

White Paper of the Interagency Policy Group's Report on U.S. Policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

The United States has a vital national security interest in addressing the current and potential security threats posed by extremists in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In Pakistan, al Qaeda and other groups of jihadist terrorists are planning new terror attacks. Their targets remain the U.S. homeland, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Europe, Australia, our allies in the Middle East, and other targets of opportunity. The growing size of the space in which they are operating is a direct result of the terrorist/insurgent activities of the Taliban and related organizations. At the same time, this group seeks to reestablish their old sanctuaries in Afghanistan.

Therefore, the core goal of the U.S. must be to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda and its safe havens in Pakistan, and to prevent their return to Pakistan or Afghanistan.

The ability of extremists in Pakistan to undermine Afghanistan is proven, while insurgency in Afghanistan feeds instability in Pakistan. The threat that al Qaeda poses to the United States and our allies in Pakistan - including the possibility of extremists obtaining fissile material - is all too real. Without more effective action against these groups in Pakistan, Afghanistan will face continuing instability.

Objectives

Achieving our core goal is vital to U.S. national security. It requires, first of all, realistic and achievable objectives. These include:

- Disrupting terrorist networks in Afghanistan and especially Pakistan to degrade any ability they have to plan and launch international terrorist attacks.
- Promoting a more capable, accountable, and effective government in Afghanistan that serves the Afghan people and can eventually function, especially regarding internal security, with limited international support.
- Developing increasingly self-reliant Afghan security forces that can lead the counterinsurgency and counterterrorism fight with reduced U.S. assistance.
- Assisting efforts to enhance civilian control and stable constitutional government in Pakistan and a vibrant economy that provides opportunity for the people of Pakistan.
- Involving the international community to actively assist in addressing these objectives for Afghanistan and Pakistan, with an important leadership role for the UN.

A New Way Forward

These are daunting tasks. They require a new way of thinking about the challenges, a wide ranging diplomatic strategy to build support for our efforts, enhanced engagement with the publics in the region and at home, and a realization that all elements of international power – diplomatic, informational, military and economic - must be brought to bear. They will also require a significant change in the management, resources, and focus of our foreign assistance.

Our diplomatic effort should be based on building a clear consensus behind the common core goal and supporting objectives. To this end, we will explore creating new diplomatic mechanisms, including establishing a “Contact Group” and a regional security and economic cooperation forum. The trilateral U.S.-Pakistan-Afghanistan effort of February 24-26, 2009 will be continued and broadened, into the next meeting planned for early May, in Washington.

The United States must overcome the 'trust deficit' it faces in Afghanistan and Pakistan, where many believe that we are not a reliable long-term partner. We must engage the Afghan people in ways that demonstrate our commitment to promoting a legitimate and capable Afghan government with economic progress. We must engage the Pakistani people based on our long-term commitment to helping them build a stable economy, a stronger democracy, and a vibrant civil society.

A strategic communications program must be created, made more effective, and resourced. This new strategy will have no chance of success without better civil-military coordination by U.S. agencies, a significant increase of civilian resources, and a new model of how we allocate and use these resources. For too long, U.S. and international assistance efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan have suffered from being ill-organized and significantly under-resourced in some areas. A large portion of development assistance ends up being spent on international consultants and overhead, and virtually no impact assessments have yet been done on our assistance programs.

We must ensure that our assistance to both Afghanistan and Pakistan is aligned with our core goals and objectives. This will involve assistance that is geared to strengthening government capacity and the message that assistance will be limited without the achievement of results. Additional assistance to Afghanistan must be accompanied by concrete mechanisms to ensure greater government accountability. In a country that is 70 percent rural, and where the Taliban recruiting base is primarily among under-employed youths, a complete overhaul of our civilian assistance strategy is necessary; agricultural sector job creation is an essential first step to undercutting the appeal of al Qaeda and its allies. Increased assistance to Pakistan will be limited without a greater willingness to cooperate with us to eliminate the sanctuary enjoyed by al Qaeda and other extremist groups, as well as a greater commitment to economic reforms that will raise the living standard of ordinary Pakistanis, including in the border regions of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, the North West Frontier Province, and Baluchistan.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

The following steps must be done in concert to produce the desired end state: the removal of al-Qaeda's sanctuary, effective democratic government control in Pakistan, and a self-reliant Afghanistan that will enable a withdrawal of combat forces while sustaining our commitment to political and economic development.

- **Executing and resourcing an integrated civilian-military counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan.**

Our military forces in Afghanistan, including those recently approved by the President, should be utilized for two priority missions: 1) securing Afghanistan's south and east against a return of al Qaeda and its allies, to provide a space for the Afghan government to establish effective government control and 2) providing the Afghan security forces with the mentoring needed to expand rapidly, take the lead in effective counterinsurgency operations, and allow us and our partners to wind down our combat operations.

Our counter-insurgency strategy must integrate population security with building effective local governance and economic development. We will establish the security needed to provide space and time for stabilization and reconstruction activities.

To prevent future attacks on the U.S. and its allies - including the local populace - the development of a strategic communications strategy to counter the terror information campaign is urgent. This has proved successful in Iraq (where the U.S. military has made a significant effort in this area) and should be developed in Afghanistan as a top priority to improve the image of the United States and its allies. The strategic communications plan -- including electronic media, telecom, and radio -- shall include options on how best to counter the propaganda that is key to the enemy's terror campaign.

- **Resourcing and prioritizing civilian assistance in Afghanistan**

By increasing civilian capacity we will strengthen the relationship between the Afghan people and their government. A dramatic increase in Afghan civilian expertise is needed to facilitate the development of systems and institutions particularly at the provincial and local levels, provide basic infrastructure, and create economic alternatives to the insurgency at all levels of Afghan society, particularly in agriculture. The United States should play an important part in providing that expertise, but responding effectively to Afghanistan's needs will require that allies, partners, the UN and other international organizations, and non-governmental organizations significantly increase their involvement in Afghanistan.

- **Expanding the Afghan National Security Forces: Army and Police**

To be capable of assuming the security mission from U.S. forces in Afghanistan's south and east, the Afghan National Security Forces must substantially increase its size and capability. Initially this will require a more rapid build-up of the Afghan Army and police up to 134,000 and 82,000 over the next two years, with additional enlargements as circumstances and resources warrant.

The international community must assume responsibility for funding this significantly enhanced Afghan security force for an extended period. We will also have to provide support for other Afghan security forces such as the Afghan Public Protection Force. Salaries paid to Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police must become more competitive with those paid by the insurgents.

Over time, as security conditions change, we should continue to reassess Afghan National Security Forces size, as it will be affected by such factors as: the overall security situation, the capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces, and the rate at which we can grow local security forces and integrate them into the overall ANSF structure.

- **Engaging the Afghan government and bolstering its legitimacy**

International support for the election will be necessary for a successful outcome. We should do everything necessary to ensure the security and legitimacy of voter registration, elections, and vote counting. The international military presence should help the Afghan security forces provide security before, during and after the election. International monitoring will also be required to ensure legitimacy and oversee Afghanistan's polling sites.

The overall legitimacy of the Afghan government is also undermined by rampant corruption and a failure to provide basic services to much of the population over the past 7 years. Where Afghan systems and institutions have benefited from high quality technical assistance and mentoring, they have made great progress. Making such support more consistent with qualified mentors to advise and monitor officials, pushing such efforts to the provincial and district levels, and channeling more assistance through Afghan institutions benefiting from this high quality support will help restore and maintain the legitimacy of the Afghan government.

- **Encouraging Afghan government efforts to integrate reconcilable insurgents**

While Mullah Omar and the Taliban's hard core that have aligned themselves with al Qaeda are not reconcilable and we cannot make a deal that includes them, the war in Afghanistan cannot be won without convincing non-ideologically committed insurgents to lay down their arms, reject al Qaeda, and accept the Afghan Constitution.

Practical integration must not become a mechanism for instituting medieval social policies that give up the quest for gender equality and human rights. We can help this process along by exploiting differences among the insurgents to divide the Taliban's true believers from less committed fighters.

Integration must be Afghan-led. An office should be created in every province and we should support efforts by the Independent Directorate of Local Governance to develop a reconciliation effort targeting mid-to-low level insurgents to be led by provincial governors. We should also explore ways to rehabilitate captured insurgents drawing on lessons learned from similar programs in Iraq and other countries.

- **Including provincial and local governments in our capacity building efforts**

We need to work with the Afghan government to refocus civilian assistance and capacity-building programs on building up competent provincial and local governments where they can more directly serve the people and connect them to their government.

- **Breaking the link between narcotics and the insurgency**

Besides the global consequences of the drug trade, the Afghan narcotics problem causes great concern due to its ties to the insurgency, the fact that it is the major driver of corruption in Afghanistan, and distorts the legal economy. The NATO/International Security Assistance Forces and U.S. forces should use their authorities to directly support Afghan counternarcotics units during the interdiction of narco-traffickers. The new authorities permit the destruction of labs, drug storage facilities, drug processing equipment, and drug caches and should contribute to breaking the drug-insurgency funding nexus and the corruption associated with the opium/heroin trade. Crop substitution and alternative livelihood programs that are a key pillar of effectively countering narcotics have been disastrously underdeveloped and under-resourced, however, and the narcotics trade will persist until such programs allow Afghans to reclaim their land for licit agriculture. Targeting those who grow the poppy will continue, but the focus will shift to higher level drug lords.

- **Mobilizing greater international political support of our objectives in Afghanistan**

We need to do more to build a shared understanding of what is at stake in Afghanistan, while engaging other actors and offering them the opportunity to advance our mutual interests by cooperating with us.

- **Bolstering Afghanistan-Pakistan cooperation**

We need to institutionalize stronger mechanisms for bilateral and trilateral cooperation. During the process of this review, inter-agency teams from Afghanistan and Pakistan came to Washington, DC for trilateral meetings. This new forum should continue and serve as the basis for enhanced bilateral and trilateral cooperation.

- **Engaging and focusing Islamabad on the common threat**

Successfully shutting down the Pakistani safe haven for extremists will also require consistent and intensive strategic engagement with Pakistani leadership in both the civilian and military spheres. The engagement must be conducted in a way that respects, and indeed enhances, democratic civilian authority.

- **Assisting Pakistan's capability to fight extremists**

It is vital to strengthen our efforts to both develop and operationally enable Pakistani security forces so they are capable of succeeding in sustained counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations. In part this will include increased U.S. military assistance for helicopters to provide air mobility, night vision equipment, and training and equipment specifically for Pakistani Special Operation Forces and their Frontier Corps.

- **Increasing and broadening assistance in Pakistan**

Increasing economic assistance to Pakistan - to include direct budget support, development assistance, infrastructure investment, and technical advice on making sound economic policy adjustments - and strengthening trade relations will maximize support for our policy aims; it should also help to provide longer-term economic stability. Our assistance should focus on long-term capacity building, on agricultural sector job creation, education and training, and on infrastructure requirements. Assistance should also support Pakistani efforts to 'hold and build' in western Pakistan as a part of its counterinsurgency efforts.

- **Exploring other areas of economic cooperation with Pakistan**

We need to enhance bilateral and regional trade possibilities, in part through implementing Reconstruction Opportunity Zones (which were recently re-introduced in Congress) and encouraging foreign investment in key sectors, such as energy. In addition, assisting Islamabad with developing a concrete strategy for utilizing donor aid would increase Islamabad's chances for garnering additional support from the international community.

- **Strengthening Pakistani government capacity**

Strengthening the civilian, democratic government must be a centerpiece of our overall effort. Key efforts should include fostering the reform of provincial and local governance in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and the North West Frontier Province. We need to help

Islamabad enhance the services and support in areas cleared of insurgents so that they have a real chance in preventing insurgents from returning to those areas.

With international partners, we should also promote the development of regional organizations that focus on economic and security cooperation, as well as fostering productive political dialogue.

- **Asking for assistance from allies for Afghanistan and Pakistan**

Our efforts are a struggle against forces that pose a direct threat to the entire international community. While reaching out to allies and partners for their political support, we should also ask them to provide the necessary resources to accomplish our shared objectives. They have the same interest in denying terrorists and extremists sanctuaries in Pakistan and Afghanistan that we do. In approaching allies we should emphasize that our new approach is integrated between civilian and military elements and in looking at Afghanistan and Pakistan as one theater for diplomacy.

For the mission in Afghanistan, we should continue to seek contributions for combat forces, trainers and mentors, strategic lift, and equipment from our friends and allies. The U.S. will also pursue major international funding and experts for civilian reconstruction and Afghan government capacity building at the national and especially the provincial and local levels.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan should take the lead in exploring ways that donors could systematically share the burden of building Afghan capacity and providing civilian expertise. As part of its coordination role for civilian assistance, the UN should consolidate requests and identify gaps.

In Pakistan, the U.S. will urge allies to work closely with us both bilaterally and through the 'Friends of Democratic Pakistan' to coordinate economic and development assistance, including additional direct budget support, development assistance, infrastructure investment and technical advice on making sound economic policy adjustments. Similarly, we should ask them to provide technical advice and assistance in strengthening government capacity, such as improving Pakistani institutions.

Conclusion

There are no quick fixes to achieve U.S. national security interests in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The danger of failure is real and the implications are grave. In 2009-2010 the Taliban's momentum must be reversed in Afghanistan and the international community must work with Pakistan to disrupt the threats to security along Pakistan's western border.

This new strategy of focusing on our core goal - to disrupt, dismantle, and eventually destroy extremists and their safe havens within both nations, although with different tactics - will require immediate action, sustained commitment, and substantial resources. The United States is committed to working with our partners in the region and the international community to address this challenging but essential security goal.

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