

Afghanistan Briefing

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Training Afghan soldiers in Kandahar
 by [Petty Officer 1st Class David M. Votroubek](#)

- [Introductions](#)
- [Remarks](#)
- [Questions and Answers](#)

Introductions

JOEL ROSENTHAL: Good afternoon. I'm Joel Rosenthal. Nice to see so many old friends and some new friends.

Thank you all for coming on such a timely basis.

This originally was supposed to be just a small roundtable discussion—that's how it was envisioned—taking advantage of Colonel McCausland's visit to New York. I just want to say a word about Jeff.

I first met Jeff when he was the dean of the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. This was many years ago—

JEFFREY MCCAUSLAND: Not that many, come on.

JOEL ROSENTHAL: That's when it really hit me full-on—I'm trained as an academician and have spent a lot of time in libraries and classrooms. I was very anxious to get out and meet people who actually worked on problems and actually did things beyond scholarship and teaching. I was always impressed by the upper levels of our military in terms of their knowledge and their experience. That was really represented by Jeff and his post there at the War College.

One of the great things about the Carnegie Council is the access that we have to people like Jeff. But probably more important than the access is the friendships that have built up over the years. Jeff has been a great resource for us and has become a great friend. So it's lovely to introduce him.

What I'm going to do now, though, is turn the program over to David Speedie, who is our program officer for the Global Engagement Project. David will give Jeff a proper introduction.

Thank you all for coming.

DAVID SPEEDIE: Thank you, Joel. Let me join you in welcoming both old friends and new friends. New friends are always welcome. And within reasonable limits for a gathering that's meant to be somewhat intimate, the more round tables, the better. This is just about ideal, I think.

Very briefly, the program on U.S. Global Engagement, the newest program at the Council, was launched just about 18 months ago. I would like to acknowledge **Alfred Ross** here, the president of the Alfred and Jane Ross Foundation, our funder, and Wade Greene, of **Rockefeller Family and Associates**, which has also been generous in their support.

From the very beginning, Afghanistan has figured quite prominently, as you can imagine, in our program on U.S. Global Engagement, for a number of obvious reasons:

First of all, it was at that time and it remains perhaps the single most urgent foreign policy challenge for the new [Obama](#) Administration.

Second of all, Afghanistan looms large in some of the critical foreign policy relationships we set out to explore in the program. Russia, for example, the U.S.-Russia relationship, has been very much in the forefront of our

thinking. As far as Russia is concerned, we have some strong mutual interest—I think Jeff may touch on this, actually—in terms of a favorable and not-disastrous outcome in Afghanistan. And also with our NATO partners—we have done some work on the role of NATO, both in Afghanistan and the future of NATO. Afghanistan then and now again brings strains and stresses to the cohesion and the effectiveness of the alliance.

Thirdly, Afghanistan, of course, is part of an extended region of concern for the United States, as well as for global security that extends from Pakistan up into Central Asia. Again, this brings Russia into the equation, of course.

Over the summer, we published on our website [four major papers](#), two by American authors, two by Russians, on the Afghanistan-Central Asia-NATO nexus. I encourage you to look at them on our website, not least because our distinguished guest was the author of one of those papers.

At that time, Jeff, you made note of some important factors that are still, I think, quite salient today. The first is that Mr. Obama had appointed [General McChrystal](#) as his military head in Afghanistan. He also named two other very important individuals, Ambassador [Holbrooke](#) as the special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, and, of course, retired General [Karl Eikenberry](#) as his ambassador in Kabul. So the new president's team was truly in place.

Second of all, you mentioned the [speech in Cairo](#) where he had sought both to dispel any sense of an anti-Muslim factor in the Afghan engagement and also to diminish the most extreme anti-American animus on the Arab Muslim street, as it were.

Third, Obama was mounting a full-court press for international support, for assistance for Afghanistan. This was priority.

All this combined to make, as you call your paper, now Obama's war. And that seemed to be a momentous development.

More recently, and finally, you said on CBS Radio that an increase in forces may be necessary to secure the situation in Afghanistan, but it remains to be seen whether or not U.S. objectives can be achieved before support for the ongoing war runs out.

Clearly, that's underscored in a month which has now become the most costly in terms of American lives. As of Tuesday, 53, I think, killed in the month of October, and the attack on the UN guesthouse early yesterday in Kabul. It would be difficult to find a moment when it isn't propitious to talk about Afghanistan, but this is certainly one of them.

I'll only add to Joel's introduction of Jeff that we have with us a modern-day [Thucydides](#). This man is a philosopher of war.

Jeff, I've learned a great deal from listening to you, and I know our audience will. For that reason, I ask you to join me in welcoming Jeff McCausland.

Remarks

JEFFREY MCCAUSLAND: It's a real pleasure for me to be here at the Carnegie Council. It's a great pleasure to be here, as Joel and David have said, with new friends and old friends.

I'm going to talk about Afghanistan at the crossroads. As has been suggested, October really defines this crossroads that we are at in Afghanistan. I guess, since it's New York, it's the World Series, and the Yankees are in it, you could quote that great philosopher [Yogi Berra](#), who once said, "When you come to a fork in the road, take it." That is, in many ways, what we're all about.

I'm going to give you my perception of what's going on in Afghanistan. And that obviously shapes what we decide to do. Perceptions are key in this regard. Many people will share differing perceptions. We see that every day in the daily papers, which reminds me of a recent story that you may have heard about, of course, showing how people will perceive things differently.

President Obama, [Kim Jong-il](#) of North Korea, and President [Ahmadinejad](#) all met God. God told them that he had been pretty much disappointed with the human race and he was going to bring on a flood and do away with the human race.

President Obama went back and was working on a speech. His speech to the American people basically was going to go, "American people, I have good news and I have bad news. The good news is, I met God. I have confirmed that a supreme being does, in fact, exist. That's good. The bad news is, he's going to bring on a flood and do us all in."

Kim Jong-il went back to Pyongyang and prepared a very different speech. His speech to the people of North

Korea was, "I've got bad news and I've got worse news. The bad news is, after 60 or 70 years of communism and atheistic ideology here in North Korea, I met God. The worse news is, God's going to bring on this flood and do us all in."

Ahmadinejad went back to Tehran and began working on his speech, which was also different, based on his perception. His speech began, "People of Iran, I've got good news and I've got better news. The good news is, I met God. God does, in fact, exist. The better news—God told me I get to be president of Iran until the end of time."

So where you sit often is a matter of what you think about. [Socrates](#) defined this in the *Allegory of the Cave* as saying, if we were seated in a cave right now, instead of this nice dining area, and there was a fire here, what we saw in terms of the shadows on the cave wall would be a function of where we were, in fact, sitting.

So with that in mind, let me give you my first overriding perception of what's going on in Afghanistan. Afghanistan makes Iraq look easy. Afghanistan truly makes Iraq look fairly simple in relative terms. In that regard, I may actually leave you with more questions than answers.

Clearly, our discussion, as has been suggested, occurs against this backdrop of the ongoing debate, the release of the report by General McChrystal, his analysis, his perception of the situation. The administration right now seems to be divided between those who say maybe we should just leave, those who argue that perhaps we should adopt a counterterrorism strategy focusing on destroying [al-Qaeda](#)—Special Operations Forces, drones, a reduced U.S. footprint—and those who would opt for the strategy proposed by General McChrystal, a counterinsurgency strategy—more U.S. forces, an effort to not only defeat al-Qaeda, but also defeat the [Taliban](#) and create in Afghanistan some semblance of a stable government and a country that can, over time, protect itself.

In March, President Obama really outlined what his vision was when he said, "Our objective is to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda and protect the U.S. homeland from further terrorist attacks."

The question, then, ladies and gentlemen, is whether to attain that objective pursuing other goals, such as defeating the Taliban and creating that society in Afghanistan, in a democratic state, which are, in fact, key and essential.

I think it's important to start out with a little bit of context. [Malcolm Gladwell](#), a very well-known journalist here in New York, wrote a book called *The Tipping Point*. In that book he talks about how societies, industries, and other things change suddenly. One of the important factors he said you have to understand in thinking about change is, what was the context? What was going on in the background that led up to that? So let's talk about that for a second.

Afghanistan is about the size of the state of Texas. The population is about 33 million people. Very dispersed, as compared to Iraq. There are only six cities in Afghanistan that have a population over 100,000. If you took 25 of the major cities of Afghanistan, those 25 cities only encompass about 20 percent of the population.

So unlike Iraq, where you have Baghdad with seven million people—literally one quarter of the Iraqi population in one single city—it's not the case in Afghanistan. So when you think about controlling this country and controlling the population, it's a much more difficult proposition.

Obviously, there are various tribes and groups. The two largest are, of course, the [Tajiks](#) in the North—represented, in fact, in the election by Mr. [Abdullah Abdullah](#), who is a Tajik—and in the South by the [Pashtuns](#). Mr. [Karzai](#), of course, is a Pashtun. Historically, let's just say, relations between the Tajiks and the Pashtuns have not always been that polite or that hospitable.

There are about 30 million to 35 million Pashtuns living in Pakistan. There are about 15 million or so living in Afghanistan. For a Pashtun, this dividing line, this border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, is pretty invisible as far as they're concerned.

There are a lot of myths about Afghanistan. One is that it's ungovernable. Actually, if you go back to 1900 until about 1970 or so, it was pretty governable. It was a poor country. It had a monarchy. It was pretty decentralized, but fairly peaceful in comparison to a large portion of the Arab world at that time.

Of course, in 1978, you had a Marxist revolution that deposed the king. One friend of mine, who is a scholar of that, said this Marxist revolution in Kabul was more like [Groucho](#) than [Karl](#). But in any event, that did, in fact, occur and installed a Marxist government. That government requested the assistance of the Soviet Union, and, of course, you had the Soviet invasion of 1979.

Since then, as we all know, Afghanistan has spiraled down into conflict, either with opponents such as the Soviet Union or internal conflicts between various warlords or the Taliban, for the last 30-odd years.

Economically, Afghanistan competes with Somalia for last place in terms of overall economic development. And

you have an illiteracy rate of about 70 percent.

I was talking to a colleague of mine involved with training of the Afghan army. He said, "Think about this. You're trying to train an army to maintain, at least modestly, some advanced pieces of equipment, and you have to start with the fact that the average Afghan has never seen a screwdriver in his life." So in the training, that's where you're starting—70 percent illiterate, and a screwdriver is a whole new thing. It puts you at a whole new place in terms of that development.

Very primitive in terms of infrastructure, transportation networks, and very remote. As a consequence, the United States is more and more dependent in terms of our resupply by passage through the Central Asian republics you see there [pointing to slide of map], to include Kyrgyzstan, as well as overflight rights and now railway rights through the Russian Federation, to resupply our forces in Afghanistan. Up until recently, we were primarily dependent on resupply through Pakistan, about 75 percent of all resupply going through the [Khyber Pass](#).

Last but not least, of course, the importance of Pakistan. As one colleague of mine put it, "You know, we can lose this war in Afghanistan, but we can only win it in Pakistan," because, as we have seen over time, al-Qaeda, and also the Taliban, have the ability to use the tribal areas along the border to train, organize, equip, and then move back into Afghanistan to conduct more attacks.

Let's put this in a broader context. These slides are from [Central Command](#) (CENTCOM). This [pointing to slide] is [Dave Petraeus](#), an old friend of mine, who is in command of Central Command.

As you can see, Dave has a pretty interesting network of places to worry about. It is important because what McChrystal was asked to do was go to Afghanistan and give a military assessment of what it's going to take in Afghanistan. Now what's going on in Washington is a sober appraisal of how that fits into the broader context in CENTCOM, and more globally, of what the United States can and should actually do.

Frankly, while a number of people have criticized the president lately for not immediately embracing what General McChrystal has said, I actually think this is the process actually working. He was told what's required there.

Now let's put that in the broader context. In my humble opinion, U.S. foreign policy for the last decade has never suffered from spending too much time trying to figure out what the heck we ought to be doing. So I don't think this necessarily is all that bad.

These efforts have to be put in that broader context. If you just think about CENTCOM for a second, what challenges do you have? You still have over 100,000 soldiers there in Iraq. Of course, we have seen some of the worst attacks in Iraq occur in the last couple of days.

The great hope is that Iraq will have national elections in January and that will be another major step forward in the democratic process, bringing that country together, and then, once those are concluded, we can see a more rapid departure of American forces from Iraq—hopefully seeing all combat forces out by the end of August of 2010 and all forces out by the end of 2011. But is that going to occur or are we going to see Iraq, for example, sink into more and more difficulties?

You have pirates. You have al-Qaeda operating in Somalia. You have al-Qaeda operating in Yemen. You have a whole host of broader issues that have to be contended with.

This is very busy [pointing to slide]. One of the great things about the U.S. military since the invention of the computer is that we have become captured by PowerPoint. I just borrowed these from CENTCOM. If this doesn't give you a headache, nothing will.

Forget all that for a second. I'm sure it's an eye test for the people over there at table 3.

The main point of this, of course, is that, as you see there, the bigger spikes are the combination of all the various kinds of attacks that have occurred in Afghanistan since about 2004. The overall impression is what's important. The level of violence roughly has doubled since around July of 2006, from about 200 attacks now to about 400 attacks occurring every single month.

They have been somewhat seasonal. The troughs you see there in violence in Afghanistan are unlike what you see in Iraq, which are more steady-state. Why is that? Winter. Winter in Afghanistan tends to be a period when violence drops off. Snow is in the mountains. It becomes more difficult for the Taliban to move back and forth from Pakistan. As a consequence, it has been somewhat cyclical. I daresay we'll see some reduction in violence in November and December simply because that's normally what has transpired in the past.

We all know what largely happened in Afghanistan. We know what happened in Afghanistan in 2002, following the American invasion. We turned our backs on Afghanistan, believing that we had pretty well secured that country

and embroiled more and more in the conflict leading up to the invasion of Iraq.

If you talk to Afghans, by the way, about that war back in 2001 and 2002, they see it very differently. They see it as the Afghans deposing the Taliban government, because the ground forces in that conflict were Afghan. The United States provided air support, the United States provided Special Operations Forces, but the ground forces were, in fact, largely Afghan.

From that period on, that assumption of success overriding things, as the U.S. became more and more embroiled in Iraq, Afghanistan became, as I used to refer to it when I used to speak about this at CBS, the "Truly Forgotten War"—the Korean War oftentimes being referred to as the "Forgotten War." In military parlance, Afghanistan became an "[economy-of-force](#) operation." What could we do to keep things about where they were, in hopes of eventually turning our attention back here, should we need to do that?

If you look at high-profile attacks, again, the bottom line is what's important. Casualty levels have increased. Part of that is a response to what we're doing, as well as what the Taliban is doing. The president, for example, announced in the spring an additional 21,000 U.S. forces to go to Afghanistan. They comprised three brigades of about 17,000 troops and about 4,000 who would go over to work in training and organizing the Afghan forces.

As we send more forces in theater, they are doing more things. They are conducting more operations. They are conducting operations in places that have been sites of increased security problems. As a consequence, there are more military operations, there's more violence, and there are more casualties.

The Taliban has also begun to change its *modus operandi*. Here [pointing to slide] you see casualties, civilian casualties in red, Afghan forces in green, and U.S. forces and NATO forces in dark blue. What the Taliban had begun to do more directly was target civilians, particularly with suicide attacks, more and more attacks being suicide attacks, which were, until about 2006, unheard-of in Afghanistan.

We have seen that just in recent days, albeit in Pakistan, with the attack yesterday on what's called the women's marketplace in Pakistan, with most of the kill being either women or children—so an effort to intimidate. Never forget, a terrorist's objective is just that—to terrorize and intimidate over time. And that's certainly what we see them doing.

These are security incidents in Afghanistan in 2008, again the red being the places where there are the most security problems, the white being the least. Through 2008 at least, what we saw was that most of the violence occurred in that belt, as you see, down in the southeastern part of Afghanistan—Kandahar, Helmand province, those areas most geographically close to Pakistan and the federal tribal areas in Pakistan.

As we consider what we're going to do next, it's always important in a military plan to remember one thing: The enemy gets a vote. Whatever you decide to do, remember, you're not dealing against a static; you're dealing against a dynamic. Whatever you do, they'll react.

I think it's important for a second to think about who our adversaries are. They really are multiple. First of all, of course, is al-Qaeda—foreign, still headed by [Osama bin Laden](#) and Mr. [Zawahiri](#). We believe that he and most of his fighters are now in the North-West Frontier or the FATA, federally administered tribal areas, though no one knows for sure. But the vast majority, if not all, of al-Qaeda are in Pakistan, very few in Afghanistan for an extended period of time.

The Taliban in Afghanistan is largely, if not exclusively, Pashtun. The Afghan Taliban, which is a separate movement of a couple of different groups, has a clear goal that they want to topple the Karzai government and reassert their position of controlling the government. Those movements in Afghanistan clearly know what their objective is all about.

In Pakistan, a more recent movement, not as old as that in Afghanistan, called [Tehrik-i-Taliban](#), is a loose conglomerate of a dozen or so other organizations. It obviously has threatened Pakistan and control of the Pakistani government. We saw that last year with operations in the Swat Valley, the North-West Frontier area, and now more recently with the invasion by the army into the federal tribal areas to put down this expanded Taliban insurgency in Pakistan.

But these are independent variables. Pakistani success, if you will, against the Taliban threat in their country may or may not have that much impact on what occurs in Afghanistan.

If you think about that one alternative of a counterterrorism strategy, what would that look like? As I said before, that would focus on the major population centers, expanded use of Special Operations Forces, and drone attacks, particularly in Afghanistan and this area in particular of Pakistan. It would also emphasize rapid training of Afghan national security forces, both the military and the police.

If you don't do that and you decide to move forward in a counterinsurgency strategy, what do you have to do? You have to do these things.

There was an old Prussian military strategist, [Carl von Clausewitz](#)—most civilians wince when a military guy quotes him. But in any event, Carl once said, "War is politics by other means." That was true at the end of the [Napoleonic](#) era; it remains true today.

What occurs in this particular conflict, I would argue, is that the politics of it may be more important than the military conditions on the battlefield. No doubt security is important. But it is necessary, but not sufficient to bring overall success. All these particular things have to occur, and all these things have to occur, if you move in that direction, in a synergized strategy.

Many would argue, secure the area first and then worry about political development and economic development later on. Too late for that. That would have been a great idea back about 2002. That option is no longer there. If you're going to move in this direction, all these things must work together to achieve overall success.

In operational terms, this is how they talk about it down at CENTCOM. You have to start out by realizing that your starting condition has perhaps 10 to 15 percent of the population supporting the insurgency, maybe 25 percent of the population that support the government, the remaining 50 percent or more who are basically neutral. Over time, through combat operations, civil security operations, providing governance, essential social services, and economic development, you move this over so that the number who support the government actually, in fact, increases.

That has to occur, as you see, within that envelope of information. How do you, over time, use information as a key part of your overall strategy? There's no doubt about it, ladies and gentlemen, an information operation is every bit as important in the battle to be successful in Afghanistan, as it was in Iraq, as is using more traditional means—guns, bombs, bullets, and soldiers.

What do U.S. forces look like right now in Afghanistan? This [pointing to slide] is where they are distributed. The couple down there in the South that you see highlighted in dark blue are brigades that have recently arrived. That's the array. You can see that the United States is primarily deployed in that area of most difficult security, which is in the South and Southeast of the country.

Again, on the supply, as I said to you before, about 75 percent of all our resupply comes through the Khyber Pass. Now we're going to be using rail supply coming across the Russian Federation, as well as aerial resupply, which has been going on for a number of years, using bases in places like Kyrgyzstan. We have seen over time the Russian Federation leaning one way or the other to encourage or discourage these Central Asian republics from supporting the United States.

If you increase the U.S. military forces by 40,000, as President Obama has been asked to do by General McChrystal, obviously that problem becomes much more complicated. In consequence, we are more and more dependent, I would argue, on cooperation with the Russians and cooperation with the Central Asian republics as we move ahead.

What's the state of the conflict right now? As David mentioned, this month has been the deadliest month in the history of this conflict. Actually, 55 young Americans were killed this month. The total for 2009 has been around 325 killed in Afghanistan. That compares to 155 for the total of 2008. Overall, the United States has suffered around 1,000 dead in Afghanistan.

One of the rules of thumb in Afghanistan and in Iraq is, every time you hear about an American being killed, multiply it by seven: That's the number wounded. So if you have 1,000 who are dead, then you have 7,000 or so that are wounded. That has been pretty constant.

What does this all cost the American taxpayer? According to the Congressional Research Service, about \$220 billion since 2001. Current outlays for the current year are about \$50 billion for 2009. In general, one can calculate the annual cost by \$1 billion per every 1,000 soldiers. So if you add 40,000 more Americans, you add \$40 billion more a year to the total and make it about a \$100-billion-a-year outlay.

The Afghan army and police forces, as you see here, are at about 175,000. About 90,000 of those are in the army. About 85,000 are in the police forces. The Afghan army, in the eyes of the population, is fairly well respected. The Afghan police forces are not. Most senior Defense officials I know think the Afghan army and police forces overall need to grow to about 400,000 to be effective, about 240,000 in the army, about 160,000 in the police forces, if you are going to have an effective counterinsurgency operation.

One thing historically that everyone has learned is that counterinsurgency operations are most successful if the primary military force operating is local. There's no way you will ever get over the fact that you are a foreigner in Afghanistan. You can try as hard as you want, but you will never get over the fact that you are a foreigner. And you'll never get over the fact that you deploy forces there on an annual basis. So, as somebody once said, we have not been in Afghanistan for the last seven years; we've been in Afghanistan for seven one-year tours. That

makes it very different in how you deal with the problem.

Finally, many have now begun to argue that we should adopt as part of this an overall strategy that depends more on the tribes. How do we get the locals to provide more of their own self-defense, as we did in places like [Anbar province](#) in Iraq?

Coalition forces: The casualties in Iraq have not all been American. There have been a significant number of coalition forces. Let me spend a moment talking about NATO.

I would argue, in many ways, the future of NATO is being written in the mountains of the Hindu Kush. Back during the days of Kosovo, when I was working in the White House, one of the comments that was frequently made about an expanded NATO was that either NATO goes out of area or NATO goes out of business.

NATO was defined to initially defend a very clear piece of territory that, in terms of overt military operations, is no longer truly threatened. As a consequence, if it has any meaning for us, then it must be more in the defense of interests and values that move far beyond that particular geographical area.

Despite the criticism by many, the NATO forces, I would argue, have fought very well in Afghanistan. Canada, in many ways, with the size of its force, has suffered probably some of the greatest casualties in Afghanistan, losing over 130. The British have lost well over 200. It's interesting. From a British standpoint, you can talk to their commanders and they will tell you that regiments of the British Army that are now operating in Afghanistan trace their histories back to operating in those same areas of Afghanistan 150 years ago.

The Dutch, who have sent some of their special operations forces, again have lost a number of soldiers, about 20 or so, one of which, actually—I know him pretty well—the Dutch chief of staff of the army lost his son in Afghanistan.

Here's how NATO forces are laid out [pointing to slide], as you can see, across Afghanistan. Now, as we move forward and try to determine whether the American people are still interested in pursuing some degree of success in Afghanistan, we must ask the same question about our NATO partners.

I just came back from Europe, and I will tell you, if American public opinion is not staunchly in support of Afghanistan, certainly European public support is behind the Americans. As one European diplomat said to me, "We would not like to be the first to leave Afghanistan, but we wouldn't mind being second or third."

Non-U.S. NATO forces number about 35,000. Many of them operate under so-called national caveats, which means they can only do certain things. As a consequence, the Taliban have begun more and more to operate throughout the country, in a clear attempt to split the alliance by going after the weakest parts.

I just came from Germany. The German forces, as you see, are the third-largest in Afghanistan. About 4,500 German soldiers operate in the North. It's fascinating, though. According to the German public, when you ask why German troops are in Afghanistan, they will say they're conducting peacekeeping operations. I was lecturing on Monday at the University of Munich and I looked the students in the eye and said, "Let me make one thing particularly clear. There is no peace to keep. Don't kid yourselves."

The most recent vote in the German Bundestag was in September, prior to the elections. Mrs. [Merkel](#), to her credit, had that done. It passed in support of maintaining the mandate by about 400 votes in favor, about 90 opposed. Curiously enough, the head of the Green Party in Germany gave a very public speech criticizing the Bundestag, because, he basically said, "We're kidding our publics. We're telling them that they are there conducting peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance. That's not what they're doing. That's not what they're going to be doing."

The Germans also maintain [Tornado](#) fighter-bombers and drone aircraft in Afghanistan, but they cannot use them to conduct combat operations. They are precluded from doing that. They can only do reconnaissance.

The Italians out near [Herat](#), recently suffered the loss of six soldiers. This was almost a day of national mourning in Italy. It seems pretty clear that the Italian forces will leave sometime in the near future.

So as President Obama thinks through his strategy for the United States, which might emphasize counterinsurgency, one of the questions he has to ask is, are the allies on board, not only in terms of numbers, but are they on board in terms of the strategy?

We can't be there fighting one war while our allies are there fighting a very different war. For General McChrystal, of course, the question is, is the sum greater than the parts? Some would argue that it may not be.

It's also interesting, of course, to keep in mind that General McChrystal maintains two hats. One, he is the commander of U.S. forces. Number two, he's the commander of NATO forces. So he operates through two very different chains of command. In his celebrated speech most recently in London, he was really operating in his

capacity as the NATO commander. He was there urging the British to deploy more forces. That's where he was and where he really got himself into some trouble.

Let's talk about politics. [James Carville](#), that political strategist for [Bill Clinton](#), ran an election in which he kept saying, "It's the economy, stupid." I would tell you, ladies and gentlemen, it's politics in Afghanistan. Can you, in fact, create a government that is perceived to be legitimate in the eyes of the population?

The elections in August were heralded as a step forward, however modest, in the direction of legitimate governance in Afghanistan. As they have turned out, they have been a step backwards. Somewhere in the neighborhood of one million votes for President Karzai were discounted by the [Independent Election Commission](#). In roughly 10 percent or more of all the polling places there was clear and convincing evidence of fraud occurring.

There has been an agreement, as you know—Mr. Karzai, on the left, and his principal opponent, Mr. Abdullah, on the right—for a runoff election on the 7th of November. Many people, however, are worried: If, structurally and process-wise, we had a year to prepare for August and we didn't get it right in August, why would you think in two weeks we can improve this in a dramatic fashion? There is an effort to reduce the number of polling places, because we found that there were many ghost polling places in which no one showed up to vote, but somehow when you opened up the ballot box, there were thousands of votes in those ballot boxes for Mr. Karzai.

Mr. Abdullah, by the way, has also called for the dismissal of a gentleman by the name of [Azizullah Lodin](#), who is the head of the so-called Independent Election Commission, organized to process and run the election. This is a group totally appointed by President Karzai, totally supportive of President Karzai. In a recent election, Mr. Lodin, the guy in charge of organizing the runoff, said, "Well, we'll have another runoff, and President Karzai is going to win," which sort of tells you where he's going.

The turnout for the elections in August was about 38 percent of the population. There is great concern: Even if it goes well, will you see any more votes? My response would be, probably no, for a number of reasons. Clearly, with the evidence of the attacks of the day, the Taliban is going to make every effort to intimidate people, number one. Number two, the weather will be a lot worse in November than it was in August. Number three, those who were intimidated to some degree during the August elections are unlikely now to reappear, particularly if you're going to reduce the number of polling places.

So even if these runoff elections go well, my guess is, we'll be lucky to hit 30 percent of the population turning out to vote.

President Karzai clearly has been a disappointment in his last five years as president, in terms of creating a government that can be described as legitimate and non-corrupt. His former finance minister compared the government to a bad [Shakespearean](#) play in which the king is basically out of control and unclear about what actually is going on.

Last but not least, of course, we all know, that counterinsurgency, as I said before, fundamentally depends on creating a government that can attract people to it, and therefore take that attraction away from your opponents—in this case, the Taliban. We Americans, I would argue—those of us who have a little gray hair on our heads—recall an attempt by us to do that once before, back in the 1960s and 1970s, that was not terribly successful.

Now, if that wasn't enough of a problem, on top of this you have this problem. We have proved that age-old adage that capitalism is a wonderful thing. Up until 2001, in fact, poppy production, though still ongoing in Afghanistan, was not nearly as huge as it is now. It has exponentially grown since we moved into the country at that time. Somewhere around 90 percent of all the illicit heroin and opium come out of, particularly, [Helmand](#) province, which you see down there in the very dark red [pointing to slide], in the South. The legend is, those in the darkest red are the places of the greatest poppy production.

The good news is, as you see, about ten provinces are poppy-free. But still and all, it's estimated in a recent UN report that about a quarter million dollars a year goes to the Taliban from the production of opium. About 300 tons are exported out of Afghanistan annually. About 150 go out through the South. About 100 go out through Iran.

It's interesting to note. There may be the opportunity for cooperation with strange places. By a recent UN report, Iran has the highest percentage of people under the age of 30 addicted to narcotics of any country on the planet. Narcotics is a really bad problem in Iran, particularly for young people under 30.

About 50 tons go out through Central Asia and normally end up in the Russian Federation or in Europe. By one estimate, the combined number of deaths from narcotics in Europe and Russia annually certainly exceeds the number of American soldiers and NATO soldiers that die on the battlefield in Afghanistan.

Having said all that, this problem continues to grow and, as I said, to some degree, it not only feeds the

insurgency, the Taliban, but undercuts, if you will, your ability to create a government that is free of corruption.

George and I were in California a few months ago talking at a conference on Afghanistan. We had a gentleman there who just came back, working on the narcotics issue. He said, "You only need to know one thing about Afghanistan and drugs if you want to understand the whole problem."

I said, "Okay. What's that?"

He said, "The gentleman that Mr. Karzai appointed to be in charge of his anticorruption unit for the government spent three to five years in the Nevada state penitentiary for drug dealing. If you understand that, you understand the problem."

President Karzai's own brother, many people argue, has been implicated as being involved in the drug trade and, as of yesterday, according to *The New York Times* at least, also is working for the CIA. So he's an entrepreneur for sure.

Economic development is certainly key and essential. Everyone would agree that the average Afghan wants the same thing we Americans want—jobs, clean water, reasonable governance, electricity, et cetera. However, the level of economic deprivation is sobering. As one economist told me, if you invest \$10 billion in economic development in Afghanistan and do that every year for about a decade, and everything goes just right, after ten years, you might elevate the Afghan economy from where it is now to Chad. You can move it up to the level of Chad in about ten years.

A high level of illiteracy, endemic poverty, and chronic underdevelopment now place Afghanistan 174th out of 178 countries on the UN Development Index. Some have said the problem of creating a reasonable economy in Afghanistan exceeds that of the [Marshall Plan](#) at the end of the Second World War.

What does that look like in more particular figures? You see here that Afghanistan's rank in terms of corruption went from 117, after all our hard work, and sank to 176.

The World Bank maintains various indicators of government effectiveness, measured on a scale of 1 to 100. In 2001, the Afghan government earned a 7.6 out of 100 in effectiveness. Five years later, after the United States had invested \$30 billion in reconstruction, it had moved up to 8.5.

There is some good news there, of course. You see telephone subscribers are up. The number of kids going to school is up. Economic growth is up. How much of that is drugs obviously is problematic.

The telephone subscribers one is interesting, though, and can cut both ways—back to what I said before about information. The Taliban actually uses cell phones as a means to intimidate and also as a means to spread propaganda. They are very good at information operations—very, very good.

GDP in Afghanistan reached \$9.7 billion by the end of 2007. Per-capita income was about \$350 for the year, which means the average Afghan couldn't pay my hotel bill from last night here in New York.

As was alluded to before, this now is a regional effort. Success in Afghanistan is inextricably tied to success in the region. So we have appointed, up there in the upper left-hand corner, Richard Holbrooke, who earned the nickname "The Bulldozer," for his time during [Dayton Accords](#), as our regional representative—special envoy, if you will. As we sit here today, Mrs. [Clinton](#), our secretary of state, is actually in Pakistan, though we have seen these horrific attacks, depicted here on the bottom, during the last couple of days.

What does this look like in terms of Pakistan? Even if you say, "Well, let's not worry about this place called Afghanistan," here is the nightmare of everyone in Washington, and that is Pakistan. Pakistan is a country of 160 million people. Most estimates I have seen—no one knows for sure—suggest Pakistan has probably 50 or more nuclear weapons. So the collapse of Pakistan into some [Hobbesian](#) state of nature or the achievement of the Taliban in Pakistan of control of the government would be, I think, everything that would keep us awake at night.

Here you see Pakistan having some progress, a little bit less corruption with the arrival of a new civilian government, some GDP growth, though the recent economic downturn obviously will have a grievous impact on the Pakistani economy, some increase in spending on education, and obviously an increase in telephone use.

Pakistani views on this conflict in the region, I would argue, are affected by three perceptions of the United States and the conflict.

First, many Pakistanis believe that the United States will use Pakistan for its own strategic interests and then discard when it no longer thinks that's necessary. They point back to their history, the end of Soviet occupation in the 1980s of Afghanistan and the United States walking away. If you've seen [Charlie Wilson's War](#), the motion picture, you know what I'm talking about, being a classic example of it.

Second of all, they view this relationship through the prism of the conflict with India. Make no bones about it: Everybody in the Pakistani military understands the primary military problem. It's not Afghanistan, it's not the Taliban; it's India. This has always been their concern. As they see the United States achieving more and more positive relations with India, they become more and more paranoid about what that means for American-Pakistani relations.

Lastly, their view about the U.S. and the insurgency has hardened over time, if you will, particularly with our support for President [Musharraf](#), the former military head of Pakistan. Many Pakistanis believe that the attacks they're seeing now are largely because of their support for the United States. Therefore, if they support the U.S. less, there would be less violence on the streets of Lahore or Karachi or Peshawar.

Here are some thoughts on what they think about us. The number of suicide attacks, as you can see, in Pakistan have gone up dramatically. Pakistanis will also point out that in the last several years they have lost 7,500 security forces, killed and wounded, fighting the Taliban. Since they did their invasion in the Swat Valley and now into the tribal areas, there are over two million Pakistanis who are refugees.

Drone attacks will get mixed reviews. As you can see, drone attacks on targets in Pakistan are up significantly. U.S. military officials will tell you that we've killed 11 out of 20 of al-Qaeda's senior leaders. That's good news. Pakistanis will point out to you that the United States has now delivered more ordnance using drone aircraft on Pakistani territory than the NATO alliance delivered on Kosovo and Serbia during the conflict back in 1999.

History doesn't repeat itself, but it rhymes. This [pointing to slide] portrays the number of months, rounded up, that the United States has been involved in various wars. As you can see, the American Revolution and the Vietnam War were the longest conflicts the United States ever fought. The war in Afghanistan, in terms of the number of months, now exceeds the combined length of World War I and World War II. I would argue, irrespective of what decision is made, the war in Afghanistan will end up ultimately being the longest conflict that we have been involved with.

But I think two points are important. First, it's inevitable to make comparisons. It's inevitable to make comparisons right now in the U.S. military between what worked and what didn't work in Iraq to what might work or might not work in Afghanistan. That can be useful. It also can be a trap. One has to be very careful in lessons learned, which ones are applicable and which ones are not applicable.

Second, General [George Marshall](#), military commander during the Second World War, once said, "Democracies cannot fight a seven-year war." Over time, the patience of the American people—or in any democracy—will run out after about seven years. Clearly, we are testing that particular proposition amongst the American people right now. Most polls right now will tell you that about one-third of the American people believe we should immediately do what General McChrystal says, about one-third say we should leave tomorrow, and about one-third don't know or are somewhere in between.

But I would tell you, the most optimistic assessments I have heard would suggest that if we were to move forward in the direction of General McChrystal's assessment, it would take about a year to wrest momentum away from the Taliban, about a year then to build momentum for us, and then about five more years after that to build a government and a security force in Afghanistan that could control the country. So that's about seven more years in this particular conflict.

What is the bill? My rough rule of thumb on the back of an envelope would say that would mean the bill would be about 4,000 more dead, about 30,000 more wounded, and about \$700 billion. That would be sort of the rough price tag that that might, in fact, cost.

Let me wrap up. I came across this quotation from this [Islamic scholar](#) in the ninth century. It's amazing. If you want a new idea, read an old book. I'll read it to you.

He said about the Middle East, "There can be no government without an army. There can be no army without money. There can be no money without prosperity. There can be no prosperity without justice and good administration."

I hope President Karzai has read that particular comment.

Let me give you, in conclusion, my perceptions. I think probably what's going to happen is some combination of a counterterrorism and counterinsurgency strategy that will likely call for increased deployment of U.S. forces—perhaps over time, up to the 40,000 that General McChrystal has asked for.

That counterterrorism has to be better integrated with overall efforts to ensure that tactical success, the killing of individuals, does not cause strategic failure by widespread collateral damage that just serves over time to alienate the population, and you end up being the best recruiter for the Taliban to al-Qaeda.

That military surge has to be accompanied by a civilian surge—the president has talked about this—which would include advisers on economic development, justice, improved government, and decreased corruption—a very clear effort to, if you will, make sure that the president of Afghanistan understands that we're going to calibrate our commitment to sending more forces with his commitment to enhancing legitimacy and reducing corruption.

Thirdly, this effort also has to encourage disaffected Taliban to, in fact, change sides, as we saw occur in Iraq. The situation is quite different. There are many who believe—McChrystal being one of them—that a very high percentage of the Taliban do this more as an employment problem than anything else.

Lastly, I think the effort has to be decentralized, a greater effort being done at the provincial level, which has historically been the way Afghanistan has, in fact, been ruled, and an effort over time to increase so-called local security forces, not unlike we did in Anbar province in Iraq.

That concludes my formal remarks, ladies and gentlemen. I would be more than happy to entertain your questions and comments.

DAVID SPEEDIE: We are going to open it up. Just one very quick observation. I think everything that Jeff has said, both in the civilian and military contexts, brings us back to the question of just how much this weighs on the administration and President Obama.

I was at a session at the Kennedy Library in Boston a couple of weeks ago called "The Presidency in the Nuclear Age." In fact, the so-called "seminar on Afghanistan" that the president is engaged in, on a fairly prolonged basis, was evoked by [Ted Sorensen](#), I think it was, who made the point that had President [Kennedy](#) made a 48-hour decision on the [Cuban Missile Crisis](#), the outcome might have been very different. Perhaps we may want to reflect on that one.

Questions and Answers

QUESTION: I listened with great interest to Senator [Kerry](#)'s speech that he gave at the Council on Foreign Relations when he came back. It was well-thought-out and very informative.

At the conclusion, he said, "Well, the military is the military. There will be some number, some increase." But on the other two legs—that is, a good, efficient, noncorrupt government and economic and development aid—he remained profoundly skeptical. He saw no evidence at all on the first issue, that there was any kind of change in government and corruption and so on. Obviously, we know all the dilemmas of economic aid—delivery, the cost, the problems, and so on.

If that's true—take it as an axiom that what he said is true about those other two legs—how do you go forward with the first leg, then, and expect to have a coherent policy?

JEFFREY MCCAUSLAND: You put your finger on the problem. As I said, in my mind, in many ways, the political problem is more important than the military problem, and perhaps more difficult. That doesn't make the military problem easy. It's just relative.

I think the decision by the president on whether or not to move forward with more forces, and why that has not occurred, to some degree, is because of the political dilemma we find ourselves in in the aftermath of the elections in August. Had the president very quickly, as many people had urged him to do, embraced what General McChrystal had asked for and immediately said, "We'll send 40,000 more troops," then any leverage that we might have gotten from that in terms of trying to move Mr. Karzai and his government towards the more legitimate anticorruption that you and I would like to see would have disappeared.

I would imagine that this great effort of ushering Mr. Karzai to the podium, which included calls by Mrs. Clinton and the prime minister of France and the prime minister of Great Britain and Senator Kerry's efforts, was to get him to come to the microphone and agree to the runoff election.

By the way, Mr. Karzai has steadfastly refused to believe the initial elections were fraudulent. He has never, ever admitted to that.

So I think the ongoing dialogue is to use this decision on a new strategy and a new force to say there must be certain key conditions met that move in that direction.

I would be one who would like to see a list of people delivered to Mr. Karzai that says, "These people must leave your government if you are still going to be in charge and we're going to continue to support you."

Obviously, there is, I'm sure, an ongoing effort to try to convince, either prior to or in the aftermath of the runoff, Mr. Abdullah to return to the government—he was, in fact, Mr. Karzai's foreign minister—in the form of a government of national unity. Not only do you have this backdrop of problems with the Taliban, but don't forget,

there's this Tajik-Pashtun problem, which is epitomized by the two candidates.

Whether that's going to occur or not seems unclear at the moment. Probably not. At least publicly, Mr. Abdullah has said he's not interested in going back into government, probably because he realizes that, under the Afghan constitution, the president can only serve two terms. He could change that, like some mayors I know have done. But in any event, even if Karzai is successful in taking the presidency again, he would depart in five years, and Abdullah obviously would be the likely candidate, and probably best positioned if he was outside of government.

In Washington, I'm sure the desire would be for a grand coalition to try to move this in the right direction.

But you're absolutely correct. We have to use our dialogue with the Afghans and calibrate, I think, our efforts based on whether, in fact, there can be a positive response in that direction, while at the same time realizing that overnight we're not going to see the government of Afghanistan become [Jeffersonian](#) democrats. Any progress that's made in that direction is going to be very modest.

The final point I would make is that I think we also need to deemphasize, perhaps, success at the national level and see if we can't work more efforts at the local level as well, to see improvements made in the provincial governorships, district governorships, et cetera.

But you're exactly right, those two points are key to overall success, whatever success is in the long term.

QUESTION: I'm an American-Afghan. I spent three and a half years as the economic adviser to the president of Afghanistan. I want to reflect on some of the issues that the Afghans have, though not necessarily everybody makes these assumptions.

For example, if you go to an Afghan village, they don't understand the Americans. They say, "We fought and we gave. Millions of people got killed. Millions of people migrated all over the place. We called the Americans friends." Some of these people are what President [Reagan](#) called freedom fighters.

So what did they do? They transacted us to Pakistan. No activity in Afghanistan can succeed if it doesn't have the supply of money and resources from Pakistan.

Pakistan has been a very, very difficult neighbor, for the three things that you mentioned. It is their nightmare they have created. That is not a country. That is an army that needs a country, basically. The timidity of the American diplomacy—a great deal of the resources come from the GCC, or the Gulf states, to the Taliban.

The fact is that these issues that are raised about the narcotics—and snide remarks are made about it—the fact is, who's involved in it? The Afghan farmer gets about \$3 billion to \$4 billion, perhaps. Some of the statistics, without the growth rate and so forth, don't include the illicit components. So it has been growing very rapidly.

They cannot fly these narcotics. They cannot transport them. A whole bunch of people from Pakistan, Iran, the British, and so forth are involved.

In your speech, what I was disappointed in a little bit was that you didn't mention the role of the Americans. If we are going to go and protect ourselves as the maker of basically a democratic process, we have to have the balance sheet properly defined.

For 30 years, Afghanistan has been demolished. There are different theories, one being that the communist revolution in Afghanistan and then the subsequent invasion was in the anticipation that the Americans were up to no good because, under the belly of the Soviet Union, they would do something. Whether this is correct or not is another issue.

So we mobilized all the warlords all over the place, and the same warlords were sanctified again by the Americans.

Another point which I wanted to make—the aid of the United States, as far as the economics is concerned, is a shambles and a disgrace for the taxpayer of this country. I was responsible basically for getting these pledges. In the period that I was working, the world agreed to \$32 billion for Afghanistan in the [London Conference](#) and in the [Paris Conference](#). You will say that \$32 billion is a lot, and maybe you have \$700 billion for a forecast.

Where does this go? It goes in the armies that are there, mostly. This is not economic development whatsoever. Most of that is given to the American experts, the so-called civilian surge. People were working for me that were making \$2,500 a day. What would they do? They were the most ignorant people I have ever come across. They rotate from East Timor to Madagascar to Bosnia to Iraq and to Afghanistan.

Look at how you have performed there. There is not much to be proud of.

The other thing is the issue of governance, this issue of corruption. In fact, in the Paris Conference there was an

agreement made that all projects of the international groups, as well as that of Afghanistan, should be audited by an internationally recognized company. It is the international community that is refusing that.

People should sit down and find all the sources of corruption. There was a lot of corruption on the donor side as well. I don't know this figure very well. Between 30 and 50 percent of the money doesn't even leave Washington or these places. They set up this whole business exercise. Of the amount that arrives in Afghanistan, 20 or 25 percent is given to the Afghan government, and the rest is exercised by the donors themselves. They do not even provide information to the Afghan government. They won't give it to you. We Americans should be concerned.

The Afghans—they may be poor, they may be ignorant, they may not know a screwdriver, but they can really fight. The question is, we have 100,000 internationally well-educated, well-trained, and well-equipped—and they cannot beat 10,000 Taliban? What is going on here?

Most of those Germans that you were talking about were drinking beer most of the time. They were not doing anything. The Anglo-Saxons, they were fighting, yes. It is the incompetence that we should look at. In fact, the American version of this enterprise with the Afghan is almost of equal incompetence. You would expect a lot more productivity from a well-educated, well-provided system. The Afghans have a reason not to be productive.

So I do not understand this notion. If the United States wants to get out, get out. The Afghans have done it before and they will do it again. [Genghis Khan](#) also destroyed them. They will survive.

In your speeches, please identify where the United States was involved and think a little bit more sympathetically about the Afghans.

Thank you.

JEFFREY MCCAUSLAND: Let me respond first by saying that if in any way any of the things I said previously were considered snide or offensive to the Afghan people, my personal apologies. That was never my intent. Simply, I was trying to describe the difficulties and some of the challenges, particularly in terms of economic development and training of Afghan forces.

Let me touch on a few things that you had to say.

Clearly, one thing that General McChrystal has talked about—and I know Stan quite well—is that not only is there going to be, if we adopt that particular approach, a change in military forces deployed, but in how you use that force. Efforts by NATO must be better integrated. The actual force must be better positioned to protect the population and not just arrive in these big armored vehicles for a few moments and then leave the village so that the Taliban can return at night. There has to be not only a change in numbers, but a change in approach.

I agree with you wholeheartedly—and I think I said that—that the key, in many ways, is in Pakistan almost more than in Afghanistan. One of the challenges, you and I both know, is the rapprochement between those two countries, which still don't even agree on the border and the [Durand Line](#) being the actual border. So resolution of those issues is key and essential to this as well.

In that regard, I think, more broadly, one of the challenges that Mrs. Clinton is trying to do right now is to actually get the Pakistani government to achieve what I would call an existential leap, and that existential leap is to begin to understand that the greatest threat to Pakistan—the civilian government of Pakistan, the society of Pakistan—is actually the internal threat posed by terrorists and the Taliban within Pakistan and not the threat posed by India. Any way that the United States, in any way, shape, or form, can improve the relationships between Pakistan and India—to help them make that change obviously has to be part of the longer-term effort.

Finally, you're right—again, I would agree—on the whole drug situation. Unfortunately, the poor farmer down there is not the one who is benefiting markedly in terms of the drug trade. Our strategy initially was the wrong one, which was to eradicate the particular crop. By so doing, what do we do? We eradicate the livelihood of that particular farmer, which means either his family starves to death or he finds some other means of economic activity, which means he probably joins the Taliban. In fact, that was a wrongheaded strategy.

Now there is an attempt to actually encourage transference to other crops and focus the counter-narcotics effort more on the middle man and those who are making large sums of money on the distribution side.

I also would agree with you that the aid has not been certainly run in the most efficient fashion, to say the very least. I was talking to the defense minister from Afghanistan, and he pointed out to me, not unlike what you said, "You Americans criticize us for corruption." His number—and I'm not sure, but I'll buy it—is about 25 cents of every dollar actually getting to Afghanistan.

He said, "You all do this in a fashion where you give a contract to one American company and it gives several subcontracts to several subcontractors and then there are sub-subcontractors."

We all know how that works, because we're in New York, a big financial place like this. Every subcontractor takes a particular percentage of operating budget off the top. So by the time the money actually arrives in Afghanistan, it's 25 cents. "You don't call that corruption in the United States. You call that subcontracting." But the effect, in many ways, is not dissimilar.

We have to think very hard about how we do that particular effort, not only in terms of success in Afghanistan. But in Iraq and now Afghanistan, if the United States, because of the threat posed by so-called failing states as, if you will, the place where terrorism flourishes—if we are going to be in this for a long period of time, we had better get a whole hell of a lot better about the civilian effort that helps rebuild societies—every bit as good as we are at applying military power. We're pretty darned good at applying military power in the classical sense. We need to develop a whole coterie of people that can go in and help societies of equal efficiency. We're a long way from that.

Finally, as you said, what's the United States all about? There is a lot of discussion in Washington about just that point. As I said, the president has refocused the attention of the effort, I think, more on al-Qaeda. I think it's important to go back to first principles. Why did we, the United States, get involved in a conflict in Afghanistan? It was because we knew that al-Qaeda was using that as a place to train, organize, and equip, and then make the attacks that they did. President [Bush](#) offered the ultimatum to the Taliban government. They refused. The war began.

The focus, really, then, is al-Qaeda, and not really Afghanistan. Many people I have talked to in Washington have said we made a wholesale bunch of errors by describing, in rather quick fashion, that we could transform Afghanistan to a market economy and to a democratic society. This is a country that has suffered, as you pointed out, very grievously, and that was not going to happen.

So there are a lot of people saying, back to first principles. This is really about al-Qaeda. If you go in that direction, then, of course, you move more towards perhaps adopting a counterterrorism as opposed to a counterinsurgency strategy.

QUESTION: Thank you very much, Colonel. Thank you, Professor.

We all know that Ambassador Richard Holbrooke originally was supposed to have a different title, but it was shortened. I understand it makes sense. But he also refers, as we all know, to the fact of what I call the Pakistani component in the very roots of what we're talking about with reference to Taliban and others.

You will correct me. I'm not so knowledgeable as you are. But it seems to me we all know the five Pakistani generals who, some 15 years ago, at the table set up the conceptual idea of the Taliban. One of the reasons for that conception, if you don't forget too quickly, was that the Taliban concept had an anti-Indian component, a profound one, for the very reason that you mentioned earlier.

Now we go to 2009 and all the things that you mentioned with reference to the Durand Line, which operated technically and legally in 1993—as we all know, essentially, the validity that the document had. When we get to this point, we are asking the Pakistanis to do two things. We are asking the Pakistanis to go and fight a group which they profoundly helped to reach power in Kabul in 1996, and a group which had different dimensions—as I said, even the anti-Indian dimension. We leave aside, of course, the famous Musharraf sentence, "Taliban and Pashtun is the same and the one."

Now we discuss the military component of the new strategy and political components. If I sit in Islamabad and I'm asked to do something which is a revolutionary move vis-à-vis 20 or more years of history, wouldn't I think about the fact that—yes, I will do what you ask me to do, but don't you think you should give me something on the Indian side? In other words, are we looking at the place where the real key to a radical change lies or are we looking at the surface?

In some way, the oldest question which is called for by the new U.S.-India relationship, which we have to preserve, for the reasons we all know—but isn't, actually, that the first port to call on. I wonder if that maybe could be done. I don't say to do it in public, but I wonder if that is a key, and then we move further. This would open the concept, of course, to other regional discussion. But first and foremost, India.

JEFFREY MCCAUSLAND: You make a great point. You alluded to, of course, the Soviet invasion. It's somewhat ironic to remember that at the high point of the Soviet invasion, the Soviet Union poured 140,000 soldiers into Afghanistan. If we agree to General McChrystal's proposal, we'll be at about 140,000 soldiers in Afghanistan, which is a little worrisome if you look at how things went for the Soviet Union.

There's a recent book, I think by [Peter Bergen](#)—I might be mistaken about that—on al-Qaeda, in which he argues that one has to keep in mind what al-Qaeda's strategy in all this is. Al-Qaeda's strategy is to draw you into long, indeterminate conflicts where over time you waste resources in terms of manpower and money, and then over time your population becomes disillusioned, and after that time, you tend to move away. That's an expansion of

what occurred in Somalia, although that may be a bad metaphor. So there's a worry that you would just be playing into the strategy that they are interested in.

But I think you're absolutely correct in terms of Pakistan being key in all this. The question right now is, with 28,000 Pakistani soldiers operating in the federally administered tribal areas, what exactly is the goal that they are trying to accomplish? Is their goal to destroy the Taliban in Pakistan? Frankly, if they are, they need a lot more forces than 28,000, I'll tell you as an old military guy. Most people believe they're just there to kind of whittle the Pakistani Taliban down to a level that they think is manageable and perhaps see the disappearance of certain leaders that they find repugnant, [Baitullah Mehsud](#) being one who has already gone off to his reward.

Certainly you're right as well that the creation of the Taliban, in many ways, had an anti-Indian component. The historical fear if you're a Pakistani is Indian direct or indirect domination of Afghanistan. That then becomes sort of the grand encirclement, which has been a nightmare for many Pakistanis. So they see that in those particular terms.

That's why I think one thing we have got to do—and hopefully Mr. Holbrooke is working on that—is move Pakistani thinking in different directions. That's a very, very difficult proposition. We do, in fact, now have, obviously, a civilian government in Pakistan, President [Zardari](#). However, by any measure, this is a fairly weak government. There's a real concern about how much direct control he, as the president, has not only over his military, but also over the intelligence assets. How do you deal with that over time? Can you broker, as you suggest—which I think would be appropriate—some attempt to find a compromise on some of the larger issues between Pakistan and India that can bring down that level of hostility?

I have talked to a number of senior Indian military officers that I've gotten to know. One of them said to me—in a way, it always struck me that the situation between Pakistan and India is like the situation between the United States and the Soviet Union back during the years of President Reagan. Bear with me for a second. President Reagan basically decided, "We're going to economically spend them into the ground." And if you talk to Indians, that's what they'll tell you.

The Indian general officer said to me, "We don't worry about Pakistan anymore, except in terms of terrorists or instability. But if you look at what the Indian economy is doing and has been doing and continues to do, there is no doubt about the fact that we are going to continue to outstrip Pakistan. Over time, if they try to stay abreast of us in terms of military spending, this will, in fact, collapse, because they are not devoting the necessary resources to economic development, education, health, welfare, government services"—all the things that the growing population of Pakistan demands and should demand as a democracy.

So the degree to which we can get a recalculation of that relationship that then, over time, hopefully would allow Pakistan to do those things and reduce this emphasis on a military solution, obviously we'll bring greater stability to the region as a whole. But that obviously is a very difficult proposition. That's a long-range proposition and will take a good deal of time to accomplish. It has to be part of the overall effort by the United States.

QUESTION: Can we put 40,000 troops into Afghanistan within a year? Let's assume that we intend to have them properly trained and equipped and all ready to go within a year.

JEFFREY MCCAUSLAND: In some ways, in military terms, that's the 64 dollar question that I'm sure a bunch of military planners in the Pentagon are running computers right now trying to figure out. The short answer is, yes, we can do that. Now, you may quibble a bit on the training and deployment requirements. That's always, to some degree, fungible.

I think what we have to keep in mind is that since [9/11](#), we, the United States of America, have fought not only the soon-to-be longest war in our history but fought that without a draft, just with a professional military force, which is expensive in terms of the cost, number one, and number two, over time, can lead that effort to be separated from the greater societal effort. The average American goes about his or her business, I'm sure, here in New York. The average New Yorker is a whole lot more worried about how the Yankees did last night than how things are going right now in Afghanistan. Absent a draft, it doesn't impact.

I once had dinner with [Colin Powell](#) when he was secretary of state and he asked me about college campuses. I said, "Well, Mr. Secretary, on the campus I was on at the time, we could organize a demonstration about Darfur a whole lot easier than we could organize a demonstration either in favor of or opposed to U.S. operations in Iraq." This was a couple years ago, when Iraq was very high.

It's not in the face of the American people. We don't deal with it.

But in terms of raw numbers, could we, in fact, do that? Yes, we could. It would put a real strain on our active forces, no doubt about it. It is tied somewhat to our ability to reduce that number in Iraq. Can we, in fact, following Iraqi elections in January, begin that rather rapid withdrawal and free up those forces to go to other places?

It also is dependent on us continuing a change in how we use our military forces that occurred after 9/11 that I think is somewhat imperceptible to most people.

After 9/11, President Bush, for example, could have gone to a draft and probably have gotten the American people to support it. He didn't do that. But what he did, in fact, do was to begin using the National Guard and Reserve, which had historically been a reserve force designed for two missions: the big mission with the Soviet Union, or that problem locally, be it a riot, a forest fire, a flood, a hurricane, or whatever. It wasn't lost on the citizens of New Orleans that when [Katrina](#) hit New Orleans, the Louisiana National Guard was in Baghdad.

Now that Reserve force is a rotational force. Every three to four years, if you're in the National Guard or Reserve, you are now going to rotate into a combat theater, either Iraq or Afghanistan.

We didn't call up the National Guard during Vietnam. That's why certain ex-presidents were in the National Guard, the New York Yankees were in the National Guard. We didn't do that during the Vietnam War.

But we certainly have done it in this particular case. So we're going to have to continue that trend.

Finally, as I said before, moving forces into Afghanistan is a much more difficult proposition than Iraq.

Good old [Saddam](#) had about 40 palaces throughout the country. Each one of them has a runway. As a consequence, you had 40 places to occupy on day one. You also have a port. You have Kuwait. So bringing in supplies is a fairly easy proposition. You can overfly from countries like Turkey. That makes it easy as well.

If you go to Afghanistan, you might as well go to Antarctica. Now 75 percent of our supplies go through the Khyber Pass by ground, more and more intercepted by the Taliban or al-Qaeda as they are moving forward. We are now more and more dependent on the Russians, as I said, to move supplies through the Russian Federation.

In Kyrgyzstan about a year ago, the parliament said they were going to close down an agreement with the United States. We were using a Kyrgyz air base to bring supplies in and move on to Afghanistan. They said they were going to end that, following a large aid package provided by Moscow to the government of Kyrgyzstan. Over time, we were able to get them to reverse that. There's no doubt Moscow has sent a clear signal that they have a lot to say about whether or not you can do those things in Central Asia.

This will be very, very important if the forces go up and more supplies are demanded.

So that is all part and parcel of the calculation of moving in and maintaining 40,000 more troops.

But the central question: Could we do it in one year? Yes. Would it be pretty? No.

QUESTION: You expanded the context a little bit into India. If I may expand it a little bit further, if Afghanistan existed floating on an island in the South Pacific, it probably wouldn't be that significant. When Obama talks about 140,000 troops in Afghanistan, if he says to the American people, "We're going to put 140,000 troops on Iran's eastern military border," people would take a second breath. Of course, now there are North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO] troops on China's western border.

As we expand NATO and the recent U.S.-supported Georgian attack on Russian troops in Georgia, the view from Moscow, of course, is, "Exactly how many more troops are you going to put in our southern area of interest?"

Perhaps you could say something about U.S. calculations on how Iran views a dramatic military increase on its eastern military border, including the [Farah](#) military base, which America has been supporting, right on Iran's border; the Russian perception of Afghanistan and Pakistan extending the NATO expansion of U.S. troops. Also, given the U.S. clear political support for the Uighur and Tibetan operations, which concern China, how does China see this dramatic increase of NATO and U.S. troops on its western military border?

JEFFREY MCCAUSLAND: There's an awful lot there.

You're exactly right, this place called Afghanistan occurs in a broader constellation of larger interests that the United States has. Good old [Hans Morgenthau](#). There's a painting, I think, of Hans upstairs. I always point out to my students, whether you're a realist or not, he had one insight that I thought was key. That is, every once in a while, when you're trying to work out your relationship with another country, it's important to put yourself in their position and look back across the table at what's going on. I think that's key and essential, and it's precisely what you're suggesting.

From the standpoint of Iranians, there's no doubt about it, there is cause for concern by the Iranians. They see 100,000-plus U.S. forces in Iraq. They see an expanded U.S. naval presence in the Persian Gulf. They see, perhaps, 100,000 or more troops in Iran. If you get out the map, you get the idea that things might become difficult.

They hear, particularly amongst many conservative people here in the United States, this drumbeat of not, "Should we go to war with Iran to take out their nascent nuclear capability?" but "When are we going to get around to doing that?"

That would certainly be cause for concern if you were President Ahmadinejad sitting in Tehran, despite all his particular bluster.

At the same time, the Iranians, I think, enjoy seeing the United States caught like the truck stuck in the mud in Iraq and in Afghanistan. There's no doubt that the Iranians continue to provide support to various factions that they hope are going to be successful in the upcoming elections in Iraq and provide weapons to various [Shiite](#) militia groups in Iraq. There is some evidence, in fact, of the Iranians providing some weapons and the like going into Afghanistan, though, honestly, it's unclear whether that's a governmental decision or just capitalism along a pretty imprecise border.

Of course, the Iranians are also worried about how the United States or others might foment unrest within Iran, the most recent elections being the classic example, and recent bombings in the Baluch portion of their country are a concern.

Having said that, there may be, as I said in the talk, some opportunities for cooperation, I think, if we can get over the bone of the issue of the moment, which, of course, is the nuclear question. The Iranians, in terms of this drug problem, have a great interest, number one. Number two, they never had good relations with the Taliban. They nearly went to war with the Taliban at one point in time. So I don't think they're terribly crazy about seeing the Taliban return to power in Kabul.

The yin and yang may exist. Even though there's a big problem by our presence, as you suggest, if you're an Iranian—who knows?—that might be an opportunity for cooperation.

I think the same is true in terms of Moscow. I just came back from Europe. I'm going back over to Berlin to be at a conference with the Russians in a few weeks. I work on a number of arms-control issues. I think there's a real attempt by the Obama Administration right now to truly hit that reset button, and to see if anything happens when you hit the button.

There is no doubt that the president's decision to not deploy the Bush Administration's plan for antiballistic missiles into Poland and radars into the Czech Republic was, in part, an effort to try to seek some cooperative ground. There is much concern if you're an Eastern European: "Is the United States selling us down the river to the Russians?"

Having said that, there's also some belief that this may have been virtue made into necessity by the belief in some places that the Czech parliament would not vote, in the final analysis, to support the radars.

But that is certainly an attempt to hit that reset button.

The [START](#) negotiations are ongoing. I've been in contact with the assistant secretary who is working on those. They are now going into continuous negotiations. The 5th of November is the deadline for a new START agreement.

I think there is an effort to use these and other mechanisms to find out if there is a possibility of cooperating with Russia. You hear a lot less talk in the Obama State Department about NATO enlargement and Georgia and Ukraine into NATO than you heard in the Bush State Department. Trust me on that one. I don't hear it mentioned very often at all.

Again, while the Russians are certainly enjoying a certain [schadenfreude](#), if you understand German, about watching the United States be hooked into this big morass in Afghanistan, they probably are not terribly excited about a very fundamentalist Islamic government in Taliban that might then spread into Central Asia and into areas of their concern. They are probably not too crazy about that idea.

Also I think they would be very gravely concerned if Pakistan were to become destabilized and you saw nuclear weapons becoming part and parcel of a government that would be Islamic fundamentalist in nature.

Russia is very concerned about the whole Islamic business. If you just look at demographic trends, over the next 30 or 40 years, some would argue that the majority of the population of the Russian Federation may be Islamic and Muslim.

As far as the Chinese go, I don't think the Chinese are terribly worried about the military presence of NATO on their border. Afghanistan does, in fact, share a small border with China. I think, more broadly, what the Chinese are enjoying is seeing the United States spend this year, I think, \$650 billion on defense and, meanwhile, the Chinese running around the world buying up every particular aspect of mineral resources and oil they can find.

I think their view of the future is that, "As we continue to expand our holdings in dollars here in Chinese banks and continue to expand our economic influence around the globe, over time, as we move farther into the 21st century, that may have greater resonance in terms of the power equation than how many carrier battle groups or brigade combat teams you might be able to deploy."

DAVID SPEEDIE: Well! [Andrew Carnegie](#), our great benefactor and my somewhat more successful fellow countryman, talked about the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding. I think this lunch has served this purpose admirably of advancing and diffusing, courtesy of our guest here, knowledge and understanding of this highly complicated situation.

Thank you so much.

JEFFREY MCCAUSLAND: My pleasure. Thank you very much.

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