



Jere Van Dyk Discusses Afghanistan

Interview

Jere Van Dyk , Madeleine Lynn

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[Jere Van Dyk](#)

MADELEINE LYNN: This is Madeleine Lynn of the Carnegie Council, and I'm here this morning with one of our Council's Senior Fellows, Jere Van Dyk. Jere Van Dyk is a journalist and author who is an expert on Afghanistan. He has been visiting the country since the 1970s, I believe, he has a long-term involvement with and love of the country, and he also knows the surrounding region very well. In addition to his work at the Council, he is a consultant on Afghanistan, Pakistan, and al-Qaeda for CBS News.

Jere has just come back from the dangerous and unknown regions along the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan, so we are very lucky to have him here today. We are going to talk about his impressions.



[Madeleine Lynn](#)

But before we do that, I thought maybe we could talk about some of your earlier experiences in Afghanistan because I know that you were there in 1981, you spent some time with the mujahideen, and you wrote a wonderful book about that, called [In Afghanistan](#). You also wrote some articles for *The New York Times* and *The Sunday Times Magazine* that were nominated for a Pulitzer Prize.

So why don't we talk a bit about your earlier times with the mujahideen?

JERE VAN DYK: Good morning, Madeleine. Thanks very much for your kind introduction. I'm happy to be here.

Yes, I did go to Afghanistan in 1981 as a correspondent for *The New York Times* and I'm happy to talk to you about it. We can begin anywhere you want.

MADELEINE LYNN: Well, at that time, of course, the United States' relationship with the mujahideen was very different. We saw them as freedom fighters. I know that you bonded with quite a few of their leaders. Maybe you could talk a little about that and about what your relationships with these people are today, if some of them are still around and you've seen them.

JERE VAN DYK: What I did in 1981, not really knowing who to talk to or how to go about it, was that I went to Peshawar, Pakistan, which is right along the Afghan-Pakistani border, and checked into a hotel called Deans, which was an old British hotel from the time of the British Raj. It was a wonderful old place, with dark wood paneling, geckos on the walls, and waiters wearing starched frayed white jackets who served you with old silver dishes. It has since been torn down. At that time, there were various mujahideen groups. Mujahideen means, of course, "holy warriors" in Arabic, the same word in Pashto and in Dari, the two principal languages of Afghanistan. I went around and I talked to all the various mujahideen leaders, trying to find someone with whom I could, to use your word, bond, someone I liked.

I didn't know the language. I didn't know the culture. I had visited there as a very young man, as you mentioned, in 1973, so I did know a little bit about Afghanistan.

But what I did in going around to all the various people—some of whom are very much alive today, and are fighting the United States—was I had to find someone I trusted. I would be putting my life in his hands.

I found one man, named [Yunus Khalis](#), who was head of a party called [Hezb-i-Islami](#), or Islamic Party. The party had divided into two parts. Party one was headed by a fellow named [Gulbadeen Hekmatyier](#), who later became prime minister of Afghanistan and today is leading the fight against the United States from the northern part of Afghanistan and the northern parts of Pakistan.

Yunus Khalis was barrel chested, had a deep voice, and wore a bandoleer of bullets around his chest. He was the archetypal Afghan warrior. I liked him. He wrote a note on a small piece of paper, handed it to someone and said,

"We will be in touch with you." This was all done through a translator. I went back to my hotel at Deans and I waited.

A few days later, a man came and he went with me to the bazaar in Peshawar and we bought a turban. I had a tailor cut some cloth and make a *shalwar keemez*, which are the baggy clothes that Afghans wear. We made a vest. And I bought a *patou*, which is the blanket that Afghan men often wear, especially in the countryside. They wear it, like a shawl, to keep them warm, they wear it to sleep under, they use it to pray on, and sometimes you use it to eat on—this is a picnic cloth, if you will. I was fitted out for clothes.

Then, a few days later, just before dawn, a group of men knocked on my door. They said, "It's time to go," and we left. I sat in the middle of a car in the back seat, surrounded by three other members of the mujahideen, with two men up front and we drove from Peshawar through various checkpoints. I was disguised as an Afghan. We drove into what is today called [FATA](#), which is the Federally Administered Tribal Agencies, the areas right along the Afghan-Pakistani border, off limits to foreigners then as they are today and began my journey up into Afghanistan.

I noticed during that time in going through there how gradually, the closer we came to Afghanistan itself, the fewer Pakistani soldiers we saw, until such time as we got to what I would call definitely a no-man's land, where there was absolutely no sense of government whatsoever, no Pakistani soldiers, nobody. There was no paved road.

The car stopped. One man escorted me up into the foothills. I sat for about 24 hours in a small baked-mud hut waiting for someone to escort me.

The most interesting thing about the waiting, besides the fact that I had to wait and wait and wait and wait, was that the house was filled with pine crates stacked to the ceiling, filled with ammunition and small arms. This was at the very beginning of what would become a \$5 billion-plus CIA operation, the largest CIA covert operation in American history, to supply the Afghan mujahideen with weapons with which to fight the Soviet Union.

All of the weapons, all of the ammunition, everything that the United States, and to a lesser degree its allies, supplied, went through the Pakistani military, in particular its military intelligence arm, called the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate, which today is shortened to be called the [ISI](#). It was a small organization at that time. It did not have a great deal of money.

But over the next ten years it would receive tremendous amounts of money as the U.S. poured money into Pakistan. Its power and influence would grow, not just among the mujahideen in Waziristan and throughout FATA and the Northwest Frontier Province, but throughout Afghanistan and throughout Pakistan itself. It became in some people's eyes an elephant, a rogue elephant—we can talk about that later.

That afternoon, an escort came, with a rifle, and we traveled through the night. The most difficult part was—and I'm not sure if it was to test me or if it was the actual truth—but the man who was escorting me made me take off my sandals. I wore Afghan sandals to blend in. He said I was making too much noise. So I had to walk barefoot through much of the night along a dry riverbed. By the time we got to a tent where I was to sleep for a few hours my feet were bloody and I did not like him, nor did I like the Afghans or Afghanistan at all. I wondered what I had gotten myself into.

The next day we got up and traveled again. I began to work my way along a goat path, a camel path, of which there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, along the Afghan-Pakistani border. This is a no-man's land. This is a buffer zone between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The border is not marked.

In 1893, the Foreign Minister of British India, [Sir Henry Mortimer Durand](#), took a black felt pen, according to tradition, and drew a line through the Pashtun nation to divide then-British India and Afghanistan. It was to create a buffer zone between British India and Tsarist Russia. Afghanistan was the center of their battle for the control of Asia.

[Lord Curzon](#), the British viceroy of British India at that time, said, "Afghanistan is the cockpit of Asia," meaning the center of Asia. [Arnold Toynbee](#), the British historian, called it "the roundabout of Asia," what Americans would call "the intersection of Asia"; the center of what in the 19th century [Kipling](#) called "the Great Game." Today, again, many people would say that the United States is involved against others in that area, and Afghanistan today, I think as much as before, is the center of so much that is going on in the world, and particularly in Asia.

We walked for two or three days up into the mountains. I stayed in what are called *chaikhana*s (teahouses) along the way. We would sleep on quilts, with my *patou* as my blanket, on a dirt floor. There was a wood stove, called a *bukhari*, in the center to keep us warm. Only men stayed there. What I noticed is we traveled deeper into Afghanistan, into Paktia and Khost provinces, was how empty it was. Some villages were bombed. Most were completely empty. You could walk through a valley and practically hear an echo because there was nobody there.

The reason is that the Soviet Union was not really bombing every village, it was not killing everybody, but they were trying to in many people's eyes—and I do think it's true—empty the countryside, force people to flee, put greater pressure on Pakistan—three million refugees ended up in Pakistan—to "empty the sea," to use [Mao's](#) phrase, to clean it out, to start over. This is exactly what was happening.

I ended up in a baked-mud compound up in the mountains, arriving three days later, with a man named [Jalaladin Haqqani](#). I walked into his small room in this baked-mud compound. He was sitting on the floor on a carpet with three other men. They were going over a map. He had a Kalashnikov rifle with a scope, which was highly unusual because it's an assault rifle—you don't need a scope for a rifle such as that; it's not a sniper rifle—sitting against the wall.

As I leaned against the wall, uncertain where I was, with whom I was, what I was going to do, a man came over at Jalaluddin's request and gave me a cup of tea and plate of honey. It was a very welcoming thing. The Pashtuns are noted for their hospitality. It is important for a man to be hospitable. It is a matter of honor and pride.

Jalaladin Haqqani went on to become in time the military commander of the Taliban. Today he is considered the principal fighter, the head of the Taliban in all of eastern Afghanistan, waging war against the United States. He is second to [Mullah Omar](#) [leader of the Taliban].

Just after the United States invaded Afghanistan on October 7, 2001, there were many reports in the press that the Americans, because they had worked very closely with him, particularly the CIA, which worked very closely with Jalaladin—I call him by his first name; I do feel I know him somewhat; I feel sympathy a bit, to confess, towards him. He was so good to me. He protected me. His men protected me for the month, month and a half that we lived together up in the mountains. I would go along on missions with them, talk with them for hours.

The United States asked Jalaladin to, and he did, go to the U.S. embassy in Islamabad. The reason I am able to confirm that is that on this last trip in December 2006, in Kabul I met one of his bodyguards. He has today turned against Jalaladin—I'm not sure if he's a double agent; it's not clear to me—and he now works for Afghan intelligence. He confirmed to me that he did go with Jalaladin to the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan after 9/11, when the United States asked Jalaladin Haqqani if he would work with them.

Haqqani thought about it, according to the bodyguard, and made a decision not to. He could not change his ways; a tiger cannot change its stripes. He's a very serious fundamentalist Muslim who believes very strongly that Afghanistan is a Muslim nation, that the United States, like the Soviet Union before that, is an infidel invader. He said, "We will go to the mountains, we will fight," and that is what he is doing today.

MADELEINE LYNN: So Jalaladin is back in these border regions where he started?

JERE VAN DYK: Jalaladin grew up in Miram Shah, a city that in fact is the capital of North Waziristan. It is about 20 miles, 30 miles, if you will, from the actual Afghan-Pakistani border. Again, it has never been demarcated, so we don't know exactly where Afghanistan begins and Pakistan ends.

And in the city of Khost, if you go to Khost today, and I was just there a few months ago—I had to let my hair grow long, I wore a beard, wore Afghan clothes, never spoke English in the street—what I found was that it is a far more dangerous city than it was in 2002 and in 2003, the last times that I was there. The reason is because the Taliban—in particular among them, Jalaladin Haqqani—who come from this area, are gaining influence, they are coming back. Before, a foreigner could walk through the city and it would be safe. Not today.

There is a large mosque, a beautiful mosque, in Khost. Its domes and the minarets are all turquoise. It has fine woodworking. The reason I know this is because I went up close and I looked at it. The money comes from Saudi Arabia and from other places in the Gulf. This is according to everybody I talked to there. It is Jalaladin Haqqani's mosque.

He is extremely influential. He is as influential today as he was before. When I met him, he was just beginning. His beard was black; his beard today is gray. He was a younger man then, he was in his late 30s, perhaps early 40s. We spent a lot of time together. We went horseback riding together. We traveled up into the mountains together. He showed me the tanks, the arms, the ammunition, that he had hidden. I got to know his men very well.

They always made sure that I had enough to eat, that I had more to eat than anybody else. I was a guest. Jalaladin Haqqani and all the men along the border are Pashtuns. They live by the principal code of the mountains, which predates Islam by we don't know how many thousands of years, because the Pashtuns have lived in this area as long as any tribe perhaps has lived in any area in the world. At the very least, we know it's 5,000 years. They have been Muslims only 1,500 years.

In *Pashtunwali*, which is the ancient tribal code of the Pashtuns, one of the principal tenets is called *panah*. Mullah Muhammad Omar cited *panah* when, in response to [President Bush's](#) edict or demand that he turn over [Osama bin](#)

[Laden](#), he said, "We cannot." The idea is that one must protect to the death a guest in your home.

So they protected me. We went out on missions, as I mentioned. We had very little to eat. There was hardly any food. Often, there was simply tea—we didn't have sugar—and rice. The times that we did have mutton, I always had more to eat than anybody else. The idea was to protect a guest and to show what is also called *melmastia*, or hospitality.

There were many interesting things that happened during that time. One was that has come back to me often and I think about it a great deal, is that one day while I was sitting in a room in this compound—it was in the winter, there was snow on the ground, I built a fire in an old jerry can and that's how I would keep warm—was that there was a visitor.

He was an Egyptian army officer. He was very happy to learn that Egyptian president [Anwar Sadat](#) had been assassinated. He was killed October 1981 by men aligned with [Ayman al-Zawahiri](#) and other radical Muslims and radical Muslim groups in Egypt. The Egyptian army officer stayed with us for about one week. He was heavysset, and the young Afghans around me sometimes snickered at his inability to move well. But he was a very serious Muslim.

What he became was one of the first, perhaps the first—according to the [9/11 Commission](#), there were 20,000 men; according to others I've talked to, Pakistanis who worked very closely with these Arab Afghans, as many as perhaps 50,000—who came during the 1980s to wage jihad against the Soviet Union and then later against the West. This is the vanguard of [al-Qaeda](#).

So Osama bin Laden, as we know, came from Saudi Arabia to Peshawar in the early to mid 1980s. Was Osama bin Laden ever in Afghanistan at that time? I don't know. I never met him. He's 6'5". I certainly would have remembered meeting him, because I certainly remember meeting this Arab army major at that time. So this was the very, very beginning of al-Qaeda.

We argued for an entire week. We didn't agree much at all. But it just showed that Jalaladin Haqqani at that time was already reaching out to the Arab world; he already had a name that was known. Some of his funding was coming from Arab states in addition to coming from of course, the ISI. Its money and arms all came from the CIA.

They fought. They would go out on missions at night, sometimes during the day, against Afghan army posts. The most difficult time, I think, was when almost every day Soviet helicopters, Mi24 helicopters, would fly in groups of two or three high overhead, because by then already there were a lot of anti-aircraft guns that the Chinese and the CIA were beginning to supply to the mujahideen.

MADELEINE LYNN: This was 1981?

JERE VAN DYK: This was 1981.

MADELEINE LYNN: The Chinese were also supplying guns as well as the CIA?

JERE VAN DYK: Yes, the Chinese.

MADELEINE LYNN: Of course, because it was a proxy war with the Soviet Union.

JERE VAN DYK: Excellent point, Madeleine. It was absolutely a proxy war with the Soviet Union. What the mujahideen were more than anything else was cannon fodder. This was an army. It was Pakistan's proxy army, it was the United States' proxy army, and it was China's proxy army, against the Soviet Union.

After my experiences in Afghanistan, I worked for a brief time later on advising, or in a small way as a consultant, to the State Department and the National Security Council. [Zalmay Khalilzad](#), today U.S. ambassador to the UN, then a consultant to the State Department, asked me to help start and be the director of [Friends of Afghanistan](#). It would be a non-profit organization that would promote the Afghan cause. I had very mixed emotions about promoting the war, but the Afghans had saved my life, more than once, and I wanted to help the women and children. I learned later that the NSC [[U.S. National Security Council](#)] and State [U.S. State Dept.] would run FOA, so yes, I was a consultant, in effect, to both.

I remember one time I heard American officials say, as they chuckled, "We will fight to the last Afghan."

The idea was that we will supply the arms and they, because of their tradition, having held off the British in three wars in the 19th century—the only place where [Alexander the Great](#) was wounded was in Afghanistan, right on what is today the Afghan-Pakistani border, between Kunar Province in Afghanistan and Dir and Swat, tribal areas in Pakistan—will fight, because there is a long tradition of fighting in Pashtun culture. The warrior-poet is the archetypal Pashtun hero. They fight. They're extremely tough, extremely strong. Afghanistan is a harsh, rugged land, which has created a very hard, tough, generous, and hospitable people, among them the Pashtuns, who will

absolutely fight. And they did.

However, it is very interesting to note—and again, it's something I think of a great deal—that one time one of the Soviet helicopters came low overhead our compound and hovered above us. It waited there.

Everybody in the compound was hiding. Everybody in the compound was worried. I remember sitting in the room next to a man who was staring up. He was sweating and trembling. We were all waiting for the bombs to drop or for the machine guns to start raking us.

In Pashtun culture and throughout Afghanistan, the most important person, the person who is revered more than anyone else, is a martyr, someone who is *shaheed*. *Shaheed* in Arabic means witness, God's witness. It means the same thing in Pashto, the principal language of the Pashtuns and of Afghanistan.

Throughout Afghanistan, there are small cemeteries. In these cemeteries there are high poles with flags, sometimes with Qur'anic verses on them. These are graves or cemeteries for martyrs. So a martyr is revered, whether you are in Kabul, Kandahar or in Herat, major cities, or in the countryside. No matter whom you talk to, educated people or people who are illiterate, more than anything else they revere martyrs. It is a matter of honor and being strong. It is like [Crazy Horse](#) saying, "Today is a good day to die."

But what I noticed that day was, as we sat in that room, as we stood in that room, and as the man next to me trembled, and we were all waiting for the helicopter to bomb us, that no one wanted to die. No one wanted to be a martyr. Fortunately, the helicopter kept going and we all survived.

MADELEINE LYNN: This raises so many questions. It's absolutely fascinating.

What I'd like to do is to make some links between what is happening in Khost now and what was happening then. You were there in 1981 and you saw this Egyptian, the beginnings of all the Arab influence.

I'm interested to hear that this mosque that you referred to as Jalaladin Haqqani's mosque is apparently funded by Saudi Arabia. What conclusions do you draw from this?

JERE VAN DYK: The mujahideen began in 1973. At that time and for years before that, Afghanistan was, and to a degree still is, one of the most isolated countries on earth. Because of the British and the Russian agreement not to interfere really in Afghanistan, to keep it as a buffer state, they kept it isolated.

There is no railroad in Afghanistan. It is landlocked. In the 1970s, there was no way that an outsider could make a telephone call outside of the country. There was no television in Afghanistan. There was no radio to the outside world in Afghanistan if you were a foreigner. It was Shangri-la to some of us, but it was extremely isolated. As a result of that, you had an extremely isolated culture and an extremely isolated people, especially in the countryside.

In the 1970s, a few professors in the Islamic faculty of Kabul University went to [Al Azhar University](#) in Cairo. One of the most important people to go was Imam [Burhanuddin] [Rabbani](#), who later became the political leader of the mujahideen and was president of Afghanistan when the United States invaded, just before [Hamid Karzai](#) was chosen to lead the interim government.

I interviewed Mr. Rabbani last December. What I really wanted to know from him was how did the mujahideen begin?

In July 1973 [Mohammed Sardar Daoud Khan](#), who was brother-in-law and first cousin to the king of Afghanistan, [King Zahir Shah](#), who had ruled for 40 years, overthrew his first cousin and brother-in-law and created a republic, setting in motion events that would eventually lead indirectly to 9/11, 25 years later.

What happened was at that time Daoud reached out to the United States, but the United States wasn't willing to give him the aid that he wanted, and so Daoud began to turn to the Soviet Union.

Those elements in the Islamic faculty, Rabbani and others, and young students, principal among them Gulbadeen Hekmatyier, and later [Ahmad Shah Massoud](#), who was killed two days before 9/11 by Osama bin Laden's people, who said that, "Unless you change and look away from the Soviet Union and go back to your roots, we will revolt." This is the very beginning of the mujahideen.

Daoud ignored them. Gulbadeen Hekmatyier, Ahmed Shah Massoud, and about 12 other young students fled to Peshawar, Pakistan, where they were taken in by a Major General [Naseerullah Babar](#), who was the inspector general of the Northwest Frontier Province, in Pakistan.

He put them in basic training in the army and began to create a small militia. At the time, a number of bombs had gone off in Pakistan. Prime Minister [Ali Bhutto](#) was convinced the terrorists responsible were Afghans. Afghanistan and Pakistan were at odds over the Durand Line. Bhutto gave permission to create this militia to fight back

against Afghanistan. In July 1975 the militia launched its first attack in the [Panjshir Valley](#) in Afghanistan, where Massoud is from, against what they saw as this godless, infidel, Western-leaning or communist-leaning—to them it was both the same—government in Kabul. The attackers called themselves the mujahideen. This was when they began.

Now, when Hekmatyier, Rabbani and the other young mujahideen—and these names didn't mean anything to the world then—found themselves in Pakistan they began to reach out to various political-religious parties, principal among them Jamiat-i Islami and [Jamaat-i-Islami](#), important political-religious parties that some say are aligned today with jihadi groups in Pakistan.

Through them they made contacts with—and this gets back to your original question, Madeleine; it's taking a long time to get to it—the Gulf states: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE [United Arab Emirates]. I've had Hekmatyier tell me this, Rabbani told me this; namely, that when they were in Pakistan is where and when they made their financial contacts with these very dedicated individuals and groups, and governments, we're certainly not sure was all involved. The isolation of Afghanistan began to end.

Also, in addition, before that, as I mentioned, Rabbani and a few of his colleagues who were professors at the Islamic faculty had gone to Al-Azhar University in Egypt, and at Al-Azhar they had met members of the [Muslim Brotherhood](#).

They began to read [Sayyid Qutb](#), who was then the principal theorist of the Muslim Brotherhood. [Gamal Nasser](#), the then-prime minister of Egypt, who was a socialist and a secularist, imprisoned and tortured, and eventually hanged Qutb. He became not just a martyr and the principal theorist of the Muslim Brotherhood, but also one of the most important influences in the jihadist, al-Qaeda, jihadi movement in the world today.

They brought Qutb's books back to Afghanistan.

So it was a combination of events that took place. And then they began to work from Peshawar. They had ties to the Pakistani political-religious parties. They had ties to the Gulf states.

This is where Jalaladin Haqqani began to make his contacts and from which he would get the money to build the most beautiful mosque in all of eastern Afghanistan, which looks over the city of Khost like a Catholic cathedral looks over a city in France or Spain. It dominates the skyline and it's beautiful, and everybody in the region knows that it was built with Arab money.

MADELEINE LYNN: Certainly nobody can deny at this point that the Taliban are back. Do you think that they still have links to al-Qaeda? I mean are there still Arab elements? Do we know anything about this?

And leading onto that, many people believe that Osama bin Laden is hiding somewhere in these border regions, and, if so, he must be being protected by somebody. Somebody is feeding him and looking after him. Any idea of the truth of any of these rumors? It seems logical really.

JERE VAN DYK: From everything that we know—every former CIA or other intelligence analyst, whether on radio and in television, or writing in the newspapers or in think tank publications; every espionage expert it seems, or analyst in Europe, whether he's with the French or the Germans or the British—when you read the articles that they write or you read their commentary, everyone seems to feel that Osama bin Laden is hiding or being kept somewhere along the Afghan-Pakistani border.

Lieutenant General [John Abizaid](#), recently retired, who was head of [CENTCOM](#) [United States Central Command] for the United States until just a few months ago, said in 2004 that if he were to guess where Osama bin Laden is hiding, he would say Chitral (Pakistan), which is in the northern part of the North-West Frontier province, across from Kunar province in Afghanistan.

However, other people say most probably farther down [south]. All the videos that we have seen have shown Osama bin Laden in what appears to be the North-West Frontier province or across the border in Afghanistan.

Now, my own personal theory—and this goes back to my own history, my own experience in that area—is that Yunus Khalis, the man whom I met, the man with whose men I traveled—and incidentally, in 2002 and in 2003 I went to visit him again outside of Jalalabad. I wanted to talk to him. I wanted to see him again. He was dying at the time. I'm the only Western journalist to my knowledge who was able to see him. I didn't have enough time with him. No one would allow me to be alone with him, nor did I have any more than five or ten minutes with him. He died just last July, so it's impossible to know—but my feeling is that he was involved in helping him escape. Not Khalis himself, but his sons or some of his men helped bin Laden.

The reason I bring up Yunus Khalis is that during the 1980s jihad, not only was Jalaladin Haqqani one of his principal commanders, but so, I am told, was Mullah Muhammad Omar. I believe, and I have heard other people say, that it was Khalis who made the introduction between Omar and Osama bin Laden. It is clear to me, based

on my own experiences, that there was a very close tie between Khalis and the Arabs. Otherwise the Egyptian army major would not have come and stayed with us in 1981 in December up in the mountains in a place called, by the way, [Shah-i-Kot](#). That's where lived.

(In March 2002, the United States launched [Operation Anaconda](#), the largest ground offensive since Vietnam, in Shah-i-Kot. I remember standing on the plains in Gardez, about 20 miles away, and watching the trails of the B-52 bombers overhead, knowing that there were American soldiers up there in the mountains, recalling, not without tremendous interest, knowing that I had lived in that exact same spot 25 years ago, when the men that we were fighting today were our allies.)

However, back to the point of this particular region: In 1996 Osama bin Laden, who had been living in Khartoum, Sudan, returned to Afghanistan. I don't know if he came back in a chartered plane or if it was an Ariana plane. Ariana is the airline of Afghanistan.

There is much controversy surrounding this particular flight because he went from Khartoum to Dubai. In Dubai the plane was there for a number of hours, and many conservatives feel that the [Clinton](#) Administration had the opportunity and chose, for whatever reason, not to pick up bin Laden. I don't know the facts of that. I just know the same stories that everyone else knows.

However, he returned to Jalalabad. Who met him and with whom did he stay? Yunus Khalis.

When the United States invaded Afghanistan on October 7, 2001, Osama bin Laden left the Kabul region. His last known interview in Afghanistan was with [Hamid Mir](#), a Pakistani journalist, who is today the head of Geo Television in Islamabad.

After this interview, Osama bin Laden went to Jalalabad and gave a speech before a group of men—we know this; this is all public record—right next to Yunus Khalis' compound. He stayed in that area.

Many people feel—and I don't discount this—that he went with Yunus Khalis' sons up into Tora Bora. Yunus Khalis lives near Tora Bora. According to the CIA, he was up, of course, in Tora Bora. After that, he disappeared.

I am of the belief that he went with Khalis' sons, even though Gulbadeen Hekmatyier has come out in the last few months and said his men escorted Osama bin Laden down from Tora Bora.

If you go back to the 1980s, the very early part, there was one [Hezb-i-Islami](#) group. Gulbadeen Hekmatyier and Yunus Khalis were together. They split, probably because Hekmatyier didn't want to share power. I don't think they were enemies. I never heard that.

However, the last known public sighting of Osama bin Laden, in March 2002, was right in the coastal region, near Khost where Jalaladin Haqqani lives.

In December I was up in the mountains in Khost province as you just referred to, Madeleine, five miles from the Pakistani border, about 20 miles from Pakistan's Miram Shah. [Afghan maps say Miram Shah. Pakistani maps call it Maran Shah.] I had to have various Afghan guides. Again, I had to disguise myself.

One of the guides I was with, a former Afghan army colonel who is today a senior intelligence officer for the U.S. Army in that region, said to me that Jalaladin Haqqani is being kept by Frontier Scouts, which is a paramilitary organization, comprised of Pashtuns, in Pakistan. He is in Miram Shah. Is this true? I don't know. Jalaladin is from this area. He has always been around there. Osama bin Laden, may well be with him.

Is it true? I certainly don't have the answer. But it is not illogical. It is certainly feasible because of the ties with Khalis, Haqqani, Omar, and the fact that Osama bin Laden worked, operated, and lived in this region during the 1980s. He understands these people. This is where most probably he would find comfort. He fought with these men. He lived with these men. He certainly didn't live in the north in Chitral, or in in Kashmir, he certainly didn't live in Pakistan's Baluchistan. If he's anywhere, very possibly he is with men he has known for 20 to 30 years, people he trusts and has fought with.

MADELEINE LYNN: That certainly makes sense.

We had a journalist called [Zahid Hussain](#) speak here recently, and in his opinion, Afghanistan is almost lost. He says he doesn't think the situation is completely irretrievable but it is very bad. And certainly, last year we know that there were more civilian deaths in Afghanistan than there have been in the last four years or so, since 2001.

In February, Bush said that he was going to send 3,000 more troops into Afghanistan. And, of course, there are American troops and NATO forces there already. But do you really think that this is going to make any difference? From the way you describe this border region, people who don't know the area really have no chance of penetrating it or getting information there. What are your thoughts on this new "surge" that Bush is proposing for Afghanistan?

JERE VAN DYK: I think this new proposed surge that President Bush is advocating, and the meeting that Secretary of Defense [Gates](#) held up in Quebec recently to try to come to an understanding and agreement with his NATO allies on how to win this war and how to make things better in Afghanistan, are going to come to naught.

The reason I say this is the following. I met in December with a man named Mawlawi Muhaiddin Baloch, who is President Hamid Karzai's advisor on religious affairs. President Karzai is pro-Western. President Karzai is America's man in Afghanistan. Mr. Baloch would not be anti-American. He is a close ally of President Karzai.

Eighty-five percent of the Afghans live in the countryside. During the time of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union controlled the cities; they did not control the countryside. The war will be fought, won or lost, in the countryside. Mr. Baloch told me that there is no difference to an Afghan in the countryside between a Soviet soldier and an American soldier. They are all infidel outsiders and invaders.

However, he said, the difference is that—and people knew this originally—that the United States came under a UN mandate. This is very, very important.

Now, what people don't realize is that—people think that the Afghans, because they do not have the financial wherewithal that the United States has, because they do not have the sophisticated technology, the lifestyle, or anything that we have here in the West—they are not dumb. This is an ancient culture. The country itself is certainly new, but the people themselves know very well what is going on.

During the 1980s, I noticed that there was not a single village that did not seem to have a small, battery-powered radio. In the 1980s Afghans would huddle around campfires at night and they would listen to primarily the BBC, but after that the Voice of America, Dari and Pashto Services. Sometimes, but rarely, they would listen to Radio Moscow. I listened just out of curiosity. They knew what was going on. News from Washington or London would be broadcast to them. If a journalist was in Afghanistan. The articles he wrote would run in New York, for example, but the VOA would read those articles over the airwaves. Afghans followed events closely. They knew absolutely what was going on. They know what is going on in the world today.

When the United States went in, many people throughout Afghanistan perhaps welcomed it. There was a lot of hope in 2002. We saw all the images on television—men shaving their beards, women taking off their *chador* or their *burqas*. There was a sense of hope, a sense of freedom. That doesn't mean that was entirely the case in the countryside. Although yes, it was in many cases.

The Tajiks and the Uzbeks—the [Northern Alliance](#)—were certainly happy. Many Pashtuns were tired of war, of poverty, and were grateful. They did not like the arrogant Arabs—many of them al-Qaeda. They wanted U.S. aid and for it to rebuild the country. That has all been lost now—that opportunity. The U.S. has made a great many mistakes.

But the Taliban, more than anything else, even though they were crude, they were mostly uneducated, they were certainly not sophisticated in the eyes of the West—they were seen as pious, they were seen as humble, they were seen as honest. Honesty is so important. That is to say, there was no corruption.

What we have had since about 2002 or 2003, when the United States began to put less emphasis on special forces and brought in larger regular army forces, and began to focus more on Iraq and let Afghanistan go, is that the West, particularly the United States—I don't care if you were a liberal or you were a conservative, or whatever the political stripe—the pundits, the strategists, all to a person it seems, patted themselves on the back and were so proud of themselves: "Look what the United States did. We defeated in two months the Taliban and it took the Soviet Union ten years to defeat the Mujahideen. Look how successful we are."

Well, what people did not realize is that the Taliban are simply the sons, the grandsons—in some cases even the same people, like Haqqani—of the more conservative mujahideen. Their religious and political beliefs are not different.

The United States did have the backing because people were tired of war. They wanted security. They wanted a better life. So what we had was this brief period of relative peace in Afghanistan.

Hamid Karzai was in power. People supported him because of his sophistication, because it was clear that the West wanted him and liked him, that he could bring in money. Afghanistan needed billions of dollars to reconstruct the country after 25 years of war.

The principal problem today in Afghanistan is corruption. I was told that almost every minister, almost to a man, in the Karzai government is seen as corrupt. President Karzai himself has never been implicated; he is not considered corrupt. Serious observers have said that some in his family, however, are involved in the drug trade. He has asked the international community to investigate this. Drug trafficking is a serious problem in the south.

The corruption, if you talk to people—I sat one night talking to a judge in Khost, I've talked to a doctor, I've

talked to villagers—and they said, "During the time of the Taliban we could close our doors at night. We did not need locks."

The judge went so far as to say, "All you need to do is cut off the hand of one man and you will not have any crime in a city after that." We would consider that barbaric, but to him this was a way to stop crime.

Corruption is rampant. People no longer, he said—and he is a judge—want to go to judges. They go to their tribal elders. The government loses power.

The United States, Japan, and the Europeans have put more than \$10 billion—much more than that now—into Afghanistan. But there is not one decent hospital in Kabul. The road down from Kabul to a place called Gardez is paved. The road from Gardez down into Khost, the city I talked about, where Jalaladin has great influence, where the Taliban are tremendously powerful now, much more powerful than they were three years ago, is mostly dirt.

Where have the billions of dollars gone? NGOs are called "cows who drink their own milk" in Afghanistan, because they have taken the donated money to support themselves. They drive in modern SUVs; they live well; they get their high salaries. Money is going to the people who are there trying to help the Afghans; but the Afghans themselves are not receiving it. The government has kicked a number of NGOs out of the country. There have been a lot of stories about corruption, and about American, European and English companies milking the Afghans for their money.

The point is that Afghans have not seen what they hoped Karzai would bring.

Secondly—and this is a difficult thing for Americans to hear—the American military is alienating the Afghan population. A few months ago the United States Marine Corps sent one of its highly touted, brand-new, Special Forces brigades to Afghanistan. The Marines have always felt that they don't need Special Forces, that every Marine is a special soldier; but, because of the success of the United States Army's Special Forces, they created two particular units. One of these units went to Afghanistan.

There was a suicide bombing or attempted suicide bombing on a Marine Corps convoy in Nouristan province. What happened? The Marines either panicked, or acted out of anger, or it was ignorance, but this convoy went for ten miles spraying the countryside and killing civilians. The United States Marine Corps was rightly furious. The Marine Corps has kept the men directly involved—those who shot civilians—in Afghanistan, as it doesn't want them to escape. The rest of the unit was sent back to the United States.

The U.S. has since paid \$2,000 to each family who lost somebody and the military has apologized. But it hardly matters now. It has happened too often. What they have done is alienated everybody in the countryside there. Every dead civilian has an uncle, a cousin, and a brother, someone who will want to take revenge. American military tactics have contributed to a lot of animosity. If you do not win the hearts and minds, that phrase from the Vietnam era—however, it's true—if you do not win these people over, we will lose in Afghanistan. We will become an occupying force.

And who is going to fill that vacuum? The Taliban. The Taliban today, it is said control Helmand province, Zabul province, Kandahar province, and parts of Khost province, and Paktia province.

The U.S. military can go in with 100 soldiers and with aircraft, and they will control that area during the time that they are there. Once they pull out, it is going to come back again under the Taliban.

Two reasons: we have not won their hearts and minds; and corruption in the government has left a vacuum. The Taliban are filling that vacuum. They are much more powerful than they were three years ago.

MADELEINE LYNN: You are painting a very bleak picture. Do you see any prospect of hope for Afghanistan? And what do you think Hamid Karzai's chances are of staying in power much longer? It sounds as though he is basically under siege in Kabul.

JERE VAN DYK: I had a U.S. major general who was commander of a division in Afghanistan in 2004 tell me that the principal role of the United States Army in Afghanistan is to further the writ of the Karzai government, to increase its influence, its ability to govern the entire country.

Hamid Karzai has been criticized and called simply the "mayor of Kabul," as opposed to being the president of Afghanistan. Conservative Muslims call him a "dog washer"—dogs are not looked upon highly in Afghanistan and in the Muslim world in general.

Hamid Karzai is seen as a good man. However, he is seen increasingly as an ineffectual man. Whether he will run again—he has even said publicly he doesn't know whether he will try to run again for office after his term is up—is uncertain.

I don't really know what is going to happen to him, but he is most definitely an isolated person, which he doesn't

like. He needs bodyguards whenever he travels throughout the country.

There is no other figure of note in Afghanistan today who can at this time take his place. There are many Tajiks in the north, particularly [Yunus Qanuni](#), who is head of the Wolesi Jirga, which is the lower house in the two-tiered parliament, who would very much love to be president. He has a Pashtun wife, but he is a Tajik, and he would not be able to be president because of simple demographics—because the largest ethnic group, the majority of the population, are Pashtuns, and they are certainly not going to vote for a Tajik.

There are other leaders. There is a new anti-Karzai coalition of royalists, Northern Alliance mujahideen, and others who have come together. The country is more divided now than it has been since the U.S. invasion. There is no Pashtun at the moment that can fill that vacuum that Karzai would leave.

I had a memorable lunch in December in Kabul with one of Ahmad Shah Massoud's advisors [Tajik hero killed by al-Qaeda on September 9, 2001] who said, "We are waiting for the time when we have to fight again in Kabul against the Pashtuns, against the Taliban. We were hopeful in 2002"—this was late 2006, early 2007—"but that hope is gone."

Now, is there hope for Afghanistan? Yes there is hope. Is it much worse than it was in 2001, 2002, and 2003? Without question it is much worse.

A journalist could walk, UN workers could walk, in a place like Gardez, two hours south of Kabul. You do not see a foreign face in Gardez today. You see very, very few foreigners walking through the streets of Kabul. Everybody is in a 4x4 or in a Land Rover.

Suicide bombings take their toll. People are afraid. Those Westerners who are there to help the Afghans are afraid of the people they have come to help, in part because of suicide bombings.

I was told—very interesting—that the Taliban have now launched suicide attacks in the north. We had a terrible one against a police headquarters, against a police training camp, in Kabul just in the last few weeks.

It is very important not just to find ways in which to win over people to your side, you must find a way to deal with the Taliban. Hamid Karzai has said, much to the chagrin of the West, that he has been talking with members of the Taliban. We must find a way to bring them into the government.

Secondly, never overlook the power, the influence, and the importance of Pakistan. During the 1980s, I noticed very, very clearly how everything was being run—the mujahideen political parties were being run from Peshawar, in Pakistan. The mujahideen began, as I mentioned, in 1973, in Peshawar. They trained in the Pakistani army. They launched their first attack from Peshawar in 1975.

There are more Pashtuns in Pakistan, in the North-West Frontier Province, than there are in Afghanistan.

In 1947 when India was partitioned and Pakistan was created, the only country to vote against UN membership for Pakistan was Afghanistan. Why? One reason is because Afghanistan does not accept the Durand Line, the border drawn in 1893 to separate British India from Afghanistan. It only grudgingly accepted it in 1893.

The United States, by demanding and paying for the Pakistani army to go up to the border region—where it hadn't gone before—was a gift to Pakistan. They want Afghanistan to recognize the border. The Tajiks have been aligned with Iran—they both speak Farsi—and India, and in recent years with Russia.

Well, they had to accept it because they were in a weakened state after fighting two wars against the British. The British lost more people, but the Afghan economy was certainly much smaller than the British economy and their treasury was depleted. It is very important to note that they lost what they consider much of their land to British India.

During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s, Afghan maps during that period did not end at the Durand Line; they ended at the Indus River, which is a good 60 miles, 100 kilometers, inside of Pakistan. Not one single Afghan parliament in the history of Afghanistan since 1893 has accepted the Durand Line as the border.

Pakistan wants that border to be ratified. The Pakistani army, particularly its ISI intelligence agency, worked very closely with the United States in the 1980s and created a proxy army called the mujahideen, as we've discussed. They did this for three reasons: (1) because they want the border; (2) a fear of being surrounded and controlled by India—the Tajiks in the north have always been aligned with India. Many of the Tajik leaders, even in 2001 and 2002 when they were in power, kept their families in India. (3) The desire to open up and maintain close economic ties with Sunni Central Asia.

When the Taliban came to power, the man who convinced them to lead a convoy of Pakistani trucker drivers from the Pakistani border, in Baluchistan, north towards Central Asia, was Benazir Bhutto's Interior Minister, Nasurallah Babar, who helped create the mujahideen 20 years before.

The Taliban was an indigenous movement, but was taken over, according to most accounts, by Pakistan. There are only two countries in the world that gave diplomatic recognition to the Taliban—perhaps there were three—it was Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, and I forget whether Saudi Arabia did or not.

According to the United States and American allies, Mullah Muhammad Omar, Jalaladin Haqqani, and Gulbadeen Hekmatyier—all the main Taliban and other insurgent leaders fighting the United States—are in Pakistan.

Is that true? I don't know. I don't think everything is run out of Pakistan, not for a minute, because there are very few roads from Pakistan into Afghanistan. If you go into Kandahar and Helmand and Zabul provinces, the villages have no ties really to Pakistan. This is, at least in part, an indigenous movement. This is an anti-foreign movement.

But a lot of supplies, it is said, come from abroad, from Pakistan. You have to work this out with Pakistan. If you can do that, maybe there will be hope, let us hope, in the future for Afghanistan.

MADELEINE LYNN: That seems very unlikely. If the present situation is to Pakistan's advantage, no matter what they say officially, what leverage do we have with Pakistan to make them come to an agreement? I mean do you think there is any hope of that?

JERE VAN DYK: General [Musharraf](#) has said that you cannot win the war on terrorism; you cannot fight the war against al-Qaeda, without Pakistan's help. He knows the power of Pakistan.

There is also a very close alignment, an increasingly close alignment, between China and Pakistan. This started in 1972, when [Henry Kissinger](#) was National Security Advisor to President [Nixon](#). He made his secret trip to China through Pakistan, to arrange for President Nixon to go to China in 1972.

China is India's traditional enemy, as Pakistan is now of course, and has been since partition, India's principal enemy.

There is a brand-new and extremely modern, apparently—I have not seen it—port in a place called [Gwadar](#), which is near the Iranian border, on the Arabian Sea, which was built by Chinese labor and with Chinese money. It is a fueling stop for the Chinese, and a place from which they can run oil and gas pipelines through former Soviet Central Asia to China. It is a way to open up economic ties to western China.

When I was in Pakistan just a few weeks ago—it was March 23rd, which is National Day in Pakistan—Pakistan presented its new joint China-Pakistan-made J7 fighter jet. It's not equal to the F16, but it's a way to wean them off the United States, to align them more closely to China and to tell the U.S., "we can go elsewhere."

The United States needs the Pakistani army to fight al-Qaeda. Pakistan now has 90,000 soldiers on the Afghan border. General Musharraf, in the English-language version of his recent book, *In the Line of Fire*, very proudly said that the United States had paid bounty to the Pakistanis for the 700-plus—perhaps 800 now—al-Qaeda members that they had picked up. This was not, however, mentioned in the Urdu translation of the book. Urdu is the official language of Pakistan.

He is working very closely with the United States. [Benazir Bhutto](#), his nemesis, has said that President Musharraf is "throwing dust in the eyes" of the West. In [a notable article](#) in *The Guardian* newspaper last August, Bhutto said that General Musharraf is playing the West "like a fiddle."

Some people think that the ISI has been very helpful to the United States in fighting al-Qaeda. But some say there is another part that is helping hide Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, which is one reason why the United States, with all its technological ability and all its sophisticated military skills, has been unable to find him. I certainly don't have the answer to that.

Pakistan is extremely important. The U.S. and Pakistan both need one another.

In Pakistan, General Musharraf is called "Busharraf," because he is too close to President Bush. Some people like him; some people hate him. It's a complicated situation. I don't know how it is going to turn out. He is under great pressure now. I don't know how long he will last in power.

MADELEINE LYNN: Well, Musharraf right now is under a lot of pressure, having suspended the chief justice. And as you say, he is walking a tightrope anyway, with people calling him "Busharraf." But it does seem that as long as he is in power, and maybe beyond that, that this symbiotic relationship is still tilted in favor of Pakistan. I would agree with Benazir Bhutto, frankly.

I believe that there are going to be elections in Pakistan in October. Will things change?

JERE VAN DYK: I met with senior officials in the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad in March—I was there working in

South Asia, in Afghanistan, in Pakistan, in India, and Bangladesh, for the last six months. I was told that the elections now are being planned for January. Actually they were scheduled, Madeleine you're right, for October, but I was told they will be in January.

The United States supports President Musharraf. The outgoing U.S. Ambassador, Ryan Crocker, in Islamabad, who is now the U.S. Ambassador in Baghdad, said just a few weeks ago that the Pakistani government is a democratic government. American officials there support General Musharraf. There is no indication that they are looking for someone else, or that they have found someone else.

If you talk to educated, sophisticated, urban Pakistanis, and if you talk to villagers in the North-West Frontier province of Pakistan, they will all say the same thing. Pakistan depends upon three things: Allah, the army, and America, the Three A's of Pakistan. Is that the case? I don't know.

Most people think that when the CIA or the White House decides that they don't want Musharraf there that someone else will come in. I don't know if that is true. I don't think that they have that power

According to the U.S. Embassy, Musharraf is aware that he made a mistake in getting rid of the chief justice. He has an election coming up. Many people want him to take off his uniform. Others say no.

He needs, more than anything, to keep the army on his side.

The peasants are too poor, they care most about getting enough to eat, and a roof over their heads. The United States has provided billions of dollars in aid since 2001. Much of this has gone to fight the war on terrorism. Very little has gone to the deplorable state of education or health care in Pakistan.

The economy, however, because, in part, of all the money that is coming from primarily the United States, is growing at 6 percent. Musharraf is not under pressure because of the economy.

It is a very complex situation. He is walking a tightrope. He has had three known assassination attempts against him. There have been others that I've read about over there and heard about. He is a tough man.

Will he survive? I don't know. And what is going to happen to Pakistan remains to be seen.

MADELEINE LYNN: I'd like to go back to Osama bin Laden. Given what you have been saying about Pakistan and about the border regions and the Pashtun peasants in Pakistan, is it really perhaps in everybody's interest, but particularly Pakistan's interest, just to let Osama alone and let him continue alive, and perhaps in America's interests as well?

JERE VAN DYK: Some sophisticated Pakistanis, and Pakistan watchers, will say that Osama bin Laden is General Musharraf's last card to play.

MADELEINE LYNN: Exactly.

JERE VAN DYK: If the United States were to find Osama bin Laden, if they were to find Ayman al-Zawahiri, the number two man, what would people in Utah, Montana, Nebraska, Texas, anywhere else in the United States, say? "Why are we still in Afghanistan? Why are we there? Why do we need to be there? We have captured the leaders of al-Qaeda. We have broken its back."

There are those who feel that the United States is in Afghanistan for the "soft containment" of China, and to surround Iran. We are in Iraq; we are now there on its eastern border. We are interested in the oil and gas fields of Central Asia. Some say that it is in the United States' interests to stay in that region.

However, if we find the principal al-Qaeda leaders, then I think in the eyes of the public, perhaps in the Congress — "We're tired of this; we're tired of war; we're tired of the troubles in Iraq. American soldiers are also dying in Afghanistan. We're certainly not winning any friends in that region. We should leave." So, absolutely, one would say that it is in American's interests not to find Osama bin Laden.

The question is: What will we do should we find him? I talked to the last Pakistani Ambassador to the United States, [Jehangir Karamat](#), who was chief of staff of the Pakistani army about this. He said to me, "If we find him in Pakistan, we will throw him across the border into Afghanistan and give him to the Americans."

There was a [2005 Pew poll](#) in which people in various Muslim countries were asked what they thought of Osama bin Laden. In only two countries did a majority of the population support Osama bin Laden: Jordan, which has a large Palestinian refugee population, an exiled population if you will; and Pakistan. In Pakistan 51 percent of the people said in response that they felt that Osama bin Laden would do the right thing in international affairs.

So there is the fear that if the United States were to capture him, to kill him, if he happened to be found in Pakistan, that there would be an insurrection in Pakistan and General Musharraf would be overthrown, that the

people would rise up in anger at the United States.

Don't forget that along the Afghan-Pakistani border in Pakistan after 2001, when the United States went into Afghanistan, that Islamic fundamentalist political-religious parties came to power, in a democratic vote and now control the provincial assemblies there. There is great animosity towards the United States government, not towards Americans. Pakistanis are very open, kind, and welcoming to foreigners.

My experience there in six or seven months this past year, and four months almost every year since 2001, is that fewer and fewer people like the United States government. We had two occasions last year, in January and in October, when CIA Predator drone missiles killed innocent civilians, many of them women and children, all of whose names and ages were published in the newspapers. They were looking for Ayman al-Zawahiri in Bajour Agency, near the Afghan border. The intelligence was that he was in these two particular places. They did not find him.

The point is that the Secretary of State [[Condoleezza Rice](#)], various senators including [John McCain](#), all said we would do it again. No one apologized. The sense is that the United States is at war against Islam.

The Pashtuns along the border feel that Pakistan and the U.S. are allied against the Pashtuns, primarily. Is Osama bin Laden hiding among them? I don't know. But there is no great love lost there for the United States. General Musharraf is right in the middle. He knows that.

In my experience people do not hate Osama bin Laden. He is seen as one who has stood up to the United States. He is standing up for Islam. He is waging what is called defensive jihad.

One man, a very prominent Indian writer, said to me, "George Washington fought not just a war of independence, he waged jihad. He was waging jihad against the invader. It was England. He was fighting to save America's natural resources. He was waging what he called a just war, a moral war, a defensive war against the invader." We look at this differently.

However, Pashtun, Islamists in Pakistan along the border, feel that the United States is at war with Islam, that Osama bin Laden is right in the center, and they are certainly not going to support the United States there, and the United States is very much aware of that.

MADELEINE LYNN: This is very sad. It is clear that America has forfeited whatever goodwill it may have had in 2001. I do think it is important for Americans to try and put themselves more in other people's shoes—and this goes for Iraq also—and try to see how the rest of the world perceives them.

I'd like to ask you just one more question, and that is going back to something you said earlier. You had mentioned that in 2001 there was a UN mandate and Afghans were very much aware of this, and, although they dislike all foreigners, whether they are Soviets or Americans—and perhaps NATO troops also; I don't know—the UN mandate was important to them. Do you think that in all this darkness there is any role for the UN to play that might make things a little better? Is that a possibility?

JERE VAN DYK: Yes, there is a very much a very definite role for the United Nations.

I want to say one thing first. The United States is very much aware of the anti-Americanism that exists in rural Afghanistan and in rural western Pakistan. The U. S. government, through [USAID](#) [U.S. Agency for International Development] and other agencies is starting to build roads, schools, health care centers in the North-West Frontier province region along the border. There is a very clear effort to try and turn around what is unfortunately a very difficult situation. Will they succeed? I don't know.

Number two, when the Taliban were in power, they, at the behest of the United Nations, stopped growing poppies. They stopped opium production. They wanted the UN presence there. They realized the importance of the United Nations. They knew the importance of international agencies. They wanted to work with the United States.

It's very important to note that there's a very clear difference between al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

Al-Qaeda has an international goal: it wants to drive Westerners, infidels, from Muslim lands. It wants to recreate, if possible, a Caliphate to bring Muslims together under one rule. The Caliphate existed, in the form of the [Ottoman Empire](#), until the end of World War I. Al-Qaeda is opposed to the West. Ayman al-Zawahiri is opposed to the International Monetary Fund, he's opposed to the World Bank. He is opposed to the dollar. He is opposed to the World Bank and the United Nations.

Al-Qaeda and the Pakistani Taliban are said to work together in Pakistan. Musharraf has said that the Taliban now are in charge, whereas before al-Qaeda was in charge.

The [Afghan] Taliban and the Pakistani taliban are similar in their religious beliefs and they both want to create a

pure Islamic government. They are different in that the Pakistani Taliban are far more worldly than their Afghan brethren.

In the 1990s, the Taliban visited Houston at the invitation of the United States, when the United States was trying to build a pipeline across Afghanistan to bring oil and natural gas down from the then-newly-formed Central Asian republics after the Soviet Union fell. The Taliban had contacts with the United States. We were not enemies.

President Bush said after 2001, "If you give up Osama bin Laden, in effect we'll work something out." The United States did not really plan initially to go to war with the Taliban. That is all changed now. Everything has changed.

Today the United Nations has an office in Gardez, it has an office in Kandahar, it has offices around the country. There is a certain respect for the United Nations. There is a certain way, I do believe, that perhaps through them—and not discounting the United States—we can win the people over.

You brought up the point about NATO. The United States and NATO are seen as Christian nations. NATO and the United States in people's eyes in the countryside are the same. There's no difference to them among a Dutch soldier, a British soldier, and an American soldier.

The Taliban were never opposed to international agencies. They wanted foreign aid. They wanted the assistance. The U.S. was deeply involved in Helmand in the 1960s, in what I believe was called the Helmand River project, to help farmers in the region. Afghans loved Americans then. They were grateful and wanted to work with the United States. That, as I mentioned, changed, but that doesn't mean that it's irrevocable, that things could not become better.

I think we need very sophisticated, delicate negotiations with people who understand and want the best for Afghanistan. There are Americans who understand Afghanistan. There are Americans who go out and talk to the Afghans. They will talk. We have to find a way to respect them, to respect Islam, to respect their culture, to not try and impose our ways upon them, to not think that everybody wants to be an American, to try and work out something. Then, within that, there is hope.

They don't want to die any more than we want to die. I learned that a long time ago when I saw those men afraid under that helicopter. They do not all want to become martyrs. They want to try and create a country for their children. They, just like people here, pray for a better life, they pray for a good harvest, they pray that they will go to heaven when they die.

They are no different from us. They are only a different culture and a different religion. If we can—and I think we can—look upon them that way, we can find ways, perhaps through the United Nations and not just the United States—that will no longer work—to create in the end a peaceful Afghanistan. And if we do that, then the so-called global war on terrorism, and al-Qaeda's power, will all disappear in Afghanistan.

MADELEINE LYNN: Thank you, Jere. You have given us a lot to think about. We all hope, with you, that things in Afghanistan will get better somehow.

JERE VAN DYK: You're welcome. Thanks very much, Madeleine.

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