah Mohammed Omar that the Taliban has learned from its mistakes. Systemic assistance would be impossible. Coalition countries would evacuate most of their personnel. The assistance programs would need to be rethought and rebuilt from scratch with new assumptions, new purposes, and definitely new constraints to reflect the new conditions, perhaps around whatever would remain of the central government and its writ. However, as under the Taliban before, assistance would probably be bare-bones, humanitarian, transactional, and disproportionately cross-border. Truly strategic objectives and programs would probably make little sense unless the political and economic tables turned.

Conclusions

Two dozen specific conclusions about assistance can be drawn from these scenarios and analyses. However, the scenarios are notional and should be fleshed out. More sophisticated, detailed, and dynamic scenarios should be constructed and examined, then adopted while they remain apposite. The realities in Afghanistan will change as, therefore, should the assistance strategies, objectives, contingencies, expectations, and conditionalities accordingly. Notwithstanding commitments made at the 2012 Tokyo assistance conference, the available funding will decline over the next three years and certainly subsequently. The civilian side will mirror the military drawdown although it will be slower and more protracted, contingent on the security envelope and governance, the two primary determinants of the scenarios, not just on donor budget limitations.

Most important, the relation between the purposes and objectives of the assistance together with the mutual expectations between the Afghans and the donors should be clearer and more rigorously reviewed and scrutinized, with appropriate conclusions for funding and programs. Ultimately, the coalition partners can offer (diminishing) assistance to the next Afghan administration. But the fundamental choices must now be made by Afghans not foreigners. What kind of society do they want? Can a consensus be found around that question? What kind of state do Afghans want; what kind can they afford; what policies should it pursue; what kind of security and how many goods and services can it provide as a result? What realistic expectations can Afghans have? It is Afghans who must face and answer these and other fundamental, constitutional questions in the years ahead. The days when the coalition countries and other donors attempt to do so will end with the drawdown of 2014.

1 | Introduction

As the drawdown of the coalition forces in Afghanistan proceeds, some stark policy choices will be required as part of the long-term relation between the United States and Afghanistan. The current level of support for the government of Afghanistan is unsustainable and undesirable long-term. Conditions both in Afghanistan and in the United States (and the other coalition countries) also make it untenable. The military changeovers are already underway. Corresponding changes on the civilian have barely been conceived, let alone articulated or examined.

Most of the discussion about the role of the United States in Afghanistan after 2014 when it ends its combat role has, perhaps understandably, focused on its non-combat but still military character. How many U.S. troops will remain? What kind? With what mission? Under what terms and conditions? What rules of engagement? Those decisions will be made in the coming months, preferably sooner rather than later.

In his 2013 State of the Union speech, President Barack Obama announced the withdrawal in 2013 of 34,000 troops from the U.S. force of 66,000. “This drawdown will continue and by the end of next year, our war in Afghanistan will be over. Beyond 2014, America’s commitment to a unified and sovereign Afghanistan will endure, but the nature of our commitment will change. [Militarily, the United States will] focus on two missions—training and equipping Afghan forces so that the country does not again slip into chaos, and counterterrorism efforts that allow us to pursue the remnants of al-Qaeda and their affiliates.”¹ A month earlier in a joint press conference with President Hamid Karzai, President Obama telegraphed his decision and emphasized his expectations for the Afghans: “And by the end of next year, 2014, the transition will be complete—Afghans will have full responsibility for their security, and this war will come to a responsible end.”²

Regrettably, to say the least, this war will not come to an end, responsible or otherwise. The combat role of the United States and its coalition partners may have ended.

1. Remarks of the President in the State of the Union Address, February 12 2013, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/02/12/remarks-president-state-union-address>.

2. U.S. Embassy, Kabul Afghanistan, Remarks by President Obama and President Karzai of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Joint Press Conference, January 11, 2013, http://kabul.usembassy.gov/pr_011113.html. U.S. General Joseph F. Dunford Jr., North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) commander repeated the same formulation in a NATO briefing just after the State of the Union address: “And we will make sure that Afghan forces have the support they need as they assume full responsibility for their own security by the end of 2014.” “ISAF Defence Ministers prepare for transition milestone,” February 22, 2013, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_98737.htm.

Responsibility for the war has already been transferred to the Afghans. The war will continue but with a different U.S. commitment, military and civilian. The number of U.S. forces is being cut dramatically and their mission will be limited to training and equipping the Afghan forces as well as some direct but limited anti-terrorism engagement. In that limited sense, the war, the combat, is over for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) countries.

As to the residual, post-2014 force and mission, the Joint Chiefs of Staff originally preferred a more gradual shift in mission and a force reduction, if there was to be one at all, from the current level of 66,000 to a stable residual force of 25,000 to 30,000.³ However, the Pentagon's own request for these post-2014 forces has now been scaled back to 9,000 to 15,000, keeping as robust a presence as possible for as long as possible. Current speculation about the actual number of the residual post-2014 force finally to be approved by the White House ranges from the zero option (no U.S. troops at all), which remains unlikely but is under serious consideration, to around 9,000 and even then on a clear, noncontingent glide path of reduction.⁴

The remaining U.S. forces are not intended to enter combat themselves, but to sustain the security gains, as President Obama said, by training and equipping the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)—the Afghan National Army (ANA), Afghan National Air

3. The new commander of the ISAF, U.S. General Joseph F. Dunford Jr. reportedly wanted a significantly smaller reduction, leaving 43,000 to continue the training and provide security at least through the April 2014 Afghanistan presidential election. "This is steeper than we had hoped for. Pulling out 34,000 leaves us dangerously low on military personnel while the fledgling Afghan army and police still need our support. It's going to send a clear signal that America's commitment to Afghanistan is going wobbly." Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "Obama wants to cut troop level in Afghanistan in half over next year," *Washington Post*, February 12, 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/official-obama-to-cut-troop-level-in-afghanistan-in-half-by-next-year/2013/02/12/63a044c8-7536-11e2-8f84-3e4b513b1a13_story.html?wp_login_redirect=0. The number of troops remaining after 2014 and the rate of their withdrawal thereafter is reminiscent of a basketball game: fast and with constantly changing numbers. As of February 2013 the U.S. military prefers keeping 10,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan at the beginning of 2015, and declining slowly through 2017, but is willing to settle for 8,000 initially. That is the size of about two normal brigades, although the 8,000 would not be deployed in that configuration. The civilians in the White House prefer a much smaller force and a much quicker reduction. The military is concerned not to lose what has been won, especially by the surge, and to support and train the ANSF. The civilian policymakers are concerned about steep costs and an endless presence; they are skeptical that a few thousand more Americans would be able to transform the ANSF, while exposing a few thousand more U.S. targets. For the out-years, one option would be 3,500 to 6,000 by early 2016 then a steep reduction through the year. Military commanders prefer retaining 3,000 U.S. troops in 2017 and afterwards, but appear to be willing to accept under 1,000 as preferred by the White House civilians together with a slower drawdown from 2014 through 2017. Keeping only 1,000 troops would mean at best U.S. advisers or very skeletal forces in facilities outside Kabul, locating the U.S. in-country force within the embassy, abandoning the counterinsurgency mission by U.S. forces and concentrating on counterterrorism with missions operating from abroad. See Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "In Afghanistan pullout, Pentagon favors phased reduction over 3 years," *Washington Post*, February 12, 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/in-afghanistan-pullout-pentagon-favors-phased-reduction-over-3-years/2013/02/11/14a4faba-7484-11e2-95e4-6148e45d7adb_story.html?wpisrc=nl_headlines. Of course these numbers require approval of the government of Afghanistan and are subject to a status of forces agreement that has not yet negotiated.

4. Whatever the final number, if the cost per combatant is \$1 million/year, a constant 6,000–9,000 force would cost \$6 to \$9 billion/year through 2017, although the number of troops and therefore costs could decline over the three-year period. Michael Kugelman, "'Zero Option' the right one in Afghanistan," CNN, July 7, 2010, <http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2013/07/10/zero-option-the-right-one-in-afghanistan/>.

Force (ANAF), and the Afghan National Police (ANP)⁵ and the Afghan Local Police (ALP)⁶—as they attempt to provide security on their own. The direct U.S. counterterrorism efforts will be conducted primarily by some still-unspecified number of special forces of the Joint Operations Command and will be directed at al Qaeda and its affiliates (presumably, but not explicitly the Taliban, unless the Taliban renounces its al Qaeda affiliation). They will not engage in broad anti-insurgency operations, for which the ANSF will be responsible. Equally important, the Afghans (or at least President Karzai) seem ambivalent about what role they want for the remaining ISAF and how they expect the ANSF to operate either with those forces or on their own.⁷

Even the seemingly uncontroversial training mission is in some doubt, if only because of the insider attacks, otherwise known as green on blue attacks, in which Afghan trainees, some Taliban infiltrators, and (significantly) ordinary Afghans, have turned their weapons on their ISAF trainers, the coalition forces under North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) command.⁸ More important, a growing tension between President Karzai and the

5. The ANP also includes the Afghan Border Police and the Afghan National Civil Order Police, a kind of special forces group responsible for preventing violent incidents and responding to crises like terrorism in the metropolitan areas. At least since early, not-so-successful attempts in the 18th century and until relatively recently, there has been no national police force in Afghanistan. Policing, like so many other governmental functions, was left to local communities and their leaders.

6. Moreover, a variety of even more local, often experimental, forces (for example, the Afghan Public Protection Program, Local Defense Initiative units under the Afghan Social Outreach Program, the Critical Infrastructure Police, etc.) have been organized by the government, by some of its ministries (especially Interior), by local authorities, by ISAF commanders, and by various ethnic, tribal and sub-tribal self-help protection groups indigenously organized and supported. Many of these units were mechanisms of both self-protection but also abuse by one local group against another in attempts to gain control over their respective localities. Sometimes when funds, weapons or kinship were aligned they even colluded with the very insurgents against whom they were designed to combat. In effect, notwithstanding their official rationales, many began as or became instruments in the constant, often localized, intercommunal struggle for power and wealth.

7. President Karzai continues to cause doubts about the levels and missions of the remaining post-2014 forces. On February 24, 2013, for example, he ordered all U.S. Special Operations forces out of Wardak Province, just a few miles southwest of Kabul, because of complaints that they had enabled Afghans working for them to torture and murder innocent civilians. President Karzai shares with many Afghans a deep distrust of international troops in part because he feels he has not been able to approve their operations or even been properly briefed. “Afghan officials are, for the most part, told even less, and many in the Karzai administration no longer wish to allow Americans to continue ‘running roughshod all around our country,’ said a person who is close to Mr. Karzai.” Mathew Rosenberg, “Afghanistan Bars Elite U.S. Troops From a Key Province” *New York Times*, February 25, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/25/world/asia/afghanistan-orders-us-troops-from-key-province-of-wardak.html?ref=asia&r=0>. “U.S. Special Forces withdrew from their base in a volatile region (the Nerkh District of Wardak Province) near the Afghan capital on Saturday, U.S. officials said, in line with a demand by President Hamid Karzai and after a warning by senior religious scholars” that they had engaged in human rights abuses of villagers. Sayed Salahuddin, “U.S. commandos begin pullout from restive Afghan province as demanded by Karzai,” *Washington Post*, March 30, 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/us-commandos-begin-pullout-from-restive-afghan-province-as-demanded-by-karzai/2013/03/30/dde05cda-9950-11e2-97cd-3d8c1afe4f0f_story.html. Just a week earlier, Karzai condemned ANSF use of torture on detainees and said he would issue a decree forbidding them from requesting supporting air strikes from the ISAF. Alissa J. Rubin, “Karzai to Forbid Afghan Forces From Requesting Foreign Airstrikes,” *New York Times*, February 16, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/17/world/asia/karzai-to-forbid-his-forces-from-requesting-foreign-airstrikes.html?ref=alissajohannsenrubin>.

8. Also significant is the growing number of green on green attacks, especially Afghan attacks on their own officers, just one of the many indicators of concern about the loyalty, motivations, discipline, coherence, and reliability of the ANSF, and therefore cause for doubt about an optimistic post-2014 scenario.

United States continues to raise doubts about whether there is a conjunction of interests, strategies, and tactics and, even more problematic perhaps, any well of mutual trust.⁹ Due to the tension, Afghan ambivalence, and comments by President Karzai berating ISAF

9. In a televised speech on March 10, the initial day of U.S. Secretary of Defense Charles “Chuck” Hagel’s first official visit to Kabul, Karzai charged that the American military were harassing Afghan university students and colluding with the Taliban to stoking violence to justify a prolonged American troop presence and combat role in Afghanistan beyond 2014. “In reality, the bombs that went off yesterday *under the name of the Taliban* were a service to the foreigners. We have been down this road before too many times.” Ernesto Londoño and Kevin Sieff, “Karzai chides U.S. during Hagel’s Afghanistan visit,” *Washington Post*, March 10, 2013 (italics added), http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/karzai-chides-us-during-hagel-afghanistan-visit/2013/03/10/773cfa5c-89af-11e2-a88e-461ffa2e34e4_story.html. Although it is true that the United States has been encouraging direct or indirect talks with the Taliban, surely it is not to keep a long-term presence in Afghanistan. President Obama had ordered a large reduction in U.S. forces and was considering the zero option while ISAF allies, for example, the United Kingdom and Denmark, are withdrawing or ceasing combat operations early and entirely. Mark Urban, “UK combat operations in Afghanistan effectively cease,” BBC News World, March 19, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-21839451>; <http://www.rferl.org/content/afghanistan-denmark-troops/24933054.html>. The Taliban, by contrast, announced that the attacks were carried out precisely to ruin Hagel’s visit and, presumably, to damage the partnership between Karzai and the United States. Some believe that Karzai’s hold on reality, not ever perhaps his strong suit, is slipping even more and that he is becoming delusional or at the very least badly miscalculating what ISAF allies will tolerate. Some believe his statements and actions need to be understood not in psychiatric but in sociopolitical terms, designed to pave the way for his own departure from office as a nationalist and not, as he has been portrayed, as an Allied stooge or parrot. Consistent with that more generous interpretation (rather than derangement), Hagel graciously noted that he too had been a politician and understood the kind of pressures Karzai was under, hinting that Karzai’s accusation was for domestic political consumption. Ten days later, on March 20, 2013, after three weeks of staff negotiation, a threat by Karzai to assert Afghan authority over Parwan Detention Facility if the ISAF failed to hand over to Afghans all its Taliban prisoners (including hardened insurgents) but without a guarantee that they would not be released once turned over. President Karzai rescinded his prohibition on ISAF troops in Wardak, in theory having reached a new agreement about their methods of operation and about the rate of ISAF’s withdrawal, but in fact apparently having uncovered that, in order to get more resources, his GIROA colleagues in Wardak had not been entirely truthful about ISAF. General Dunford thanked Karzai for their “very constructive talks.” “This plan meets the President’s intent and leverages the growing capacity and capability of the Afghan security forces to meet the security needs of this country. This solution is what success looks like as we continue the transition to overall Afghan security lead.” Dawn (Reuters), “Nato forces say agree [sic] to leave key Afghan province near Kabul,” March 20, 2013 <http://dawn.com/2013/03/20/nato-forces-say-agree-to-leave-key-afghan-province-near-kabul>. In fact, once control of prisoners has been transferred to GIROA, the ISAF fears that they would be released have materialized. In February 2014, Karzai released sixty-five additional detainees on the grounds that there was not sufficient evidence against them to warrant their incarceration. The coalition partners believe these detainees are extremely dangerous and likely to return to combat on behalf of the insurgency. Humeyra Pamuk and Hamid Shaliz, “Karzai rejects U.S. warnings over freed Afghan detainees,” Reuters, February 13, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/13/us-afghanistan-detainees-idUSBREA1C08Q20140213>.

The clear problem here is that the Afghan general public is led to believe that Karzai’s leadership made ISAF change course and that the successful prosecution of the war is more important to ISAF than to Afghans and their government. And that, in turn, provides some support for Karzai’s earlier claim that the United States is secretly negotiating with the Taliban to prolong its combat mission. Indeed the previous day, a presidential spokesman described ISAF’s operations in Afghanistan as “aimless and unwise.” “NATO announces Wardak agreement,” BBC, March 20, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-21855901>.

In general, saving face for President Karzai, as General Dunford did, is a wise course, but sooner rather than later the gap between public statements and reality will need to be reduced if there is to be any hope for a less dependent, let alone self-reliant, Afghanistan. Afghans need to understand post-2014 realities if they are to avoid once again feeling abandoned and betrayed. President Karzai’s flights from reality do not help and are not likely to moderate President Obama’s conviction that the United States needs to reduce dramatically at least its military commitment and exposure to Afghanistan. If there is little partnership, little mutuality, between the two governments in a difficult counterinsurgency against a very committed and growing and sophisticated adversary, then tensions, recriminations, and accusations are likely to grow. The U.S. commitment, decided in 2002, to a distant insurgency has waned. Current and future U.S. administrations are not as invested, therefore the twelve-year-old commitments are likely to atrophy precipitously.

plans and performance, a more aggressive withdrawal is becoming the default position of the growingly reluctant coalition countries whose domestic political pressures continue to build for a full withdrawal.

When the United States withdraws its combat troops, so too will every other coalition member that might still have any troops left. Token personnel at best may remain for the same limited training, equipping, and anti-terrorist missions, but not any combat engagement. Moreover, no coalition country will return to combat or increase its force after the 2014 drawdown absent direct, imminent threat. The large-scale ISAF military engagement, counterinsurgency, and presence are finished. In that limited sense, this war will come to a military end.

However, the United States and the other coalition partners have also had massive civilian programs. So have multilateral institutions like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. President Obama has not yet addressed the post-2014 disposition of those efforts other than to assert in his 2013 State of the Union address that “America’s commitment will endure but the nature of our commitment will change.” Many programs, at least those of the United States, have been driven by, in many respects defined by and designed as, support for the anti-insurgency effort led by the military. Although developmental in form and appearance, most were designed, placed, and executed as part of the counterinsurgency effort. Civilian participation in the provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs), almost always under military command, is only the most obvious example. At least the bulk of the civilian programs followed in the wake of the military strategy.¹⁰ The anti-insurgency doctrine forged by General David Petraeus, former ISAF commander, was summarized in four words: shape, clear, hold, and build. Shaping and clearing were primarily the responsibility of the military. Holding and building were the underlying missions of the civilian programs.¹¹ Those were their purposes and the reason for billions of dollars of assistance both bilateral and multilateral, not because Afghanistan was a stellar development partner with astounding results warranting those billions as an exemplar of what foreign assistance could accomplish. In short, the U.S. civilian effort was in fact if not in rhetoric a part of the military-led counterinsurgency albeit with limited hold-and-build objectives. The efforts responded primarily to the anti-insurgency campaign and strategy rather than as primary missions like most missions of civilian agencies working abroad. Despite its size and huge funding, the civilian effort was never primarily engaged in what President George W. Bush referred to as nation building.¹²

10. The most obvious example was the switch of sites and projects following the military surge and its pivot to the south and east. The Ring Road was another example, although perhaps more to pacify President Karzai than the Taliban.

11. None of this is to say that the education, health, agriculture, environment, or economic projects had no developmental character, only that they were *primarily* designed and placed as part of the hold-and-build elements of the counterinsurgency strategy and not necessarily in the form or place of greatest developmental impact.

12. The clearest indication of the driving strategy was the shift in resources to the south and east of Afghanistan once the counterinsurgency military surge was redirected to Kandahar, Helmand, and the other strongholds of the Taliban.

So, what will and what should happen to these civilian efforts and programs after the direct U.S. role in counterinsurgency has ended? How much funding and for what purposes should the president request and Congress appropriate for the changed U.S. commitment? Under what social, political, and economic climate? And with what possible results?

At the July 2012 Tokyo international assistance conference (which followed the May 2012 NATO conference in Chicago), the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, GIROA (pronounced *Jai-row-a*) and the donors forged a new partnership, the Tokyo Declaration Partnership.¹³ The coalition partners and other donors pledged \$16 billion dollars over four years (through 2016) subject to several serious, but not very specific performance commitments by GIROA, especially better governance and the reduction of corruption. If delivered, the promised assistance alone would be equal to Afghanistan's entire gross domestic product (GDP).¹⁴ Whatever the plans for assistance, the formula for Afghanistan's long-term future is unsustainable.

Still, it is unlikely the assistance will be delivered. Most of those who made the funding commitments will no longer be in office when the bills come due. No administration can bind its successors and no office holder can either. Some, like Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, are already gone. Almost none of them can deliver their executive, let alone their legislative, branches with any certainty over four years. All the coalition partners face unemployment problems at home, domestic budget deficits and debt, and a general economic recession. More important, the support from the publics and legislatures for massive assistance to Afghanistan will decline precipitously after 2014. Moreover, the pledges are contingent on parallel GIROA commitments, whose performance is unlikely at best. And what happens after 2016 when the Tokyo commitments have expired? In any case, the Tokyo commitments are best-case estimates rather than legal, binding commitments, no matter what the language of the communiqués. Had the war gone well, large assistance levels might have survived the exit of combat troops, which itself would have been as sign of success, not of weary resignation. Indeed, there might have been a reduction rather than an exit of combat troops if the war gone well. Afghanistan would have been more like South Korea or Germany than Vietnam and Iraq.

More important, unlike South Korea, Germany, and to a lesser extent Pakistan, Afghanistan does not lie anywhere near the real core of national interests of any of the coalition countries, including the United States.¹⁵ The coalition countries are in Afghanistan as a

13. The Tokyo Declaration Partnership for Self-Reliance in Afghanistan: From Transition to Transformation, July 8, 2012, which includes the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework as the Annex, paragraph 15, <http://www.khaama.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Tokyo-Conference-Declaration.pdf> (hereafter cited as "Tokyo Framework").

14. World Bank, "Afghanistan in Transition: Looking Beyond 2014, Volume 1: Overview, May 2012," 2; <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFGHANISTAN/Resources/Vol1Overview8Maypm.pdf> (hereafter cited as "Afghanistan in Transition").

15. Some will argue that the United States has a profound interest in Afghanistan, namely the defeat of al Qaeda and the prevention of terrorist attacks like those of 2001. Al Qaeda and the Taliban are not identical; al Qaeda operatives have now been all but eliminated. The Taliban felt it could not easily turn away al Qaeda operatives because they were pious guests and al Qaeda was one of the Taliban's few allies. Finally, the attacks of 2001 may have been planned in the villages or caves of Afghanistan but a metastasized al Qaeda now has

reaction to September 2001, an emotional rather than a geostrategic response. Quite naturally those emotions have dimmed over the past decade as the coalition has paid so handsomely in human and financial treasure and because the Afghan response has been so disappointing.

Even the Afghans recognize the likelihood of a reduction in civilian assistance levels after 2016, noting only that “in Chicago and Bonn, the International Community recognized the necessity that reductions of donor support take place in a phased and responsible manner [because] the lessons of the past are clear; precipitous drops in assistance promote instability.”¹⁶ So even under GIRoA assumptions, the best possible assistance scenario for civilian purposes includes a substantial but gradual reduction in the post-2014 and post-2016 assistance levels.¹⁷

other and better locations, for example, in Yemen, Syria, and the Sahel. Moreover, the 2001 attacks were not launched from Kabul or Tora Bora, but from Boston, Newark, and Washington (Dulles). The pilots that hijacked the planes and flew into the World Trade Towers were based in Hamburg. It is not possible to root out every cave and village in the world where a small group of terrorists can incubate a plot against the United States or any other country. Indeed, better sites for terrorist planning are not in poor, dusty, isolated villages but in the wired, integrated, cross-roads cities of the world, including those in Western Europe (like Hamburg), Africa, other parts of Asia, and the United States itself.

16. Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *Towards Self-Reliance: Strategic Vision for the Transformation Decade*, Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan, July 8, 2012, 3, <http://mof.gov.af/Content/Media/Documents/Towards-Self-Reliance-27-6-2012167201210282583553325325.pdf> (hereafter cited as *Afghanistan's Strategic Vision*). This is the paper GIRoA prepared for and presented at the 2012 Tokyo conference on assistance.

17. The assistance discussed at Tokyo did not include the ongoing, post-2014 assistance for Afghanistan's security forces. The government of Afghanistan assumes that virtually all of its security budget of about \$4.1 billion/year will be funded by the coalition countries. The current working assumption is that the Europeans will fund about \$2.1 billion/year, the Afghans will fund about \$500 million/year, and the United States will fund the remaining \$1.5 billion/year. If there is sufficient disillusionment by any of the European countries, the United States would probably be called upon to replace whatever amounts are not funded. However, even under those optimistic assumptions, gone after the drawdown of combat troops, will be the very large amount of very flexible funds in the Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP) available to individual U.S. field commanders for purposes that would advance their security and counterinsurgency missions. The CERP-supported projects were often indistinguishable from those funded by the civilian agencies, like USAID. They were almost always short-term and directed toward gaining local Afghan support for the counterinsurgency, but too often USAID programs were as well, notwithstanding the rhetoric of long-term development. Indeed, USAID often included CERF in its local calculations. That source of funding will of course disappear entirely when the commanders have left.

2 | The Context and Prospects for the Post-drawdown Civilian Effort

The civilian engagement after 2014 will be framed by the contextual conditions in Afghanistan. The form and substance, not just the funding, of that context will define what civilian programs will be possible, what they will look like, what they will set out to accomplish, and (notwithstanding the usual hyperbole) what they will actually achieve.

As both the United States and Afghanistan have noted, three challenges or, to use the GIRoA term, “pillars,”¹ will define Afghanistan’s near-term future: security, governance, and the economy. These three are the primary challenges for, in fact determinants of, Afghanistan’s foreseeable future and of the socioeconomic-political environment into which any reasonable, productive civilian role, including assistance, must fit.

Security

Security is the most important, if only as the necessary condition for the others. If Afghan parents cannot send their children to school, adults cannot work, citizens cannot go about their business without fear that anyone leaving in the morning may not return at night, better governance or economic conditions will not follow and would make little difference if they did. Personal security is the first responsibility of any state and it is the preoccupation of those who do not have it. In fact, personal security is a central component of good governance, perhaps its *sine qua non*. It is a theme insurgents play constantly, but while promising security as well as sanctity if they succeed, the insurgents will of course create insecurity in the interim.

1. Preamble, “Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement Between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan,” <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/2012.06.01u.s.-afghanistanspa-signedtext.pdf> (hereafter cited as “Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement”). More important, these three factors are recognized as the critical ones by the government of Afghanistan itself in its Afghanistan Compact and the subsequent Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS). See Islamic Government of Afghanistan, “Afghanistan National Development Strategy, 1387–1391 (2008–2013): A Strategy for Security, Governance, Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction,” i, 5–13, http://www.undp.org.af/publications/KeyDocuments/ANDS_Full_Eng.pdf (hereafter cited as “Afghanistan National Development Strategy”). “The ANDS lays out the strategic priorities and the policies, programs and projects for achieving the government’s development objectives. These are organized under three pillars: (i) Security; (ii) Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights; and (iii) Economic and Social Development.” *Ibid.*, 5. Note: The Afghanistan National Development Strategy may also be found at http://www.embassyofafghanistan.org/sites/default/files/publications/Afghanistan_National_Development_Strategy_eng.pdf. The two pdf documents are identical.

As the international forces withdraw, Afghan security will depend almost exclusively on the ANSF which amount now to just over 350,000, the level at which they are expected to remain through 2015.² But the ANA has only about half that number.³ Notwithstanding official coalition and GIROA comments about their growing competence, most Afghans are, at best, deeply worried about their personal and national security although there may be growing popular confidence in the ANA. The ANSF are widely believed to be undertrained, underfinanced, undermotivated, and, the police more than the army, deeply corrupt. The competence and integrity of the ANSF, let alone its commitment and loyalty, is uncertain, especially the police, both the Afghan National Police (ANP) and the Afghan Local Police (ALP). ANSF members remain poorly trained, poorly led, and poorly resourced. Sometimes they are without shoes and warm coats. The ANSF do not have powerful weapons or accompanying ordinance or, of course, any serious intelligence or air power.

In particular, the quality of the ANA is in some doubt. Bolstering Afghan anxieties, much was made in the U.S. media of the December 2012 quarterly Pentagon report to Congress. The lead or most tantalizing sentence in many media reports noted (somewhat misleadingly) that “a bleak new Pentagon report has found that only one of the Afghan National Army’s 23 brigades is able to operate independently without air or other military support from the United States NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] partners.”⁴ Actually, the Pentagon report is more complicated and more optimistic. Officially, Afghan forces are believed by the U.S. Army to operate more independently of the ISAF and to do so with increasing competence and effectiveness.⁵ Indeed, in addition to competence and capacity,

2. “The ANSF sustainment plan calls for Afghan forces to achieve a surge strength of 352,000 personnel by the end of 2012, and to remain at that size for three full years, through 2015, to allow for continued progress toward a sustainable secure environment in Afghanistan.” U.S. Department of Defense, “Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan December 2012 Report to Congress in accordance with section 1230 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), as amended, and section 1221 of the National Defense Authorizations Act for Fiscal Year 2012 (Public Law 112-81),” 16, http://www.defense.gov/news/1230_Report_final.pdf (hereafter cited as “1230 Report of December 2012”).

3. By the end of 2012, the ANSF had basically reached their projected force of 352,000, including 195,000 in the ANA and 157,000 in the ANP, “As a result of the significant increase in the size of the ANSF, Afghans now constitute more than two-thirds of all those in uniform in Afghanistan.” *Ibid.*, 45–46.

4. Elizabeth Bumiller, “Pentagon Says Afghan Forces Still Need Assistance,” *New York Times*, December 10, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/11/world/asia/afghan-army-weak-as-transition-nears-pentagon-says.html>. Similarly, “Despite tens of billions of dollars in aid, Afghanistan’s huge security deficiencies after 11 years of war are evident from a Pentagon report released Monday that showed only one of the Afghan army’s 23 brigades can operate independently without U.S. or allied air support and other assistance.” David S. Cloud, “U.S. force in Afghanistan may be smaller than expected after 2014,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 11, 2012, <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/dec/11/world/la-fg-us-afghan-20121212>.

5. These conclusions were apparently based on “Figure 22, Operational Effectiveness Ratings” of the 1230 Report of December 2012 (p. 93). Of course no newspaper story could possibly fully summarize the entire 165-page report. However, to stay only with Figure 22 (a part of a 50-page section on “Afghan Security Forces”), that brigade was the only one which, according to the U.S. Army could operate “independent with advisors” meaning it had full logistics and intelligence capabilities. Another 20 brigades were rated “effective with advisors” meaning they could and most often did operate independently in most settings. The last of the 23 brigades was considered “effective with partners.” Moreover, these are ratings for full brigades, each of which contains 20 *kandaks* (battalions). Twenty out of the ANA’s 146 *kandaks* (14 percent) were rated “independent with advisors”; 72 (49 percent) were rated “effective with advisors”; 22 (15 percent) were rated “effective with partners”; 7 (5 percent) were considered “developing with partners”; and 25 (17 percent) were not assessed. But the brigades contain some of each.

“Afghans now lead well over 80% of combat operations and control areas where more than three-quarters of the population resides.”⁶ The percentage continues to grow, according to the U.S. Department of Defense, and is now at least 90 percent of combat operations covering 90 percent of the population.⁷ Notwithstanding the improved tactical performance of the ANSF, remain without the capacity to plan or implement a strategic campaign including supporting tactical targets or to knit them together into a systematic drive.

To complicate the ANSF mission, whatever its state of readiness, President Hamid Karzai announced in a mid-February 2013 speech at the National Military Academy that he would forbid his troops from requesting any additional air strikes from NATO.⁸ If the directive is not rescinded and if it is obeyed, it will hamper all of the ANSF’s ground units. Because NATO is withdrawing, little air support for ANSF units will be available, whether forbidden or permitted, for air strikes, air lift, medevac capacity, intelligence, tactical strafing of the Taliban’s combat positions, or any other air support. NATO plans to provide some air assets to the ANSF⁹ but far fewer than currently available, with far less trained and experienced pilots. Karzai may also forbid ANSF air strikes if (as inevitable) they inflict civilian casualties when attacking Taliban positions.¹⁰

6. Shashank Bengali, “U.S. fatalities in Afghanistan declining,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 14, 2013, <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/feb/14/world/la-fg-afghanistan-casualties-20130215>. In fact the figures are a bit narrower: 80 percent of Special Operations Forces partnered operations are ANSF led. 1230 Report of December 2012, 91, Figure 21. Moreover even as early as 2010, 80 percent of enemy attacks took place in areas in which at most 20 percent of the population lived, and more than 40 percent were in just 10 districts, primarily in northern Helmand Province and western Kandahar province. “Equally important to the insurgency’s *decreasing relevancy*, the expectations of the Afghan people have changed. Surveys clearly reflect that the Afghan people will simply not tolerate the oppressive policies imposed by the former Taliban government. In some areas, this sentiment has manifested in anti-Taliban movements.” ISAF Public Affairs Office, “ISAF Commander’s Statement on Security Situation,” Kabul, Afghanistan, April 24, 2013, <http://www.isaf.nato.int/article/isaf-releases/isaf-commanders-statement-on-security-situation.html>. In fact, since attacks are confined to areas where only 20 percent of the population lives, the Pentagon’s 1230 Report of July 2013 proposes that “too much emphasis [has been placed] on enemy-initiated attacks (EIAs) as a single measure of [counterinsurgency] progress. . . . Progress in governance and development are far more indicative of success in Afghanistan than the total number of EIAs.” U.S. Department of Defense, “Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan July 2013,” Report to Congress in accordance with section 1230 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181) as amended, and section 1221 of the National Defense Authorizations Act for Fiscal Year 2012 (Public Law 112-81) and Sections 1212, 1217, 1223, and 1531(d) of the NDAA Fiscal Year 2013 (Public Law 112-239), 2, http://www.defense.gov/pubs/Section_1230_Report_July_2013.pdf; parentheses added (hereafter cited as “1230 Report of July 2013”).⁸

7. “Although challenges remain, the ANSF demonstrated an increasing level of effectiveness. The ANSF led almost 90 percent of operations by the end of the reporting period [March 31, 2013] and is already in the lead for security in areas covering nearly 90 percent of the Afghan population.” 1230 Report of July 2013, 2.

8. “Tomorrow, I will issue an [sic] decree stating that *under no conditions* can Afghan forces request foreign air strikes on Afghan homes or Afghan villages during operations.” Reuters, “Karzai to decree ban on foreign air-strike assistance during Afghan ops,” *The Guardian*, February 16, 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/feb/16/karzai-bans-nato-air-strikes>. (italics original).

9. NATO will be transferring and then leaving additional air assets to the ANSF before the end of 2017: 85 or so MI-17 helicopters to support special forces; light attack aircraft for close air support; and small planes for transport. However, the Afghan Air Force will not be “fully fielded” until the end of 2017. General Joseph F. Dunford, National Public Radio interview with Renee Montaigne, May 20, 2013, <http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=184700634&m=184700613> (hereafter cited as “NPR Dunford interview”).

10. A huge congressional furor accompanied the Pentagon’s announcement that, among the weapons the ISAF would be leaving or supplying, were M-17 helicopters the U.S. Department of Defense was purchasing from Russia, a purchase the special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction (SIGAR) called imprudent. See Office of Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, July 11, 2013, <http://delauro.house.gov/index.php?option=com>

The insurgency will continue absent an improbable reconciliation whose terms are acceptable to its many factions and of course to other Afghans. With its sizeable rejectionist elements, the Taliban may well split over compromises necessary for any reconciliation, as of course could those fighting against it. Moreover, the insurgency has metastasized well beyond the south, aided by U.S. policy, driven by General David Petraeus and Richard Holbrooke (the late presidential special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan), of transferring the bulk of military and assistance efforts to the Taliban strongholds in the south and east while “abandoning” the “safe areas” of the north and east. In the safe areas, hostility toward the United States and GIROA has predictably increased as a response to the feeling of desertion: “We were punished because we supported NATO and the government and because we successfully fought the insurgents.” So the insurgency is now not just Pashtun and not just southern although it remains Pashtun-dominated. The number of Uzbeks, Tajiks, Hazaras, and other Shi’ites remains still relatively small.

It is hard to see any scenario by which the ANSF will maintain their ground let alone defeat the insurgency. The ANSF may not even maintain its ground once ISAF has left the field. The recent insider attacks by erstwhile trainees, not just against their NATO trainers but now also against their own Afghan officers and cohorts, cannot possibly result in anything but loss of morale on all sides and renewed calls, within Afghanistan and within the coalition countries, to reduce the foreign presence still more rapidly, notwithstanding doubts about the army and the police. In fact, perhaps the most important danger of the insider attacks, in this case green-on-green, is to the ANSF and their morale. How effectively can ISAF train the very troops against which it needs to protect itself? How well can the ISAF officers mentor the Afghans troops even as they are wary of their mentees, guarded around them, and carefully keeping their distance? How does the mentorship relation succeed absent mutual trust? In fact, in large part because of the green-on-blue attacks, new rules of engagement were issued in 2012 including restrictions on partnership between the ISAF and ANSF, ending the embedded ISAF troops below the level of battalions, and instructing ISAF troops to keep an unlocked and loaded weapon at the ready whenever they are with ANSF troops.¹¹ These are hardly the kind of rules or the kind of relationship that builds trust, partnership, and mentorship.

Apart from its combat readiness and its internal dysfunctions, the most important question is the extent to which the ANA will survive at all after 2014 or whether it will disintegrate into its component units which might attack one another as well as, if not more than, the Taliban insurgency. The Afghan National Army, the combat core of the ANSF, is

_content&view=article&id=1338:delauro-granger-lead-over-80-representatives-demanding-answers-on-contract-with-russian-arms-dealer&catid=2:2012-press-releases&Itemid=21; Aaron Mehta, “SIGAR warns Pentagon against Russian equipment purchase,” *Defense News*, June 25, 2013, <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20130625/DEFREG04/306250016/SIGAR-Warns-Pentagon-Against-Afghan-Weapons-Purchase>; Karen DeYoung, “Congress fuming over U.S. purchase of Russian helicopters for Afghanistan,” *Washington Post*, July 12, 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/congress-fuming-over-us-purchase-of-russian-helicopters-for-afghanistan/2013/07/12/33aecde0-ced0-11e2-8f6b-67f40e176f03_story.html.

11. In response to demands by President Karzai, additional rules of engagement were issued in November 2013. Under the new rules, U.S. forces were prohibited from entering Afghan homes for military purposes or to fire on Afghans unless they are certain both that the target is an insurgent and is armed.

not so much an integrated army as a brittle collection of military units or militias, each itself frequently loosely organized most often under the patronage of what in the 1990s were called warlords, frequently along communal lines. Command and control remain aspirational. Afghanistan's plurality Pashtuns are aggrieved that most of the officers in the ANA, from the top down to the *kandaks* (battalions), are Tajiks or Uzbeks while the bulk of the foot soldiers are Pashtuns. Meanwhile, Taliban insurgents are overwhelmingly Pashtun.¹² Pashtuns do not want their young men in an army fighting their own kinsmen. Consequently, even the Pashtuns in the army are disproportionately from the north and central parts of the country rather than from the south and east, the heartland of the insurgency.

The likelihood of an under-resourced, undertrained, and internally divided ANSF defeating the Taliban after the ISAF has withdrawn all but a fraction of its forces, which will be devoted to a different mission at that, is small bordering on miniscule. More likely is a defensive strategy in which the ANSF secure and defend the cities, regional centers, and (by day anyway) major roads, major border crossings, and perhaps important commercial corridors, a possible *déjà vu* for those who lived through Vietnam where (especially after the U.S. military and civilian assistance dried up) the Republic of Vietnam army collapsed, and, with it, so too did the government and further U.S. assistance. Still, some analysts, including some from the U.S. senior military and the Defense Department, believe that the ANSF will be strong enough and that the insurgency will have been degraded enough that the Taliban will be reduced by the ANSF to a chronic headache but not much more. Those observers are few in number and ambivalent, however highly placed.

Indeed, notwithstanding the official coalition optimism, according to General Joseph F. Dunford Jr., ISAF commander, notes that the ANSF suffer from “inconsistent leadership, lack of aviation, and literacy challenges. Basic systems, processes and institutions . . . still need to be done and will be [done] over the next several years.”¹³ Nonetheless he believes, at least publicly, that “the ANSF [troops] are now sufficient to deal with the present threat, that they are ready to take the lead this summer, secure the elections in 2014, and effect full security transition by the end of 2014” but there will “not be a fully sustainable Afghan army and police by the end of 2014” or until the implementation of NATO's plan through 2017 to train, advise, and assist the ANSF.¹⁴ However, ready or not, full security control for

12. The insurgency consists of several groups, including the Taliban (led primarily by Mullah Muhammad Omar but with a collective leadership known as the Quetta Shura), the Haqqani Network (a group led by Jalaluddin Haqqani and his sons in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas [FATA], probably Waziristan), Hezb-e Islami (founded in 1977; led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, prime minister in 1993–1994 and again for a few months in 1996; Gulbuddin also may be a member of the FATA), and perhaps the Commander Nazir Group (headed by Bahawal Khan). The groups are loosely allied with some coordination but ultimately independent. The Taliban is the largest and most important, constituting the primary threat to the government and still controlling much of the south and east of the country. To avoid clutter, the entire insurgency with all its groups and factions will sometimes be referred to as the Taliban.

13. NPR Dunford interview.

14. Ibid. Notwithstanding “the gap between ANSF readiness now and the drawdown,” the number 1 challenge, Dunford says, is overcoming the lack of confidence Afghans have about 2014 and their anxiety, on the one hand, that they will be abandoned and, on the other, that foreign forces will continue occupying Afghanistan. Overcoming the Taliban's narrative of a permanent occupier is part of that challenge, he says.

the entire country was turned over to and assumed by the government of Afghanistan at a formal ceremony on June 18, 2013. Karzai noted that “our own security and military forces will lead all the security activities.”¹⁵

By itself, that change should injure the Taliban by denuding its charge that the real enemy is the ISAF and the foreign occupation.¹⁶ From now on, the combat will be Afghan against Afghan; the foreign occupation will be limited to a few ANSF bases from which a much smaller residual force of ISAF trainers and special forces may still operate. Yet, even while the ISAF remains present, albeit decreasing its forces, the insurgency seems to be gaining rather than weakening. Not capable of capturing the state, it is inflicting constant uncertainty about the security of the state and about the personal security the state is supposed to provide. The Taliban may have been degraded enough that, although it can produce tactical successes, it cannot mount or win a strategic campaign. But it does not need to do so. Tactical victories are enough. Sowing seeds of doubt about GIROA and the ANSF create fear about the future. The ANSF, however, have to win across the board. It has to protect the state by holding territory, protecting the population, and building confidence. Otherwise, it cannot establish security which is its mission.

Afghans know all this. They are fearful about their own safety once the coalition forces leave, notwithstanding their understandable abhorrence of drones, night raids, checkpoints, rudeness, and all the other components of a foreign army (or armies) fighting a civil war in their country. Most Afghans hate the foreign troops, but less than they hate the idea of the exit and being left alone with the Taliban and the warlords.¹⁷ As General Dunford put it, a key challenge is “overcoming the lack of confidence that the Afghan people have about 2014”¹⁸ and the Taliban message that the international community will then abandon Afghanistan, ironic given its opposite message about foreign occupation. Faced with

The number 2 challenge, he says, is how the ANSF emerge as credible and confident this summer, in fall, and beyond, and how the ANSF secure and set the conditions for what is “of course *the* most important event in the next 18–24 months . . . the watershed elections in April 2014 . . . which need to be inclusive, free and fair.” Ibid. (emphasis in original).

15. Javed Hamim Kakar, “Afghan forces undertake combat lead,” *Pajhwok Afghan News*, June 18, 2013, <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/06/18/afghan-forces-undertake-combat-lead>; “Afghans take nationwide security lead from NATO,” BBC, June 18, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-22942013>.

16. When asked why armed anti-government groups are fighting against the Afghan government, only 66 percent chose to answer. The respondents were given six set answers from which to pick. The presence of foreign troops was the reason cited by 21 percent of the respondents; while 16 percent responded that it was to gain power. The Asia Foundation, “Afghanistan in 2012, a Survey of the Afghan People,” 56–57, <http://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/Surveybook2012web1.pdf> (hereafter cited as “2012 TAF Survey”).

17. In the view of Afghans, insecurity, unemployment, and corruption are the three biggest problems confronting Afghanistan. In the 2012 public opinion survey conducted by the Asia Foundation, 28 percent thought it was insecurity, 27 percent unemployment, and 25 percent corruption. The next highest problem was the poor economy at 11 percent. Ibid., 29–30. Notwithstanding the insecurity, a majority of respondents say they have no sympathy at all (63 percent) with armed opposition groups in Afghanistan, while 10 percent say they have a lot of sympathy; 20 percent say they have some level of sympathy. Perhaps surprisingly, 55 percent of Pashtuns have no sympathy for the insurgents. Over time the number of Afghans who have no sympathy has risen steadily from 36 percent in 2009 to 55, 64, and 63 percent in 2010, 2011, and 2012, respectively. Ibid., 57–61. Balancing the two perspectives (concern over insecurity and little sympathy for the insurgents), a large majority of respondents (82 percent) agree strongly or at least somewhat with the government’s negotiation and reconciliation efforts, which they believe will help stabilize the country. Ibid., 53–54.

18. NPR Dunford interview

existential uncertainty, Afghans are hedging: emigrating; leaving temporarily for work abroad; applying for visas and scholarships overseas; and, especially among the Pashtuns, “sending one son to join the ANA and another to join the Taliban—and possibly a third son to join the local strongman’s militia—in an attempt to maximize the chances of being on the side of whoever wins control of the area where they live after 2014.”¹⁹ Even the ANSF hedge communicating with local Taliban units, arranging (often temporary) cease-fires, leaking ISAF intelligence, and even selling weapons and ammunition, all of which are then used against the ANSF by the Taliban recipients. That hedging behavior is paralleled elsewhere as well as uncertainties darken prospects throughout Afghan’s political economy. Millions of dollars are being transferred, often smuggled, out of Afghanistan every week.²⁰ Inversely, property values in Kabul have declined, even plummeted, an excellent quantitative indicator of uncertainty, and only partially because foreign renters are leaving.²¹ Without doubt, the supply/demand balance has shifted dramatically. As uncertainty over security increases, so do transaction costs of domestic supplies and trade. Local power brokers and militias and of course the Taliban will reassert themselves and their governing authority, including the extraction of illicit road and property taxes. Goods and services will become scarcer and more expensive. Greater certainty about security would at least mitigate that slide.

At the very least, the insurgency will continue absent an improbable reconciliation whose terms are acceptable to its many component factions, to the Pashtuns in general, to other Afghans, especially in the non-Pashtun areas, and to the government itself. However, as President Barack Obama and President Hamid Karzai put it in a joint statement, “As a part of the outcome of any process, the Taliban and other armed opposition groups must end violence, break ties with al Qaeda, and accept Afghanistan’s constitution.”²² In the

19. Vanda Felbab-Brown, *Aspiration and Ambivalence: Strategies and Realities of Counterinsurgency and State Building in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2013), 11.

20. Some \$4.6 billion in cash per year—greater than each of Afghanistan’s entire annual gross domestic product (GDP) and the entire annual civilian assistance budget—is expatriated and officially declared while billions more are expatriated illicitly. “Curses be upon such businessmen that made tons of money here and now that the Americans are leaving they flee,” said President Karzai at a press conference. “They can leave right now. We don’t need them.” Graham Bowley and Mathew Rosenberg, “In Afghanistan, Businesses Plan Their Own Exits” *New York Times*, March 30, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/31/world/asia/businesses-may-flee-afghanistan-after-troop-withdrawal.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>.

21. In a country beset by donors, each donor is consumed by the mostly unsuccessful search for quantitative indicators of success. Rents are a good measure of for evaluating, for example, economic growth, security, and rule of law.

22. “Obama and Karzai Joint Statement,” January 13, 2013; <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/01/11/joint-statement-president-obama-and-president-karzai>. Slight variations of this formula have been articulated elsewhere. “The necessary outcomes of any reconciliation require individuals and entities [i.e., the Taliban] to break ties with al Qaeda, renounce violence, and abide by the Afghan Constitution, including its protections for all Afghan women and men.” Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement, III.4.a. While secretary of state, Hillary Clinton laid down the same conditions in a major speech: “Over the past two years, we have laid out our unambiguous red lines for reconciliation with the insurgents: They must renounce violence; they must abandon their alliance with al-Qaida; and they must abide by the constitution of Afghanistan. Those are necessary outcomes of any negotiation.” This, she said, is the price for a political resolution and an end to the military strikes against them. U.S. Department of State, “Remarks at the Launch of the Asia Society’s Series of Richard C. Holbrooke Memorial Addresses,” February 18, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/02/156815.htm>. At other times the Taliban is told it must renounce both violence and terrorism (which probably amounts to the same thing), abandon not just its alliance with but also any support for al Qaeda (which are not

unlikely event that the negotiations on a host of issues are successful and if all sides could control their own factions,²³ the Taliban would presumably be willing to accept the first, consider the second, but balk at the third absent constitutional changes. Any negotiations would surely include Taliban demands for amendments to the current constitution, maybe even an entire revision. Even if those hurdles are surmounted, it is far from certain that the Taliban would honor its pledges once in office and the ISAF withdrawn.

Still, hopes for reconciliation or at least some negotiated settlement continue. The feelers and rumors about reconciliation talks have become daily fodder for blogs and newspapers. Are Taliban factions willing to talk? Which ones? Where? With whom? Under what conditions? Under whose sponsorship and in what venue? What about the conditions set by both the Afghans and the coalition regarding al Qaeda, ending violence and accepting the existing constitution? And are they really outcomes or, as sometimes asserted, preconditions?

Clearly, the Taliban is split over whether to reconcile and, if so, under what terms. There remain sizeable rejectionist elements for whom the war is going well and will go better still once ISAF is no longer engaged in combat operations. And then there is the matter of timing and strategy. The entire ISAF engagement in the past few years rested on the theory that the war could not be won militarily, and that like all other civil wars its resolution would result from a political bargain. But, the NATO strategists argued, the insurgents would never negotiate while they thought a military victory was possible. The surge was designed to degrade the Taliban in its southern and eastern strongholds and to give the parties time, conditions, and incentives to negotiate. The last fighting season in which the insurgents will face the full ISAF is all but over, yet no one believes that the ANSF will force the Taliban to the negotiating table this year. At best, from GIRoA's perspective, the insurgents will be able to hold some areas of Afghanistan. The real outstanding question is which ones and with what trends.

Perhaps for those reasons, efforts to negotiate reconciliation and even to forge the preconditions for such a negotiation have not gone well. Those old enough may recall the lengthy pre-negotiations over the shape of the table around which the various actors in Vietnam would be willing to sit and talk. The Taliban—whom President Karzai calls his “disenchanted brothers who are not part of al Qaeda”²⁴—do not recognize the legitimacy of

the same things), and accept or at least abide by the existing constitution (also not quite the same). More important, these conditions have often been put forward as preconditions for negotiations, not just their irreducible results. Finally, the Taliban has its own conditions, including unwillingness to negotiate with President Karzai, but it would be a bit tricky to accept the constitution and also reject negotiating with Afghanistan's constitutionally elected president. See also Ashley Tellis, “Reconciling with the Taliban: Toward an Alternative Grand Strategy in Afghanistan” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2009, http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/reconciling_with_taliban.pdf.

23. As already noted, the Taliban is not the only insurgent group. The Haqqani Network and Hezb-e Islami, for example, would not necessarily accede to an agreement forged unilaterally by the Taliban.

24. Katherine Haddon, “Karzai invites West to help woo ‘disenchanted brothers,’” *Agence France-Presse*, January 28, 2010, <http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/world/01/28/10/karzai-invites-west-help-woo-disenchanted-brothers>; Karen DeYong, “Afghan president plans meeting on reintegrating, reconciling with insurgents,” *Washington Post*, January 29, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/28/AR2010012803452.html>.

his government and will not negotiate with him at all, they say. Although he has appointed a High Peace Council for that purpose (including a dozen former Taliban members) and although the Pakistanis released some 20 Taliban prisoners as a goodwill gesture (and to allow them to participate in the negotiations), the Taliban may be willing to talk with the United States and the coalition but not with Karzai or GIROA. Indeed, to make that point firm, the Taliban assassinated the former president of Afghanistan, Burhanuddin Rabbani, the head of Karzai's High Peace Council. So notwithstanding Karzai's recent announcement that he would establish an (already established) office in Doha to negotiate with the Taliban, it may continue to be mostly empty.

On June 18, 2013, the Taliban announced that, at long last, they had opened an office in Doha, but were silent about its modalities, for example whether it would now abandon its earlier position and negotiate with the Karzai government.²⁵ The announcement did, however, include the Taliban's goals "to support a political and peaceful solution which includes the end of the occupation of Afghanistan and the establishment of an independent Islamic system."²⁶ The religious dimension would not have proven fatal since Karzai is himself president of the government of the *Islamic Republic of Afghanistan*. But just to make the formal and substantive point about the content of a negotiated settlement clear, the Taliban installed a plaque inscribed "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan" and raised its old flag above the office as if to announce that its old Islamic Emirate now had an embassy in Qatar to which it welcomed Western negotiators (but not Karzai or his High Peace Council). President Karzai of course was outraged, both at the implicit recognition of the Taliban by his "major ally," the United States (although the United States had nothing to do with the plaque or the flag, indeed it insisted that they be removed), and that it had done so unilaterally, excluding him from the process. So Karzai once again suspended talks to which he had not yet been a party, not just with his disenchanted brothers but also with the United States over the modalities of its post-2014 military presence in Afghanistan. The Taliban removed the flag and the plaque but has not returned to the office. Ever mercurial, however, having insisted on these steps and on coalition support for them, Karzai seemingly reversed himself less than two months later.

On Eid al Fitr, he once again publicly invited the Taliban to open peace talks with him and his High Peace Council. As to the offending signage, President Hamid Karzai chided

25. "Afghans take nationwide security lead from NATO," BBC, June 18, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-22942013>.

26. Muhammad Sohail Shaheen, "Taliban to Join Talks With Negotiators as Afghanistan Takes Control of Security," PBS, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/world/jan-june13/afghanistan1_06-18.html. Infuriated by the secretive bilateral discussions between the Taliban and the United States, by the willingness of the United States to meet with the Taliban first and without GIROA's participation, and by the failure of the United States to arrange for future talks on reconciliation to take place in Afghanistan with the High Peace Council, Karzai broke off talks with the United States on a bilateral security agreement (BSA). No doubt the exclusion of GIROA from the talks would have justifiably angered the president of any country whose future was apparently being negotiated without its participation. Karzai's move bespeaks the more general gulf between GIROA and the United States, as if the Afghans were doing the United States a (revocable) favor by allowing it to keep troops there, to train the ANSF personnel, to provide \$2 to \$4 billion per year for Afghanistan's security forces, to provide an additional \$4 billion each year in other assistance, and to engage in limited anti-terrorist activities against GIROA's insurgent adversaries.

the Taliban albeit disingenuously: “Your signs and banners were removed in no time in Qatar because you were not free there; you were guests and even not accorded hospitality.”²⁷ Had they opened their office in Afghanistan, their flags and banners would not have been removed and they would have been respected. “‘You were away from Afghanistan and were taken there [Qatar] by foreigners. Your symbols were raised by others and brought down by others.’ He asked the Taliban to stop relying on foreign hands and shun violence.”²⁸

So the problem with the flag and the plaque was neither the name nor the implied assertion of sovereignty but rather that the Taliban negotiators had been taken to Doha by foreigners, kidnapped as it were, and were not free, as they would have been in Kabul where, as free men, naturally their symbols would have been respected. The embassies of the coalition countries must surely be counting the days until the 2014 presidential elections are concluded.

Still, worried or not, no Afghan wants to return to the civil war of the 1990s. Afghans remember their abandonment by the United States after they forced the Soviet Union to withdraw in 1988, that is, after, in their view, they had served Western interests. The devastation and insecurity of the 1990s contributed substantially to the remarkable success of the Taliban, which promised justice, honesty, and security. Even the large part of the population that opposed the Taliban applauded the respite. No doubt, the hopes that some had for the Taliban were crushed by its religious, social, and cultural extremism; cruelty; barbarism; and imposition of inimical codes of conduct, all foreign to most Afghans. But the chaos and insecurity that provided succor to the Taliban also remain vivid memories. The population is stuck between the iron of the Taliban and the anvil of the corrupt and inept GIRA.

In large part to assuage Afghan fears of insecurity, the United States and Afghanistan last year negotiated an Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement.²⁹ The agreement designates Afghanistan as a “major non-NATO ally” of the United States³⁰ and the parties “commit to strengthen long-term strategic partnership in areas of mutual interest . . . as two sovereign and equal countries”³¹ and also to “strong support for Afghan efforts toward peace and reconciliation.”³² Toward those ends, the United States pledges “to *seek* funds [beyond 2012], on a yearly basis, to support the training, equipping, advising, and sustaining of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) so that Afghanistan can independently secure and defend itself against internal and external threats.”³³ Linking civilian and

27. Muhammad Hassan Khetab, “Taliban should’ve opened office in Afghanistan: Karzai,” *Pajhwok Afghan News*, August 8, 2013, <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/08/08/taliban-shouldve-opened-office-afghanistan-karzai>

28. *Ibid.*

29. Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement.

30. *Ibid.*, Article III.3.

31. *Ibid.*, Preamble.

32. *Ibid.*, Article III.4

33. *Ibid.*, Article III. 5 (*italics added*). Left uncertain is the amount to be sought and, obviously, whether the search will be successful. So no hard resource commitments were made.

military components, the United States also commits to “seek on a yearly basis funding for social and economic assistance to Afghanistan.”³⁴

But general sentiments of partnership do not really provide security. Ordinary Afghans are looking for concrete commitments and reliable, practical application of force to protect them, and they did receive some in the agreement. “Afghanistan shall provide U.S. forces continued access to and use of Afghan facilities through 2014 and beyond as may be agreed in the Bilateral Security Agreement for the purposes of combating al Qaeda and its affiliates, training the Afghan National Security Forces, and other mutually determined missions to advance shared security interests.”³⁵ The United States “reaffirms that it does not seek permanent military facilities in Afghanistan or a presence that is a threat to Afghanistan’s neighbors”³⁶ but “the United States affirms it shall regard with grave concern any external aggression against Afghanistan,”³⁷ which would precipitate “consultations on an urgent basis to develop and implement an appropriate response.”³⁸ Moreover, “the United States further pledges not to use Afghan territory or facilities as a launching point for attacks against other countries.”³⁹

Not exactly a NATO-like alliance, major or minor, ally or not, no matter how the U.S. secretary of state may have characterized it. In place of a NATO Article 5 obligation to regard any attack on its ally as an attack against the United States, the United States pledges only “urgent consultations” with Kabul about “an appropriate response” and only against a foreign aggressor. However, the major security threat for Afghanistan is not an invasion by its neighbors but the domestic insurgency and the use of Pakistani territory as a safe haven for the insurgents. The United States does commit itself to help Afghanistan combat al Qaeda and to train (and presumably to help equip and pay for) the ANSF. It also does put Afghanistan’s neighbors on public notice that it would regard any external aggression against Afghanistan as a matter of “grave concern.” Still, it is clear what the government of Afghanistan and President Karzai are getting out of the agreement: a U.S. security commitment, although not exactly a guarantee, and as an “equal partner.”

34. *Ibid.*, Article V.5.a (italics added). At Tokyo, “the International Community reaffirmed its commitment to support the training, equipping, financing, and capability development of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) *during the Transformation Decade* with the understanding that over the coming years, the International Community is to *gradually reduce* its financial contribution commensurate with *the assumption by the Afghan government of increasing financial responsibility.*” Tokyo Framework, paragraph 8, (italics added). Again, in both documents, the amounts to be sought and the success of the search are left uncertain.

35. Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement, Article III.6. The envisioned bilateral security agreement (BSA) is basically an elaborated status of forces agreement to establish the scope, missions, conditions, and arrangements for a continued U.S. military presence in Afghanistan. In fact the proposed BSA will succeed the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) of 2003. Under Article III.2.b of the Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement, the BSA was to be concluded by May 2013, one year after the agreement was signed. One of the major sticking points is the U.S.-proposed grant to its forces of immunity from local law adjudicated in local courts (similar to the SOFAs the U.S. has with other countries in which its troops are stationed), which the Afghans understandably do not want to provide. Clearly the one-year target has not been achieved and the urgency for completing the BSA will grow as 2014 approaches.

36. *Ibid.*, Article III.6.a.

37. *Ibid.*, Article III.9.

38. *Ibid.* (italics added).

39. *Ibid.*, Article III.6.b.

Less clear by far is what the United States is getting out of this strategic partnership agreement and therefore how enduring it will be. The government of Afghanistan pledges to fight al Qaeda—which wants to destroy it—but only in Afghanistan. So, GIROA promises the United States only that it will fight its own enemy, nothing else. More important, unlike its agreements with other well-established allies, the United States is prohibited from using Afghan territory or facilities for anything at all outside Afghanistan’s borders and only for specified purposes within Afghanistan itself.

But that diminishes dramatically the use of regional bases to the United States. So to its equal partner and major non-NATO ally the United States pledges to fight Afghanistan’s domestic battles but without any compensating use of territory or facilities for anything at all beyond Afghanistan itself, except perhaps supplying U.S. forces in Afghanistan while fighting al Qaeda there, which, to be sure, was the reason for engaging in Afghanistan in the first place. Finally, all these commitments depend on the successful negotiation of a bilateral security agreement (BSA) in which the specifics of a continued U.S. military presence will be explicated, including the tricky issue for both sides of drones, night raids, command and control, and the writ of Afghan law and courts over the remaining U.S. forces.⁴⁰

However, if the final number of U.S. forces remaining in Afghanistan after 2014 is somewhere between zero and 9,000, down from 68,000, the value of most of these assurances will be moot anyway, especially if they contain no use of airpower. The U.S. forces will be marginal at best. With that level of forces, the United States would be a stretched simply to maintain Bagram Airfield, never mind any additional facilities.⁴¹ Yet, notes

40. Although perhaps only for show in Afghanistan, President Karzai seems puzzlingly indifferent to the BSA and its timing. In late August 2013 he informed reporters at a news conference, “Although the Americans asked for October, we are not in a hurry and if the document is agreed upon during this government, good. And if not, the next president can discuss whether to or not to accept it.” “Afghanistan’s Karzai says no rush to sign U.S. security pact,” *Kelo*, August 26, 2013, <http://kelo.com/news/articles/2013/aug/24/afghanistans-karzai-says-no-rush-to-sign-us-security-pact>. In late November Karzai presided over a special *loya jirga* with over 2,500 elders who overwhelmingly recommended ratification of the agreement (including the controversial reservation of total U.S. legal jurisdiction over its troops) by the National Assembly and signature by President Karzai. In December, just prior to a visit by Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, Karzai announced that, irrespective of what the National Assembly did and notwithstanding the protracted and consummated negotiations between Afghanistan and the United States in which his ministers took an active role, he would not sign the agreement at all until additional changes were made, including additional restrictions on drone attacks and release of all prisoners including those in Guantanamo Bay detention camp, and until the elections have been held (but presumably before his successor has been sworn in). It seems increasingly clear that President Karzai has no intention of signing the BSA at all. Under the urging of the Pentagon, President Obama has not insisted on the deadline and may now be reconciled to completing a BSA with Karzai’s successor. However the cost is a continued and perhaps accelerated drawdown in case Afghanistan’s next president demurs as well (even though all of the current presidential candidates have announced their intention of signing the BSA and urged President Karzai to do so before the elections. Absent the agreement, the zero option will prevail after 2014. In fact, President Obama has now ordered the Pentagon to prepare concrete “zero option” plans, not just vague contingencies. The United States and Iraq failed to come to terms after a similar negotiation, so the United States withdrew its forces entirely from Iraq

41. Bagram now holds upward of 7,000 troops and can hold up to 10,000. “Bagram: US base in Afghanistan,” BBC, June 24, 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4672491.stm. It is the major supply and logistic center for ISAF, so nowhere near 10,000 would be necessary just to operate Bagram itself if the other facilities in Afghanistan were eliminated or much-reduced.

Ronald Neumann, former U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, “a minimally effective force needs to have a presence in the country’s four major military areas: Herat [in the west]), Mazar-e Sharif [in the north], Jalalabad [in the east] and Kandahar [in the south]. [Without them,] U.S. advisers would not have the reach to circulate effectively to the brigade level, where the critical strengthening of the Afghan army will need to continue.”⁴² Certainly a country-wide presence would be impossible as would any forward training positions. Even supplying or rescuing forward-based Afghans would be logistically difficult if not unworkable. Meanwhile, Afghanistan seems to be negotiating strategic partnerships with several other countries as well, for example, with China,⁴³ so how will these various partnerships—all strategic of course—all work? How, for example, would strategic partnerships with both Pakistan and India or with China, Russia, Iran, and the United States apply simultaneously?

Afghan anxiety over security should be self-evident. The suspension of disbelief would be required for any kind of equanimity. Similarly, equanimity is in short supply for the foreign civilians left to provide assistance after 2014. Post-Benghazi, no donor and certainly not the United States will put its civilians in a position to be picked off by any of the combatants, including insider attacks and possible rejectionists in the event of a Taliban reconciliation. To say the least, the environment in Afghanistan will be risky for the post-2014 civilians outside the walls of the U.S. embassy. Because there will be only token non-Afghan military presence whose mission in Afghanistan will at best include minimal force protection for the U.S. civilians, the civilians cannot depend on some reserve force that might theoretically, for example, have come to the rescue in Benghazi. They will depend instead primarily on the security environment that the ANSF can provide and those risks will need to be tolerable to the donors. So the security context for a post-2014 U.S. civilian engagement is dicey, both for Afghans and U.S. civilians.

42. Ronald E. Neumann, “U.S. must decide about troops in Afghanistan,” *Washington Post*, March 29, 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/us-must-decide-about-troops-in-afghanistan/2013/03/28/f28de832-9667-11e2-9e23-09dce87f75a1_story.html?wpisrc=nl_opinions. Among the many other contentious issues in the BSA negotiations for the post-2014 residual force are the number of bases available to those forces. President Karzai announced that the United States has requested nine bases, a request he feels will unduly compromise Afghan sovereignty and is therefore loath to approve. But according to General Dunford, the United States has asked only for access to some still-undetermined number of Afghan bases that the United States would share in some negotiated way to train, advise, and assist the ANSF. “Select Young Afghans Chosen As Commandos In Training,” NPR, May 20, 2013, <http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=184700634&m=184700613>. If Neumann is right, presumably those bases would also need to be available on some kind of negotiated terms as a way to provide reach over the entire country for the limited anti-terrorist mission actions of the remaining ISAF special forces. The smaller the footprint, the narrower the reach.

43. In September 2012, anticipating NATO’s withdrawal and its own increasing presence, Zhou Yongkang, China’s domestic security chief, made China’s first high-level visit to Afghanistan in over 55 years. He and President Karzai discussed a range of economic and security issues, signed a security agreement “to upgrade their ties to the level of strategic and co-operative partnership . . . conducive to peace, stability and development,” including a Chinese pledge to “train, fund, and equip Afghan police.” Rob Taylor, “Top China official visits Afghanistan, signs security deal,” Reuters, September 23, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/09/23/afghanistan-china-idUSL4E8KN00U20120923>.

Governance

Decent governance is the second factor defining Afghanistan's near-term future and the context for the U.S. civilian engagement after 2014.⁴⁴ Governance remains troubled. Notwithstanding its many ambitious plans and priorities, in fact GIROA is weak, ineffective, and accountable (if at all) mostly through payments and concessions to the demands of its rapacious power-holders. Corruption is rampant. Public positions are, in effect, bought and sold, then used to repay the purchase price. Performance is modest. Public suspicion and animosity is high. Economically, Afghanistan remains very poor. Without donor funds, GIROA's plans would collapse, and so too would GIROA itself.

No Afghan expects Swiss or Danish standards but repugnance at rampant corruption and injustice animated much of the Taliban's appeal. The public does expect a decent level of governmental efficiency, effectiveness, honesty, accountability, responsiveness, some transparency, and commitment, especially given the highly centralized government resulting from the December 2003 Constitutional Loya Jirga. The result of that exercise, chaired by Karzai and all but choreographed by the United States, was not just a strong central government (versus Afghanistan's historically limited one reflecting the social, economic, political, and historical realities of the country), but a unitary state (rather than, for example, a federal one) at that, and one with Hamid Karzai as its interim president.⁴⁵ Put differently, the *loya jirga* could have created a federal not a unitary state and a weak rather than a strong central government. At the urging of Karzai and others (who would soon assume positions in the national government), it chose the latter in each pair. In effect, the model was not the United States, Great Britain, or India with empowered subnational units in a decentralized structure of governance, but Japan, China, and France in which power and authority are centralized, indeed all but monopolized, in the capital. The corruption of the current government, particularly the corruption of the justice sector, and its failure to provide fundamental fairness notwithstanding (some say, because of) its emphasis on formal court systems has done grievous harm to the legitimacy of GIROA.⁴⁶ Instead of

44. Decent governance depends on security; conversely, security also depends on good governance. As the special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction noted: "Afghanistan will not be able to achieve security and stability if its people generally distrust and dismiss the government as ineffectual and corrupt." Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, April 30, 2013," 7, <http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2013-04-30qr.pdf>.

45. In fact, after the quick and complete (but as it turned out only temporary) rout of the Taliban, the entire Constitutional Loya Jirga of some 500 delegates was heavily influenced, some say managed, by the victorious coalition, specifically the United States. As U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan and man on the ground, Zalmay Khalilzad negotiated many of the constitutional deals within the Constitutional Loya Jirga and had all but single-handedly elevated Karzai, first as chairman of the interim administration established at the 2001 Bonn conference and then as interim president after the June 2012 emergency *loya jirga*. Although relatively marginal before then, Karzai was—or seemed to be—pliant; of course he was interested as were his family, tribe, friends, and clients.

46. See, for example, the Pentagon's 1230 Report of December 2012 to Congress. "Afghanistan has made limited progress toward an independent and self-sustaining, functional, transparent, and fair justice system. The Afghan judicial system continues to face numerous challenges, including inadequate coordination between the formal and informal justice systems and systemic corruption at all levels resulting in a lack of political will to pursue prosecutions against many politically connected individuals." Department of Defense, 1230 Report of December 2012, 13.

insisting on a strong, broad, centralized government, GIROA would have earned loyalty had it concentrated on, and insisted on, a basic system of elementary justice and effectiveness from villages on up to the central state itself.

Outside of the Soviet period, Afghans have little experience with active engagement by the central government in their immediate affairs. They do not expect it; indeed probably do not want it. Instead, the donors together with some elements of the Afghan elite have designed, or at least subsidized, far more state structure than the Afghans can afford, more state than Afghans can consume, and more state than Afghans want. It is certainly more state structure, and more centralization, than consistent with the underlying social dynamics and social history of Afghanistan, which has typically supported a small center with modest powers, authorities, and ambitions and with variegated local patterns.⁴⁷

Indeed, the history of attempts to create greater centralized authority is one primarily of failure. King Amanullah Khan (1919–1929) tried to establish a more robust central government and more liberal society during the 1920s and, in good measure as a result, was overthrown. The British tried and left exhausted. The Soviets tried and were expelled. And now the United States and its allies have tried, at huge cost in personnel and funds. They will probably leave as drained as the British and the Soviets. The elders do remember fondly the days of King Mohammad Zahir Shah when the central government seemed to work well, peace also reigned and orchards blossomed. But Zahir Shah, if he did so at all, indirectly and with a lighter hand, very unlike the ambitions of the Soviet state and GIROA. That said, Afghans are not inherently inimical to a stronger central government, if it can deliver good governance. They would probably accept such a strong, centralized, unitary state if it produced basic, essential public goods like security, rudimentary justice, education, and some infrastructure like electricity. None has so far.

47. To collapse and oversimplify its history, Afghanistan has experienced three major attempts to impose liberalizing reforms and create a strong central state and two attempts to impose liberal reforms but without the added effort of a strong central state. During the 1920s King Amanullah Khan, who headed a nominally central government (1919–1929), tried to impose liberal reforms (but not as much centralization as that of the Soviets or the present coalition) on a conservative country, including (perhaps especially) gender equality. He was deposed in 1929 on the wave of popular uprising against the reforms. That failure was instructive to King Zahir Shah who, after the assassination of King Muhammad Nadir Shah, acceded to the throne. For not quite five years, he reigned with a lighter touch by returning to a live-and-let-live policy under which conservative customs and local authorities regained their formal, not just informal, governance of local affairs primarily through their homegrown and differentiated khans, maliks, sardars, mullahs, wallahs, imams, ulama, *jirgas*, and *shuras*. Even under Zahir Shah, however, there was no really effective national army, police, court system, or bureaucracy with truly national reach. He too, however, was overthrown, in his case by his cousin, Mohammed Daoud Khan, who again tried his hand at reforms. He was also overthrown. A series of coups first established and then overthrew communist heads of government, prior to the Soviet intervention in 1979 to save the last of the string, Mohammad Najibullah Ahmadzai. Communist style, they all tried to make a strong central government work. Those attempts led to the civil war of the 1990s that basically eradicated central authority. The Taliban attempted to establish a strong, central state and impose unpopular reforms beginning with the Peshawar Accords of 1992, this time a fundamentalist Islamic emirate. It might ultimately have succeeded in quashing the mujahideen and communal variations but for one major strategic mistake: al Qaeda. The current, post-2001 attempt by the U.S.-led coalition is the third recent attempt at creating a strong, single, unified state and, again, at imposing new institutions and customs. Whether the coalition's attempt to supplant the Taliban for good would have succeeded had the coalition not tried to impose liberal reforms and a central state as well will be the focus of much future historical debate.

Against that background, the building part of Petraeus' counterinsurgency doctrine meant, in the slogan of those days, to "extend the reach and legitimacy of the government of Afghanistan,"⁴⁸ meaning the central government and meaning throughout the country, not just along the front lines of insurgency. Among the many problems of that mission, two were critical. First, with enough will and enough resources external actors could *help* extend the *reach* of the central government but extending its *legitimacy* is a very different matter. Legitimacy is based on the ideological foundations of the government itself, its history, its performance, and its relation to the population or (in more democratic environments) its citizenry. External actors cannot build legitimacy for a government, even if they have the power, resources, and will to impose that government on the country. Not since the demise of the divine right of kings has enduring legitimacy (as opposed to sheer power) been available to a government absent the underlying foundations. Nevertheless, the United States and its allies tried to build a wall of legitimacy for GIROA, a government fundamentally corrupt, predatory, abusive, erratic, sometimes despotic, and definitely underperforming, and then extend the wall.⁴⁹ Moreover they tried to do so sometimes by absorbing but mostly by overwhelming other governmental institutions that did have some ideological and performance legitimacy, however limited. It is easy to distort and then romanticize the legitimacy and performance of Afghan institutions before the Soviet invasion. They were also dominated by powerful interests, but the power then was less, it was more constrained, the society was much less complicated, the available booty was smaller, the opportunities for misuse were more limited, and the conceptions of local officials were less ambitious. Society was village and kin based, mostly illiterate, and horticultural.

Afghanistan has changed dramatically in the past two decades. It is far more urban, with a far more educated and worldly population than in the 1950s and 1960s. About a quarter of the population now lives in urban areas, and more are moving into them every day. By the end of the next decade or so, a majority of the population will live in

48. "Over the past decade, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has overseen a series of stabilization programs throughout Afghanistan aimed at improving security and extending the reach and legitimacy of the Afghan government." Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) "Stability in Key Areas (SIKA) Programs: After 16 Months and \$47 Million Spent, USAID Had Not Met Essential Program Objectives" SIGAR Audit 13-16, July 2013, <http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/SIGAR%20Audit%2013-16-SIKA.pdf>. A more focused expression of that general mission appears on the USAID website for Afghanistan under the Stabilization section of "Our Work": "Strengthening the reach and legitimacy of the central government in outlying regions. Stabilization programs are designed to improve security, extend the reach of the Afghan government, and facilitate reconstruction in priority provinces. Their core objective is to implement projects that will improve stability so that more traditional forms of development assistance can resume." <http://www.usaid.gov/afghanistan/our-work>. However, as the SIGAR noted, it applied to the entire mission of USAID.

49. That unusually narrow and explicit mission statement (extending the reach and legitimacy of the central state) also bespeaks the U.S. government's fundamental long-term political concern, not to say preoccupation. In many other countries, governments are partners of bilateral assistance programs, but their legitimacy and reach are the givens or starting points, and are their own problem. It is not the job of the United States, or the objective of U.S. assistance programs, in most countries to build legitimacy and reach of the national government and state. In fact, parts of assistance programs are sometimes designed for precisely the opposite purposes: to broaden the reach and legitimacy of nongovernmental actors, rather than governmental ones, and to dilute or pluralize the reach and control of the central government, for example, in the case of autocratic regimes. In Afghanistan it has been almost the reverse and not because GIROA is so deeply virtuous, effective, just, or democratic; indeed, precisely because it is the opposite.

towns and cities, which are commensurately much larger and more heterogeneous, with more mixing of different Afghan groups, communities, ethnicities, and sectors, especially Kabul. Many more Afghans have lived and worked abroad in Pakistan, Iran, and the Gulf and countries further afield, including refugees during the 1980s and 1990s. Those who returned brought consumer goods and services unimaginable in “traditional Afghanistan.” Now radios, televisions, cellular phones, and the Internet connect even small villages to a larger world. GIRoA estimates that telephones and connectivity in Afghanistan has gone “from almost no coverage in 2001 to 86% of Afghan residential areas and 18.27 million fixed and mobile phone users” in 2012.⁵⁰ Afghanistan’s cities are ballooning, especially but not only Kabul (now about 4 million versus just over 1 million in 2001 when the coalition ousted the Taliban).⁵¹ Like it or not (the Taliban do not), Afghanistan is becoming more global, however tentatively and fitfully. The image of a rural, kin- and village-based horticultural society in isolated valleys is now a distortion of Afghan life and of Afghan aspirations.

However, added to the structural problems of creating a strong central state are the communal problems. Notwithstanding the cultural, political, and social dominance of the Pashtuns, demographically Afghanistan is a collection of minorities in which the Pashtuns are the plurality, although not the majority.⁵² Indeed, even that truth is too simple. The Pashtuns are organized into a tribe of patrilineal segmentary lineages; their aggregates divided into mutually competitive, sometimes antagonistic, subtribes, clans, and lineages. So, for example, the Durranis and the Ghilzais are often at odds with one another as are, within the Durranis, the Panjpai and the Zirak branches, and so forth among the constituent units of the various branches. President Karzai’s Popalzai is a smaller clan within the Durranis. Karzai was a minor figure even among the Popalzai (and secondary even in his own family) until he was clutched from relative obscurity by the United States, in particular Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad. Pashtun solidarity, so often assumed by the minority populations and even by the coalition partners is by no means assured. The social fissures are substantial and, especially in recent years, are often cross-cutting not just sectarianism but among and between power brokers of all kinds.

50. Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Finance, “Towards Self-Reliance: Strategic Vision for the Decade of Transformation,” July 8, 2012, 4, <http://mof.gov.af/Content/Media/Documents/Towards-Self-Reliance-27-6-2012167201210282583553325325.pdf>. The “decade of transition” is approximately 2004–2014 and the “decade of transformation” is approximately 2015–2025. Notwithstanding constant use of these terms, especially by GIRoA, it is not easy to ascertain the definitions of the respective decades. The key is the shift, linked to the transfer of full security responsibility, between 2014 and 2015.

51. The latest Central Statistics Office puts the population of Kabul at just under 4 million and Afghanistan’s at 25.5 million. Central Statistics Office, Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, “Estimated Population of Afghanistan 2012-2013; Settled Population by Civil Division, Urban, Rural and Sex-2012-13”; <http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/Settled%20Population%20by%20Civil%20Division,.pdf>. Afghanistan’s population rose by 500,000 people over the past year, raising the national total to 27 million, according to an August 2013 Central Statistics Organization (CSO) report. Meer Agha Nasarat Samimi, “Afghan population rises to 27 million,” *Pajhwok*, August 21, 2013, www.pajhwok.com/en/23013/08/21/afghan-population-rises-27-million.

52. Although there is no simple majority community, the Pashtuns are such a large plurality that the Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, and others are often referred to as “minorities” as if the Pashtuns were in fact a real majority. Hereafter that common convention will be used, although inaccurate, just to avoid the need for qualifying the term “minority.”

Perhaps a more central state is inevitable if and as Afghanistan continues to be drawn into global dynamics. But, to minimize potential conflicts, that kind of state would have been more stable and, in Afghan eyes, more legitimate had it developed more organically along with changes in Afghanistan's society, polity, and economy. An imposed state is far less likely to weather the withdrawal of its patrons. For now, Afghans would prefer a smaller but more honest government, local and central, that would actually and effectively deliver their modest expectations, especially for personal security and fairness. Without that and without some minimal level of the public goods Afghans can now afford (roads, electricity, telecommunications, water, education, trash collection, courts, air transportation, and public health), the political economy of Afghanistan will be distorted and diminished.

But absent those changes and foundations, Afghanistan would have been better-served in limiting the ambitions of the central state in Kabul. Its system of village, district, and provincial governance through *jirgas* and other communal mechanisms presided over by local notables (khans, *maliks*, sardars, imams, *ulama*, etc.) avoided the necessity to choose policies acceptable to all across the country or, alternatively, to choose favorites from among equals and imposing policies anathema to some. Its patchwork of variegated villages, districts, and provinces required little policy integration as long as governance was limited and local: live and let live. Conversely, different groups were not forced to choose between loyalties to the (Pashtun) monarch or the Pashtun-dominated central state versus their own communities, traditions, and relations.

So even now, while the “minority communities” recognize that a Pashtun needs to be president, Pashtun leadership is not the same as Pashtun control or domination. And perhaps because of its inefficiency, ineffectiveness, and poverty, the current state with its constellation of power, interests, institutions, structures, and procedures provides sufficient checks, balances, and protection to these minorities by almost ensuring that, as President Karzai has discovered, every major initiative needs to be negotiated, including presidential cabinet selections. That would change if GIROA and the donors become successful at imposing a strong, centralized government with a top-down bureaucracy. And for that reason, not just the limitations of financing and inefficiency, resistance has been more than token at the local levels, especially as Kabul has steadfastly opposed any but token decentralization in favor of limited de-concentration.⁵³

53. A decentralized system would include real authorities at the local level and some negotiated or packed division of power between various levels of government, bottom to top. The subnational units would have their own areas of authority, shaped by and accountable to local dynamics. Notionally separate, the units of course are related to the center. A de-concentrated system is based on a unitary or centralized state in which centrally employed and empowered officials are posted by the capital to local offices as agents, not of the localities to which they are assigned (often temporarily) but of their central ministries. In a de-concentrated system, decisions flow from the center downward through the hierarchy of staff. The contributions of the local officials, even those locally chosen, are treated by the center more like recommendations than like co-equals. Central ministries are free to take them or leave them. Since 2001 de-concentration has theoretically been the attempt in Afghanistan and subnational governance is one of the 22 national priority programs, albeit often half-heartedly. President Karzai created the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), precisely to implement de-concentration, but IDLG is not a ministry, even though it does have cabinet rank, and has been resisted by other parts of the government, partially because it has very limited capacity—which

Nevertheless, the basic orientations of most Afghans have not changed commensurately. Culturally, Afghanistan remains much more like its former self than like an urbane, cosmopolitan magnet for South Asia. Notwithstanding the centralized government envisioned—fantasized might be the more accurate description—first by the Soviets and then by the donors and the Kabul cliques it does not have the mandate, legitimacy, capacity, or resources to live up to that vision, not now or in any foreseeable future. Only a much more massive resource and tax base, better performance, and greater accountability could make that conceivable and then only if there was Afghan consensus on its desirability.

Yet, notwithstanding obvious improvements in their lives, the result of the state-building exercise of the past dozen years is a government top heavy, deeply corrupt, and Kabul-centered but with ambitious, donor-driven plans and its own 22 national priority programs⁵⁴ to control much of Afghan life under its Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS).⁵⁵ Tied with North Korea and Somalia, Afghanistan ranks last on Transparency International's 2012 corruption perceptions index of 174 countries.⁵⁶ Billions of dollars are being stolen by elites tied to the palace and its patronage networks and by those tied to other officeholders. Instead of the state development for which the donors have been paying, Afghanistan ranks in the lowest decile on each of the World Bank's six world governance indicators: voice and accountability; government effectiveness; regulatory quality; rule of law; corruption, and political stability/absence of violence.⁵⁷ Accompanied by a tainted system of justice, miserable governance by rapacious elites may well be the greatest single challenge for Afghanistan. It is a challenge not very amenable to large assistance programs absent political will by the elites who are the beneficiaries of precisely the governance dysfunctions they are supposed to correct. At least as much as the failure of government to provide basic services that Afghans know foreigners have subsidized, they despise the corruption and injustice brought to them by their own government. As already noted, that was one of the appeals of the Taliban as they rolled up the country; that and an end to the civil war.

is characteristic of many of the other parts as well—and because its record has hardly been stellar. Because it was created by and associated with President Karzai and because it has nemeses, it may not survive after the 2014 elections. If not, however, its functions would need to be absorbed by another ministry, perhaps the Ministry of Interior or (a revised) Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation and Development.

54. Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Finance, *National Priority Programs*, <http://mof.gov.af/en/page/3976>. It should be obvious that 22 very broad priority programs means that, in effect, everything is a priority and, as the old saying goes, that means that nothing is a priority, and that the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) is not so much a strategy as a list of requests and quasi-plans looking for funding.

55. See Afghanistan National Development Strategy, cited previously in note 1. No doubt, as in the rest of its operations, much of GIRoA's "unreality" is in part attributable to the donors themselves. The donors asked the government to provide its priority programs. And like most of the donors themselves, the word "priority"—literally "come before"—elicited from GIRoA not any kind of ranking but instead a disgorging of absurdly extensive plans. Thus, GIRoA provided few real priorities, just an impossibly long wish list of aspirations totally divorced from the realities of its budget and capacities. Like the word "priority," the word "strategy" has no real meaning either, other than a listing of what GIRoA would like to do and be funded for.

56. Transparency International, "Corruption Perceptions Index 2012," <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2012/results>.

57. World Bank, "Worldwide Governance Indicators" (formerly "Governance Matters"), <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.aspx#home>.

So, Afghanistan ranks at the bottom of the corruption scale as billions of dollars are being stolen and invested abroad. The measure of its inequality, its Gini coefficient, remains relatively low, not because the impulses of the kleptocratic elite have been checked, but because that elite is still relatively small and the goodies remain tied to Western resources and narcotics while poverty is widespread.⁵⁸ The elite is grasping and growing, cronyism is rampant, and donors have demanded reforms if they are to meet their Tokyo commitments. GIROA has admitted that it needs “to create an inhospitable environment for corruption, narcotics and nepotism.”⁵⁹

Potentially, at least, much of the hope for meeting even a minimal number of Afghanistan’s Tokyo commitments—ambitious aspirations, really, rather than commitments—depends on the 2014 presidential and the 2015 parliamentary elections. A successful, credible process and a legitimate, competent government pursuing the right policies *could* launch Afghanistan in a much more positive direction. Conversely, egregiously flawed elections would drain the resulting government of any remaining legitimacy and therefore authority. It would almost surely doom the country’s near-term future quite apart from the expectations and conditions set by the donors. If the procedure and the outcome do not pass muster with Afghans, the resulting government could be all but a lost cause from the outset.⁶⁰ The Taliban would certainly exploit that advantage.

The 2009 elections were deeply defective. The Independent Election Commission (IEC) of Afghanistan and the Electoral Complaints Commission (EEC) rejected the proffered results by which Karzai would have won by the requisite majority on the initial ballot. Karzai won in the east, south, and northwest; former foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah won in the north and west, the areas of the Northern Alliance (with the exception of the northwest formerly controlled by Abdul Rashid Dostum.⁶¹ But Karzai did not win a

58. For 2008 Afghanistan’s Gini coefficient was a respectable 27.8, about the same as Pakistan at 30.0. World Bank Gini Index, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI>. The CIA does not have a Gini coefficient for Afghanistan but Pakistan’s is 30.6 (2007/2008) comparable to the World Bank Gini index and for around the same time; Norway is 25 (2008), Sweden is 23 (2005), and the United States is 45 (2007) on the CIA index; Central Intelligence Agency, World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2172.html>. Of course the apparent equivalency between Norway or Sweden and Pakistan is incongruous, especially when comparing, for example, their respective median incomes.

59. Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *Afghanistan’s Strategic Vision*, 3.

60. Credibility is a judgment almost entirely about the process not the candidates, all of whom were tarnished by checkered careers and political alliances. Unsurprising perhaps in a country whose history is filled with such violence and shifting currents, political actors switched sides regularly. Today’s enemy was tomorrow’s ally. Relationships were temporary. No candidate remained un-blemished if viewed from the perspective of another candidate or group. Rather than dwelling excessively on past stains, elections have meant choosing the best (or least objectionable) from among those available yet insisting, if possible, on fidelity to a set of principles and policies that promise a better future. Based on that criterion, the reduction of corruption is the highest value for Afghan voters along, of course, with some confidence that the winner will deal with the insurgency on acceptable terms.

61. National Democratic Institute, Afghanistan Election Data, http://afghanistanelectiondata.org/election/2009/#filter/600-95-AND/country?views-mode=views-mode-map#layers=district_map_openlayers_7,district_map_openlayers_8,afghanistan-ethnic&baseLayers=afghanistan-grey. National Democratic Institute, “The 2009 Presidential and Provincial Elections in Afghanistan,” 57, http://www.ndi.org/files/Elections_in_Afghanistan_2009.pdf.

majority even under the suspect returns.⁶² The IEC planned a runoff between Karzai and the runner-up, Abdullah, but amidst allegations of widespread fraud in the first round, Abdullah refused to participate on the grounds that, since the election itself would not be honest, fair, and transparent, the results too would be rigged. So the IEC canceled the runoff and Karzai was declared president. The flawed result undermined the credibility of the outcome and the legitimacy of the resulting government. Afghanistan's stability, never mind its democracy, cannot easily weather another such election. The new president would have almost no authority and the recurrent theme that Afghanistan is a country whose capital has no writ outside its city walls would gain commensurate currency.

Non-credible elections and electoral outcomes would also dramatically affect domestic Afghan and international commitments to GIROA. If there is no peaceful, convincing, constitutional transfer of authority in 2014, the failure to perform on the Afghan government's democracy commitments in the Tokyo Declaration Partnership and in the Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement would provide the legal, formal basis for total U.S. exit, civilian as well as military, if that becomes Washington's preferred path. Again, Afghans would probably look toward communal identities and protection and for exit strategies if the elections are not credible or if they result in an ineffective, corrupt, sectarian result. In certain parts of the country, the south and the Pashtun-dominated areas in particular, that would mean increased support for the insurgency. In other parts, it would mean increased support for warlords and other communally based militias, which will increase in support, power, and independence if concerns about security surge. Major political actors—regional leaders like Balkh Province governor Atta Mohammad Noor, Nangarhar Province governor Gul Agha Sherzai, and former Herat Province governor Mohammad Ismail Khan; and military figures like Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Rahshid Dostam—or their successors will reemerge and with greater vigor.

Credible elections, on the other hand, would of course produce a new government coalition with a new president, a new cabinet, and perhaps new policies, although—where you sit is where you stand, as the saying goes—many of the Karzai policies will survive the transition. Karzai controls the budget and almost all government appointments including provincial governors. He has learned to accommodate power brokers like Atta, Sherzai, and Mohammad Ismail Khan as well as some of his own cabinet like Dostam.⁶³ And Karzai had the advantage of the *loya jirga* imprimatur and of donor support. Indeed, many argue that the donors in effect installed him. No matter what the contestants say now, the new officials will discover the “wisdom” of Karzai's centralization with its donor spigot of patronage. The new president and cabinet will try to capture the same authorities and

62. After reviews, petitions, and appeals, the final results were President Karzai (49.67 percent), Dr. Abdullah Abdullah (30.59 percent), Ramazan Bashardost (10.46 percent), and an assortment of 29 other candidates with some 9.28% between them. Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan, “Final Certified Presidential Results,” October 21, 2009, http://www.iec.org.af/results_2009/leadingCandidate.html.

63. Although legally, technically, and in most cases actually, the president has the authority to appoint virtually every government official, that authority is limited somewhat in practice by the many other power brokers, national and local, with whom he has to contend. In that sense, there is some pragmatic if not formal check on presidential authority.

patronage. The new government will seek the same donor support, but will be even more hedged. The new president will have been one of several potential candidates, none outstanding and none with broad and deep political bases, all with demanding coalitions, and (better or worse) none with the obvious backing of the donors. The government could well become a coalition organized by a Pashtun presidential winner with weaker power and authority among the plurality Pashtuns and certainly among the other communities. It is hard to see how clean, effective, accountable governance can result from that predicate, especially if each person, network, and community continues to see the central government as a garden ripe for personal or communal harvest. Among the other obstacles to credible elections—the IEC’s unpreparedness, the uncertainty about candidates, President Karzai’s intentions—is security. Notwithstanding General Dunford’s conviction that the ANSF are fully capable of securing the elections (by which he means election day not necessarily the campaign period and certainly not throughout the country), Afghans are not so convinced. In its 2012 public survey, the Asia Foundation found that 35 percent have a lot of fear and 19 percent have some fear about voting in a national election, while 41 percent have a lot of fear and 28 percent have some fear about participating in a peaceful demonstration. Less realistically, 40 percent would have a lot of fear and 23 percent would have some fear in running for public office, which almost none of them would do. The likely candidates have good reason to be even more afraid.⁶⁴

Still, the elections offer the theoretical hope of a new era. The hope remains theoretical however given the apparent scenarios for the elections. The end of the Communist period in 1988–89 and the following near-decade of conflict among the warlords not only paved the way for the astonishingly sweep by the students or *talibs* in 1996, but thoroughly discredited both the existing political parties organized and dominated by the warlords and, longer term, even the idea of politics organized around political parties.⁶⁵ If Afghanistan is ever to

64. 2012 TAF Survey, 46–49.

65. In a national poll administered by the Asia Foundation, two statements were given for agreement: “Political parties create division and confusion; it is therefore unnecessary to have many political parties in Afghanistan” or “Many political parties are needed to make sure that Afghans have real choices in who governs them.” Fifty-eight percent agreed with the first statement and 42 percent chose the second. 2012 TAF Survey, 136. The results of survey questions vary by area of the country, and the Asia Foundation includes those variations in many cases. Many analysts doubt the veracity of popular polls in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is a country at war. Terrorism is an everyday threat so respondents are wary of sensitive questions. Taliban members are hardly sympathetic to polling or to the Asia Foundation. Large parts of the country are inaccessible. It is largely illiterate. The public is not accustomed to public opinion polls. People are suspicious and fearful of one another and apprehensive that their opinions will fall into the wrong hands and be used against them. There are additional reasons to be skeptical. For example, the respondents were provided with statements against which to react, say by “strongly or somewhat” agreeing or disagreeing with the given statement or (as in this case) being asked which of two statements they agreed with more. The respondents were not asked general questions, such as “how do you feel about political parties” with the self-generated answers then coded or grouped into general categories. Moreover, the questionnaire was administered by total strangers. In a social context highly defined by personal, especially kinship, relations, in which suspicions and tensions run high, and in a war zone, the responses, data, and resulting representations and conclusions need necessarily to be taken with caution, if not some skepticism, especially when they seem to run counter to many personal conversations and experiences that, although idiosyncratic, do not suffer from these conditions. However, the Asia Foundations has tried to take these factors into account and to provide for the uncertainties of insecurity, sample size and distribution, lack of trust in strange poll-takers, and other similar factors into account. *Ibid.*, Appendix 2: Methodology. In any event, this survey is among the better quantitative measures of opinion. It is especially useful longitudinally from year to year. And these data points can help illuminate other sources of information.

become truly democratic, that distaste will need to abate so that energetic but civil politics and elections, grounded in a rule of law and with open media for analysis and debate, can be organized around durable institutions like parties and possibly ideas rather than just individuals, personalities, patronage networks, and cliques.

Still, the structure of the state (federal, confederal, or unitary) and the outcome of the elections matter less to Afghans than whether the resulting state performs its minimal functions, whether they will have decent governance efficient, honest, accountable, and, most important, effective. Will it provide satisfactory levels of justice, education, water, health, power, and the bases for jobs, incomes, economic growth, and a better future? Afghans would be willing to live with a number of structures and electoral results if they were the beneficiaries of good governance rather than a predatory, rapacious, capricious, non-performing elite. These other matters are means to better governance no matter how strongly Afghans feel about Kabul's power or electoral maneuvers.

The Economy

Economic growth will depend on the first two pillars, security and decent governance. The growth may be more modest and more rural than most would like. The rapid growth in the cities has been artificial, especially in Kabul; already that bubble is deflating. With luck, it will not burst entirely. Many Afghans will be disappointed and many will take losses on their investments in an economy heavily affected by expatriates, many of whom will be leaving.

Afghanistan will necessarily revert toward its more natural, less artificial, donor-created condition. The primary danger is that its natural condition includes a heavy narcotics-based economy, which continues to re-enrich, re-energize, and re-empower

Afghanistan's single non-transferable voting (SNTV) system supported by President Karzai in the Constitutional Loya Jirga of 2003 and subsequently in the National Assembly should be changed. Only Jordan, Vanuatu, and the Pitcairn Islands now use a SNTV system. Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan abandoned it. But it does create systemic, institutional disincentives for political parties which just adds to the historical-rooted distaste for them. The competing alternative—proportional representation—was favored by donors and specialists in the design and analysis of election systems because it produces a result more representative of those who voted and would not have created disincentives for political parties did not appeal to Karzai and many of his colleagues for those very reasons. Encouraging the atomization of political actors, SNTV constitutes a hurdle to organized political competition, a huge advantage for Karzai. In single-member districts, SNTV and proportional representation would act virtually identically, but in the multi-member districts of Afghanistan SNTV requires parties not only to gather the most votes in the district but to have their voters allocate their individual votes among the party's multiple candidates in an optimal way without really understanding how to do so (unless the parties can instruct each of its supporters, or at least a discrete block, on exactly which one of its multiple candidates to vote for). A party could get a majority of votes in a district and still win relatively few seats if, for example, its voters intentionally—or unintentionally—cast a substantial number of their votes for one of its candidates while the others get very few. For a discussion about the way in which SNTV wound up the chosen system in Afghanistan, about how it was intended to work, about its basic structure, about its inherent therefore predicted problems, and about how these problems and predictions finally vested in the 2005 election of President Karzai, see Andrew Reynolds, "The Curious Case of Afghanistan," *Journal of Democracy* 17, no. 2 (April 2006): 104-117; and Sara T. Ghadiri, "SNTV in Afghanistan: Is There a Better Option?" *Res Publica—Journal of Undergraduate Research* 15, no. 1 (2010): 84–91, <http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/respublica/vol15/iss1/12>.

various drug lords the Taliban had removed or at least contained. In that respect the loop returns to security because a large narcotics industry would destabilize yet further Afghanistan's already shaky security. No doubt there were once verdant orchards and other products. There could be again if security, governance, and economic environments permit. But those are big "ifs" and it remains unclear how much agriculture could contribute to a much larger, more urban, and more educated population.

Afghanistan is rich in rare earths, more ordinary minerals (for example, copper), as well as some gas and oil. The Ministry of Mines estimates the value at \$3 trillion⁶⁶ but other estimates are closer to \$1 trillion.⁶⁷ Getting resources out of the country, absent a smelter, for example, or a railroad, remains one of many major obstacles.⁶⁸ Moreover, even if the mining potential were to be fully realized, it would provide only around 100,000 new jobs over the next decade. About 500,000 new workers will enter the economy per year, so mining will provide only about 2 percent of the needed employment.⁶⁹ Good governance, including a congenial and reliable legal environment for investment, is another. A variety of very optimistic—perhaps utopian—scenarios are based on the revival, after 10 centuries, of florescent trade on a robust and safe "silk road" with goods being traded and transported between China through Central Asia to Turkey, Russia, and Europe, and with Afghanistan at its center.⁷⁰ All possibilities depend on a conducive security, governance,

66. Zainab Mahammidi, "Afghanistan's minerals worth 3 trillion," *Pajhwok*, June 17, 2010, www.pajhwok.com/2010/06/17/afghanistans-minerals-worth-3-trillion.

67. James Risen, "U.S. Identifies Vast Mineral Riches in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, June 13, 2010, www.nytimes.com/2010/06/14/world/asia/14minerals.html; "Afghan mineral wealth could top \$1 trillion: Pentagon," Reuters, June 14, 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/06/14/us-afghanistan-minerals-idUSTRE65D00H20100614>. Compare to "Here's why the trillion-dollar Afghan mineral discovery is bogus," *Business Insider*, June 14, 2010, <http://www.businessinsider.com/heres-why-the-trillion-dollar-afghan-mineral-discovery-is-bogus-2010-6>.

68. "The mining sector, the other big hope of economic self-sufficiency for Afghanistan, is still moribund as the Afghan Parliament continues to bicker over a mining law. A lack of security and legal clarity has prevented the large-scale exploitation of mineral resources." Rod Norland, "Opium Production In Afghanistan Is Up Again," *New York Times*, April 15, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/16/world/asia/afghanistan-opium-production-increases-for-3rd-year.html?ref=asia&r=0>.

69. World Bank, "Afghanistan Economic Update, October 2013" (hereafter cited as "Afghanistan Economic Update, October 2013"), 17, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2013/10/24/000442464_20131024131051/Rendered/PDF/820120WP0WB0Af0Box0379855B00PUBLIC0.pdf.

70. The Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement envisages just such a future by "restoring Afghanistan's historic role as a bridge connecting Central and South Asia and the Middle East." Article IV.3. The idea of a flourishing regional silk road with goods and services flowing through Afghanistan in all directions is more than optimistic, notwithstanding GIROA's optimism. See, for example, *Afghanistan's Strategic Vision*, 18–19. It is highly problematic, verging on fantasy. The road would need transit through Afghanistan's insurgency-filled provinces, including Wardak, Naghman, Kabul, and Nangahar, and pass through Jalalabad and the Khyber Pass into Pakistan. It would then wind through the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)—now also an insurgency-filled zone of turmoil—then Punjab and Sindh. The road would end in Karachi, which is almost imploding with ethnic and religious violence and explosives. Alternatively it could go through FATA south to Gwadar (still not operative) rather than Karachi. To do so, it would have to pass through Baluchistan, also a zone of insurgency. Meanwhile the Central Asia Republics from which resources and to which goods would flow are basically on the ancient east-west silk road from China to Europe. This would be a new, north-south silk road. In addition to its highly problematic insecurity, the economics make little current sense either, unless the Central Asian Republics are prepared to provide enormous subsidies to create a political and economic alternative to their dependence on Russia and China for the transport of their natural resources to global markets. The operations of Gwadar have been transferred from the Port of Singapore Authority to the state-owned China Overseas Ports Holding Company, so Gwadar would probably not work if the point of the

and economic environment. More likely is improved but still relatively small intra-regional trade, for example, with Iran, the Central Asian Republics, and Pakistan, and possibly with India.

Security and decent governance aside, perhaps the most important question about the economy is Afghanistan's comparative advantage, if any, in the world economy and therefore the mix of the agricultural sector with any kind of industrial or service sector. In fact, Afghanistan runs a trade deficit of nearly half its gross domestic product (GDP), even in years of exceptional wheat harvests.⁷¹ Its hopes for dramatically increased income from the export of mineral, gas, and oil reserves are uncertain. Narcotics aside, current exports, primarily dried fruits and carpets, represented only about \$2.6 billion in 2012. Dried fruits are no longer a significant export, in part because insecurity has reduced supply and in part because other countries, like China, Iran, and Turkey, are more efficient producers and have captured markets that Afghanistan once served. A variety of assistance programs have sought to encourage the production and marketing of traditional handicrafts, like rug weaving, in part because of the larger participation of women. But better production and marketing conditions for weavings will not lift 27 million people very far from their 2012 gross national income per capita of \$1,000 (a decline from \$1,419 in 2010).⁷² There simply are not enough carpet customers and the price (even if a higher fair price) will not be high enough to significantly increase the per capita GDP. Indeed these domestic sources of income have no prospect of offsetting even much of Afghanistan's security costs. One bright spot is the explosion of education at all levels. University enrollment is now at least 60,000 to 65,000.⁷³ Unfortunately, the developing world to which Afghans might aspire is full of unemployed college graduates, often the source of instability. The real question is what place these graduates will find in Afghanistan's economy after 2014, again assuming security and decent governance. Reciprocally, poor economic prospects and performance will be a gift to the insurgency. Narcotics aside, one export will remain: permanent or temporary emigration. Émigré remittances will remain an important ingredient in the national economy. Afghanistan is not the only country whose domestic economy depends

new silk road is to free the CARs from Chinese influence. Meanwhile, from the Chinese perspective, an alternative silk road might even bypass Afghanistan and the CARs entirely, going from China through Pakistani Kashmir (itself an area of constant, and recent, proto-war between Pakistan and India) over an expanded Karakoram Highway (the highest road in the world across the Karakoram mountains) and through Khunjerab Pass to Karachi or (more complicated) to Gwadar. Of course, if all of these different insurgencies could be reconciled, then only the physical logistics and therefore the economics would remain as problems.

71. The trade deficit was 43 percent of GDP in 2012, a year of exceptional harvests due to unusual rains. World Bank, "Afghanistan Economic Update, April 2013" (hereafter cited as "Afghanistan Economic Update, April 2013"), 2, 10, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDS/IB/2013/05/02/000333037_20130502161223/Rendered/PDF/770830REVISED0box377289B00PUBLIC00.pdf. Agriculture accounts for one-fourth to one-third of GDP with wheat about 60 percent of the value of agricultural output. Unfortunately, about one-third of the wheat production is rain-fed rather than irrigated; rain is unpredictable. *Ibid.*, 3–4. The trade deficit is offset by the declining donor funding and spending, which will be declining.

72. UN Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2013: The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World*, Table 1, Human Development Index, http://hdr.undp.org/hdr4press/press/report/hdr/english/HDR2013_EN_Statistics.pdf.

73. U.S. Agency for International Development, "USAID in Afghanistan: Partnership, Progress, Perseverance" (2011), 27, http://transition.usaid.gov/locations/afghanistanpakistan/documents/afghanistan/USAID_Afghanistan_Interim_Report.pdf.

on wages earned elsewhere. It is a ticket to survival, not substantial growth let alone prosperity.

The Neighbors

Landlocked Afghanistan's future, civilian even more than military in some ways, also depends, now and historically, on the disposition of its immediate and its more distant neighbors: Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Iran, China, Russia, the Gulf states, and, most important, Pakistan; and ultimately on East Asia, Europe, and the Western Hemisphere. Once ISAF withdraws and leaves the fighting to the ANSF, the neighboring countries will see a security vacuum. A re-energized insurrection and an international vacuum would tempt them to intervene, if only out of apprehension that the others would. All have security interests in Afghanistan, at least as a buffer against the others. Immediate neighbors have relatives or co-religionists whose futures would be at risk again if the Taliban regroup and advances. The neighbors have as little faith in the ANSF as do ordinary Afghans. Afghanistan could become like the headless goat carcass in *Buzkashi*, its polo-like national sport, in which Afghanistan's horse-mounted regional neighbors jostle to grab the Afghan corpse and race to their goal with the trophy.

Uzbekistan and Tajikistan could easily be drawn into a communally based conflict. As noted, several of mujahideen militias were led by Uzbeks or Tajiks, protected their communal interests, and drew their cadres and support from those communities. Any threat from a Pashtun-dominated force like the Taliban would probably motivate a resurgence of Tajik and Uzbek militias. As also noted, many of the officers of the ANSF are Uzbeks and Tajiks while the bulk of the non-officers are Pashtun, a potentially volatile mix. The tentative positions of the Uzbek and Tajik minorities more broadly would pose provocations for Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, which are also at some risk from their own indigenous Islamists like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Islamic Jihad Union. The secular leaders of these countries, originally Communist apparachiks, are concerned that Afghanistan could become both model and haven for fundamentalism on their borders. The growing tensions between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan complicate their responses even more. Indeed, the growing tensions could possibly trigger armed conflicts between Uzbeks and Tajiks in Afghanistan arising out of tensions in Central Asia. Militancy from the north would add to Afghanistan's problems. On the positive side, with some level of peace, regional trade would, for the moment, more likely flow north and south, then later perhaps east and west as well. Afghanistan's limited oil, gas, and mineral resources need an outlet; conversely, Afghanistan needs refined and usable energy.

Iran's theocracy has reason to be concerned, not so much because of the Islamic fundamentalism but because it would be Sunni rather than Shi'ite. The Hazaras and other Shi'ites have been discriminated against—persecuted, they justifiably insist with a history of uprisings, occupations, special taxes, quarantines, and massacres—for generations. Iran could be provoked to defend Afghanistan's Shi'ite minority. On the other hand, the border is not only calm but a source of some prosperity. For example, Herat is a thriving, orderly

city and province, due in part to the border trade with and investment from Iran and in part to Mohammad Ismail Khan who, notwithstanding many other failings, runs a kind of model for local administration through his network.

The Saudis and the other Gulf states have been active, if ambivalent, players anxious to defeat the insurgency, yet attempting to remain honest brokers, which requires some level of neutrality. Moreover, as elsewhere, Gulf citizens have privately been funding fundamentalists in South Asia, the Near East, and North Africa. Wahabi, Deobandi, Salafi—whatever the term and form—Gulf money has been supporting the insurgency in Afghanistan even as the Gulf governments have supported negotiations and the Western coalition countries.

Afghanistan once represented strategic depth in Pakistan's military doctrine vis-à-vis India and perhaps still does, however improbably. The two are vying for influence in Afghanistan but of course on opposite sides. India supports GIROA, which has been at pains to emphasize its warm relations with India and the presence of India's embassy and consulates. Recently, President Karzai welcomed additional military aid from India.⁷⁴ That just increases the enmity between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Notwithstanding attempts to warm their relations,⁷⁵ the two neighbors are often a hair's width away from total animosity. If Afghanistan had a military force even remotely equivalent to Pakistan's, outright war would be a more likely prospect than the current mutual recrimination and constant provocation. Each accuses the other of providing shelter for insurgents and terrorists

74. Kay Johnson, "Karzai seeks Indian military aid amid Pakistan row," Associated Press, May 19, 2013, <http://news.yahoo.com/karzai-seeks-indian-military-aid-amid-pakistan-row-103234707.html>.

75. In August 2013 President Karzai made his latest of 17 trips to Islamabad to visit Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. They discussed a variety of issues, including strengthening bilateral ties, reconciliation, and the release by Pakistan of some Taliban prisoners to help the reconciliation. The trip was disappointing from the Afghan perspective but expectations were almost certainly unrealistic. Meer Agha Nasrat Samimi, "Islamabad, Kabul agree to stay engaged." *Pajhwok*, August 26, 2013, <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/08/26/islamabad-kabul-agree-stay-engaged>. The preceding February, in their third trilateral meeting, then-President Asif Ali Zardari, President Karzai, and Prime Minister David Cameron met in London to discuss reconciliation with the Taliban and between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Surely it was a step forward that Karzai and Zardari met, not over mutual recriminations, but to discuss a common threat to both countries. They committed themselves to take all necessary measures to achieve the goal of a peace settlement over the next six months. "Chequers Joint Statement," British Prime Minister's Office, February 4, 2013, <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/chequers-summit-joint-statement>. "They committed themselves to continue to make strenuous efforts in the spirit of mutual interest. Both sides agreed that good neighbourly relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, that ensured the long term stability of both countries, was of fundamental importance." *Ibid.* They re-affirmed the September 2012 commitments to their Strategic Partnership Agreement. Moreover, "the two sides agreed that they wanted to build greater trust and co-operation between their military and security services and agreed concrete steps to deliver this." *Ibid.* Rather than each accusing the other of providing safe haven for its insurgents—a fair enough accusation whose force is only somewhat diminished by the incapacity of either one to deal with cross-border insurgents even if it wanted to do so—they agreed to establish an (already established) office in Doha to negotiate with the Taliban. Inconveniently, their common adversaries did not attend the London conference and were not party to the agreement even on a venue for negotiations. Since the May 2013 elections in Pakistan, Karzai and newly elected Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif have also traded visits, Karzai going to Islamabad in August and Sharif going to Kabul at the end of November. Nawaz Sharif's relations with the Pakistani army and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) are much cooler than were Zardari's since the military removed Nawaz from office in 1999 after a tense standoff. Still, although the tone may be slightly warmer as a result and despite formal statements by both about the desirability of stable, peaceful, mutually beneficial relations, no real progress has been made in any substantive warming of the testy relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

attempting to destabilize it. Both are right that different but connected insurgents target each and find sanctuary in the other. Yet each is too weak and too mistrustful of the other to move against the other's offending insurgents.⁷⁶ The Quetta Shura, the heart and brains of the Taliban and presided over by Mullah Mohammad Omar is not a misnomer, for example. The area around Quetta is a refuge for the Taliban leadership. Similarly Pakistani insurgents use bases in Kunar and Paktia as havens from the Pakistani military. Afghanistan regularly blames Pakistan (with some reason) for the shelling of its territory by Taliban residents in Pakistan. The Interior Ministry recently banned all Pakistani newspapers from Afghanistan because they distort reality and "are a propaganda resource of the Taliban spokesmen,"⁷⁷ for example, by publishing transcripts of Taliban statements. (So much for the freedoms, hospitality, and respect the Taliban would be accorded in Afghanistan had they not been "taken to Qatar by foreigners.") Meanwhile, Pakistan interprets every engagement by India in Afghanistan as proof both of India's intent to encircle it and of Afghanistan's complicity in doing so. To some extent, both are right about the other; both have interests in protecting the other's adversaries. But more important, even if the respective havens are not necessarily provided by the other, each is politically and militarily powerless to eliminate the havens and expel the other's insurgents even if it wanted to, and, as charged, probably disinclined to do so even if it could.

Farther afield, Russia, like Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, is concerned that an Islamist state dominated by the Taliban would provide support, even if only symbolically, to its own Islamist (and ethnic) insurgents in the North Caucasus. Primarily because of Xinjiang Province, China shares the concerns of Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan regarding Islamic awakenings and insurrections. But China, a competitor to and past military adversary of India, has therefore long been supportive of India's enemy, Pakistan, which in turn regards China as its only real and steadfast friend and ally. In September 2012, anticipating NATO's withdrawal and its own increasing presence, its domestic security chief, Zhou Yonkang, made China's first high-level visit to Afghanistan in over 50 years, discussed

76. The tit-for-tat goes on regularly. In mid-February 2013 Afghan authorities found and detained Maulvi Faqir Mohammed, the second-in-command of the Pakistani Taliban. Pakistan requested that he be turned over to them. Mariana Baabar, "Islamabad asks Kabul to hand over Maulvi Faqir," *The News*, February 22, 2013, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-21113-Islamabad-asks-Kabul-to-hand-over-Maulvi-Faqir>. Just a few hours later Afghanistan refused on the grounds that there was no extradition treaty between the two countries. Similarly, the Afghans asked Pakistan to return its Taliban prisoners "so that they could participate in Afghanistan's peace and reconciliation efforts" but the Pakistanis demurred "because there is no prisoner exchange agreement between the two countries." Tahir Khan, "Afghanistan refuses to hand over Maulvi Faqir," *The Express Tribune*, February 22, 2013, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/510971/afghanistan-refuses-to-hand-over-maulvi-faqir>. On the other hand, at Afghanistan's request, a few weeks earlier Pakistan began releasing Afghan Taliban prisoners in order to help Afghanistan lay a conducive atmosphere for possible talks with the Taliban, but the ISI believes that over half of those released have now returned to fight as active Taliban insurgents. Baabar, "Islamabad asks Kabul to hand over Maulvi Faqir." Each country needs the other, yet both dwell on mutual recriminations more than on cooperation. In fact, Afghanistan does not recognize the Durand Line that demarcates their current internationally recognized common border, believing that some of its territory lies to the east of that line in what is now Pakistan. The real threat is to both countries: the desire by many Pashtuns for a new "Pashtunistan," which would include the large Pashtun areas in Afghanistan's south and east plus the Pashtun-dominated areas in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas and its recently renamed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly Northwest Frontier) Province.

77. "Pakistan shelling will jeopardize ties: Kabul," *The Express Tribune*, September 22, 2012, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/440725/pakistani-shelling-will-jeopardise-ties-kabul>.

economic and security cooperation, and signed a security agreement, including a pledge “to upgrade their ties to the level of strategic and co-operative partnership . . . conducive to peace, stability and development,” and a pledge by China to “train, fund, and equip Afghan police.”⁷⁸ So, yet another strategic partnership and more training, equipping, and funding. China is increasing its presence and natural resource investments in Afghanistan, for example, in the Mes Aynak copper mine and assistance (now stalled) with a railroad to transport Afghanistan’s mineral resources. In January 2012 the China National Petroleum Corporation was awarded several exploratory blocks for gas and oil in the Amu Darya fields near Faizabad, the capital of Badakhshan Province. China’s involvement heartens Pakistan and worries India.

Three factors create some optimism that the neighbors will restrain themselves. First, the trophy is not worth being manhandled by the others. Other than the dangers and the challenge of the sport, what does the winner wind up with: a mangled goat carcass? Meanwhile the cost of competition has been high. Second, but related, other larger and wealthier countries and empires have been drawn into the Afghanistan vacuum and rued the day they were. Why should Iran or Pakistan or Uzbekistan commit troops and treasure in the belief that, unlike predecessors, they will do better? And third, the first mover will gain a bit of advantage but will also draw in the competitors and engender the competition. So the costs will be driven even higher than just the heavy burden of fighting the Afghans themselves. Indeed, all the rivals need to do is arm and support the Afghan factions, who will do the job of defeating their first-moving competitor for them, and on the cheap. Of course, as history has demonstrated multiple times, foreign powers do not easily learn its lessons until it is too late. So direct intervention is a distinct possibility. Still the lessons of the Soviet and now the United States and coalition experiences are fresh and the neighboring states are weaker than either of the two global powers. One legacy the coalition could leave on its way out would be some kind of regional agreement not to interfere, however improbable to achieve.

78. Rob Taylor, “Top China official visits Afghanistan, signs security deal,” Reuters, September 23, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/09/23/afghanistan-china-idUSL4E8KN00U20120923>.

3 | Three Scenarios

If this is the general context for Afghanistan's post-2014 future and if the factors of security, governance and the economy are the main domestic determinants, the civilian role after 2014 might best be established in light of how these factors will play out. Many scenarios are possible but they probably fall under permutations of three general patterns: optimistic, muddling through, and pessimistic.

Optimistic Scenario

Perhaps the most important and most optimistic prospect for Afghanistan is political rather than military. If the election process goes well and if decent candidates emerge and contest in a credible manner, a new and more legitimate government would take over with a new (or, less optimistically, reshuffled) cabinet, new ministers, new policies, and a new, popular mandate. Optimistically, it would be competent as well, thus ending over a dozen years of cabinet reshuffles and policy vacillations under President Hamid Karzai. Cronies organized around different cliques or set of cliques might take over, almost certainly (given the nature of the Afghan elites) with continued but, optimistically, reduced levels of corruption. Optimists can hope that scandals, like Kabul Bank, in which, among others, President Karzai's brother, Mohamoud Karzai, was deeply implicated will not recur.¹ But, even optimistically, the level of assistance will be reduced; the only question is how quickly and by how much.

One potential bright spot is the Wolesi Jirga, the lower and more important house of the National Assembly,² although not because it is a venue of virtue and integrity. Its members enjoy privileges and immunities, including patronage and payoffs for their votes, that, for many, may be the primary motivation for seeking office. Compared to the office of the president, the National Assembly has much more limited powers.³ It has little institutional

1. Mathew Rosenberg, "Trial of fraud and vengeance leads to Kabul Bank convictions," *New York Times*, March 5, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/06/world/asia/afghanistan-convicts-21-in-kabul-bank-scandal.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

2. "USAID assistance strengthens the ability of the Parliament to operate as an independent and effective legislative, representative, and oversight body on behalf of the Afghan people." 1230 Report of December 2012, 117. Note that each of the Pentagon's 1230 reports includes several sections on civilian assistance programs, reinforcing the proposition that the assistance programs have been an integral part of the military's counterinsurgency strategy.

3. The 2003 Constitutional Loya Jirga did consider a more parliamentary form of government or at least one with a more powerful legislature. Interim President Karzai fought tenaciously against parliamentary

coherence. But it does have some powers, for example, to approve the budget and major presidential appointments, which creates the *potential* for a countervailing check on the presidency in which resides almost every governmental power in the unitary state, including the appointment of virtually every official in the country, the design and execution of the budget, the authority to (selectively) enforce the laws, on and on. Originally presumed to be hopelessly incapacitated by its many factions, their limited political bases, their desire for payoffs and patronage, constrained legal authority, and almost no institutional coherence or member loyalty, the National Assembly was assumed to be a rubber stamp for President Karzai. Perhaps as a result of the divided cabinet and President Karzai's reputation for indecision, the Assembly did exercise some of its limited powers. It rejected several Karzai nominations for ministerial positions and several of his budget submissions. In July 2013 it voted no-confidence in, thereby effectively dismissing, the minister of interior, Mujtaba Patang, in part over the deteriorating security and growing instability of the country and in part because he failed to appear after being summoned by the Assembly along with the ministers of defense and intelligence (the National Directorate of Security).⁴ In August 2012, following several votes of no-confidence, it voted to dismiss Minister of National Defense Abdul Rahim Wardak (a former Pashtun mujahideen commander and sometime competitor to Karzai) and Minister of Interior Bismillah Khan Mohammadi (a former Tajik mujahideen commander), both with strong patronage networks, in theory over their failure to stem cross-border attacks from militants in Pakistan and corruption in government. True, many believe that Karzai clandestinely wanted these dismissals so he could place his Pashtun allies and clients in these powerful positions and that the Assembly's dismissals were in fact favors to Karzai rather than checks on his powers.⁵ Others believe they constituted a signal to Karzai that more patronage was needed by more parliamentarians.⁶ Perhaps more important, the Assembly has been the venue of vigorous debate that too frequently devolves into brawls. Like many other legislatures, it rarely drafts legislation, and notwithstanding its sporadic stands against the presidency, remains with little oversight power. It does not frequently assert the powers it does have, no doubt in part because votes have been purchased. Few have illusions about the Assembly as a paragon either of rectitude or effectiveness.

power and in favor of presidential power, just as he insisted on a unitary state that the powerful president would control. No surprise there.

4. Ghanizada, "Afghan parliament dismiss interior minister Mujtaba Patang," *Khaama Press*, July 22, 2013, <http://www.khaama.com/afghan-parliament-dismiss-interior-minister-mujtaba-patang-1687>. See also Mara Tchalakov, "Abdul Wardak and Bismillah Khan Mohammadi: Unpacking Afghanistan's Ministerial Shake-up," *Political Update*, Institute for the Study of War, August 16, 2012, http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ISWPoliticalUpdate_AfghanistansMinisterialShakeup.pdf.

5. Following their removal, Karzai appointed General Bismillah Khan Mohammadi to replace Abdul Rahim Wardak as minister of national defense and the National Assembly concurred. A few observers in Kabul believe that Karzai wanted for years to remove Wardak, a Pashtun rival, and to consolidate his hold on the cabinet in time for the 2014 elections, which is why, they surmise, Karzai did not fight more vigorously for Wardak, who is now a special adviser on defense.

6. For a fuller discussion of the tensions between President Karzai and the National Assembly, see Gran Hewad, "Tit for Tat—and Worse: The long history of enmity between parliament and government," *Afghan Analysts Network*, July 23, 2013, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/tit-for-tat-and-worse-the-long-history-of-enmity-between-parliament-and-government>.

Still, from a structural and governance perspective, depending on how it is exercised, increased authority of the Wolesi Jirga, the lower house, could be a welcome development because it would create an elected (therefore somewhat accountable) countervailing institution to the presidency and the bureaucracy irrespective of any venal motivations and intentions. More positively, it could develop into a constructive force for better governance, especially if the projected 2015 parliamentary elections are well-contested, more depersonalized, fair, and produce an airing of and some choice between public policies. If the president could not simply pass laws by decree and needed parliamentary approval, if the members of parliament would contain their avarice, if they would better represent their constituents and some element of the common good, if they were not so completely focused on their personal benefits, if they would at least attend meetings and take their roles seriously, if it passed more than two laws (on elections) in a sitting—all big if's—the Assembly *could* become a critical positive force as well as perhaps (apart from the media and possibly political parties sometime in the future) the only viable constitutional constraint on the unbridled authority of the presidency.⁷

True decentralization would also limit the power of the presidency but no one in the executive branch will willingly permit it. Were the National Assembly to improve, it could contribute significantly to Afghanistan's policy framework and its governance; even now it gets high marks from the Afghan population.⁸ Surprisingly, 70 percent of the respondents to the 2012 survey of public opinion by the Asia Foundation believe that parliament represents the people and therefore should make the laws “even if the president does not agree” while the other 30 percent believe that “since the president represents all of us, he should pass laws without worrying about what parliament thinks,”⁹ an astounding repudiation of the tight presidential power and control exercised by President Karzai.

Another bright spot, not just potentially but actually, is the growth of new outlets, particularly television, radio, and social media. As President Karzai reiterates repeatedly, Afghans have much to dislike about the foreign troops, including night raids, imperial use of their roads and villages, arrests, and interrogations. Freedom of expression, not much honored before 2001 and certainly not by the Taliban, has been one of the benefits of the invasion by the coalition countries. Private media outlets are permitted and subsidized by these invaders, even when critical of the occupation. Free discussion has provided at least part of a model for governmental accountability. Outlets have proliferated and some have flourished. If the environment survives the withdrawal of the International Security

7. In some perverse way, it can be said that the insurgency itself checks the presidency as well by limiting his geographic reach, his room for maneuver, and his decisions, but of course these are not constitutional or legal checks.

8. According to the Asia Foundation, more than 7 out of 10 respondents (72 percent) agree strongly or somewhat while 27 percent disagree strongly or somewhat that “parliament is addressing the major problems of people in our country.” 2012 TAF Survey, 97. Getting more local, a smaller number, although still a substantial majority, 59 percent, agree strongly or somewhat that “*my MP [member of parliament] is addressing the problems of my constituency in the parliament.*” 2012 TAF Survey, 98 (italics added).

9. 2012 TAF Survey, 137. The respondents were asked to choose as to which of the two statements they agreed with more, but the two statements were the only ones offered—pick one or the other—thereby illustrating a problem with the Asia Foundation survey.

Assistance Force (ISAF) and the aftermath, life in Afghanistan, particularly improved governance, will be much enhanced.

Perhaps the brightest spot for Afghanistan's future is the new generation of Afghans, those age 24 and under. They constitute nearly two-thirds of the entire population.¹⁰ Particularly hopeful are those in the urban areas and those who have had tertiary, or at least secondary, education, whether rural or urban. Their formative years have been dominated, like those of their parents, by insecurity, conflict, and civil war. They came of age not under a brutal, repressive Taliban regime for which seventh-century Mecca and Medina remains the epitome of and model for human existence to be recreated in the 21st century, but under a regime, however flawed, that welcomed, even needed, engagement with a completely different 21st-century global world. Virtually all have radio and television. Many are now connected to one another and beyond via 17 million cell phones. Tens of thousands are familiar with Google, Twitter, and YouTube. Many are energetic, determined, ambitious, plugged in, and (at least some) intent on making Afghanistan into the kind of country envisioned by Afghanistan at the July 2012 Tokyo conference and the ensuing framework and Afghan strategic vision statement.¹¹ It is easy to over-idealize youth in any country and to expect that somehow they are animated by greater altruism and will not fall into the same corruption, graft, and predation of their elders. Many probably will be co-opted and corrupted by power and money, but for now most of them say they want to renew their country and, no doubt themselves overly idealistic, to make it effective and engaged and to rid it of violence and corruption. Some will certainly try. The tragedy of their lives is that the odds are not in their favor.

More regionally, Afghanistan's several neighboring countries would, optimistically, leave Afghanistan alone, stay out of its internal affairs, or even open friendly constructive relations, including free trade that would help Afghanistan develop. If Afghanistan were on the road to stability and perhaps even some measure of prosperity, its neighbors might have more material incentives to play supportive roles. But their own interests are incompatible with one another and, unfortunately, also Afghanistan.¹²

There is, of course, the small dampening matter of the insurgency. Optimistically, the Taliban would reconcile, join the government, and reintegrate into a pluralist, non-fundamentalist, humane society; conversely, it would be defeated or rendered into a chronic nuisance but not a serious threat. A continued, truly threatening insurrection

10. In fact the rough estimate is 65 percent of the population but these are estimates. Central Intelligence Agency, World Factbook, 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>. Approximately 34 percent of the population, over one-third, is under 10. Afghanistan in Transition, 135. Nearly half (46.2 percent) is under 14 in 2011. United Nations (UN) data, "Afghanistan," <http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx>.

11. *Afghanistan's Strategic Vision*.

12. For a skeptical view of a regional approach based on the mutually inconsistent national interests among the regional countries, see Ashley J. Tellis, "Implementing a Regional Approach to Afghanistan: Multiple Alternatives, Modest Possibilities," in *Is a Regional Strategy Viable in Afghanistan*, ed. Ashley J. Tellis and Aroop Mukharji (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010). For a more optimistic view, see Audrey Kurth Cronin, "Thinking Long on Afghanistan: Could it be Neutralized?" *Washington Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (Winter 2013).

would hardly be optimistic. Absent the international forces, it would menace and, worst case, overwhelm the government and the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). As both the Karzai government and the coalition partners recognize, defeating the insurgency militarily is extremely unlikely, but perhaps a reversal of the insurgency's momentum and rendering it a containable nuisance is not impossible. As of the end of the 2013 fighting season, the Taliban can claim multiple tactical victories but has not managed a successful strategic campaign. Still, the hope of GIROA is reconciliation and inclusion, not outright defeat. It is unlikely that the election of a new president could make much difference in the attitude of the insurgents and their willingness to reach some kind of accommodation, including participation. They too are tired and split into contending camps.

If an accommodation could be reached and if the insurgents were willing to join, that would raise some issues about the policies of the resulting government, the engagement of the donors, and the terms of their respective participation. Naturally, the Taliban will also have set some conditions. As a result of the negotiations, the 2014 presidential elections may not necessarily be honored. The Taliban is unlikely to recognize the winner of an election in which it played no direct part. Even if the office remains, the presidential election may have to be rerun. The membership and powers of the National Assembly may have also to be renegotiated. Certainly ministerial positions would have to be reshuffled even in the unlikely event that the Taliban decided to accept Afghanistan's current constitution without amendment. What ministries would the Taliban demand and what policies would it pursue? The then-existing array of non-insurgent political forces would be different and that would mean a different set of winners and losers. Some officials would have to relinquish their positions to make room for Taliban successors or at least dilute their power to accommodate additional ministries for the Taliban, a kind of ministerial inflation. Almost surely, the relative power of non-insurgency factions would be diminished, assuming they had agreed to the deal with the insurgents.

Moreover, as central players in the new government the Taliban would be engaged in GIROA's policies, at the very least in the ministries they controlled. Although Mullah Mohammed Omar says that the Taliban has learned some lessons from its mistakes, he has not articulated what those lessons are. Which mistakes? And what lessons? Remaining enigmatic allows for optimistic projections for a reconciled Afghanistan, but the data for such optimism remains slim. For example, what would a post-reconciliation government's policy be on education, especially the education of girls? Even seemingly noncontentious issues like health could easily be affected. The Taliban is not noted for its interest in science, modern medicine, or the health of women. Would polio inoculations be allowed or would those who administer them be assassinated, as in Pakistan? What policies would a Taliban Ministry of Health promulgate? What about human rights in general, like the constitutionally guaranteed rights of speech and assembly? What about women? What about the role of Islam and shari'a? Most importantly, what would be the complexion of the post-reconciliation ANSF, with what missions, and who would control it?

Less contentiously perhaps, what kind of economic policy would the new government pursue? Would the Taliban accept, let alone encourage, international investments, however limited they may be? What economic policies would the Taliban accept? International investments would open Afghanistan to global economic forces and influences, including a pollution of morals. Trading with and investment from Central Asia, China, Saudi Arabia, and even Iran, religious differences aside, would be one thing. Europe, East Asia, and North America might be another. The former would hardly encourage or result in political liberalization, open Internet and information access, or freer movements of persons, goods and services. In fact, they might well be allies in preventing them. These countries might well align with the Taliban's domestic forces and policies. But the latter countries would not.

The optimistic scenario, then, depends on continued security and development assistance from abroad; a security apparatus that can challenge, defeat, neuter, or absorb the insurrection; a credible election with a fresh reinvigorated mandate; a government of competence and integrity; a more realistic division of power and authority between the center and the regions; a strengthened legislature; and a real, functioning system of justice. It depends as well on the terms, conditions, and success of a peaceful absorption of the Taliban and its allies in a non-fundamentalist state, and a state that wants to be part of a more globalized world. Likewise, optimistically, Afghanistan's neighbors would contribute to development or at least remain neutral and not interfere. Optimism would depend as well on the continued delivery of the substantial amount of the foreign assistance of the kind promised at Tokyo under conditions mutually satisfactory to the new government and the donors but in the context of donor austerity at home and, to say the least, the donors' domestic needs vying for increasingly scarce funds. With the exception of the de-concentration (maybe even some decentralization) and the strengthened legislature and perhaps the foreign assistance, an optimal scenario is hopeful but not likely. Perhaps more disheartening, Paul Collier estimates that half of all postconflict countries return to conflict within five years so, even *ceteris paribus*, the risk of a return to conflict within five years is 50/50, which in Afghanistan's case may itself be optimistic.¹³

Muddling Through Scenario

Muddling through may be a more realistic scenario for Afghanistan, but even it is perhaps too optimistic. First, after the drawdown, it will dramatically lose salience and attention by coalition countries and major donors. Of all the allies in the "coalition of the willing," that fought so hard in Iraq, which of their general publics now cares much about Afghanistan's increasing violence and potential for sectarian implosion? Other than cursory and somewhat sporadic coverage, where are the stories about Iraq in the major media outlets? Who cared about Vietnam, let alone Cambodia or Laos, in the immediate decades after 1975? Afghanistan will be much more on its own. By definition, direct military spending will

13. "The risks of conflict relapse are very high during the first post-conflict decade—typically around 50%." Paul Collier, "Development and Conflict," Centre for the Study of African Economies, Oxford University, October 1, 2004, 7, <http://www.un.org/esa/documents/Development.and.Conflict2.pdf>.

plummet and so too will corollary military funding, including the Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP) spending by its longer-term hold-and-build contractors.

For the United States, the political pressure to bring the remaining troops home will grow commensurately, quite aside from the projected reductions approved by the White House. There might then be an apparent conjunction of interests: the interests of the government of Afghanistan to end a foreign occupation and the collateral damage its forces bring; and the interests of the coalition countries whose forces are exposed to attack (both by the Taliban and by their own Afghan allies) to eliminate or at least reduce casualties.

The security envelope provided by the coalition forces will decline commensurately, indeed it will disappear. The ANSF will be fully responsible for security in Afghanistan. After 2014 the president of Afghanistan, whoever that is, will have little if any further reason to complain about night raids by coalition troops or to condemn the civilian casualties as a result of drone strikes.¹⁴ To the extent it remains intact, the ANSF will in theory be under the president's control to direct, encourage, or constrain as he thinks best.

However unlikely, the ANSF's defeating the Taliban or at least holding large parts of the country is not completely infeasible, especially if (again, however improbable) the anticipated support from the coalition countries actually materializes, especially after 2014. The ANSF could establish real command and control. It could rally and succeed. The next Afghan president will certainly depend on it. Realistically, and notwithstanding ISAF's official optimism, it is hard to see any scenario by which a trained and motivated ANSF can maintain its ground, let alone defeat the insurgency. Indeed, as already noted, the ANSF could fragment into factions and communalisms, egged on by "green on green" insider attacks. The ANSF's factions could wind up fighting one another as least as fiercely as the ANSF combat the Taliban, a redux of the 1990s. And the Taliban would probably increase in strength, and probably expanding in geography. Could the expansion be held in check and contained to the south and east?

More likely, the ANSF and the insurgency will be locked into a strategic stalemate in which neither one inflicts a decisive defeat on the other, but both make some tactical gains and sustain some tactical losses in a constant no-win struggle. Momentum would shift back and forth at the tactical but perhaps not at the strategic level. If so, the ANSF would probably secure the cities and major towns and large parts of the primary roads, at least by day. The Taliban would establish control in certain parts of the countryside, primarily in the south and east. From there it would harass ANSF troops, supply routes, and important parts of the economic infrastructure. Naturally, it would continue terrorist attacks against the

14. As discussed in Chapter 1 (see note 7), in a mid-February 2013 speech at the National Military Academy, President Hamid Karzai said he would forbid his troops from requesting any additional air strikes from NATO. Rubin, "Karzai to Forbid Afghan Forces From Requesting Foreign Airstrikes." Also see Reuters, "Karzai to decree ban on foreign air-strike assistance during Afghan ops" (cited in Chapter 2 note 8). Far from clear is whether his order will stick before he leaves office, let alone afterward. If it does, what effect would the ban have on ANSF's counterinsurgency, whether NATO will have air strike capacity in Afghanistan after 2014, and whether NATO would be willing to use the capacity.

ANSF but also against GIROA officials and ordinary citizens. It would also lay improvised explosive devices, conduct random violence throughout the country, and try to make Afghanistan as insecure and ungovernable as possible. Its terrorism and control would be more extensive at night. Even the cities and towns, and certainly the roads and villages, would become more insecure. The pattern is hardly unique to Afghanistan.

With declining donor resources, tentative security, and a very uncertain, deeply problematic future, governance could revert more to the negotiated balance traditional to Afghanistan and with the historical writ that ran not very deeply beyond Kabul and varied from place to place and time to time. Notwithstanding a roller-coaster security environment—temporary gains and losses, sometimes up, sometimes down—the central state would not have the funds to support its grand Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and 22 national priority programs. Indeed, without the billions of dollars of donor assistance creating, encouraging, and propping it up, the current central government structure would never have been created or sustained. Absent that foreign support and forced to rely more on their own resources, Afghans might necessarily reconsider the utterly foreign constitutional, bureaucratic, and political fiction that they have a strong central government. In fact, a muddling through regime may not even be decentralized, which assumes a core, national government that legally and systemically shares power with truly and independently (not just derivatively) empowered local authorities (not just, as in de-concentration, assigns central staff to localities for implementing national policies). Instead, the local authorities are more likely to be more on their own with more modest and formalistic nods toward the center. Notwithstanding the ways in which Afghanistan has changed in the past two decades, its more traveled population with their consumer goods, and the movement of populations to the towns and cities, the center will no longer have the resources to entice (some say bribe) national loyalty and local compliance. The attempt to graft a strong, national center onto a quilted social, cultural, economic, and historical landscape would be over, or certainly much attenuated, at least for the moment.

A revival of religious fundamentalism—if it ever truly diminished—would reinforce the country's basic cultural conservatism. Without doubt, the recent entry of women into the workplace along with their newfound rights and participation in many other avenues of Afghan life would be challenged. The gains made toward gender equality would decline, but in what ways and by how much?

A reversion to the governance mean and a social reversion together with an uncertain security envelope would be accompanied by—even cause—a decline in the economy. As noted, the substantial amounts of funds expended by coalition donors and their militaries will disappear. The wealth they created will disappear with them. Almost no export economy has been created. The hope for economic growth powered by natural resource extraction is highly contingent. And in many, even most, countries large-scale resource extraction has also brought the resource curse of grand corruption and the creation of a small, enriched elite with little trickling down to the larger population. The small elite that

has already captured the opportunities brought by the coalition, and has already far intensified earlier levels of corruption, will try to capture and privatize any rents from resource extraction. As already noted, the economic exploitation of Afghanistan's natural resources depends on domestic security, the cost of logistics, and the cooperation of its neighbors, all theoretical and tentative. The most dependable source of income would be poppy and opium.

In any of the many muddling through scenarios, Afghanistan would need to keep its conflicting neighbors at some level of bay, a prospect that would probably have exceeded even Bismarck's remarkable ability to balance interests. It is certainly beyond even the conceptual capacity of Afghanistan's foreign service and political leadership in a muddling-through environment. Afghanistan will be trying to secure its own future in the face of the conflicting whims of its neighbors. Yet a failed Afghanistan would serve none of their interests. Perhaps the only safe harbor for Afghanistan, depends on its neighbors being convinced to follow national interests rather than instincts and passions.

Still, Afghanistan survived reasonably well for centuries before the Soviet occupation and its emphasis on the central government, education, gender equality, and its attempt to wrench Afghan society and economy into a globalizing world, which was again replicated by the coalition. Notwithstanding the altered social, economic, and political landscape, Afghanistan could still muddle through with a much reduced GDP, a renewal of local traditions,¹⁵ and a substantial emigration by the new, albeit still very small, middle and upper classes, assuming the insurgency can be contained and a much smaller and less ambitious national government can deliver on its diminished mandate and with limited corruption. Real governance would again be more subnational, but many Afghans would welcome that along with tempered governance ambitions nurtured in Kabul.

In the areas consolidated by the Taliban, security might well be reestablished but at a cost in the elements that constitute the United Nations (UN) human development index (health, education, domestic income per capita, etc.) and certainly without extending the promises of the 2012 Tokyo Framework. Life in the contested parts of Afghanistan would be less secure. If uncertainty prevails, small and medium-sized private investment would decline; large-scale investments would cease to occur. But Afghans could adjust, as they have in the past, to a more localized and self-sufficient life. The economic decline alone also affects the areas still under GIRoA control. The entire country being in play and in flux, no one could really be sure that any area would remain secure, especially because the insurgency would have metastasized. Trading and short-term investments would continue but

15. Along with fantasies of a florescent Silk Road globalizing Afghanistan on the one hand, the fantasy of restoring the old local *shuras*, *jirgas*, and other traditional legal and governance mechanisms is also unfeasible. Many traditional leaders have been killed, replaced, displaced, or simply moved, leaving no clear, authoritative successors. Money and guns, the new coins of the realm (more than formal succession, age, wisdom, and kinship, the sources of traditional authority), have empowered different actors in leadership roles albeit some using the old titles. The social changes have also affected the authority and sustainability of old institutions and procedures. The changed economy, for example, does require more formal rules and court systems. The old system cannot simply be resuscitated by restoring the old guard. As they say, the genie, once out of the bottle, won't very easily return, especially if the bottle has changed so considerably.

the time horizons for expected returns would diminish. Afghans in a position to do so would take as much as they could as fast as they could, not a prospect for sustained economic growth or good governance.

Yes, Afghans could muddle through with continued and probably growing insecurity, corrupt but more local governance, economic contraction, increased narcotic flows (including increased domestic use), poorer health and education services, and a lot of hedging. It would not be optimal but muddling through is never optimal.

Pessimistic Scenario

The more pessimistic scenarios are yet more daunting. If the ANSF fare poorly or even collapses, the Taliban will begin to recapture substantially more territory, gain momentum, and look like they are winning. Even a rolling series of more limited successes would probably trigger a set of defensive responses, probably self-fulfilling, toward communal preservation and away from a single polity and national institutions. Substantial, extensive, sustained Taliban gains, actual or apparent, indicating real momentum—more than just unsystematic, intermittent gains and losses—would probably panic many Afghans, including quite a few Pashtuns. It could trigger a flight to ethnic, religious, and ideological safety in alternative non-Taliban sanctuaries.

Whatever their (natural) dislike of being occupied by Western forces, virtually every poll and every private conversation confirms that a large majority of Afghans (including Pashtuns) are averse to the prospects of another Taliban regime.¹⁶ No matter how many times the Taliban leadership says it will not return to a form of government and religion inimical to the history and character of Afghanistan, virtually no Afghans want to risk that trial. Been there, done that. Afghans may be religious and social conservatives deeply committed to a role for Islam in public life, but the majority are not fundamentalists devoted to (re)creating some imagined caliphate or emirate. Relatively few have any interest in being governed by religious fundamentalists.

Consequently, for all practical purposes, a prospective collapse of the current Afghan state and its replacement by a Taliban-dominated one would be more likely to precipitate

16. The evidence is abundant, if often anecdotal. However, some quantitative data is available. According to the Asia Foundation, a large majority of respondents have no sympathy at all (63%) with the insurgents while 10% have a lot of sympathy and 20% have some level of sympathy. “Over time, there has been a decline in the number of people who sympathize (either a lot or little) with these armed opposition groups that use violence.” 2012 TAF Survey, 6. True, the proportion of Afghans with no sympathy for the insurgency has declined in a few regions: Central/Kabul (74% to 70%), the West (60% to 56%) and the South West (61% to 55%). “Among those who express a high level of sympathy toward the armed opposition groups, 34% say it is because these groups are Afghans, while a similar proportion (33%) says it is because they are Muslims.” Ibid. Sympathy or antipathy toward the insurgents is not quite the same thing as sympathy with or antipathy toward a Taliban regime, but they are pretty close. The same Asia Foundation poll found substantial support for reconciliation: “A large majority of respondents (81%) agree with the government’s national reconciliation and negotiation efforts, with 38% strongly in favor.” Ibid. Although the majority is large among all ethnic groups, it is highest among Pashtuns (85%) and Uzbeks (84%) and highest in the East (91%), Northeast (86%) and Southwest (84%). Ibid.

some kind of race to safety and a possible civil war both between the minorities, and the Pashtuns, among the minorities, and possibly among the Pashtuns themselves than a security and governance peace under the Taliban, whatever the official assurances. Afghans of all persuasions are full of grievances, but, unlike some other countries including Pakistan and Iran, almost no one talks about secession or partition. A toxic combination of Wahabism (in the form of Deobandism) and the *Pashtunwali* (the Pashtun code of conduct) could change that, at least for the non-Pashtuns.¹⁷ A peaceful partition of the country is possible, but improbable. The specter of a return to some version of the decade beginning in the mid-1980s or worse of a Hobbesian conflict of all against all is not beyond imagination.

Any Northern Alliance–type renaissance would be different in form and content; it would be uncertain, volatile, and fluctuating.¹⁸ The minorities who fought the Taliban before—Tajiks, Uzbeks, Shiites, and Hazaras—persist more or less in place and fearful of a Pashtun Taliban regime. They remain anti-Taliban, notwithstanding some Taliban successes, many dependent on pockets of Pashtun populations, in those same regions of the north and west. Indeed many of the same leaders are still alive albeit in changed conditions. A northern counter-insurrection or northern counterinsurgency, however different from two decades ago, would have regional backers in Central Asia and Iran. Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Directorate might whisper that it can control the Taliban, but it cannot, and it probably knows it. More important, Afghans know it. Moreover they do not trust or like the Pakistanis. Although a Taliban government and security regime could bring some stability, animosity and uncertainty about governance and the future would increase. The question is whether even Taliban participation as envisioned under the optimistic or muddling through scenarios would trigger such an apocalyptic response among non-Pashtuns and non-Islamists that they take radical defensive action. Their concerns could perhaps be tempered by explicit guarantees by the Taliban and “red lines” that would need to be incorporated into any negotiated reconciliation and settlement but to the potential victims of a Taliban success, formal guarantees would be almost vacuous.

The response of the Pashtun to Taliban successes would also be uncertain, potentially volatile, and fluctuating. The assumption of solid support by the Pashtuns of a triumphant Taliban is questionable. Inherent inter-tribal tensions and competitions could easily overcome any Pashtun solidarity. The Ghilzais and the Durranis could easily split from one

17. While the *Pashtunwali* encodes many problematic principles (including the deprecating treatment of women and the rough collective accountability and justice by which one group’s unjustified loss must be avenged against the offending group irrespective of individual accountability), it also includes many noble ones: the importance of honor, loyalty, duty, dignity, generosity, and hospitality. Perhaps the major defect in these noble principles is their exclusivity. With the exception of hospitality (to certain guests), they apply almost exclusively endogenously rather than to other groups in Afghanistan or elsewhere, and often not even to other Pashtuns of opposing tribes, subtribes, and clans.

18. The Northern Alliance had an official name (United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan) and some formal structure. The Northern Alliance formed (gathered is perhaps the better term) in 1996 after the Taliban gained control of Kabul and established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, which was basically a loose coalition of local militias (often also loosely) under local warlords: the Sunni Tajiks led by Ahmad Shah, Massoud the Suni Uzbeks led by Abdul Rashid Dostam, the Sunni Pashtun Eastern Shura led by Abdul Qadir, the Shi’a Tajiks and Hazaras led by Sayed Hussain Anwari, and the other Shi’a Hazaras led by Mohammad Mohaqiq.

another in a confused near-anarchic environment, to say nothing of the subtribes and clans of which they are composed. Karzai's minority Popalzais are uncertain to prevail when their foreign sponsors have departed even though they have captured a substantial number of GIROA positions and a great deal of wealth and power in the ISAF decade. However, rather than dueling among themselves over ideology, territory, spoils, and loyalties, the apparent secession of the minority populations in the north could solidify the Pashtuns even around the Taliban. The assumption that any civil war would resemble the Pashtun/non-Pashtun division of the post-Soviet period is almost certainly too simple to capture the sociopolitical realities of post-2014 Afghanistan.

Whether a general victory by the Taliban, or a protracted civil war, or both, under a pessimistic scenario, the Afghan national state and the national economy would collapse for most practical purposes. Although the Taliban may have no objection to returning to a traditional agricultural or horticultural economy, most Afghans would. Those who migrated to the cities are not likely to want to return to primitive villages. Many young Afghans have never even experienced the village life of their grandparents. Emigration would increase if the borders were not sealed. A true civil war or a de facto splintering or partition would spell the end of national governance and an economic collapse as well. Trade and the movement of goods would become increasingly hazardous, episodic, and expensive, perhaps even impossible. Kabul might remain defended by the remnants of the ANSF still issuing optimistic plans and priorities, but it would resemble the Wizard of Oz with all the light-and-sound pyrotechnics. The curtain would have parted though, revealing a pathetic, possibly psychotic GIROA. Like all national disintegrations and civil conflicts, much of Afghanistan would be contested, up for grabs, disintegrated. Power and authority would become more and more contingent and localized, dependent on who had the men, the money, and the guns. Conflict and violence could easily become endemic.

Poppy production and drug flows would increase.¹⁹ No one would exercise the kind of authority necessary to reduce the drug economy; all would be trying to control as much of it as possible. The Taliban attempted unsuccessfully to stamp out the drugs in areas it controlled. One of the lessons Mullah Omar apparently did learn was not even to try the next time.²⁰

19. Under most World Bank scenarios, poppy accounts for a significant portion of any growth in domestically based GDP. See World Bank, *Afghanistan in Transition*, 5, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFGHANISTAN/Resources/Vol1Overview8Maypm.pdf>.

20. In fact, although initially the Taliban forbade the production of poppy (the use of drugs, like the use of alcohol, being forbidden in Islam for clouding the mind), the prohibition took such a toll on Afghan farmers, especially in the Helmand and the other parts of the Taliban's heartland, that the prohibition was, in effect, rescinded by around 1996. The Taliban learned quickly that it could not alienate its base, shari'a or not. Banning women from schools and health clinics, amputating limbs for thieves in stadiums with tens of thousands of cheering spectators, forcing men to grow beards of a certain length, whipping and caning, all of them in the name of Islam, were one thing. Banning poppy was quite another. Meanwhile the coalition has tried both to prohibit poppy cultivation or eradicate the crops and simultaneously to regain the support of the local poppy-growing population in its anti-Taliban counterinsurgency. Alternative livelihood programs were supposed to compensate for the loss of poppy income while also being more Islamic. Attempts to incentivize alternate crops have been at best inconclusive, more accurately disappointing. The alternatives were neither as uncomplicated for Afghan farmers nor as remunerative as poppy cultivation. The empowerment of illicit tax extraction by local power brokers and their enrichment is just another complexity in the intricate story of poppy in the life of Afghanistan.

Chaos, insecurity, dissolving governance, and a devastated economy would be a natural petri dish for drug production and smuggling, especially because the drug trade would fund all kinds of militias.

Whether a Taliban victory, or a splintering into enclaves, or a civil war, the coalition countries would withdraw most personnel, maybe leaving a few through the special operations command. By contrast, Afghanistan's neighbors would be forced to engage directly or to support various proxies. Pakistan would be most affected. It may be playing both sides against the middle now but, as that aphorism goes, that game is not sustainable. A victorious or succeeding Pashtun Taliban would energize and embolden Pashtuns in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and in Kyber-Pakhtunkhwa. It could easily rekindle visions of Pashtunistan, this time to support the joint cause of a Talibanized emirate straddling both sides of the Durand Line.

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How do the Afghans themselves assess these scenarios? Are they optimistic or pessimistic? In the 2012 national survey by the Asia Foundation just over half the sample (52 percent) believed that in general the country is going in the right direction, a 6 percent improvement from the previous year. The question is heavily influenced by the security situation, so the responses vary quite a bit by region.¹ Citing income and education, a slim majority (53 percent)—two-thirds in the urban areas—say their families are more prosperous now than under the Taliban while almost a third (31 percent) say they are less prosperous.² Four out of five Afghan households own a radio, 70 percent own a mobile phone (94 percent in urban areas and 63 percent in rural areas), over half own a television (92 percent in urban areas and 40 percent in rural areas). The numbers have been rising steadily over the past dozen years but the growth seems to have leveled off.³ Education, health, diet, and the availability of products in the market have improved dramatically, but sizable numbers of survey respondents complain about electricity and especially unemployment.⁴

Contrary to the views of almost all international observers, including ISAF commanders, 70 percent of Afghans believe that the government is doing a somewhat good or very good job in providing security,⁵ 93 percent have great or fair confidence in the Afghan National Army (ANA) and 82 percent in the Afghan National Police (ANP).⁶ Over 85 percent believe the ANA and ANP help improve security. Some 93 percent believe that the ANA is honest and fair with the Afghan people, a level that declines to 86 percent for the ANP; 82 percent say that the ANA is professional and well trained, compared to 74 percent for the ANP.⁷ These are high levels of confidence if they are accurate representations of overall public opinion. However, nearly 50 percent of the respondents fear encountering ANA and

1. 2012 TAF Survey, 23–30.

2. *Ibid.*, 63–66.

3. *Ibid.*, 171–172.

4. *Ibid.*, 73–76. Seventy percent say that employment is quite bad or very bad and 62 percent say the same about electricity.

5. *Ibid.*, 242.

6. *Ibid.*, 81–82, 241–243. Perhaps part of the confidence about security is a result of an apparent drop in the crime rate. Over half (51 percent) of the respondents rarely or ever fear for their own security or that of their family, a drop from 60 percent in 2006 but an increase from 48, 46, and 44 percent in 2009, 2010, and 2011, respectively. However, only 16 percent have actually been a victim of violence or crime in 2012, a drop from 22 percent in 2011 (but almost identical with 2009 and 2010). Again the numbers vary by region (the southeast and southwest having greater fear of insecurity and a greater experience with crime) and by community (more Pashtuns than Tajiks or Uzbeks or Hazaras). *Ibid.*, 34–36.

7. *Ibid.*, 50–52, 241–242.

the ANP officers,⁸ and 64 percent, nearly two out of three survey respondents, believe it is not acceptable to talk negatively in public about the government as a whole, presumably at least in part because they fear the consequences.⁹ Public responses may not accurately reflect true opinions that are less favorable. In fact, given the dozens of articles and reports citing cases of ANP corruption and abuse, it is hard to believe that three-quarters of the Afghan public believes that it is professional and well trained, that over 82 percent have great or fair confidence in it, and that 85 percent believe it has improved security.¹⁰ But even if an accurate reading and even crediting the high levels of confidence in the security forces, 65 percent of the Asia Foundation survey respondents believe that the ANA still needs the support of foreign troops and cannot operate by itself.¹¹

Judging by their private complaints in personal interviews well as dozens of official, academic, and journalistic accounts confirming incompetence, greed, theft, corruption, predation, nepotism, patronage, venality, and dozens of other offenses attributed to GIROA, the satisfaction and confidence by Afghans in their governance would seem to be abysmal. Yet, 60 percent or more of the Asia Foundation survey respondents reported a great deal or fair amount of confidence and satisfaction in some parts of government (provincial government, provincial development committees, public administration, parliament, and the Independent Election Commission); 50 percent or more are similarly satisfied with municipal and national officials and the judiciary.¹² Moreover, 75 percent of the survey respondents say that the central government (that is, GIROA) is doing a good or somewhat good job.¹³ The evaluation is less positive about specific performance. Asked to name the central government's most important accomplishments, respondents cite education, peace and security, and reconstruction, although only 28, 24, and 21 percent, respectively, cited satisfaction with actual achievements in these areas.¹⁴ Although they were the most important accomplishments respondents could cite, still only about one-fourth of the population was satisfied with the level of those accomplishments. The critical areas of corruption, security, and unemployment (corresponding to security, governance, and economic growth) are GIROA's greatest

8. *Ibid.*, 47. The Pashtuns fear encountering the ANA officers just a bit more than the other communities but 65 percent of the Pashtuns (versus 42 to 47 percent of others) fear encountering ANP officers.

9. *Ibid.*, 123.

10. At least for the ANA although not for the ANP, the levels of reported corruption are surprisingly low. Although respondents report increasing levels of corruption in general, the number of bribes to the ANA is the lowest (18 percent) of all of the institutions to which respondents were asked to react: public health service (36 percent), courts and judiciary (34 percent), job applications (34 percent), receiving official documents (32 percent), municipal officials (29 percent) state electricity agents (26 percent), college/university admissions (25 percent), and customs officials (24 percent). However, the ANP ranked in the middle (31 percent), much less well than the ANA. *Ibid.*, 112. These are the percentages of times when citizens say they have had to give cash or a gift to or perform a favor for a contacted official, which may not be the best way to ask about corruption levels. *Ibid.*, 234. Moreover, corruption is different from security. The ANA and ANP maybe providing high or low levels of security independent of their levels of corruption.

11. *Ibid.*, 51–52.

12. *Ibid.*, 84, Table 7.3.

13. *Ibid.*, 84–85. For a breakdown by geographical, policy, and service delivery, see 85–87.

14. *Ibid.*, 87–89.

failings.¹⁵ Overall, however, the proportion of the Asia Foundation respondents who say the national, provincial, municipal, and local/district governments are doing a good job is 75, 80, 65, and 66 percent, respectively,¹⁶ again a surprising response.

The discrepancy between the Asia Foundation polling data and personal, journalistic, and academic accounts is stark, as is the actual expatriation behavior of Afghans, for example, visa applications, green card requests, investments and funds sent abroad and hedging behavior with respect to the insurgents. For reasons already noted, it is hard to credit the accuracy of the polls, with formal questions, required choices, and impersonal administration against numerous public accounts of long private conversations among Afghan acquaintances and friends, especially regarding prospects for the post-2014 period. Afghans are nervous and frightened about a post-drawdown country and they are acting accordingly.

Afghan behavior is perhaps more telling than either conversations or polls. Without doubt, the projected reductions of the military presence and the assistance budgets have already adversely affected Afghanistan's economy, and will do so even more dramatically after 2014. The assistance industry that follows donor funding is clearly waning. Contracts and grants are not being renewed and, although the current declines have been relatively minor, future reductions, clear to all, will not be. International organizations are scaling back. The supply/demand ratio is being reversed. Given that reversal, prices would naturally fall, unless the future were bright, in which case a wise investor would buy low and sell high when the bright future vests. Investment decisions are not only or even primarily about the present economy but about economic prospects.

Private Afghan investment, an indicator of faith in the future, has been falling. Factory and home construction is declining. Property prices in Kabul, which rose astronomically over the past decade, have begun to drop precipitously, even plummeting in the wealthier areas where the elite—who have the best insider knowledge, the greatest number of options, and who represent bellwethers of risk because their personal and familial fortunes and future are at stake—have invested in the past. Now, large mansions are up for sale or rent; many have been available for months without offers. Afghans are not seizing the buy-low opportunities in real estate, processing, manufacturing, and other sectors, except in the extractive industries, presumably because they do not see sufficient probability of and are not sufficiently confident in the sell-high return. Along with reduced immediate demand from the foreigners, uncertainty or pessimism about the future is almost certainly the driver of the bear market in houses, factories, and land. Perhaps for that reason they want more liquid investments. But actually Afghans are not averse to acquiring real estate. They are indeed buying property and depositing funds: in Dubai. They are buying multiple units at hundreds of thousands of dollars each as sanctuary against insecurity,

15. Ibid., 90–92.

16. Ibid., 96, Table 7.15.

not just against a falling market.¹⁷ They are already hedging their bets, just not in Afghanistan. Those that have access are scrambling for visas and opportunities abroad, any way they can. From their perspective, the future of Afghanistan does not apparently look so bright.

17. “Daoud sees his 27th-floor bolt-hole as both a canny investment and the ultimate insurance policy against the darkest scenario . . . when the bulk of foreign forces leave. ‘Nobody knows what’s going to happen after 2014. If something happens . . . here, I can take my family. We feel safe in Dubai.’” Accordingly those with the means to do so have “sharply increased” their investments in the Emirates both as a response to calculations of profit but also to fears of insecurity after the drawdown. Praveen Menon and Mathew Green, “Afghans seek shelter in Dubai ahead of pullout,” Reuters, September 13, 2012, <http://in.reuters.com/article/2012/09/12/afghanistan-dubai-idINDEE88B0G620120912>.

5 | U.S. Civilian Engagement

What then about the civilian side of the U.S. effort in Afghanistan, especially the large assistance program, after “the end of the war” in 2014? The answer should depend on several factors, beginning with a clear idea of its mission and purposes and the consequent principles and policies, all of which in turn is constrained by the prevailing scenario. What should be the requirements and conditions? What will GIROA look like after 2014 and what policies will it have? Which planning permutation of which scenario type (optimistic, muddling through, or pessimistic) applies best? What about the inevitable changes in the context and therefore in the prevailing or probable scenario type? The environment is too volatile, the funds too large, and the consequences too significant to allow meandering, incremental, transactional, impromptu, ad hoc decisions about assistance.

President Barack Obama has been very clear about the U.S. mission and purpose in Afghanistan: “disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and prevent their return to either country in the future.”¹ Note, however, not one word about the Taliban, except perhaps about its breaking ties with al Qaeda as one of the prerequisites for reconciliation and participation in the government. Arguably, it would not be possible to prevent al Qaeda’s return under a government that includes the Taliban although the active prevention of al Qaeda’s return is not one of the prerequisites for reconciliation with the Taliban, just breaking ties now. What in particular does the end of a direct U.S. military combat role in the counterinsurgency mean for civilian engagement? For starters, what would be the roles and purposes of U.S. diplomacy and assistance?

Diplomacy

The U.S. has diplomatic relations with dozens of governments with which it disagrees or considers unsavory. A more regular diplomatic relation with Afghanistan, irrespective of its composition and short of unlikely aggression against its neighbors or truly abhorrent domestic policies like genocide, would pose few formal problems.

1. President Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan,” March 27, 2009, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-a-New-Strategy-for-Afghanistan-and-Pakistan.

Nevertheless, difficult as they have been for the past dozen years, the diplomatic challenges after 2014 may well be even greater in the future, albeit different. As in Iraq, the administration began construction in Kabul of an enlarged embassy compound—its largest in the world in the case of Iraq. In both cases the compounds are far larger than the diplomatic missions will probably require. The United States will have diplomatic needs in Kabul, presumably with a government headed by a new, hopefully less impulsive and more cooperative president with complementary goals. Although there will still be a U.S. military role, the new Afghan government may be resentful over its lack of centrality in the world and in U.S. foreign policy, notwithstanding its insistence on Afghan military control. GIRoA will definitely resent the striking reduction in and conditions for U.S. assistance in Afghanistan. U.S.-Afghanistan relations are likely to be bumpy, requiring careful U.S. management: reassuring GIRoA and Afghans that Afghanistan still matters and has not been abandoned; contributing to stabilization; encouraging policies that might make Afghan's future viable and decent; avoiding impulsive or panicked decisions; dealing with the neighbors and other powers.

The thorniest bilateral diplomatic issue is likely to be the role of the Taliban in Afghanistan's governance and the course of the insurgency. Serious negotiations with the Taliban have not even begun and will almost certainly be left unconcluded after 2014, after which the leverage of the United States will dwindle. The withdrawal of U.S. combat troops and the shift in missions would seem to follow a conclusion by President Obama that al Qaeda has been sufficiently degraded, dismantled, and defeated or that the cost of doing so is too high or that the ANSF can now handle the job. Some administration officials have commented off-the-record but publicly that the United States will now settle not for a secure, democratic, just, and prosperous Afghanistan, as envisioned in the Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement, but for a bit less: a stable, reasonably prosperous Afghanistan that preferably is at peace with its neighbors. Even that goal is ambitious on all three counts: the stability, the prosperity, and the peace. That goal will constitute a constructive diplomatic purpose beyond the problematic management of a rocky relationship between the two countries. The U.S. mission in Kabul could work with other embassies to help ensure restraint by Afghanistan's neighbors, some kind of regional arrangement, formal or informal, to assist Afghanistan in some kind of regional effort or at least to forego direct and indirect military engagement in Afghanistan, perhaps through a multilateral guarantee of its neutrality.² Conversely, neighbors will also have demands on Afghanistan, which cannot expect them to remain neutral if, for example, it provides sanctuary or encouragement to their insurgents.

For that reason, if no other, the most difficult of these bilateral neighborhood relations is the one between Afghanistan and Pakistan (with which the United States also has a difficult, sometimes tempestuous, but ultimately critically important relation). As already noted, both Pakistan and Afghanistan accuse the other of sheltering its insurgents, creating protected safe havens, and allowing them as a staging ground for intermittent cross-border

2. Recall Chapter 3 discussion; also see skeptical viewpoint in Tellis, "Implementing a Regional Approach to Afghanistan: Multiple Alternatives, Modest Possibilities."

incursions. Bottom line, there is no shortage of diplomatic contributions for the U.S. embassy in Kabul. Most depend on forging a stable, relatively even-keeled working relation with Afghanistan itself after the drawdown, a considerable challenge in its own right.

Assistance

In addition to diplomacy, part of that civilian relation will be the ongoing but certainly modified U.S. assistance program. Since 2002 the U.S. Congress has appropriated over \$96 billion for relief and reconstruction in Afghanistan.³ In addition to the Department of Defense at least five civilian agencies have had direct funds for development or reconstruction programs in Afghanistan since 2002: Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Department of the Treasury, Department of Justice, and Department of Agriculture. The total government-wide funding appropriated from 2002 through 2012 was \$88.76 billion: about \$57.81 billion through the Department of Defense, \$17.82 billion through USAID, \$6.17 billion through the State Department, \$4.45 billion through Treasury, \$290 million through Agriculture, and \$.127 billion through Justice.⁴ The total appropriated for 2012 was \$16.5 billion: \$12.63 billion through the Department of

3. Of the \$96.6 billion total (through September 30, 2013), \$54.30 billion was for security, \$24.71 billion for governance and development, \$6.93 billion for counternarcotics efforts, \$2.67 billion for humanitarian aid, and \$7.99 billion for operations and oversight. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), “Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, October 30, 2013,” 67, <http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2013-10-30qr.pdf>. These are not the same categories used by the various departments and agencies, which makes comparisons difficult.

4. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, January 30, 2013, Appendix B, 182-183, <http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2013-01-30qr.pdf> (hereafter cited as “SIGAR January 2013 Quarterly Report”). An additional \$6.64 billion was appropriated for International Affairs Operations. SIGAR divides the funds into categories that do not match the categories used by USAID: security (\$51.15 billion), governance and development (\$23.39 billion), counternarcotics (\$6.15 billion), humanitarian (\$2.44 billion), and international affairs operations (\$6.64 billion). *Ibid.*, 55. These are only the “reconstruction” funds and, as the categories clearly indicate, do not include appropriations for the conflict itself. However, the \$51.15 billion for security is almost entirely for the ANSF. The \$22.39 billion for governance and development includes \$3.45 billion for the Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP), which illustrates the thinking behind the CERP funds that have been appropriated, as the name suggests, for use by U.S. military commanders, primarily commanders of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). The apparent specificity of funds reported throughout U.S. government accounts—whether USAID’s, SIGAR’s, or other accounts—is more than a little illusory. Amounts possibly are rounded to the nearest \$10 billion. SIGAR’s categorization of funds is different from USAID’s, and its categorization is too broad to illuminate the specifics of the development assistance portfolio consisting of projects and programs. At a minimum, Congress should insist on full disclosure by the State Department and USAID prior to any additional appropriations. Ironically, for an agency (USAID) and government that insists on the centrality of transparency and accountability by the government of Afghanistan, it is difficult to find much transparency in the U.S. government’s budgets and programs. USAID’s dashboard effort to increase transparency is a welcome addition. Nevertheless, because USAID’s website is in constant flux, hyperlinks available just a few months earlier may no longer work. For example, USAID’s equivalent numbers (see above) were mentioned on a web page that is no longer available, presumably because the actual 2013 appropriations have been made. The special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (S/RAP) at the State Department has no website at all. Office staff refers telephone inquiries to the website of the special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction (<http://www.sigar.mil>) and in particular to SIGAR’s latest report. The special inspector general is not a great favorite at State or USAID. Ernesto Londoño, “John Sopko, watchdog for U.S. reconstruction spending in Afghanistan, battles bureaucrats,” *Washington Post*, August 8, 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/john-sopko-watchdog-for-us-reconstruction-spending-in-afghanistan-isnt-looking-to-make-friends/2013/08/08/3cfc9c10-0053-11e3-96a8-d3b921c0924a_story.html.

Defense, \$2.0 billion through USAID,⁵ \$480 million through the State Department, none through Treasury; and none through Agriculture.⁶

The largest U.S. civilian agency providing assistance, USAID's \$2 billion Afghanistan budget for 2012 (although only \$1.8 billion was actually appropriated) is twice the amount that was requested in 2013 for the rest of South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia combined (leaving aside Pakistan). The \$2 billion budget was twice as much as requested for all of Latin America, 40 percent of the total requested for all of the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa put together, and just under four times the amount requested for the countries of Central Europe and Eurasia, and that does not include other, non-USAID resources at the State Department and other departments also allocated to Afghanistan.⁷

To take one specific example, in terms of GDP, per capita income, human development index (HDI), and other similar indicators, Afghanistan has some similarities to Uganda.⁸ In 2011 USAID allocated \$0.1927 billion for Uganda⁹ versus USAID's appropriation of \$2.3311 billion for Afghanistan, about 12 times as much. There are differences between the two, not least of which is that Uganda was not used as an al Qaeda base to plan an attack on the United States nor was it the home of a 12-year counterinsurgency in which the United States was deeply engaged politically and militarily. Donors have therefore not pledged an

5. In 2011 USAID reported an appropriation amount slightly lower (\$1.8 billion) than the \$2 billion requested. The \$1.8 billion earmarked \$597.4 million for democracy and governance, \$536.6 million for economic development, \$326.6 million for peace and security, \$206 million for education and social services, \$113.9 million for health, and \$6.5 million for environment. <http://results.usaid.gov/afghanistan>. Without delving into the arcana of congressional appropriations, \$1.837 billion of USAID's \$2 billion—that is over 90 percent—is in a budget account called “economic support funds” (ESF); notwithstanding its name, it is used for a number of purposes, all to advance U.S. foreign policy interests. For any given country, the amounts and general purposes and programs of ESF allocations are decided by the State Department but the implementation and details are normally left to USAID. Ideally they work together on amounts, purposes, and implementation.

6. *Ibid.*, Appropriations breakdowns were \$11.2 billion for security (all of it for the ANSF), \$2.95 billion for governance and development, \$740 million for counternarcotics, and \$150 million for humanitarian. An additional \$1.47 billion was appropriated for international affairs operations.

7. USAID, Foreign Assistance by Country, <http://foreignassistance.gov/CountryIntro.aspx>. Finding exactly comparable data by fiscal year is a bit daunting. Amounts can be reported as “requested” by the administration on behalf of the various departments, “appropriated” by Congress, “apportioned” (after the appropriation) by the Office of Management and Budget, “obligated” by the department or agency, and actually “expended” by the receiving implementing institution. The data provide fairly good approximations of the relative levels of bilateral assistance for each region, notwithstanding the various categories. A modest amount of funds are also available for regional purposes but those are not included in these approximations.

8. Notwithstanding their many differences, Uganda had an estimated population of 35.9 million, a per capita gross national income (GNI) of \$1,168 (in constant 2005 purchasing power parity), a human development index (HDI) of 0.456, and an HDI rank of 161 out of 185 countries. For the same year, Afghanistan had an estimated population of 30.4 million, a per capita GNI of \$1,000, an HDI rank of 0.374, and an HDI rank of 175 out of 185 countries. See United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Human Development Report 2013, 146, Table 1, http://hdr.undp.org/hdr4press/press/report/hdr/english/HDR2013_EN_Statistics.pdf. Afghanistan's Central Statistics Office (CSO) estimated a lower population of 25.5 million. <http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/Settled%20Population%20by%20Civil%20Division.pdf>. The CSO now estimates 27 million. Meer Agha Nasarat Samimi, “Afghan population rises to 27 million,” *Pajhwok*, August 21, 2013, www.pajhwok.com/en/23013/08/21/afghan-population-rises-27-million. Despite massive donor funding, Afghanistan seems to be losing ground. In 2011 its per capita GNI was \$1,416, its HDI index was 0.398, and its HDI rank was 172 out of 187 countries. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Human Development Report 2011, http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/271/hdr_2011_en_complete.pdf, Table 1

9. <http://results.usaid.gov/uganda>.

additional \$16 billion toward the first four years of any Ugandan security needs, as has been done for Afghanistan. Donors explicitly recognized Afghanistan's special status as indeed has Afghanistan itself. In fact GIROA's assistance vision through the upcoming decade of transformation, approximately 2015–2025, is that by 2025, "Afghanistan will have reduced its dependence on international assistance to non-security sectors to levels consistent with other least developed nations."¹⁰

For a country that, unlike Pakistan, is not close to the core of U.S. national interests and in which counterinsurgency is now a far more ambitious objective than the United States is willing to pursue, the disproportionate allocation to Afghanistan of resources wildly in excess of those for otherwise similar countries will cease. Moreover, the slogans, mission statements, and strategies of the past dozen years will require review at the very least.¹¹ The assistance program will almost certainly need to be recast to fit a different set of objectives, not just substantially reduced. It should not be the same set of programs with proportionately and radically smaller funding. Some programs simply cannot succeed with appreciably lower resources. Many programs are not appropriate for what will necessarily become the revised purposes of U.S. diplomacy, assistance, and strategy in Afghanistan and the new environment for GIROA.

Before deciding assistance levels together with their geographical and substantive distribution in some abstract way at a donors conference, the better course is to consider the purposes assistance should be designed to achieve, the implementation and policy constraints that will condition it, the objectives that can realistically be met, the ways to meet the objectives, the resources it would take to do so, the prospects for meaningful results, and the policies that would be implicated. Decisions need to reflect the role of Afghans, their objectives, the policies they would need to adopt and implement, the likelihood that they will do so, and the constraints on achievements, especially the insurgency. If possible each donor, or preferably consortium of donors, would construct a civilian strategy to knit these elements together and to construct

10. Islamic Government of Afghanistan, "Afghanistan National Development Strategy, 1387-1391 (2008-2013): A Strategy for Security, Governance, Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction," i; http://www.undp.org.af/publications/KeyDocuments/ANDS_Full_Eng.pdf (parenthesis original) (hereafter, the "Afghanistan's National Development Strategy" or, as it is commonly referred to "ANDS").

11. To take only the most obvious example, almost all of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), which were embedded in ISAF bases, especially, the small forward bases, have ended along with the end of the ISAF combat mission and the bases supporting it. Within the PRTs, State Department, and USAID officers, often personal temporary contractors and under the direct command of the forward position's commander, were assigned to civilian hold-and-build roles, for example, as development advisers to the commander or as the primary contact between the PRT commander and local civilian officials, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), or ordinary citizens. But their assistance programs were driven by the security, pacification, and counterinsurgency mission of the PRTs—rather than broader developmental goals—and the financial and other resources they brought to the field were for those purposes. The embassy and USAID offices in Kabul, by which they were deployed and to which they reported on a formal basis, were of course partners in the larger U.S. government anti-insurgency effort. To be sure, the development and assistance vocabulary was common and recognizable to any other diplomatic or development assignment anywhere else in the world, but the deeper purpose was to serve the counterinsurgency effort by providing contacts and assistance. Often PRT outposts would not have been the best sites for the larger purposes of diplomacy or national development. They were however, the outposts for counterinsurgency purposes: near the borders, in insurgent-controlled valleys or villages, on the insurgents' supply routes. These front-line posts needed to be held and built if larger counterinsurgency efforts were to prevail.

disciplines and consequent priorities so that a little bit of everything does not become the operating principle. Programs should not be authorized and implemented on the fly or whatever seems good at the time. Civilian agencies, whether diplomatic or assistance, talk about designing strategically, but almost always their actual practice falls far short.¹² Donors conferences almost never result in a single strategic plan, let alone a division of labor in implementing it. Then again no one actually expects that all of the donor commitments will be met either.

Analyzing the USAID program under the three different scenarios might be the best way to begin the strategic review process.

The Optimistic Scenario

Essentially, USAID has been planning for the optimistic scenario. After 2014 USAID assumes four transitions: a successful security transition to the ANSF; a successful political transition to a post-Karzai era with an uncertain constellation of political forces in the cabinet, a stronger parliament, and of course uncertainty about the role of the Taliban and Islamists; an economic transition from a war economy to a peace economy based initially on growth in exports of the agricultural sector but later on exports of other natural resources; and an institutional transition to fully civilian governance with accountability.¹³ Apart from these optimistic assumptions lies some disquiet about population growth, rural-urban migration, and growing unemployment of youth especially in Kabul and urban areas.

Hardly surprisingly, these are assumptions fully consistent with, indeed partly based on, GIRoA's own optimistic strategic vision for Afghanistan as stated in its Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS):

By the solar year 1400 (2020), Afghanistan will be:

- A stable Islamic constitutional democracy at peace with itself and its neighbors, standing with full dignity in the international family.
- A tolerant, united, and pluralistic nation that honors its Islamic heritage and the deep seated aspirations toward participation, justice, and equal rights for all.
- A society of hope and prosperity based on a strong, private-sector led market economy, social equity, and environmental sustainability.¹⁴

12. The U.S. special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction (SIGAR) has proposed seven questions to evaluate U.S. assistance projects. "Congress and the relevant Executive Branch agencies should carefully consider a series of questions as they evaluate current and proposed reconstruction projects, including: Does the project or program clearly contribute to U.S. national interests or strategic objectives? Do the Afghans want it and need it? Has the project or program been coordinated with the Afghan government, other implementing agencies, and international donors?" Other questions raised by SIGAR relate to whether the security environment permits effective implementation and oversight of the programs, whether the programs include sufficient safeguards against corruption, whether the Afghans have the technical and financial resources and the political will to sustain the programs, and whether there are adequate indicators to measure outcomes and results. SIGAR January 2013 Quarterly Report, 4–5. Useful as these are, they are basically questions of good practice at the tactical level but do not easily lead to strategies or priorities.

13. Briefing by a senior USAID official.

14. Afghanistan National Development Strategy, i.

GIRoA's presentation to the donors at the 2012 Tokyo conference grounded that general vision in specific goals.

By 2015 [the end of the 2005–2014 decade of transition], Afghanistan will have taken over full operational responsibility for its own security and will be leading development initiatives to build on foundational investments and good governance that will pave the way to economic growth, fiscal sustainability, and sustainable human development.

By 2025 [the end of the 2015–2024 decade of transformation], Afghanistan will have reduced its dependence on international assistance in non-security sectors to levels consistent with other least developed nations. Peace and stability will be consolidated in the country through effective development, improved delivery of government services and the promotion of fundamental freedoms and human rights.

By 2030 achievements in development and governance will allow Afghanistan to emerge as a model of a democratically developing Islamic Nation.¹⁵

The government of Afghanistan projects that its current financing gap of –40 percent will decrease gradually to about –23 percent by 2020 and to –12 percent by 2025.¹⁶ By then, GIRoA forecasts, Afghanistan will have reduced its dependence on international assistance for non-security sectors to “levels consistent with other least developed nations,”¹⁷ similar to Uganda's assistance levels for example, assuming the peace it supposes. That projection excludes almost 100 percent of Afghanistan's security costs, approximately \$4 billion each year through 2016, for which GIRoA assumes the donors will provide.¹⁸ Moreover, economic growth has slowed and government revenues remain weak.¹⁹

To realize those forecasts, the 2012 Tokyo framework contains the guiding principles and commitments between GIRoA and the so-called international community—some 70 countries, mostly observers and minor contributors with perhaps a dozen major donors—and various multilateral institutions including the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)—which has the lead among donors—the World Bank, and the Asian

15. *Afghanistan's Strategic Vision*, 3–4.

16. *Ibid.*, 23. The World Bank notes that the non-security financing gap, the difference between Afghanistan's income and expenses, is currently about 40 percent of GDP and is currently borne entirely by the donors. *Afghanistan in Transition*, 1. Its development budget of about \$16 billion, borne by the donors, equals Afghanistan's total gross domestic product and “cannot be sustained.” *Ibid.*, 16.

17. *Afghanistan's Strategic Vision*, 3.

18. The assumption is that the Europeans will provide \$2 billion, the United States will provide \$1.5 billion, and GIRoA will provide \$500 million.

19. Government revenues, now only 10 percent of GDP, will grow only with higher levels of agricultural production primarily in fruits and nuts; greater resource mobilization through more diligent income taxes, sales taxes, and customs administration; improved human capital; and strengthened institutions and governance and less of what the World Bank euphemistically refers to as leakages. *Afghanistan Economic Update*, October 2013, 3, 15, 16. Agricultural growth was strong in 2012 (about 14.4 percent), due mainly to unusually good weather; it has slowed to 3.1 percent in 2013. *Ibid.*, 3. Irrespective of domestic growth, “Afghanistan will continue to require substantial grant assistance for the foreseeable future.” *Ibid.*, 16.

Development Bank. The Tokyo framework supposedly provides the basis for a paradigm shift—from recipient to owner and partner—between GIRoA and its partners for the transformation decade. It stipulates “shared development and governance goals and a mechanism . . . to hold parties accountable for achieving them . . . [and] for the effective and transparent stewardship of resources.”²⁰

For their part of the mutually accountability, the donors will provide \$16 billion over four years through 2016 plus 100 percent of Afghanistan’s security costs. In addition to the funding, GIRoA assumes that, as part of the paradigm shift to partnership and transformation, the funds will increasingly be channeled through its own ministries, institutions, and mechanisms. That assumption flows from the 2010 Kabul conference at which the donors committed to aligning 80 percent of their assistance with GIRoA’s national priority programs and to channel at least 50 percent of their development assistance through GIRoA’s national budget, a pledge they reiterated in the Tokyo framework.²¹ GIRoA’s budget scenarios constitute what Afghans mean, at a minimum, by non-abandonment. At least as important, GIRoA refers to donor funding as foundational investments.²² Although economically unrecognizable as economic investments (with commensurate returns), the Afghanistan National Development Strategy depends on these donor gifts. Understandably from its perspective, however, the government abjures the idea of benevolent gifts. The donors, in its view, are venture capitalists, investment bankers, providing basic capital for an Afghan future that serves their interests. It abjures the idea of benevolent gifts. But if so, the GIRoA commitments are all the more pressing. They would constitute the return. Performance shortfall would constitute a kind of default or raise red flags for the bankers on future payments, good money after bad, under those circumstances. In its desire to define the relationship, GIRoA may have laid for itself the basis and language by which the donor commitments—never all that solid anyway—could be curtailed by holding GIRoA to its own investment paradigm.

However, under mutual accountability those donor resources are predicated on reciprocal commitments by GIRoA, especially on improved governance and particularly, the donors insisted, on reduction in corruption, all with benchmarks.²³ In response to the donors, GIRoA “reaffirmed its solemn commitment to strengthen governance, grounded in human rights, the rule of law and adherence to the Afghan Constitution, and holds it as integral to sustained economic growth and development.”²⁴ As mutual participants of the Tokyo framework, both the GIRoA and the donors “affirm that a functional democracy based on credible and inclusive elections, a professional and efficient civil service, access to justice and the rule of law . . . with a particular focus on the rights of women . . . are

20. Tokyo Framework, Annex, paragraphs 2–3.

21. Tokyo Framework, Annex, paragraph 12.

22. *Afghanistan’s Strategic Vision*, 3, 6, 7.

23. Tokyo Framework, Annex, paragraphs 3, 6, 8, 12, and Annex, paragraph 11. Paragraph 8 includes the “broadly accepted principles of inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development” on which the Tokyo framework is built. Paragraph 10 explicates the five major areas of development and governance which the Afghans and the donors will monitor performance.

24. *Ibid.*, Annex, paragraph 4.

essential to a secure, just, stable and prosperous Afghanistan.”²⁵ Moreover, “the Participants emphasize . . . that they cannot continue ‘business as usual,’ and must move from promise to practice . . . [through] a new reinvigorated development partnership.”²⁶ Indeed during the transformation decade “Afghanistan will . . . become an effectively governed and economically, socially progressing country driven by its own priorities.”²⁷ Finally, as part of the departure from business as usual, GIRoA and the other participants adopted six principles, including “monitoring of development and governance benchmarks in a transparent manner [as] a powerful means to enable accountability to the Afghan people, and reinforce reciprocal commitments of donors and the Afghan government to improved development performance.”²⁸ Of particular importance to the donors, President Hamid Karzai pledged to “fight corruption with strong resolve,”²⁹ which is not quite the solid commitment with benchmarks and mutual accountability for which the donors were looking and which they think—or pretend—they got.³⁰

25. Tokyo Framework, Annex, paragraph 10.

26. Ibid., paragraph 9.

27. Ibid., paragraph 7.

28. Ibid., paragraph 8.

29. “Afghanistan aid: Donors pledge \$16bn at Tokyo meeting,” BBC, July 8, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-18758148>.

30. With all the donor emphasis on reducing corruption, recent reports that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has been bribing President Karzai are dismaying, no matter how understandable from a purely Realpolitik perspective. “For more than a decade,” reports the *New York Times*, “wads of American dollars packed into suitcases, backpacks and, on occasion, plastic shopping bags have been dropped off every month or so at the offices of Afghanistan’s president [courtesy of the C.I.A.] All told, tens of millions of dollars have flowed from the C.I.A. to the office of President Karzai. However “there is little evidence that the payments bought the influence the C.I.A. sought. Instead, . . . , the cash has fueled corruption and empowered warlords, undermining Washington’s exit strategy from Afghanistan. ‘The biggest source of corruption in Afghanistan,’ one American official said, ‘was the United States.’” Mathew Rosenberg, “With Bags of Cash, C.I.A. Seeks Influence in Afghanistan,” *New York Times*, April 28, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/29/world/asia/cia-delivers-cash-to-afghan-leaders-office.html>. A week later Karzai admitted that he had been receiving monthly payments for a decade, “for such purposes as salaries, aid to wounded veterans, and scholarships.” “He explained that they were ‘very useful and we are very thankful for this aid. Yesterday I thanked the CIA’s chief in Kabul and requested their continued help and they promised they would continue.’” “Karzai dismissed questions about why such money, not in state coffers, was needed for what he described as government expenses. ‘This is the choice of the American government,’ he said.” Qadir Sediqi and Chelsea J. Carter, CNN, May 6, 2013, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/05/04/world/asia/afghanistan-cia-money/index.html>. Mahmood, another brother of President Karzai, was a 7 to 10 percent shareholder of the Kabul Bank, which became insolvent and whose depositors had to be reimbursed hundreds of millions of dollars by the donor-supported Ministry of Finance when the officers, directors, and major shareholders allegedly used the bank for fraudulent loans and payments through fabricated companies, invented names, and forged documents in order to siphon the guaranteed deposits to their personal accounts and investments in Afghanistan and the Gulf.

The absurdity of these anti-corruption commitments must make Afghans incredulous even as the coalition partners (feign to) take them seriously. With a straight face, President Karzai and his entourage make vacuous promises they cannot keep even if they wanted to . . . and they do not want to because it is patently not in their personal or political interest to do so. They cannot keep those promises because they are hemmed in by more fundamental political promises, bargains, and compromises arising out of their own political weakness. But they and their clients are dining on the fruits of corruption. They smuggle billions of dollars out of Afghanistan for personal real property, enterprises, and bank accounts in the Gulf and beyond. Meanwhile, the office of the special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, the U.S. Department of State, and USAID, together with their counterpart coalition partners, insist on paper promises that cannot and will not be redeemed. For these useless paper promises, the United States gives real, hard cash, \$4 billion per year, all from taxes extracted not from Afghans but from its own citizens. It is as if the United States has bargained for an extraordinarily fine 14th-century carpet and the Afghan seller turned up instead with a plain white cotton towel. The coalition accepts the towel but sternly warns the Afghan that it will not be fooled in the future and demands a promise

All GIROA pledges will be achieved through five GIROA government and development commitments: (1) representational democracy and equitable elections; (2) governance, rule of law, and human rights (including improved “access to justice for all, in particular women, by ensuring that the Constitution and other fundamental laws are enforced expeditiously, fairly and transparently. . . . [and] that women can fully enjoy their economic, social, civil, political and cultural rights; fight against corruption, including strengthening counter-narcotics efforts, and improve the capacity of state institutions”); (3) integrity of public finance and commercial banking; (4) improved government revenues, budget execution, and subnational governance (with improved revenue collection and budget execution “accountable to, and incorporating, local needs and preferences”); and (5) achieving inclusive and sustained growth and development “through a focus on human development, food security, private investment, and decent work and employment opportunities and the improvement of ranking in the human development index” and “strengthened enabling environment for the private sector.”³¹

So, bottom line, the government of Afghanistan has committed itself to democracy with credible and inclusive elections; greater access to justice and the rule of law; securing the rights of women; perfecting a professional and effective civil service; fighting corruption; strengthening counternarcotics; improving the capacity of state institutions, public finance, and banking integrity; increasing revenue collections and enhancing public financial management; providing effective and transparent budget planning and execution; incorporating local needs and preferences; instituting full and transparent monitoring and evaluation of assistance; and becoming an effectively governed and an economically, socially progressing country driven by its own priorities. Amazing.

GIROA performance on these commitments will affect the donors and their contributions, but only the most starry-eyed Tokyo participants can possibly believe that they will be implemented. The donors have indicated that some commitments are more immediately important to them than others, particularly those related to governance, elections, and alleviating systematic and grand corruption. And even “the Afghan government seeks sustained development, economic growth and fiscal sustainability *with declining reliance on donor financing* as articulated in *Afghanistan’s Strategic Vision*, the government’s vision statement submitted at the Tokyo conference.”³²

Apart from the performance of GIROA in meeting its Tokyo commitments and from the security environment, U.S. budget realities, a more skeptical Congress, the special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction (SIGAR), and a variety of other constraints will also affect the implementation of the U.S. assistance program, whatever its size. For example, it is clear already that the poor capacity of GIROA’s ministries and agencies together with the

for the real rug next time. The dealer promises. The coalition next pays cash for another carpet. The dealer smiles all the way to the bank, in this case literally to the Commercial Bank of Dubai. For a deeper discussion of the social and political dynamics of corruption and the feckless international attempt to reduce corruption, see, for example, Vanda Felbab-Brown, *Aspiration and Ambivalence*, especially chapters 5 and 6.

31. Tokyo Framework, Annex, paragraph 11.

32. *Ibid.*, paragraph 5 (italics added). See also *Afghanistan’s Strategic Vision*, 3.

massive corruption will prevent simple budget transfers (“budget support” in the technical lingo) for the assistance, notwithstanding the commitment of aligning 80 percent of aid with the Afghan national priority programs and channeling at least 50 percent through the government’s own budget.

However, to meet the 80 percent/50 percent partnership commitment, at least in spirit, USAID will probably set up joint accounts in which dual-key withdrawals will depend on actual program performance, financial accountability, sequenced payments, and substantial USAID monitoring. Some projects and proposals are to be implemented by GIROA itself but others will be implemented by contractors GIROA selects with USAID participation or at least monitoring. Some will go to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and public international organizations. Some will go to U.S. or Western contractors and grantees. The balance among the implementing modalities will depend on the performance of budget-supported projects, on GIROA-selected contractors, and on the level and locus of continuing corruption. USAID payments likely will be made by some mix of direct USAID disbursements or replenishing letter-of-credit drawdowns in tranches depending on performance according to pre-agreed benchmarks.³³

Currently USAID has programs in eight substantive sectors: agriculture; democracy and governance; economic growth; education; health; infrastructure (roads, energy, water); stabilization; and gender and participant training.³⁴ The programs on stabilization and on gender and participation have been added in the past couple of years; agriculture has been given its own special focus rather than an element of the economic development and growth sector. Geographically, the programs are heavily clustered in the east and south following the counterinsurgency strategy, especially the surge.³⁵ Project concentration in 17 of Afghanistan’s 36 provinces (Herat, Faryab, Jawzjan, Balkh, Badakshan, Takhar, Baghlan, Kabul, Logar, Nagahar, Khost, Paktiya, Gazni, Paktika, Zabul, Kandahar, and Helmand) varies by program type, security considerations, and the specifics of the counterinsurgency campaign. Secondary concentrations follow the rest of the Ring Road in the

33. Briefing by a senior USAID official.

34. United States Agency for International Development, Where We Work, Afghanistan and Pakistan, Afghanistan, <http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/home>. The programs on stabilization and on gender and participation have been added in the past couple of years while agriculture (including alternate livelihoods) has been given its own special focus instead of being an element of the economic development and growth sector. The programs and categories shift depending on military, political, bureaucratic, and public relations purposes. What matters is the amounts in each category, the total, the attendant conditions, and most important the purposes and strategy for providing the aid. The 2013 appropriation *request* was just over \$2.505 billion including \$549 million for peace and security; \$1.018 billion for democracy, human rights, and governance; \$168.8 million for health; \$120 million for education and social services; and \$649.4 million for economic development. United States Agency for International Development, Where We Work, Afghanistan and Pakistan, Afghanistan, <http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/about/budget>. For a comparison between years, including the dramatic reduction from nearly \$14 billion in 2011 to nearly \$3.5 billion in 2012 and \$2.5 billion in 2013 with a projection of \$2.2 billion for 2014, see http://foreignassistance.gov/OU.aspx?OUID=166&FY=2013&AgencyID=0&budTab=tab_Bud_Planned.

35. For a full list of all current projects and their geographic distribution, see United States Agency for International Development, Where We Work, Afghanistan and Pakistan, Afghanistan, <http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/projects>. For a global comparison, see United States Agency for International Development, Where We Work, Interactive Map, <http://map.usaid.gov/?l=regional&w=AFGHANISTAN%20%26%20PAKISTAN>.

southeast, south, and southwest. Because the assistance program was designed with hold-and-build objectives, these are areas of high instability, violence, and conflict. The high levels of assistance, however desirable from a counterinsurgency perspective, have not always been possible where the insurgents controlled large parts of the province (Helmand, Kandahar, and Zabul, for example).

In addition to its own programs, USAID has contributed substantially to the Ministry for Rural Reconstruction and Development's National Solidarity Program. It has also provided handsomely to the World Bank's basic Afghanistan program, including nearly \$1.75 billion to the World Bank's 31-country, \$6 billion, multidonor Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF).³⁶

At least in theory, it should be possible to continue projects in all program areas under the optimistic scenario. All are consistent with GIROA's "strategic vision" and with the World Bank's "Afghanistan in Transition" analysis. But even now, security considerations limit geographic viability—for example, in the south and east—and those limitations will grow post-2014 even under optimistic assumptions. Still, with declining resources, USAID cannot do everything and certainly not at pre-2014 levels. It will need to prioritize and cut. Preferably, the cuts will actually, not just rhetorically, be taken strategically and alongside changes in principles and procedures.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Enhanced monitoring and evaluation by the donors and also Afghans, and more public disclosure to the Afghan public, will—or should—be critical. The Tokyo framework emphasizes its centrality both as a way of tracking the results and commitments of the parties, as a set of checks and balances, and as a way of ensuring confidence among the partners. The special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction (SIGAR) insists on a rigorous monitoring and evaluation (M&E) program. Neither USAID nor the State Department disagrees. However, with the military drawdown, USAID will lose the valuable information that came from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). ISAF simply will not be there, nor will the security it provided for USAID's staff and to a lesser extent for the implementing partners. For budgetary and (even under the optimistic scenario) for security reasons, the monitors will almost certainly need to be Afghans. USAID is considering the employment by outside contractors of Afghans who would, in substance, report directly to USAID rather than to the contractors. But the value of the monitoring depends on the quality of the monitors and the protocols under which they operate.

Afghanistan is not known as a country of deep capacity, although the large number of recent, unemployed graduates of high school and college (even if of dubious quality) present a labor pool that could be trained to provide donors with quality monitoring and

36. World Bank, Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), <http://www.artf.af/>. The year-by-year and donor-by-donor amount of ARTF's actual and expected donor contributions are from. *Ibid.*, Annex 2, Table 1, The World Bank, *Countries At A Glance, Afghanistan*, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/afghanistan>. Donor preferences for ARTF projects and programs are given in Table 2. *Ibid.*

simultaneously make a small dent in the number of potentially volatile unemployed graduates. The training will need to be rigorous and probably lengthier than desirable. Moreover, newly trained monitors will need to be monitored themselves. Supervising monitors will probably need to be internationals. No matter the difficulty, though, the civilian agencies continuing to work in Afghanistan after 2014 will be under increased scrutiny if only because they will no longer be protected by the shield of the counterinsurgency now led by the Afghan military. Afghanistan will begin to look more like countries it aspires to resemble and will be held to similar tests. Congress will be far more vigilant as will be the American public, which is usually informed by press coverage, often anecdotal and not always fully accurate.³⁷

If GIRoA continues to use the phrase “foundational investments” for donor contributions, then the actual investments of Afghans with their own resources cannot be too discordant with donor contributions: donors are not likely to be more confident in Afghanistan’s future than Afghans and they are unlikely to take disproportionate risks on a large scale. A variety of additional internal dynamics will either justify continuing support or put it at risk. If Afghans continue to hedge, for example, by the level of expatriation of personal legal and illegal funds, confidence by donors cannot be far behind. Most important (other perhaps than the elections), if donor funds and programs are appreciably corrupted (especially those that go on-budget), donors will diminish their support and some may withdraw entirely. To ensure funding and impact accountability, all conditions will need to be monitored in a way convincing both to GIRoA and donors, not least because their discussions will be affected by the results.

SECURITY

More important than monitoring results are the constraints on design and implementation of the programs themselves. As noted, the vast majority of civilian projects, certainly USAID’s, are precisely in the areas of greatest insecurity because they have been part of the counterinsurgency strategy. Under the optimistic scenario, that insecurity will be dramatically reduced if not eliminated. However, to the extent that insecurity continues, even if locally, the protection offered by ISAF’s umbrella will be removed after 2014 as of course will be the logistics and transport ISAF provided. No civilian agencies will be able to continue if the safety of their own staff and, more likely, the civilian implementers of their programs are at substantial risk. Already most U.S. government staff are confined to Kabul. Regional security officers in the embassy will have even more authority than they have had to date, which is itself substantial. After Benghazi, none of the four (and formerly five) U.S. concurrent ambassadors in Kabul (three are subordinate ambassadors) and no

37. USAID has a website devoted to evaluations (<http://www.usaid.gov/evaluation>). It has an agency evaluation policy (<http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/USAIDEvaluationPolicy.pdf>) as does the U.S. Department of State (<http://www.state.gov/s/d/rm/rls/evaluation/2012/184556.htm>). The application of these policies in Afghanistan has been irregular, in part because of the difficulty of conducting rigorous evaluations in a war theater, and in part because good practice in normal environments is difficult or impossible in many areas of a theater of war where military and political needs and preferences take precedence. A recent search shows that there is no longer a web page from either USAID or the State Department for the monitoring and evaluation of USAID programs in Afghanistan.

USAID mission director will chance countermending the, almost surely, very conservative judgments of the security officers. Contractors and grantees will also be on a shorter post-2014 leash, even if they are willing to take additional risks. Unfairly (as illustrated by the practicalities of M&E), a second, much looser, standard of risk applies to Afghans as opposed to internationals, but everyone will want to take fewer chances with local staff. It is possible that Afghan NGOs and contractors would be willing to take greater chances, but U.S. officials will not want to have large numbers of Afghan casualties. So even under the optimistic scenario, reconsideration of the location and extent of the assistance projects will surely be high on the agenda. Moreover, that security/risk analysis is likely to change as local conditions change. Some projects are likely to be lumpy in their execution; it would hardly be surprising to see some suspended or canceled mid-stream and then perhaps restarted, irrespective of the political, economic, or security environment. If so, results will be uncertain, at best.

BUDGET EXECUTION

Uncertain too will be GIRoA's budget and budget execution, which affects implementation and, ultimately, results. The security sector now consumes about 43 percent of the total GIRoA and 60 percent of the operation and maintenance budget; it "is crowding out spending in other sectors," especially the development budget.³⁸ Budget execution will be even more important if the donors come close to their goal of putting half their aid through the Afghanistan's own budget and ministries. GIRoA's budget execution is already low.³⁹ Its ministries and agencies have been spending only about half their budgets, even in the best of years. Budget pipelines are clogged between Kabul and the provinces and certainly between provincial capitals and districts. Inadequate planning, corruption, and different priorities, capacities, and performance among mutually dependent ministries as well as between and among national and subnational units are only some of the reasons. If additional insecurity materializes after 2014, donors are likely to withhold annual commitments because the previous year's assistance remains to be spent.⁴⁰

38. Afghanistan Economic Update, April 2013, 14, 16.

39. Although budget execution improved in 2012, "only half of the development budget was executed in 2102 [and] almost half of the ministries executed less than half their development budgets." *Ibid.*, 14. "The large budget increase will pose significant challenges to budget execution this year." *Ibid.*, 16. World Bank reports seems a bit inconsistent in assessment of GIRoA's budget execution. "While execution of operating budget has been historically high (most recently 96%), Afghanistan does not have the capacity to handle very large O&M [operations and maintenance] expenditure." *Afghanistan in Transition*, 11. But also "core development spending, after more than doubling in absolute terms between 2005/2006 and 2007/2008, has since flattened out at around \$1 billion in annual disbursements, with execution rates declining to the 40 percent range." *Ibid.* However, budget execution declined in 2013. In the first half of 2013, budget execution was only 36.4 percent of GIRoA's operating budget and only 17 percent of its development budget. In the first half of 2012, the comparable figures were 50 percent and 24 percent respectively. Through the first half of 2013, only three ministries (health, finance and rural development) with development budgets exceeding \$50 million executed more than 20 percent of their budgets. Consequently, in its mid-year review, the Ministry of Finance revised the development budget downward by about 10 percent from \$3 billion to \$2.7 billion while keeping the operating budget constant. *Afghanistan Economic Update*, October 2013, 10–11.

40. The rush to spend the full annual allocation in order to meet budget execution targets and to claim at least the same amount of funding for the following year is hardly confined to the Afghan bureaucracy. Every government agency in the United States is familiar with the year-end rush for obligations if not always expenditures, as no doubt are bureaucracies globally. Of course it often leads to wasteful spending.

If, however, security improves under the optimistic scenario and if GIROA's budget execution and performance also improves, the security and bureaucratic impediments will be reduced. In that event, donor programs and assistance strategies should and will probably need reconsideration, albeit for different reasons: why should the vast preponderance of programs be centered on 17 provinces? A full portfolio review by each donor—preferably harmonized between the donors—will surely be in order.

TALIBAN MINISTERS

More critical even than these implementation considerations, personnel safety, program execution, and the like will be the “alignment” of donor and GIROA assumptions, plans, policies, programs, and expectations. Under the optimistic scenario with significant Taliban reconciliation, some ministries will definitely have Taliban ministers. Even assuming the core ministries of finance, interior, defense, and economy remain outside the control of the Taliban (and even suppose that deputy ministers are also non-Taliban), which donors will be interested in working with a Taliban minister and on what programs and with what policies? And vice versa, which Taliban ministers will want to negotiate their ministerial policies and programs with the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and Japan? Taking the current structure of government as if it would continue, which donors would be willing to align their programs with, say, the new Taliban minister of justice or public health or education, let alone women's affairs? Will these Taliban ministers and the large donors agree to be mutually accountable as required by the Tokyo framework?

So what possibilities for civilian engagement would the current donors have, quite apart from strategies and priorities? What would the new, coalition government of Afghanistan want? Under what conditions? Would those conditions be acceptable to the current donors? And could there be the kind of monitoring and evaluation the donors say they will insist on? Even if security and better governance resulted from a new, inclusive, coalition government, what would an ongoing civilian engagement with it look like?

PRIORITIES AND STRATEGY

Given the constraints, how should USAID prioritize its diminishing resources? Based on what strategies? Even under the optimistic scenario, top priority should go to the three areas critical to the prospects of success: security, governance, and reasonably equitable economic growth. At the GIROA level, that will mean the core ministries and programs of defense, finance, economy, interior, and justice and their programs. As discussed, the uncertainty of security profoundly affects both governance and economic performance, reform, and potential but perhaps with the exception of some work with the Afghanistan National Police (ANP) or the Afghan Local Police (ALP), security assistance should, and will, remain the responsibility of the U.S. military.

The governance element should aim at honest, effective, accountable, and transparent governance. It should aim to reduce the predatory behavior—corruption, patronage, nepotism, communal discrimination—of government officials and their allied power brokers

with access to state resources. The nurturing of intrastate political networks whose loyalty resides in communal or personal leaders undermines state coherence and effectiveness, as well as popular allegiance to a state that serves the public without (excessive) favoritism. It will mean ongoing work to strengthen *both* the capacity *and* the effective performance of the executive and legislative institutions at all levels but particularly at the center. It will also mean work on justice and a true rule of law that will include honest, transparent, free, fair elections at the national and local levels with outcomes credible to the Afghan public. The rule of law is particularly important. Ordinary Afghans feel directly and personally the injustices that accompany corrupt or ineffective court systems. As already noted, Afghanistan is far too interconnected internally and globally to revert to the informal village-based *shuras*, *jirgas*, khans, *maliks*, and *ulama* of the past, even assuming they were as just and righteous as people may think they remember. Like it or not, justice in Afghanistan will depend on formal court systems to augment informal systems. The question is how equitable, impartial, transparent, and rule based the formal system will be.⁴¹ The Taliban continues to play off Afghans' discontent with the system of justice. The major problem for reducing predatory behavior and improving the rule of law is political will in Afghanistan, not funding or programming by donors. Millions of donor dollars have been poured into the country since 2002, with relatively little to show. Unless greed, predation, nepotism, and bribery can be contained, assistance can do little. Without the will by those with the ability to implement a rule of law rather than to control the courts for their own interests, USAID's rule of law and governance programs will produce few results. A serious agreement—not the usual platitudes and pretenses—will be necessary, along with benchmarks and, probably, conditionality. The reductions in available funding should provide the incentives for USAID and the State Department to drive such an agreement . . . or to get out of the business of hoping or pretending that these programs will have significant impact.

But with reductions in aid, even honest and effective governance, however implausible, would not be enough. The bloated government in Kabul, the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, the 22 national priority programs, the entire superstructure will need to be

41. Most observers report widespread disaffection with the formal system. In private, almost universally, people complain about injustice, favoritism, delays, and costs. However, the 2012 survey by the Asia Foundation reports higher and growing levels of both use of and satisfaction with the state courts. Considering only disputes with a choice of venue (not, for example, criminal cases) and with some regional variation, 46 percent report taking their disputes to formal courts and 43 percent to village/neighborhood *shuras* and *jirgas*. Satisfaction with the procedure is high for both, with 62 percent satisfied with the state courts (32 percent dissatisfied) and 72 percent satisfied with the *shuras* and *jirgas* (23 percent dissatisfied). When asked why they took personal disputes to the *shuras* and *jirgas* rather than the courts, 22 percent cited corruption in the courts, 17 percent said because the *shuras* and *jirgas* were honest, and 16 percent because the *shuras* and *jirgas* were efficient. Presented with pre-set questions about the state courts, 68 percent agreed they were fair and honest (31 percent disagreed), 55 percent that they would follow local norms and values (44 percent disagreed), 56 percent that they were effective at delivering justice (43 percent disagreed), 42 percent that they resolved cases promptly (56 percent disagreed), and 59 percent that they treated men and women equally (39 percent disagreed). The numbers for the same statements about *shuras* and *jirgas* were 86 versus 12 percent for fair and honest, 74 versus 24 percent for following local norms and values, 75 versus 24 percent for delivering effective justice, 70 versus 28 percent for prompt resolution, and surprisingly 70 percent agreed that women should be included in village and neighborhood *shuras* and *jirgas* (a different question from equitable treatment) versus 27 percent who disagreed). So even in the public surveys, the *shuras* and *jirgas* still have a better reputation than the state courts. 2012 TAF Survey, 148–156.

trimmed, and trimmed substantially. At least from the U.S. assistance perspective, it will simply not be possible to support such an expansive undertaking. Unless other donors can be found, real choices and real priorities will need to be established. Moreover, at least meaningful de-concentration, if not real decentralization, must occur, and to more effective and honest office-holders.

Although the United States will no longer engage directly in conflict, the counterinsurgency will continue. The ANSF will be in the lead. No doubt better governance will remain crucial to the (now Afghan) counterinsurgency strategy, but the old slogan—extend the reach and legitimacy of the central government—should not be the defining goal of U.S. efforts to improve governance. What needs to count are governance, effectiveness, and accountability. The United States could also take a more balanced view between the central and the subnational units of government, especially after the 2014 elections for provincial councils.

The main problem is not with geographical or structural imbalance in the U.S. program. The main problem is that real decentralization, much less federalism, is adamantly resisted by the central government. A more robust de-concentration, in which the local agents of central ministries integrate their plans and requests with local officials such as provincial governors, district governors (*waluswals*), and perhaps even mayors (*shahrwals*) is part of GIRoA's own set of reforms but continues to be resisted by many ministries in Kabul.⁴² As in the rule of law, absent political will, assistance cannot create a more de-concentrated, let alone decentralized, state. Necessity resulting from decreased donor funding may, however, cause a shift in policy when Kabul no longer has the wherewithal to support its operations and ambitions.

More important even than structure and process, after the drawdown, the United States will feel less pressure to compromise the legitimacy aspect of governance or dilute good governance assistance in favor of pressing security and counterinsurgency priorities, for example, by supporting rapacious, corrupt, ineffective government officials who may have purchase over local areas or militias or ethnic groups. Of course, scrupulous, effective, accountable governance is needed at all levels, so perhaps a division of labor among the

42. The government's plans for greater devolution would, if implemented, result in more authority and integration in planning, budgeting, and execution at the provincial and subprovincial levels as well as greater participation by local officials. The provincial governors (appointed by the president) are supposed to chair committees consisting of their own staffs, the locally resident officials of the central line ministries, and *waluswals*, and it should include local public participation. Among other tasks, they are supposed to propose an integrated budget to be discussed, amended, and approved at the cabinet level in Kabul by the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economy, Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG), Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, and various line ministries (Education, Agriculture, Water, Public Works, etc.). The budget is then submitted to the cabinet and the National Assembly. To date, the process is more theoretical than real. IDLG was created by President Karzai to implement and strengthen local governance and devolution, but not decentralization (a word all but banned at IDLG and its sister agencies in Kabul). Although the director of IDLG sits in the cabinet with a kind of ministerial rank, IDLG is not a ministry. It has critics and adversaries, and there is talk (perhaps only wishful thinking by its critics) of its disappearance after Karzai leaves the presidency. Even if IDLG is dissolved, however, its functions would almost certainly not. Even those who criticize IDLG recognize the need for better governance at the subnational levels. The functions of IDLG would have to be transferred to an existing ministry.

donors will be necessary to augment Afghan efforts. And in that mix, the donors should insist on increasing meritocratic standards for recruitment and promotion versus the parochial criteria of community or personal and familial patronage if a more effective and legitimate state is to be generated. In that they will align themselves with the ambitions of ordinary Afghans rather than the economic and political elite.

The 2014 presidential elections and the accompanying provincial council elections are absolutely critical to that attempt as well as to security and good governance, as will be the 2015 parliamentary elections. There can be no enduring partnership without a new government (executive, legislative, and judicial and at national and subnational levels) that is legitimate and effective in the eyes of Afghans and internationals. Both GIRoA and the donors agreed that “credible and inclusive elections, a professional and efficient civil service, access to justice and the rule of law are essential to a secure, just, stable and prosperous Afghanistan.”⁴³ From a security perspective, ISAF commander General Joseph F. Dunford identified the 2014 elections as “the most important event over the next 18–24 months . . . a truly watershed event” the securing of which is a critical objective for the ANSF.⁴⁴

Securing the elections is important to ISAF and ANSF precisely because a legitimate and effective government is critical for security itself and even more critical for good governance. Whatever the theoretical arguments may be about elections—too early, too Western, too disruptive, etc.—there is no current shortcut to legitimacy, even in Afghanistan, other perhaps than the shari’a law and theocracy proposed by the Taliban. Except theological authoritarianism does not enjoy currency among the majority of Afghans for choosing their government. Afghans want a voice in choosing their government and then replacing it if is ineffective, rather than doing both by theocratic edicts or constraints. That said, the insane number of elections ordained by the donors is unsustainable; indeed they would be impossible without the huge donor subsidies. It is one thing to support elections, another to make the electoral structure and calendar unworkable.

Economic growth will mean working on the macro-economic environment, on pro-market mechanisms and programs, on fiscal and monetary policies that promote growth and reduce the financing gap, on budget formation and execution, on de-concentration, on the institutional foundations of a solid economy (like merited trust in a fairly regulated banking sector, equitable and reliable enforcement of contracts, basic technical assistance to ministries of finance, economy, trade, and commerce), and a host of other issues. Vastly increased revenues, including taxes, will be vital if GIRoA has any chance of implementing even a pared-down version of its Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) after donor resources diminish, so continued work on taxes should be a high priority. GIRoA must be able to collect revenues domestically.⁴⁵ Even diminished levels of donor support

43. Tokyo Framework, Annex, paragraph 10.

44. NPR Dunford interview.

45. Direct tax collection is virtually nil. Donor revenues constitute about 65 percent of the core budget. Afghanistan Economic Update, April 2013, 15. Government revenues come from customs collections, royalties, leases and concessions, and consumer sales. Even when collected, much of the revenues are lost to corruption.

will depend on increased levels of domestic taxation. Foreign publics are unlikely to contribute taxes to an Afghanistan that is unwilling to tax itself at meaningful and sustainable levels.

Some basic but expensive infrastructure might be funded but principally through multidonor institutions like the World Bank (for example, through ARTF) and limited to infrastructure critical to economic development. The infrastructure must be maintained and sustained by the GIROA treasury.⁴⁶ Without doubt, Afghanistan needs substantial infrastructure improvements. Some can wait, the private sector can fund some (like mobile telephones or other connectivity), and Afghanistan will need to become accustomed to borrowing or working on its own infrastructure rather than sending the bills for its long wish lists to other countries' taxpayers. Without confidence in the enabling environment, long-term sustainable investment and development will be hard to foster even in a benign security environment. The disciplines imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank or the Asian Development Bank should be supported, not eroded, for example, in the name of counterinsurgency and security. The economic governance of Afghanistan has to be made to work on its own terms.

Somehow, like better governance, economic opportunity needs also to become more widespread and more local. Job creation will continue to be critical, both to economic growth but also to maintain the allegiance of the population. Agriculture (excluding poppy), which accounts for 25 to 30 percent of GDP, accounts for 50 percent of employment.⁴⁷ Afghanistan's economy is volatile, if only because of the insurgency; no single year foretells the future. However, "economic activity and private investment appear to be slowing considerably in 2013 as a result of increased uncertainty surrounding the political and security transition."⁴⁸ Several dozen times in its short economic update for 2013, the World Bank qualifies its economic assessment with reference to the importance of the political and security transition and strengthening institutions and governance for economic stability and growth. Only the services sector represents a higher percentage of GDP (46 percent) but much of the service sector depends on the declining foreign presence, military and civilian.⁴⁹ Small and medium-size enterprises have been growing in the

Revenues from customs should be appreciably higher, for example. At present, they constitute about 25 percent of total revenues, but declined by nearly 10 percent in 2012 despite increased trade, probably because of what the World Bank euphemistically called "a deteriorating governance environment at customs." *Ibid.*

46. President Karzai insisted on a rapid construction of Ring Road, for example, and President George W. Bush acceded. The result was a bad design, poor supervision of the construction, the dilution of basic construction standards, massive costs and cost overruns, a road that is deteriorating, and one that is now dominated in many areas by the Taliban and therefore impassable. On almost any criteria, the design and implementation mandates imposed by Washington produced a debacle, the result of acceding to political favors rather than solid design.

47. Afghanistan Economic Update, October 2013, 4, 17. The services sector accounts for about half of GDP. The industrial sector accounts for a little over one-fifth, with over half of that from manufacturing (of which foods and beverages constitutes 95 percent). Construction, a part of the industrial sector, contributes around 8 percent of GDP and mining—the presumptive hope of the future—less than 1 percent of GDP. *Ibid.*, 4–5. Apart from the uncertain mining subsector, Afghanistan's economic future depends on fruits and nuts, carpets, and, contingent on irrigation, cereals and cotton. *Ibid.*, 11.

48. *Ibid.*, 6.

49. Afghanistan Economic Update, April 2013, 7.

cities, albeit with payoffs to the protection rackets of the power brokers (and the Taliban), but they are lagging in the smaller towns and villages. Sustained growth will depend on Afghanistan's own domestic resources and comparative advantages rather than donor resources. Afghans should keep their eyes toward moving up the value chain, not perhaps so difficult given how low Afghanistan is. Afghans add little value to exported goods, other than carpets, fruits, and opium (which still remains the most important cash crop).⁵⁰ Better, more honest, more transparent, streamlined business policies and environment are required. Donors have been prone to subsidize small and medium businesses through direct grants or micro-credit facilities, but the record of impact versus cost for donor investments in micro-credit has been poor globally.⁵¹ Concentration on the fundamental underpinnings rather than on specific projects or schemes, for example, providing capital or jobs, will be more suited to USAID's pared-down budget and will ultimately be more sustainable. Ultimately, the market will prevail and remains the best guide to sustainability. The provision of core fundamentals and public goods critical to the market and whose price cannot be internalized should be the guiding principle. If things go poorly, economic collapse is a definite possibility, in which case USAID would need to review its economic portfolio.

The prospects for an optimistic outcome, indeed on the very existence of an Afghanistan that approaches the vision of the Afghan public depends on the three primary areas: security, governance, and economic growth. They are the primary determinants of viability. Both good governance and economic growth will depend on reduced levels of corruption and they will depend on the political will and performance of (almost certainly) a coalition government.

Health, education, social services, gender, and other elements of the USAID portfolio are secondary, not because they are unimportant but because they depend for their survival and sustainability on the other three. Although they will certainly contribute to a better life in Afghanistan long-term, they are secondary determinants, perhaps even lagging indicators of the kind of country to which Afghanistan aspires. If the primary determinants fail, there will be little opportunity for the secondary ones to succeed, resulting in diminished chances for an optimistic future for Afghanistan.

Infrastructure is an intermediary priority. It is important, perhaps even vital for economic growth and perhaps even governance, but very expensive. Costs will be beyond the means of the likely USAID portfolio except perhaps for some feeder roads and perhaps telecommunications. If security were more certain, more investments infrastructure projects, such as roads or irrigation rehabilitation, would be more sustainable. In general infrastructure should be left to the multilateral banks, especially the World Bank and the Afghan treasury. If USAID's resources allow for infrastructure projects at all, they should be relatively low cost but with a high return to immediate economic growth.

50. Afghanistan is the highest opium producer in the world. *Ibid.*, 6.

51. In Afghanistan the private-sector supply of micro-financing has been declining, in part because of the consolidation of suppliers (including the exit of some) and fewer borrowers. *Ibid.*, 12.

In short, USAID and the other donors will need to work with GIRoA to render the current Afghanistan National Development Strategy and its national priority programs actually strategic and with actual priorities (certainly fewer than 22), related to specific objectives and tailored to actual resources and realistic outcomes. The major non-security priorities ought to relate to good governance and good economic growth, especially jobs if possible. Secondary, contingent priorities can be considered for objectives that cannot succeed absent the necessary, primary two. To the extent feasible, programs should also be sequenced to follow the priorities unless some element of a secondary priority needs to precede or accompany one of the primary priorities.

One problem with prioritization lies in optics. As part of a strategy, prioritization entails choice: some things more important than others. Since donors cannot easily announce their higher priorities without seeming to degrade the lower-priority programs, they tend not to announce them publicly. More implicit than explicit, that makes donor priorities hard to read and harder to apply. It can also lead to accusations of insincerity or double-dealing: clearly a program that was announced as important really is not. On balance, a more forthright and public explanation of priorities is the better option, notwithstanding the downsides.

Based on past performance, USAID will unfortunately not prioritize, at least not rigorously. It will not create a concrete strategy, although it will create multiple documents with “strategy” in the title. It will continue to insist on what it will probably call a balanced portfolio among its current eight areas, doing some of everything and if anything it will provide far more funds to the secondary areas rather than the two primary priorities of governance and economic growth.⁵² It will hold many meetings on strategy but, since strategy depends on plans and choices, USAID will not settle on a real strategy or priorities. It will respond to internal (bureaucratic) and external (Hill and interest group) pressures and to its many Afghan partners. It will provide less to all but it will favor none in any strategically meaningful way. It will make no strong enemies but neither will it maximize the potential for Afghanistan’s viability. It will continue with its same suite of programs, perhaps adding or splitting something out of deference to some political cause or constituency. There is plenty of room to dispute the two priorities of good governance and economic growth, but if so, the alternative priorities should be identified and the reasons for their priority should be explicated.

Part of the post-2014 reality is—or should be—the (to-some) dreaded word: conditionality. In general, the development community has decided that conditionality does not work. More accurately, it has not been much applied, as donors insisted on conditions but then wilted when it came to enforcement. Most often, recipients formally acceded to, sometimes even embraced, but never really meant to comply with the conditions or were unable to do so. And when time came to assess the consequences of failure, the donors (led by their development agencies) have simply found reasons to disregard the conditions and the consequences of rupture and continue as before.

52. The third primary area, security, is beyond USAID’s competence or mandate.

The track record on donor monitoring of recipient promises and commitments and then, if performance is delinquent, following through proportionately on consequences (up to and including revising programs and reducing funds) is poor in general. It is virtually nonexistent where, as in Afghanistan, other important U.S. national interests are engaged, in which cases the performance deficits are excused or, more often, just ignored. Those other national interests will diminish after 2014 and certainly after 2016. Congress should insist on clear explications of U.S. expectations and Afghan assurances. Then it should insist on a clear tracking system with tangible metrics wherever possible and with explicit qualitative indicators in other cases. The United States should be severe in considering the too-common post-facto explanations regarding failure to meet the expectations coupled with requests for continued funding anyway. Legitimate problems and reasons should be part of the calculation, but not just absence of political will to comply, let alone corruption and other malfeasance. The United States, like private investors, should condition its future funding “foundational investments” (in GIROA’s terms) on performance. The United States (and the other donors) cannot want Afghan development more than the Afghans do. The United States cannot substitute its commitment for Afghanistan’s commitment. Afghanistan’s national strategic vision cannot be realized unless the Afghans undertake the measures to realize it, and that should be the basis of the donors’ conditionality.⁵³

Conditionality does create tensions between donors and recipients, tensions the development agencies would prefer to avoid, especially given the kind of partnership vocabulary embedded, for example, in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness⁵⁴ and implanted into the Tokyo framework. The “mutual accountability” language in the Paris Declaration and the Tokyo framework created precisely a set of conditionalities for future assistance. The donors need to honor those conditions, not only for the sake of their own taxpayers but, as noted, for the sake of Afghans. Corruption, capriciousness, illegality, predatory governance, excessive nepotism and patronage, governance failures, all redound to the detriment of ordinary Afghans and the benefit of the insurgents. Mismanagement of donor funds through fraud, waste, and abuse corrode confidence in and loyalty to the government. Abuses feed the insurgency, which promises security, order, and justice but, Afghans understand, delivered brutality, intolerance, unfairness, and (to most Afghans) abhorrent policies.

Conditionality will only work if it is employed judiciously. There are far too many areas of legitimate donor concern to couple them with the kind of conditionality that will result in real consequences actually levied. Consequences will need to be calibrated. Donors, especially the United States, should not make idle threats, which in turn means linking

53. It is self-evident that “the Afghans” is itself a semi-cliché. Like all countries, Afghanistan contains a variety of opinions, interests, and powers. Neither is GIROA itself a monolith. There are pro-reform elements in Afghan society and government; there are those who are anti-reform or who benefit from the status quo. The United States needs to take everything into account. If, for whatever reasons, the weight of performance does not meet the government’s own commitments, donors need to draw appropriate conclusions and take appropriate action.

54. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, “Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness,” 2005, and “Accra Action Agenda,” 2008, <http://www.oecd.org/development/effectiveness/34428351.pdf>

conditionality to the most important components of the partnership. Above the generalities of Afghan assurances in the Tokyo framework, the donors should provide topical and procedural clarity and specificity about all conditionalities but particularly about corruption. High levels of fraud and self-dealing with donor funds should mean a reduction of future funding. Major abuses of human rights should as well, at least in donor-funded projects but probably across GIROA. Massive election fraud cannot be countenanced. Assistance should be reduced if the monitoring confirms meaningful failure of performance in programs critical to the general priorities of security, governance, and economic growth. If these are the decisive areas, they need to be protected and prioritized.

Corruption is high on the list but it is too pervasive to be linked convincingly to specific conditions for the actual imposition of concrete sanctions (in the form of assistance reductions). So at least initially, conditionality should be reserved for corruption that seriously impacts the strategic priorities of security, core governance (the ministries of defense, finance, economy, interior and justice), and the integrity of markets as well as donor funds. If the donors follow through on those conditions, consideration can be given to expanding them, and the expansion would be seen through the lens of consistency and determination rather than shallow and empty bluffs. In effect, USAID should develop an anti-corruption substrategy to links goals, priorities, and means and avoids broad generalities about the admitted deleterious effects of corruption. Certain forms of corruption are more critical than others and should be addressed before others. The strategy should spell that out, and do so as publicly and transparently as possible.

Along a different, nontopical dimension, some priority should also be given to sustainability after the drawdown and budget reductions. Under muddling through or pessimistic scenarios, sustainability would be virtually irrelevant. Sustainability will degrade in the absence of good governance and economic growth. Even optimistically, however, project sustainability is more an illusion than a reality for Afghanistan unless governance and the economy improve considerably. Perhaps, even under the optimistic scenario, the immediate post-2014 goals should aim to anchor and sustain the existing gains rather than anything additional or more ambitious; at least until a post-ISAF homeostasis develops. Once relinquished, momentum is admittedly difficult to create or re-create and easier to sustain, but the current momentum will be uncertain as the shock of the ISAF exodus is truly digested.

Still, the success of the optimistic scenario will depend less on the priorities and actions of the donors than on the domestic policies and dynamics of Afghanistan. To the extent that assistance makes a difference, USAID and other donors should be making choices for the allocation of their diminishing resources in ways that optimize the chances of an optimistic outcome. Suboptimal choices will further limit the uphill struggle for an optimistic outcome. In the event of failure and a descent into muddling through or pessimistic scenarios, lower-priority programs are doomed anyway.

Muddling Through

Under the muddling through scenario, all elements—program areas, geographic areas, security, monitoring, results, mutual confidence and accountability—are dicier. If insecurity increases, if the ANSF underperform, if the insurgents reclaim more territory especially over the following few fighting seasons, if insecurity grows, if governance declines, if the historical patterns reassert themselves, if local political actors gain traction, if the writ of the central government recedes even further, if as a result economic development is therefore stymied, if unemployment grows, if Afghanistan's neighbors get worried and move to protect their own interests, if Afghans hedge even more, if the better educated and better networked begin to leave, if Afghans continue to expatriate capital, if all of these patterns spread, then the rationale for assistance will diminish. The need for countervailing diplomacy will increase. The possibility for a broad assistance program will decline, for all these reasons. The entire assistance package will become more problematic. The necessity for choice, priority, and sequencing will grow. A complete review and approach will be required based on very different parameters and premises. The United States will not be back at the square one of 2001, but it surely cannot continue with its current, optimistic plans. It will need to reevaluate and, no doubt, retrench. Public support and congressional reaction will not sustain the optimistic plans if Afghanistan is just muddling through with its ups and downs and an invigorated insurgency.

Perhaps the most profound shift, the United States (both the State Department and USAID) would need to review the centrality of the government of Afghanistan itself. It would have to question its past mission to “support the reach and legitimacy of the central government.” If Afghanistan is just muddling through without national reconciliation with and incorporation of the Taliban (indeed with a strengthened and assertive insurgency) with more and more territory under insurgent control or under contestation, the writ of the central government would, by definition, be even more attenuated. The “reach and legitimacy of the central government” would be diminished, volatile, and uncertain. Extending it would be at best an aspiration, especially since both the reach and the legitimacy of GIROA would be under contestation. If the central government were muddling through and under siege, and if control over various provinces and districts were volatile, shifting one way then another, national assistance programs through central ministries and a national budget would make little sense. The country would become a patchwork of de facto units and the central government could not perform. What would a national budget mean in that context? The U.S. government would not credibly be able to work on national macroeconomic policy or through central ministries in a country where half or even a third of the provinces were in insurgent hands. The authority of the central government would continue to wane. If Afghans would be looking more local as the central government muddled though, so too would the donors.

Put differently, the local sources of political, social and economic dynamics, which have never disappeared, would reassert themselves in the face of a faltering attempt by Kabul

and the donors to create a successful centrally dominated unitary state. For both security and sociopolitical reasons, that attempt would prove too anemic and probably too inconsistent with Afghanistan's underlying dynamics.⁵⁵ The decentralization issue, or perhaps more accurately the balance between the central and the regional and local governments, will need to be revisited. The effectiveness and sustainability of Kabul's reach and writ will not run through even the part of the country in which it does now. The political geography of Afghanistan would change significantly. Even a proportionately diminished assistance program would need to work in a more decentralized way if it were to have any practical relevance, in which case more complimentary authority and planning would also be required on the Afghan side. Assistance for food, health, education, and economic growth could not be planned or delivered in a seamless, national way if significant parts of the country were conflict zones or under insurgent control. The assistance programs would be chopped up by areas of insecurity into pockets available for productive work. The Tokyo framework hardly touches on subnational processes, not surprisingly perhaps in an agreement between national governments and multinational institutions. That shortcoming will become critical if the Afghan national government is just muddling through and palpably does not enjoy that signature criterion of a sovereign state: the monopoly of legitimate force over its territory.

Most of USAID's other, non-governance, non-economic programs might require similar structural changes for implementation. Their adjustments would be more obvious, related directly to security and geography. What would a national government system of health, education, or infrastructure come to? Because the muddling through scenario presumes a more robust and partially successful insurgency with perhaps temporary gains and losses in territory and control, projects would need to reflect those realities. By assumption, GIRA in general and the ANSF in particular would no longer control certain pockets of territory, and as noted, those pockets would probably be fluctuating. The insurgents would have no interest in the donor programs in the areas they controlled and, reciprocally, the donors would have no interest in providing non-humanitarian assistance in insurgent-controlled areas even if it were possible to do so, unless there were some commonality between donors and insurgents over food support, health, or possibly some education

55. As already suggested, given Afghanistan's growing urbanization, its increased incorporation into the globalized economy, the swelling number of young educated Afghans, a more powerful central state might well be in Afghanistan's future. The developmental course may be more gradual than one initiated by donors and certain Afghan elites, beginning immediately after the fall of the Taliban at the UN-sponsored Bonn Conference in December 2001; the Afghan Constitution Commission that flowed from it; and the December 2003 Constitutional Loya Jirga that adopted the Constitution that enshrined the powerful central government. All were enormously influenced, if not fully choreographed, by the donors and by the ambitions of their presidential candidate, Hamid Karzai. As head of the Interim Administration, Karzai organized the June 13–July 13, 2002, *loya jirga* that resulted in the appointment of the Transitional Administration, again headed by Karzai until the first presidential elections of 2009 that elected Karzai as president of the unitary, centralized state. The 2002 Tokyo conference, the 2004 Berlin conference, and the 2012 Tokyo conferences all engaged donors and their resources in support of the central government. The attempt to re-create a strong central government in the wake of the civil war of the 1990s and the defeat of the Taliban may have been critical to the counterinsurgency strategy. Certainly its architects thought so. Debate will continue on whether the counterinsurgency might have been more successful and sooner had the more decentralized pattern of Afghanistan's more distant past been supported and had those donor resources devoted to creating and extending the legitimacy of the strong central government been directed to support a more decentralized state.

projects. So governance, economic growth, health, education, and infrastructure programs would need to be trimmed and restructured accordingly, with (again) priority to governance and economic growth.

In the absence of central authority, the narcotics trade would probably increase. Because GIROA's control of that flow is modest even now, the increase might be limited as well.⁵⁶ Programs by the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, the Department of Defense's Counternarcotics and Global Threats, and the Justice Department's Drug Enforcement Administration might have greater purchase and might increase, although access and staffing problems would resemble USAID's. They too would confront a degraded access, capacity, and perhaps even a more contentious policy environment. They are as unlikely to be successful in the future as in the past, except at attracting donor funding based on hope and desperation to reduce the scourge of drugs more than success at doing so.⁵⁷ Indeed, absent ISAF protection, dealing with, let alone trying to exercise some control over, narcotics would undoubtedly erode even further. Moreover, someone might well ask about the longer-term salience and effects of such programs. Could they really accomplish their purposes, and if so, how?

56. Opium production has been increasing annually over the past few years even with the anti-narcotics programs of GIROA and the coalition partners. See United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Counter Narcotics, *Afghanistan Opium Risk Assessment 2013*, April 2013, http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/ORAS_report_2013_phase12.pdf. "Afghanistan is already the world's largest producer of opium and last year [2012] accounted for 75 percent of the world's heroin supply. [A UN] report suggests that Taliban insurgents took advantage of insecurity . . . to assist opium farmers and win over popular support [increasing revenues for the Taliban in the process]. Opium cultivation has increased most wherever there has been insecurity." Rod Norland, "Opium Production In Afghanistan Is Up Again," *New York Times*, April 15, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/16/world/asia/afghanistan-opium-production-increases-for-3rd-year.html?ref=asia&r=0>. Opium production is particularly high in Kandahar and Helmand provinces, still heavily controlled by the Taliban notwithstanding ISAF's concentration there. "More than 70 percent of opium production now takes place in the three provinces where the surge occurred. 'This country is on its way to becoming the world's first true narco-state,' said one international law enforcement official. . . . The opium trade is a much bigger part of the economy already than narcotics ever were in Bolivia or Colombia." The United Nations has estimated in the past that opium trafficking makes up 15 percent of Afghanistan's gross domestic product, a figure that is expected to rise as international military and development spending declines with the NATO withdrawal at the end of 2014. The increase in opium poppy cultivation is attributed mainly to historically high prices for opium, coupled with insecurity. Farmers earn as much as \$203 a kilogram for harvested opium, compared to only 43 cents a kilogram for wheat or \$1.25 for rice, according to the report. *Ibid.*

57. The questionable strategies and effects of most counternarcotics programs on reducing the drug trade, mostly concentrating on production, is the subject of an entire literature. Basically, narcotics production and trade, whether growing, refining, or delivering, is fundamentally a function of economics: supply, demand, and cost. If demand is not reduced, one or another local effort to reduce supply is unlikely to have much impact on the drug economy. Eradication in one place usually results in increasing demand and supply in another, and the same holds for production, trade, and ultimate delivery. In Afghanistan, poppy production and processing simply outcompetes other crops and employment. In many parts of the country other crops are hard to grow, less productive, and certainly less remunerative. With an extremely high rate of unemployment, poppy production is the most viable alternative in some places. Unless that changes, the incentives for poppy production and trade are compelling, and force (whether eradication or arrest or violence) has generally been unsuccessful. Efforts at eradication have alienated Afghans at all levels in the supply chain. Alternate livelihood programs have generally not compensated producers, processors, and traders well enough to displace the production of and trade in poppy and its narcotic derivatives.

The humanitarian programs—the Agriculture Department’s food programs, the State Department’s migration and refugee programs, USAID’s food security and disaster relief programs—might well engage. Although important to deal with the consequences of fragmentation, they would have little long-term strategic purpose.

The entire retrenchment and accompanying review would also necessarily raise questions about the basic purposes and strategies for the assistance programs. GIROA would hope to regain its lost hold, portray losses as temporary and tactical, claim it has plans to recapture lost ground, and argue for continuing, even increased, assistance to help it do so. This would be no time to quit, it would argue; if anything, assistance should be increased if only to show faith and to improve the odds of turning the tide. But in fact Afghanistan would be a country pockmarked with varying authorities vying for space and control. One likely scenario, as already noted, would be a GIROA authority in the cities and perhaps the major roads but uncertain authority in the villages and countryside.

If GIROA had lost ground it was unlikely to recover, what would the donors hope to accomplish, even if in the remaining government-controlled enclaves (some probably pretty large)? And how? Secondary matters like monitoring, accountability, and Tokyo commitments aside, what faith would the donors have in their “foundational investments” (to use GIROA’s term)? On what basis? With what results or returns on the investments? And how would the donors (and GIROA) react to the inevitable increase in hedging behavior by Afghans? To increased emigration? To (probably) increased levels of corruption and accompanying “get it while you still can” short-term behavior of its officials and elites? To the probable reversal of gains made over the past decade, including those touted in Afghanistan’s strategic vision?

What plan, what strategy, would GIROA itself have and how realistic would it be absent the bulk of ISAF, the doubts of the donors, and the non-confidence-inducing behavior of its own citizens (especially the elites)? Even assuming a credible 2014 election, what would the muddling through GIROA look like? Would it consolidate its hold over diminished areas? With probable losses of, or increased security over, trade routes? Over important resources? And with probably a changed relation with its neighbors and its place in the region? And what would the size and momentum of the insurgency look like? Would the insurgents continue to gain? Would their respective positions have stabilized? Would GIROA be recovering areas previously lost? Would it have a convincing chance of doing so? Finally, what about the coherence of GIROA itself? How would the elements of its constituent coalition reassess the context? Would there be growing private feelers to the insurgents? To one another? To regional neighbors? To donors?

The donors would need regularly to review the bidding and the game notwithstanding the appeals of GIROA. Almost certainly the reviews and donor commitments would become more tentative, contingent, and probably of shorter duration. The Tokyo commitments by GIROA itself would probably be a dead letter, but more existential problems and commitments would be more importunate and immediate. GIROA would naturally be concerned

that short-term donor commitments would be self-fulfilling indications of non-confidence and failure, especially when donor funds equal Afghanistan's own gross domestic product. Still, in a muddling through context, a whole new set of discussions with the new post-election coalition GIROA (itself unstable and revolving) would become a pressing priority. So too would a host of practical problems for the donors, including security for their nationals and the probability that projects would be subject to shifting security and implementation limitations.

More important even than practicalities would be a donor review of the purposes and strategies for the assistance programs. Security assistance would be oriented toward fortifying the areas still retained by the ANSF and on retaking lost territory. To the extent that it would have any strategic dimension, the assistance program would need to double down on governance and, if possible, on some kind of perhaps more subnational and fragmented economic growth strategy, both again to try to promote confidence in GIROA. GIROA's national priority plans and its strategic vision would need to be revisited to remain credible at all. The grand idea of a self-reliant Afghanistan with "economic growth, fiscal sustainability, sustainable human development, peace, stability as a model of democratically developing Islamic Nation"⁵⁸ will be improbable and no longer strategic unless GIROA could regain the control it lost.

For diplomacy too, a review would be necessary. The fluidity of a muddling through scenario both for Afghanistan and for its neighbors would call for even greater regional diplomacy to prevent or at least retard the impulse of Afghanistan's neighbors from protecting their immediate interests by engaging in the internal dynamics of Afghanistan's or, worse, by creating shifting alliances and perhaps secret arrangements among one another to do so. If the elections go badly and if the insurgents gain ground, questions about GIROA's international standing as the legitimate government of Afghanistan might also become an issue, although it is not clear in whose interest raising such questions would be other than the Taliban's. But keeping the bilateral and multilateral relations on some kind of reasonable track, given the fluidity, will perhaps make embassy diplomats pine for the days of Karzai's presidency, however mercurial.

Pessimistic Scenario

If even the muddling through scenario were to erode, whether quickly or over some time, and if the center looked as if it were deteriorating or disintegrating, all bets would be off. Afghans would look to self-protection. They want to avoid the civil war and warlords of the 1990s, but survival comes first. Survival would probably take the form of communal and geographic havens with armed defenses and inevitably offenses as well. That would likely mean regionalism, subregionalism, militias, and strong-men. Given the intermingling of different groups during the past decade, especially in the main cities, any sorting out could be bloody and painful. Where interests overlap, there would be no need for ethnic cleansing.

58. *Afghanistan's Strategic Vision*, 3–4.

Still, once passions are underwritten by military forces, the centrifugal forces are likely to prevail, as they learned in the Balkans. More likely would be some kind of de facto split between a Pashtun area (predominantly south and east) versus the rest of country. However, there would be no guarantee, perhaps not even a likelihood, of solidarity in any part, including the heavily Pashtun areas in which tribal and other divisions could easily erupt. A simple Pashtun/non-Pashtun split is unlikely.

Any split, especially one between Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns would worry Pakistan because Afghanistan, under Pashtun leadership, has never recognized the Durand Line. As already noted, Pashtuns on both sides of the border have long dreamed of a single Pashtunistan carved out of both countries and with an internationally recognized border. But there would be plenty of regional headaches before any such effort could become even plausible. The Pashtuns themselves are hardly united. The Pashtun clans would likely have a go at one another as well. Clashes between those who would support the official government in Kabul and those who would support the Taliban or other insurgents would expand. Still, the major fault lines would more likely engage the Pashtuns versus the Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, and smaller groups, who would in general oppose the more fundamentalist Taliban and the *Pashtunwali* customs and lifestyle. No doubt, there have been Taliban incursions in the north and west and there are fundamentalist sympathies among the minority communities. But if the old civil war divisions reasserted themselves, the old mujahideen and warlord splits and loyalties probably would as well. If so, it would probably reengage Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Iran, and possibly even Russia and China. Iran may not worry about a fundamentalist theocracy on its border but, in addition to their purely communal concerns, the others do.

The United States and its allies would need to reconsider their policies from scratch. Unlike the muddling through scenario, they would now be at square one. Instinctively, they would probably try to maintain the ex-ante coalition in Kabul between the moderate Pashtuns and the other minorities. They might want to protect and support what would remain of GIROA and the ANSF. But that was their strategy in the now-degraded muddling through scenario. A major deterioration would require a full re-thinking and a new policy toward Afghanistan, the likely civil war, and the region.

Likewise, the assistance program would need to be rebuilt from scratch with new assumptions, purposes (if they can be found), and constraints to reflect the new conditions. The central government and its strategic vision would hardly count, even less than in the muddling through scenario with its hope for a rebounding. Indeed, forging a reasonable assistance package for what would remain of the central government in Kabul would be some struggle, even if that were a major goal. Security would be a major problem even if policy and purpose were clear. Even Afghans would find project implementation infeasible in most parts of the country. How would the governance, law, economic growth, agriculture, health, education, or infrastructure programs work? Would any counternarcotics programs have a chance when narcotics trade would represent the best economic source of livelihood and, naturally, weapons purchases? The militias that controlled drugs would

also control armaments, wealth, and power. Some governance programs might still be possible, but they would be local and fragmented. Localized health, education, and agriculture projects might be feasible. What would any of these programs really look like or add up to? Like the remnant government, the donors and their assistance would probably be confined to or at least very much centralized in the cities still held by friendly forces, ANSF or not. Humanitarian programs, perhaps cross-border, would be the order of the day, as they were before 2001. Indeed, all programs might well become cross-border in a kind of déjà vu world. It might be best to try re-recruiting the old staff except that the locations and modalities by which they operated, for example, out of Peshawar, would no longer be available either. Dushanbe and Samarkand would not be promising venues. But even more than in the muddling through scenario, to what purpose? What would be the larger goal and what strategy for achieving it? To help GIROA hang on? To consolidate its areas of control?

Of course, this is the pessimistic scenario. Everyone hopes it is unlikely in the extreme. As the old saying goes, “Hope is not a strategy.” Given the dreary options and hopefully its improbability, perhaps little time needs be devoted now to plumbing its details. But some thought should be given to the indicators that would point to this kind of deterioration and to what kind of conditions would auger for a major review of the muddling through scenario.

6 | Conclusions

Where does this analysis lead then? What does it come down to? Key principles and conclusions can be drawn for the future of civilian engagement in Afghanistan after the 2014 drawdown.

1. Afghanistan's future depends primarily on three pillars or factors: security, governance, and economic growth.
2. Other challenges are important (health, education, women's participation, and especially the rule of law) but, perhaps with the exception of the rule of law, they are secondary.
3. A number of possible scenarios based on the three pillars are possible but perhaps it is useful to think of three: optimistic, muddling through, and pessimistic.
4. The combination of assistance and its strategic use depends on how each of the three scenarios (or some permutation) plays out and how Afghans and donors react or structure them with policies and strategies.
5. The future of the insurgency may be the most critical factor; it will in turn depend on the three principle factors—security, governance, and the economy—which in turn will depend in great measure on the Afghans themselves and their government.
6. The strength of the insurgency and the performance of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) aside, probably the most important factor in shaping Afghanistan's future, and therefore the effectiveness of any donor assistance, lies in the policies of the future government and of its political will and ability to work that will as a practical political and economic matter. The old cliché still applies: Afghanistan's future cannot be more important to the United States than to Afghans and the United States cannot substitute its will and policies for those of the Afghans. The performance of the government of Afghanistan is the critical determinant.
7. With declining financial resources choices will need to be made. They should depend on the analyses accompanying the defining pillars and consequent scenarios.
8. The probability of an optimistic scenario is not great. The probability of a pessimistic scenario is greater. Some kind of muddling through scenario may be the most likely, perhaps even the most optimistic, but it will be uncertain and erratic.

9. Much depends on the 2014 elections, both the process and the results. Absent a credible election with an outcome widely seen to be legitimate and an effective leader and government, the probabilities of an optimistic scenario are dramatically reduced.
10. Afghans will no doubt be disappointed in the amounts of future assistance they will receive and perhaps the areas for which they will receive them. Some will feel abandoned. But U.S. foreign policy and assistance strategies should not be based on Afghan sensibilities and emotions. They should be based on U.S. national interests and accurate analysis of the problems, on resources (especially on the Afghan side), on proposed strategies, and on the performance of the Afghans.
11. Assistance is just what the term suggests: ways to help others achieve common ends. The donors can *assist* but they cannot create Afghanistan's future. They are secondary actors. Afghan agency is critical.
12. The scenarios depend much more on Afghan agency than on what the international community does. No amount of assistance can substitute for uncertain political will or, worse, obstruction and resistance to reform by powerful Afghans. More specifically, if personal or patronage interests constantly nullify necessary reforms and the public good, neither military nor civilian foreign intervention can rescue Afghanistan from a dim future.
13. The donors should develop several plans, not just one, each based on contingencies and scenarios.
14. In the muddling through and pessimistic scenarios, all programs and projects will need to be reviewed, but plans should be made now for these eventualities, even as Afghans and donors alike hope they will not materialize.
15. The three scenarios are basic, fairly crude, fairly vague, and fairly self-evident. Better, more sophisticated, nuanced planning scenarios should be developed to discipline policy and programs and, if possible, to develop strategy. The greater problem is that the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and other civilian agencies have developed no scenarios at all, have little if any policy and serious program priorities or discipline, resist strategic choices and trade-offs, and most likely will (as in the past) do a little of everything, making ad-hoc rather than strategic decisions as the need arises. That precludes systematic strategic thinking and is a poor recipe for decent policy and programming. The military has learned to do planning, strategic thinking, and priority-based decisionmaking. Civilians need to do the same.
16. The planning scenarios should be based on clear, balanced, realistic, and likely assumptions and strategies rather than visions, illusions, fantasies, or delusions.
17. The specific assistance and diplomatic programs and priorities flowing from the scenarios should form the basis of a civilian strategy, but should be subject to

constant, objective, and honest review, without the concomitant bureaucratic incentives and impulses to “adjust” the facts so that the performance and prospects look better, more successful, and more encouraging than they are. Path dependency, bureaucratic turf, and emotional or ideological investments need to be resisted or checked by leadership. For that too, skeptical congressional and independent oversight will be critical, not to burden Afghanistan more than it already is but to keep the executive branch honest.

18. Realistic conditionality is critical: the levels of assistance should depend on the performance of Afghans, especially the government, as reflected in the scenarios.
19. Each conditionality should be real, not notional and certainly not accompanied by incredible or implausible threat. If the performance, especially of GIRoA, falls substantially short and/or the contextual scenarios change, assistance should be reviewed and adjusted accordingly. Concrete corruption targets should be among the indicators but, notwithstanding the corrosive effects of corruption (not least on GIRoA’s credibility); even corruption may not be the most important focus. The usual warnings about consequences of non-performance should be genuine, not just hortatory. Funding should be increased where targets are met. Funding should be cut if the conditions are not met without truly mitigating circumstances beyond the control of local actors. Public explanation should be given for any reductions. The donors should be careful about drawing “red lines” but when they are drawn, they need to be respected and enforced; otherwise donor credibility will decline even further. Real consequences are necessary to reward positive and discourage negative developments. U.S. credibility is already in short supply. It will vanish if proposed conditionality is simply a façade. More important and quite apart from any donor, Afghanistan’s vision will fail if certain conditions (mostly related to security, governance, and the economy) are not met.
20. The nature and future of the Afghan state will be determined this time in Afghanistan, not in Bonn or Washington. Having botched that determination over the past dozen years, foreigners should not be trying to ordain the result on their way out. That means they should not try from afar with less commitment to continue insisting on the bloated, central state they created. If that is what Afghans now want and think they can afford, fine. But if they prefer a federal or a confederal rather than a unitary state, if they want more or less centralization, if they opt for stronger or weaker government, if they cannot fully agree, or if the conditions do now allow for such a state notwithstanding Afghan preferences, all this should be left to Afghan dynamics (including of course the predictably adamant resistance of the current state), however rudimentary and tentative. Post-2014 dynamics are likely to be messy and unpleasant. The result may not be to the liking of coalition countries; they had their chance and are now trimming, shrinking, and withdrawing. Instead, the donors should insist on specific results in exchange for specific contributions (or investments, as GIRoA prefers to call them). Fine, fair enough: then accept the investment language and bargain for the appropriate returns on those investments.

21. Truly independent monitoring and evaluation is critical to realistic assessments of developments. Monitoring, evaluation and oversight should be located in the Department of State and USAID, but also in a genuinely independent entity, perhaps an expanded special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction (SIGAR) beyond the role of inspector general. Ideally, it should not be co-located with the embassy in Kabul or the State Department in Washington. With its own separate budget, it should report directly to Congress while sharing its analyses with the executive branch.
22. The diplomatic engagement is less contingent than assistance but also probably more circumscribed after 2014. The difficult and probably exasperating diplomacy surrounding the U.S.-Afghanistan bilateral relation and the attempt to forge a benign regional environment will be its central challenges.
23. After the 2014 presidential elections and then the 2015 parliamentary elections, the government of Afghanistan is likely to be a constellation, a coalition, of different forces with different goals and differential performance. The U.S. should concentrate on the ministries and agencies most important to the long-term future of Afghanistan, so long as those agencies are in the hands of forces likely to take and implement the right policies and are not inimical to the United States.
24. The basic social, political, and cultural dynamics of Afghanistan, like its growing urbanization and the role of its more educated up-and-coming generation, will surely affect the scenarios. Afghanistan is under rapid change, not just as a result of the insurgency, the counterinsurgency, and the foreigners. Planning should include those dynamics or risk being archaic before the get-go.

These are basic principles, meant to begin a conversation and review.

As noted, more nuanced U.S.-Afghanistan scenarios than optimistic, muddling through, and pessimistic are preferable. Other analysts and policymakers surely have better ideas. Excellent. The point is that a truly strategic approach to post-2014 planning requires an analytical framework including a variety of factors such as purposes, challenges, resources, probabilities of success, Afghan will and contingencies, and consequent scenarios. Dynamic scenarios will include not just the realities of Afghanistan and the government's plans, policies, competencies, and resources but also those of its adversaries, especially (but not only) the Taliban. But no analysis at all is likely to mean a haphazard strategy or none at all. And that is likely to consign the post-2014 civilian program to a sequence of incidental decisions with diminished resources driven by personalities, constituencies, and political slogans.

Policy and planning scenarios notwithstanding, basic policies regarding military and civilian engagement in Afghanistan are grounded in the long-term engagement of the United States with Afghanistan and the long-term future of Afghanistan in general. What are the realistic U.S. interests in Afghanistan? What costs are the United States prepared to

sustain? Over what time? Under what contingencies? With what probable results? To take just three examples, any of Iraq, Egypt, or Pakistan is much more central to the long-term interests of the United States than Afghanistan. Yet the U.S. engagement in Afghanistan has already distorted other, more critical U.S. policies and interests in South Asia and globally. The engagement has directly and indirectly affected U.S. relations with Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, India, Russia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and even Iran. Indirectly it has drawn U.S. attention and resources from other more critical countries, regions, and problems. Which U.S. interests in which of Russia, China, India, Central Asia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, or even (inversely) Iran should the United States and its partners actually sacrifice or even tax for Afghanistan, and by how much? Again, U.S. basic interests in each of them is greater than it is in Afghanistan.

More specifically, the engagement has exacerbated tensions in the already highly charged relation between the United States and Pakistan. That relation has soured unduly because of U.S. pressure on Pakistan to increase its efforts to attack Taliban residents in its northwest and ensure supply routes between Karachi and Jalalabad. It has forced Pakistan to sustain drone attacks and endure the humiliating SEAL that killed Osama bin Laden in a town dominated by the military's premier academy, a mere 30 miles from Islamabad, and without warning, let alone consulting Pakistan or its army (particularly its directorate of Inter-Services Intelligence). A host of other issues relating not directly to Pakistan but to Afghanistan have also exacerbated tensions. The Pakistani view, right or wrong, that the United States is constantly using but then betraying Pakistan for its own purposes, is reinforced by the U.S. commitment in Afghanistan. But Pakistan, not Afghanistan, is a more critical U.S. strategic interest. A reduction of U.S. commitment in and to Afghanistan will reduce that particular irritant and contribute to a policy toward Pakistan more reflective of longer-term U.S. interests, although of course never enough to reverse or neutralize Pakistan's attitudes or policies. Indeed, with the diminishing centrality of Afghanistan, the United States will hopefully return to a more appropriately balanced policy in Pakistan, putting its interests in Afghanistan and other countries into proper perspective. U.S. diplomacy in Kabul could perhaps usefully help Afghanistan with its neighborhood problem but not, as in the past decade, at the disproportionate expense of U.S. relations with the respective neighbors, near and far. The United States would not totally abandon Afghanistan but put its interests there into appropriate perspective.

Second, within a more balanced perspective, where will direction come from for U.S. policy in Afghanistan itself and what will that direction be? As the military draws down and U.S. engagement on policy issues in Afghanistan wanes, fewer stakes will remain; they will be less relevant to broader U.S. policies. The Department of State will presumably have the lead on the bilateral relations, but subject to what policy and what instruments will it have to bring to bear? The United States is interested in a decent, stable, peaceful, prosperous, and democratic Afghanistan. It has no ambitions to control Afghanistan's resources. Yet because of the last dozen years, the U.S.-Afghanistan future will not be a classic arrangement of states discussing their relations. The insurgency will continue to shape the relationship but it will depend more on internal dynamics and far less on statecraft. As to

real resources by which to affect outcomes, the State Department will have dwindling assistance funds, with most implemented by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Already the out-year budget scenarios contemplate substantial reductions, notwithstanding the commitments made at the 2012 Tokyo conference. What will be the scenarios and priorities behind U.S. policies? USAID should but probably will not be much engaged in formulating them. Already all but neutered, USAID has been conditioned to spend all it gets and to ask for more, irrespective of policies or trade-offs. The country assistance budgets are constructed by both the State Department and USAID on a region-by-region basis more than on a global level. Therefore, even if it had the discipline for policy prioritization and trade-offs, USAID cannot realistically propose that savings from Afghanistan be applied to Egypt, let alone Zimbabwe or an all-but-forgotten country in Central America.

Ultimately, the global, inter-regional policies, priorities, and trade-offs (including adjustments in assistance) will be recommended by the State Department with USAID input, but set by the National Security Council, the Office of Management and Budget, and then Congress, especially the House and Senate authorization and appropriations committees. The trade-offs in time and resources will need to be global, especially given the turmoil and the stakes in the Middle East. The fate of the rebalance toward Asia will also play a role. No doubt, the State Department can devote attention to all these issues, but the nondiplomatic resources will be more problematic. If Afghanistan begins to deteriorate, the State Department could be more hard pressed to justify its decisions.

A well-configured civilian effort should staff the study of various basic scenarios and propose an appropriate U.S. strategy. The effort should include a robust “red team” to critique the proposed responses. It should include some gaming, similar to what the military does with some regularity. Unfortunately, scenario planning, meaningful red teams, and honed strategies are not exactly the great strength of the civilian side of the U.S. government, and certainly not of the State Department or USAID.

The main issues relate to the diminishing weight that the United States and its allies can bring to Afghanistan’s future and how best to direct that residual weight. As indicated, the underlying national interests in Afghanistan are modest at best. Now the long-term bills and commitments are on the table, absent the emotional pull of September 2001. To repeat, the United States simply cannot undertake to guarantee the security of every country with an insurgency or every cave in which ambitious haters of the United States are planning a terrorist attack against its cities, schools or subways: too many adversaries, too many insurgencies, too many caves, too few resources.

As for Afghanistan itself, that will require hard talk—some public, some private—about stakes and resources, what the United States is prepared to do, and what the Afghans will need to do for themselves, not unlike the insistence that Afghanistan will need to rely on its Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) rather than on foreign forces for security. The United States should work with GIROA to forge a policy in which Afghanistan can

adjust aspirations, ambitions, objectives, and plans from hopes and dreams to more closely realize its actual, sustainable resources. The resulting policy would for example almost surely strip from the presidential palace the ill-fated illusion that it can sit at the heart of a centralized all-powerful government deciding extremely ambitious programs and budgets for 36 provinces and over 300 districts, an illusion one might have thought died in May 1989 as General Boris Gromov crossed the Afghan-Uzbek bridge back into the centralized Soviet state, itself about to implode. In the end, the U.S. commitment to Afghanistan may be as wobbly as feared by some Afghans, but if so its unsteadiness will result from the combination of U.S. resources, the importance of Afghanistan to the national interests of the United States, the alternative calls by other challenges to U.S. resources and the centrality of those calls to U.S. national interests, and most important of all, by the attitudes, behavior, and performance of GIRoA and the Afghans. The U.S. should make these issues clear, if only to reduce the constant Afghan anxiety that the United States is unilaterally unreliable and will abandon Afghanistan at the slightest pretext.

Ironically, a more realistic U.S. policy might best serve Afghanistan's long-term interests as well. As in the security domain, the coalition partners can offer a much reduced level of *assistance* to the next Afghan administration. But the fundamental choices about the nature of the state including the security it can provide, the level of goods and services it can expect, the plans it can reasonably design and implement, the level of competence and effectiveness that will actually be provided by the central and local governments, the economic policies it will follow, the degree of decentralization it will pursue, and dozens of other constitutional and policy decisions incumbent on every independent state, all of these will be even more the province of Afghans themselves . . . because Afghanistan is on the verge of becoming truly its own independent truly sovereign state and not the construction of its partners.

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