

Date: Wed, 30 Mar 2011 14:09:52 -0400

To: "Dr. Baruch Fischhoff - Chair, National Academy Committee on Improving Intelligence" <baruch@cmu.edu>, "Dr. Richard Atkinson - Chair NAS/NRC DBASSE" <rcatkinson@ucsd.edu>, "Dr. Theda Skocpol - National Academy of Sciences" <ts@wjh.harvard.edu>, "Bill Nordhaus - National Academy of Sciences" <william.nordhaus@yale.edu>, "Dr. Richard Cooper - Former Director, National Intelligence Council" <rcooper@harvard.edu>, "Dr. Robert M. Hauser - Exec. Director, DBSSAE" <hauser@ssc.wisc.edu>, "Mr. Jake Sullivan - Director, Policy Planning Staff via Ms. Marisa S. McAuliffe" <mcauliffems@state.gov>, "Dr. Richard Atkinson" <rcatkinson@ucsd.edu>, "Dr. John Mark Hansen - Dean and COSSA Executive Committee" <jhansen@uchicago.edu>, "Dr. Kenneth Prewitt - COSSA President" <kp2058@columbia.edu>, "Dr. William Press, PCAST and AAAS President-elect" <wpress@cs.utexas.edu>  
From: Lloyd Etheredge <lloyd.etheredge@policyscience.net>

**Subject: 268. Red Team Followup: From National Intelligence to Systemic Intelligence; Fwd: Pickering and Brahimi**

Dear Dr. Fischhoff, Dr. Atkinson, and Dr. Hauser:

I write to bring to your attention a remarkable Report (attached) from the Century Foundation, prepared with Lakhdar Brahimi and Thomas Pickering as co-chairs. The Report illustrates an idea, that arose earlier in the Fischhoff study process, that the concern with national intelligence investments via the DNI's \$80 billion/year should evolve to think about new paradigms of systemic intelligence and rapid learning.

At the systemic level, the issues expand to include the capacity to embody intelligence - for example, the development of professional diplomacy, policy-development networks, and statesmanship across the new G-20 (and full) international systems.

### **An Evolving Paradigm**

In an earlier period, when I directed the graduate program in international relations at Yale, I became involved with the Goheen Report to develop a strategic plan for our

national capacities for graduate and professional training in international relations. One of the ideas that I raised was expansion of the [www.apsia.org](http://www.apsia.org) network (that was the focus of the Goheen Report) to include counterpart graduate institutions in other leading countries. The vision was that, someday, the kinds of extraordinary system-level professional work that Brahim, Pickering and their task force members envision could become possible: They envision in Chapter 3 an arc of multi-tier negotiations across global and regional stakeholders and facilitators: I doubt that there is any specific link between the Goheen Report and what may be possible in their timely [Afghanistan: Negotiating Peace](#) roadmap - involving so many players and professional diplomats in this region of the world. However, what they are attempting to do - if it can be pulled off - points to the vision of building systemic capacity as the key to achieve many US foreign policy goals in the future.

### **Beyond Document-Based Wisdom**

It is not enough for ultimate wisdom to be included in a highly classified briefing that arrives on the desk of an US President. It also, probably, is not enough even for such a document to be circulated to allies. As we can recognize from the work of Tetlock and others (e.g., integrated complexity), the education, and the personal and professional growth and experiences that lead to the required level of professional diplomacy and statesmanship at all of the required points in the international system, is a much more challenging task.

I suggest that a Red Team, or a similar process, begin to work with social scientists to challenge conventional nation-state thinking and help to rebalance a portion of investments from US, and possibly other, sources. The international system, in terms used by social scientists, is now an "emergent system" with possibilities that require imagination as well as the older, fixed coefficient models. The international membership in the Brahim and Pickering panel is impressive and shows the potential for a better future that could be brought to life.

### **Planning Issues that Need to be Revisited Periodically**

The vision for statesmanship [at all of the points required for problem solving and

progress] and third-party and policy networks can extend, naturally, across other professions and institutions. It is a set of planning issues that will need to be revisited periodically as the new system emerges. Thomas Pickering has provided thoughtful leadership for "Science Diplomacy," working with Dr. Agre [now, a former President of AAAS], and more recent AAAS officers also have made a commitment to this level of strategic thinking.

Lloyd Etheredge

Dr. Lloyd S. Etheredge - Director

Government Learning Project; Fellow

World Academy of Art & Science

Policy Sciences Center

URL: [www.policyscience.net](http://www.policyscience.net)

301-365-5241 (v); [lloyd.etheredge@policyscience.net](mailto:lloyd.etheredge@policyscience.net) (email)

[The Policy Sciences Center, Inc. is a public foundation that develops and integrates knowledge and practice to advance human dignity. Its headquarters are 127 Wall St., Room 322 PO Box 208215 in New Haven, CT 06520-8215. It may be contacted at the office of its Chair, Michael Reisman ([michael.reisman@yale.edu](mailto:michael.reisman@yale.edu)), 203-432-1993. Further information about the Policy Sciences Center and its projects, Society, and journal is available at [www.policysciences.org](http://www.policysciences.org).]

# AFGHANISTAN



# AFGHANISTAN

## NEGOTIATING PEACE

The Report of The Century Foundation  
International Task Force on Afghanistan  
in Its Regional and Multilateral Dimensions

Lakhdar Brahimi and Thomas R. Pickering  
*Task Force Co-Chairs*

THE CENTURY FOUNDATION PRESS • NEW YORK

The Century Foundation conducts public policy research and analyses of economic, social, and foreign policy issues, including inequality, retirement security, election reform, media studies, homeland security, and international affairs. The foundation produces books, reports, and other publications, and convenes task forces and working groups. With offices in New York City and Washington, D.C., The Century Foundation is non-profit and nonpartisan and was founded in 1919 by Edward A. Filene.

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Bradley Abelow	Lewis B. Kaden
H. Brandt Ayers	Richard C. Leone
Alan Brinkley, <i>Chairman</i>	Alicia H. Munnell
Joseph A. Califano, Jr.	P. Michael Pitfield
Alexander Morgan Capron	John Podesta
Hodding Carter III	Richard Ravitch
Edward E. David, Jr.	Alan Sagner
Brewster C. Denny	Harvey I. Sloane, M.D.
Charles V. Hamilton	Kathleen M. Sullivan
Melissa Harris-Perry	Shirley Williams
Matina S. Horner	William Julius Wilson

Richard C. Leone, *President*

## LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGUING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

available on request from the publisher

Manufactured in the United States of America

Cover design and art: Claude Goodwin

Copyright © 2011 by The Century Foundation, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of The Century Foundation.

## FOREWORD

The NATO mission in Afghanistan, now in its tenth year, began as a response to al Qaeda's attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. For much of the past decade, the conflict was overshadowed by the much larger and more lethal struggle in Iraq. With the winding down of the large American commitment in Iraq, however, Afghanistan is again center stage; in the words of Barack Obama, the fighting there "has to be our central focus, the central front, on our battle against terrorism." While other NATO members are engaged, the United States deploys a force of nearly a hundred thousand troops, three times the total of all its partners in a broad, international coalition.

Over time, the discussion of war aims in Afghanistan has shifted from crushing al Qaeda to establishing a successful state capable of defending itself, and committed to denying a reassertion of control by the Taliban forces. The task of achieving these goals has proven difficult and discouraging. In this context, America and its allies have sought fresh ideas and new approaches to defuse the conflict and reduce the military presence in Afghanistan. The odds may be long that approaches outside official channels will bear fruit, but, on the other hand, the stakes are high and the need acute.

Stimulated by conversations with Vartan Gregorian, president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and later with the support and participation of Stephen Heintz of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the staff of The Century Foundation set about to fashion an international and multilateral effort that might add something useful to the debate. Was this just an American war, sparked and sustained by preoccupations that inadequately accounted for local realities—the charge leveled against the U.S. wars in Vietnam and Iraq? Or was this a conflict in which the region and the world had common stakes and were investing genuine effort? If it is the latter, is there a way to

achieve those goals without indefinitely continuing a long, grinding war with unforeseeable consequences?

We were fortunate to find two outstanding individuals ready to lead an international effort exploring these issues. In his long career of distinguished service to his native Algeria and then to the world community, Lakhdar Brahimi was twice called to represent the United Nations in Afghanistan—first during the Taliban regime, where he negotiated with its top leaders, and again after its ouster, when he led the international effort to support a new, more open government. Also agreeing to co-chair our international task force was Thomas R. Pickering, one of America's most respected career diplomats, who has served as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, India, and Russia, as well as undersecretary of state for political affairs when the growing Taliban–al Qaeda relationship began to prompt American and UN countermeasures. These distinguished co-chairs led a task force of seven American and eight international members with an extraordinary range of experience, who met with senior policymakers and respected analysts in a dozen countries and now have given us this important report. Jeffrey Laurenti, senior fellow and director of foreign policy programs at The Century Foundation, coordinated the work of the task force with fellow and program officer Michael Wahid Hanna. Background papers that TCF commissioned to inform the deliberations of the task force are summarized at the end of the report, which includes a link to access them on the Internet.

The task force concludes that Afghanistan's long and debilitating war is fundamentally stalemated. The Taliban are not going to be eradicated, and the Kabul government—still supported by the large majority of Afghans—is not going to be overthrown. The international community will not abandon the country due to the ongoing threat of al Qaeda. The task force argues that, to end this war with a durable compromise settlement, a complex and multi-tiered negotiating framework will be essential. The time to start that political process, it concludes, is now.

Since the September 11 attacks, The Century Foundation has engaged in a variety of efforts to develop more effective and reasoned responses than political forces have produced. For example, a team of experts led by Richard Clarke assembled a report, *Defeating the*

*Jihadists: A Blueprint for Action*. TCF also produced the first book-length volume, titled *The War on Our Freedoms: Civil Liberties in an Age of Terrorism*, underscoring the ways in which the governmental response to the attacks appeared to be encroaching upon civil liberties without enhancing the nation's security. As the invasion of Iraq became the focus of American attention and resources, TCF launched Afghanistan Watch, a project to build awareness of the “forgotten”—and far more critical—struggle.

We are particularly indebted to the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, whose generous support of this project has been essential to its success. We are also deeply grateful to Germany's Friedrich Ebert Stiftung for its close collaboration on this project, as on many other activities; the Berlin-based foundation is publishing a German-language edition of this report, and its regional offices in Kabul, Moscow, and New Delhi organized meetings of the task force with local representatives. In Pakistan, the Centre for Research and Security Studies and Talk for Peace International organized similar meetings in Islamabad, and we are grateful to Ambassador Anne Patterson and her colleagues for their efforts. We also thank Lord David Hannay for organizing consultations for the task force in London, and the Norwegian foreign ministry for helping to underwrite a Central Asian regional consultation for the task force in Tajikistan. Finally, we very much appreciate the support of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and its head, Staffan de Mistura, in facilitating wide-ranging meetings of the task force in two successive visits to Afghanistan.

The resolution of Afghanistan's multiple conflicts will not be easy. Reaching—much less implementing—a negotiated settlement will take time, as this international task force argues. But the alternative is a protracted and interminable war that neither Afghans nor Americans nor Pakistanis nor Europeans nor anyone else will want or can afford. We have in this report a road map to escape the deadly cul-de-sac. We hope America's leaders, and the world's, will act on it.

Richard C. Leone, *President*  
THE CENTURY FOUNDATION



# CONTENTS

FOREWORD <i>by Richard C. Leone</i>	v
MEMBERS OF THE TASK FORCE	xi
PREFACE	xv
MAP OF CENTRAL ASIA	xviii
MAP OF AFGHANISTAN	xix
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE	13
CHAPTER 1. WHAT END IN SIGHT?	15
CHAPTER 2. THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A SETTLEMENT	27
CHAPTER 3. MOVING INTO A POLITICAL PROCESS	49
SUMMARY OF TASK FORCE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	75
NOTES	81
ABOUT THE TASK FORCE MEMBERS	95
DESCRIPTIONS OF THE BACKGROUND PAPERS	101



**MEMBERS OF THE CENTURY FOUNDATION  
INTERNATIONAL TASK FORCE ON  
AFGHANISTAN IN ITS REGIONAL AND  
MULTILATERAL DIMENSIONS**

**LAKHDAR BRAHIMI**, *Task Force Co-Chair*

Board Member, International Crisis Group; Former United Nations  
Special Representative for Afghanistan

**THOMAS R. PICKERING**, *Task Force Co-Chair*

Co-Chair, International Crisis Group; Former United States Under-  
secretary of State for Political Affairs

**INTERNATIONAL**

**HIKMET ÇETIN**

Former Foreign Minister, Turkey; Former NATO Senior Civilian  
Representative in Afghanistan

**JEAN-MARIE GUÉHENNO**

Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy, Brookings Institution/Center for Inter-  
national Cooperation (New York University); Former UN Under-  
Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations

**IGOR SERGEYEVICH IVANOV**

Professor, Moscow State Institute of International Relations; Former  
Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation

**WALTER KOLBOW**

Former Deputy Minister of Defense, Germany

**SADAKO OGATA**

President, Japanese International Cooperation Agency; Former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

**FRANCESC VENDRELL**

Former Special Representative of the European Union for Afghanistan; Former Personal Representative of the (UN) Secretary-General for Afghanistan

**WANG YINGFAN**

Former Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations; Former Vice-Chair, Foreign Affairs Committee, National People's Congress

**UNITED STATES****BARBARA K. BODINE**

Diplomat in Residence, Lecturer of Public Affairs, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs; Former United States Ambassador to Yemen

**STEVE COLL**

President, New America Foundation; Staff Writer, the *New Yorker*

**JAMES DOBBINS**

Director, International Security and Defense Policy Center, National Security Research Division, RAND; Former United States Special Envoy for Afghanistan

**ROBERT FINN**

Senior Scholar, Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination, Princeton University; Former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan

**LAWRENCE J. KORB**

Senior Fellow, Center for American Progress; Former Assistant Secretary of Defense (1981–85)

**JAMES SHINN**

Visiting Lecturer, Keller Center for Innovation in Engineering Education, Princeton University; Former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian/Pacific Security Affairs (2007–09)



## PREFACE

Each of us, on receiving an invitation from The Century Foundation to become part of an international task force on Afghanistan, wondered whether such a group really could contribute to an end to violence and instability there. After decades of strife that has ravaged that landlocked country in the center of Asia—and then spread far beyond Afghanistan to distant lands—could anyone locate enough resolve and convergence of purpose in the international community to shut down at last this thirty years war?

As the task force took shape, our hopes that we could make a modest contribution rose. The fifteen men and women who have joined together in this task force have served their nations or the international community in diplomacy and defense, statecraft and politics, war-fighting and peace-keeping. Some in our group have helped provide relief to millions of refugees—including millions of Afghans—and overseen vast programs of development and reconstruction. Others have pierced veils of deceit and self-deception to analyze and report on the region's complex problems frankly and freshly. Members have represented the United Nations, the European Union, and the North Atlantic Alliance in Afghanistan. They have painstakingly worked to forge or execute complex agreements to end murderous conflicts that seemed equally intractable—in places as far-flung as Cambodia, Central America, central Africa, the Middle East, and the former Yugoslavia.

As our effort began, there was excitement in some policy circles that recasting military strategy for counterinsurgency could regain a victory that had seemed secured just half a decade before and then disappointingly unraveled. In others, there was despair that anything could be achieved in Afghanistan, and an anxious eying of the exits by those resigned to abandoning the country to another round of

internecine warfare or obscurantist rule—or most probably both. Neither, we thought, had it quite right.

To inform our debate, we have undertaken wide-ranging consultations with policymakers and independent analysts in leading capitals in Europe, Asia, and North America, as well as in Central and South Asia. We have met with Afghans on all sides—senior Kabul officials, political opposition, civil society, and persons intimately linked to the insurgency as well. And we have drawn on a wide range of insightful policy papers by experts from a half-dozen countries and at least as many perspectives, enriching our understanding. These papers, commissioned by The Century Foundation, have explored for us the organization and priorities of the Taliban insurgency; the concerns of the key Afghan and international stakeholders in the conflict; militancy in the Pakistani borderlands; the Indian-Pakistani backdrop and the Central Asian dimensions; women’s changing roles in Afghan life; and possibilities for peace-building from the local level in Afghan society.

We conclude, as this report details, that the long, grinding war, and the prospect of its indefinite continuation, have eroded the determination of all parties, both Afghan and external, to prolong the struggle in hopes of achieving their maximalist goals. The realization is growing on all sides that “victory” in Afghanistan is ephemeral, simply a pause before another renewal of war. Thus we see real possibilities for fruitful negotiation even in the arid political climate of South and Central Asia.

In this report we lay out, first, our understanding of the current military and political balance inside Afghanistan and the developing stalemate that should make a political settlement a possibility—in short, why negotiations make sense for all sides, now rather than later. We then turn to consideration of the contentious issues that Afghans and internationals may be expected to bring to the negotiating table, and suggest how the international community might seek to support and sustain an Afghan political settlement. We proceed then to an exploration of the “how”—our suggestions for how a political process would unfold, eventually superseding the battlefield.

We recognize that, in any complex political process, it is often easier for things to go wrong than go right. When passions and fervor have been mobilized for war, any compromise risks denunciation as

betrayal. We have seen in too many places the consequences when political leaders quaver for fear of intransigent constituents—a deadly conflict drags on and on, sucking more lives and lost hopes into its maw.

The Hadith records a relevant instruction of the Prophet Muhammad: “Shall I inform you of something more excellent than fasting, prayer and charity? It is putting things right between people, making peace between people and restoring good relations between people.” Or, as was more epigrammatically proclaimed six centuries before, “Blessed are the peacemakers”—for making peace, perhaps as much as fighting war, requires courage.



Credit: iStockphoto/Zorani



Credit: iStockphoto/Sambrogio



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## CHAPTER 1. WHAT END IN SIGHT?

Afghanistan has been at war for more than thirty years, and for nearly a decade, the international community has supported the country's political, social, and economic reconstruction—and opposed the return to power of the Taliban. Afghans have seen many improvements over that decade, yet the resurgence of the Taliban across much of the country underscores that they are undeniably a force in Afghan society whose exclusion entails a very high cost. A majority of the Afghan people seem anxious for the contending factions to achieve a negotiated end to the war.

Peace is possible in Afghanistan, if Afghans on all sides can overcome their deep divisions and if the international community does not waver or fragment—just as international unity of purpose has contained and then resolved such other intractable conflicts as Cambodia, Mozambique, El Salvador, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. For Afghans and the international community alike, 2011 can be the year when allies and adversaries reach the strategic conclusion that this war must end in a compromise peace, and commence the serious negotiations that will be required to achieve it.

### SETTLING INTO STALEMATE

While the fighting in Afghanistan has ramped up to new heights of intensity, the international community seems clearly to recognize that the war in Afghanistan will have a political rather than military solution. And, despite proclamations of inevitable victory from

Taliban leaders, there are signs of realization among Taliban that their progress in recent years has provoked sufficient counterforce to contain it. Neither side can expect to vanquish the other militarily in the foreseeable future. This growing sense of stalemate helps to set the stage for the beginning of a political phase to conclude the conflict.

## PRESSURES OFF THE BATTLEFIELD

There is deepening weariness with the war among the Afghan public; even the most committed opponents of the Taliban among Afghans have to calculate that indefinite prolongation of the war puts their security at risk. Public support in Western countries for maintaining troops in Afghanistan to protect the government is declining. Some governments are finding the financial cost of their deployments increasingly burdensome. For their part, the Taliban have encountered increasing resistance from the population in areas beyond their most dedicated base when they have sought to re-impose the stern morality code of emirate days. Moreover, the improved living standards that international aid has brought to many Afghans contrasts sharply with those under Taliban rule. Taliban leaders are also feeling pressure to explore a negotiating track from the new ambivalence that many detect in Pakistan.

## UNDERSTANDING RECONCILIATION

Securing defections of insurgents or trying to co-opt senior-level Taliban to join the Kabul regime is unlikely to be sufficient to bring peace; reconciliation with the insurgents will eventually have to involve creating a broader political framework to end the war. Admittedly, though, signaling a willingness to negotiate might be perceived by some as undermining a message of determination and strength that is an important element of a military campaign. All sides may be wary of sending signals that might be construed as evidence of weakness, even when balanced by demands for major concessions from the other side.

## THE RIGHT TIME?

While some counsel holding back from negotiations until military momentum is clearly and decisively in their favor, we believe the best moment to start a political process toward reconciliation is now. For the government's allies, the optimal window would seem to be before their capacities peak, not when force levels have commenced a downward trajectory. For the insurgency, the prospects for negotiating a share of national power are not likely to become appreciably brighter by waiting until 2014. On the contrary, the prospect that the Americans could find a way to reduce the size of their force deployment and yet maintain force lethality for years to come suggests that perhaps the only way they can get the Americans truly out is with a negotiated settlement. For the United States, a negotiating process allows it to shape the ultimate political outcomes with more confidence than by betting on a prolonged and inconclusive war.

For all sides, the longer negotiations are delayed, the higher the price is likely to be for restoring peace at the end. While negotiations will involve difficult trade-offs and priority-setting, a substantive agreement that would end the war in a way acceptable to all parties is possible. The sooner a peace process starts, the better the odds that a genuine peace can be reached well ahead of 2014.

## CHAPTER 2. BUILDING BLOCKS OF A SETTLEMENT

A peace settlement will have to address two broad sets of issues: at the national level, a political order broadly acceptable to Afghans; and at the international level, the individual security interests of various international stakeholders as well as the shared global security concerns of all. The Afghans themselves will have the responsibility to reach compromises on the internal issues, which may be expected to include:

- ▲ *Division of power.* At the heart of this conflict, as in so many others, is the contest for power, both at the center and in the provinces. Control of the ministries of defense, interior, and perhaps also education and justice, may well be particularly sensitive.
- ▲ *Political order.* While the Taliban never saw a need for a constitution or elections during their rule, in a negotiated settlement they may desire rules that guarantee them political space and the opportunity to contend for greater power. The current constitution will likely end up as the point of departure in hammering out a revamped political system.
- ▲ *Administrative authority.* With control over government appointments firmly in the president's hands under the current constitutional regime, the Taliban will want to ensure that the key provincial posts awarded to them in a settlement cannot be revoked at will by the president—whether Hamid Karzai or a successor. Perhaps a new mechanism at the center, or some devolution of authority for selection of governors, may be devised; perhaps budgetary authority for currently elected but powerless provincial councils could end up on the negotiating table.
- ▲ *Presidential power and democracy.* Though the Taliban have never shown interest in the relative merits of presidential or parliamentary regimes, or in democracy itself, acceptance of elections as the basis for allocating power is likely to be a key

element of a power-sharing agreement—and reforming the electoral system will likely present contentious issues.

- ▲ ***Islam as basic law.*** While the 2004 constitution already deeply embeds Islam in the country's governance, the Taliban may press for tighter control, in the name of Sharia, over dress and behavior, and for enhanced roles for clerics or their nominees in politics and justice, that other Afghans would resist.
- ▲ ***Human rights and rights of women.*** Defense of the constitution's guarantees of human rights, and particularly the rights of women, against the abuses associated with Taliban rule is likely to be a major point of contention.
- ▲ ***Justice and accountability.*** Many Afghans—though apparently not the government or the Taliban—continue to press for bringing to justice the perpetrators of war atrocities over recent decades; one available avenue, the International Criminal Court, only has jurisdiction over crimes since Afghanistan's accession to the Rome Statute in 2003.
- ▲ ***Afghan security forces.*** Of particular sensitivity will be control of the Afghan National Army and the national police; the Taliban would want to ensure that their former Northern Alliance foes do not control the state's coercive power. Their fighters' incorporation into the police or other security forces might prove contentious.

The international community has serious security interests in how a settlement positions Afghanistan vis-à-vis its neighbors, while international resources will be crucial to sustaining the peace—which should be contingent on Afghans honoring the accord:

- ▲ ***Economic development.*** Afghanistan's own economy remains too small to cover the country's peacetime requirements, yet broadly shared economic and social development is crucial to securing the stabilization of Afghanistan. A wider range of donors, including from the region, will need to make firm aid commitments.

- ▲ ***Multilateral funding.*** Renewed commitment of the multilateral development agencies, especially the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, will be crucial for long-term, reliable financing.
- ▲ ***Natural resources.*** Afghanistan's biggest near-term revenue prospects lie in mining its mineral deposits. The international community should assist Afghanistan in negotiating utilization agreements and support its establishment of a fair and open legal framework for natural resource revenues.
- ▲ ***Capacity-building and education.*** The international community will need to start supporting long-neglected secondary, vocational, and university education, which is critical to developing Afghans' competencies for effective business management, public administration, schools, and health.
- ▲ ***Regional economy.*** A regional border control and trade transit agreement should be considered as part of, or parallel to, an Afghan peace settlement.

The international security dimensions of the Afghan peace settlement will need, *inter alia*, to include the following:

- ▲ ***Severance of all Taliban relations with al Qaeda and similar groups.*** An accord must include a verifiable severing of Taliban ties with al Qaeda and guarantees that Afghanistan will never again shelter transnational terrorists, with possible UN Security Council measures to support counterterrorism capability during a transition period.
- ▲ ***Containing the threat of narcotics.*** The settlement will need to ensure vigorous anti-narcotics efforts by Afghan authorities with close international assistance and cooperation, with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime empowered to monitor closely Afghan narcotic production and trafficking and certify the adequacy of that cooperative effort.

- ▲ *Withdrawal of foreign forces.* This is the key demand of the insurgency, and the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)—and particularly U.S. troops—will almost certainly be an essential component of the settlement. Their phase-out will be welcomed by most governments in the region.
- ▲ *Peacekeeping deployment.* The presence of UN peacekeepers has been an important component of many peace accords, providing reassurance to the parties, and a political settlement in Afghanistan is likely to require a UN monitoring and peacekeeping presence to support the implementation of the settlement. Neither a belligerent party to the current conflict, nor states bordering Afghanistan, should be part of the force; Muslim countries in particular should be encouraged to participate.
- ▲ *Afghanistan's future status in the region.* Given the security anxieties of some of its larger neighbors, a likely cornerstone of the international settlement may be a precisely negotiated guarantee of Afghanistan's "nonalignment" with regard to its neighbors, and perhaps with any state. Security assurances by all states in the region, both "negative" and "positive," should be endorsed by the UN Security Council.

## CHAPTER 3. MOVING INTO A POLITICAL PROCESS

Tentative contacts involving the government and the insurgents suggest an interest in a political process among at least some sections of the insurgency, though deep skepticism remains about the prospects for a negotiated solution to the war. An effort to establish a political process—with a framework to capitalize on openings, ensure coherence, focus contacts, and organize regional diplomatic efforts—can at least clarify practicable options.

### AN EXPLORATORY PHASE

Perhaps the most promising option for establishing a political process would be through an internationally designated facilitator who could broach sensitive issues without undermining the relevant players' respective negotiating positions. A facilitator might be an individual, a team, a state or group of states, an international organization, or some combination of these. Through discreet contacts and discussions with those involved in the conflict or with stakes in its outcome, a facilitator could determine whether there is enough potential convergence among the various parties, internal and international, to sustain serious negotiations on a political settlement. The United Nations has the greatest institutional experience in providing such a facilitating role, and appointment by the UN secretary-general of a representative to head this facilitative phase would be the best option for undertaking an exploratory engagement.

### A NEGOTIATING PROCESS

The facilitator should report to the UN secretary-general and perhaps the UN Security Council on an ad hoc basis until other structures are in place. Because there are so many international stakeholders, the facilitator will then need to structure a negotiating process that can include them when the concerns most important to them are considered. A standing international conference could provide

formal scaffolding for a multi-tiered negotiating process. While the conference might convene in plenary only to launch the negotiating process and later to ratify its results, it could provide a regular diplomatic venue, acceptable and reasonably convenient to all the parties, for their authorized negotiators.

A primary nexus from the start will be the Afghan parties, who must resolve the core internal divisions; international supporters may be helpful from the sidelines. The neighbors in the region, and the broader international community, will be more directly engaged in parallel tracks on regional security, economic integration, and post-conflict peacekeeping arrangements as the Afghans show progress on their postwar government.

## BEYOND PRECONDITIONS

Both sides have set preconditions for talking to their foes that may reflect the concerns of highest priority to them, but which should no longer prevent their talking to each other. Fulfillment of each specific point should be their goals in a political settlement.

## AFGHAN GOVERNMENT PREPARATIONS

Managing a complex political negotiation requires a capable and representative negotiating team with strong administrative support, which the Afghan government does not yet have. Moreover, President Karzai has a heterogeneous constituency whose cohesiveness will be challenged by the course of negotiations, given many Afghans' bitter experience of Taliban rule. His High Peace Council could serve as a platform to open a national dialogue on goals of any negotiations with the insurgency and the future shape of the Afghan political order.

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) has credibility with the Afghan public and is uniquely positioned to support and encourage countrywide debate in Afghan society on the goals of eventual negotiations. UNAMA could initiate or support district and provincial level dialogue on the substance of negotiations and

the concerns of various communities about their outcome, including through the Provincial Peace and Reintegration Committees.

## TALIBAN ENGAGEMENT

For a political process to go beyond back-channel discussions, the Taliban will need to put forward credible interlocutors who can speak for the insurgency and its commander networks. The Quetta Shura to all appearances is still the central node of authority within the insurgency. While figures in the Haqqani network have expressed their interests in a political process, they also emphasize fealty to the Quetta Shura. Political figures connected to Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's smaller Hezb-i-Islami organization have seemed more disposed to an alternative political path to end the insurgency. The facilitator heading a political process would likely be engaged with various leadership levels and groups within the insurgency, and through these contacts may clarify who can speak for the Taliban.

Taliban figures who profess to favor a political track would like the international community to take a series of steps to create a more favorable climate for talks, such as removal of individuals from UN sanctions list and release of detainees. Many in the international community see these instead as an incentive to completing a settlement and a reward for demonstrated behavior.

## CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES

The facilitator or the parties themselves may find it useful to strengthen the credibility of an emerging peace settlement through confidence-building measures that help demonstrate the viability of peace to their more hard-line supporters. Potential options might include early exploration of local ceasefires and the facilitation of humanitarian access. Other reciprocal de-escalatory measures might involve an end to ISAF targeting of Taliban field commanders and shadow governors in exchange for an end to Taliban improvised explosive device (IED) attacks against ISAF and targeting of Afghan government officials. Selective sanctions de-listing and detainee releases may enter the mix of confidence-building measures.

## IMPROVING AFGHAN GOVERNANCE

Improving governance, limiting corruption, and enhancing the rule of law will be urgent tasks for the government of Afghanistan while a political process is under way. Continued failure to act on them can only undermine its base. ISAF and the international community, too, have an interest in supporting credible reform measures ahead of negotiations, including reform of their own lax reliance on private contractors.

## PAKISTAN'S ROLE

Pakistan's leadership has affirmed its willingness to participate in a political resolution to the conflict and emphasized its ability to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table and influence their decision-making. Without its active involvement, such a process is unlikely to succeed, though Islamabad should not be understood to speak for the Taliban. Its official relations with Afghanistan are complicated by the continuing dispute over the Durand Line, by the presence of Taliban safe havens in Pakistan, and by Pakistani perception of some senior Afghan officials' hostility to Pakistan. Pakistani officials claim to view their security interests in Afghanistan primarily with reference to India. Pakistan may be expected to use its influence over the Taliban as leverage to advance its own security interests as part of a political settlement.

## OTHER REGIONAL PARTIES

Fearing renewed safe havens and training facilities for terrorist groups that attack India, New Delhi remains wary of a political settlement that appears to give international legitimacy and some share of power in Kabul to the Taliban. Still, India could better protect its historic ties, economic links, and legitimate security interests in Afghanistan through a political settlement than by again supporting anti-Taliban Afghan factions in a continuing Afghan conflict after ISAF phases out. Iran's interests in keeping the Taliban from power in Afghanistan are complicated by its enmity with the United States,

but the two countries have convergent concerns about Afghanistan's future and they should find common ground for cooperation in suppressing narcotics trafficking and in supporting a carefully negotiated political role for the insurgency. China's long-time close relations with Pakistan could be an asset to the facilitator in encouraging progress toward a settlement. The Central Asian states, as well as Russia, will need a settlement that includes provisions to safeguard their borders against penetration by jihadi fighters and drug traffickers.

## THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES

The United States, which together with its NATO allies continues to provide ISAF's vital support, is the essential interlocutor from the international community in charting a path toward the conflict's resolution. It will need to take an active role in all the stages of the negotiating process—from the multilateral consultations on appointment of a facilitator, to convincing reluctant Afghan leaders to proceed down a negotiating path, to working with the facilitator to find solutions to break apparent deadlocks. It will have to maintain ongoing dialogue during the negotiating process with all the international actors, as it has patiently done with a deeply conflicted Pakistan, and as it must also do with Iran.

# REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE



## Chapter 1

### WHAT END IN SIGHT?

Afghanistan has been at war for more than thirty years, and most Afghans yearn for peace. While Afghans themselves have primary responsibility for ending their resort to violence to serve their political ends, the presence of large American and NATO deployments, a United Nations assistance mission, and reconstruction programs funded by dozens of countries underscore the conflict's international dimension. The international community now must put its collective shoulder to the wheel in search of a political solution to end Afghanistan's chronic strife.

The conflicts that have shattered this once-peaceful country bubbled up from within, but they became intertwined with broader strategic interests. First it was the Cold War, with the Soviet military intervention, and a resulting insurgency supported by the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, as well as Iran and others. After the withdrawal of Soviet troops and, subsequently, of American supplies, Pakistan became the most influential power in Afghanistan, through support first to mujahideen factions and later to the Taliban. They had largely defeated, and believed themselves on the verge of completely eliminating, a rival alliance of militia leaders actively backed by other states in the wider region, when the murderous attacks of September 11, 2001, dramatically changed the situation.

As it tightened its ties to al Qaeda, the Taliban regime met with intensifying opposition from the international community, from non-recognition to sanctions to the American intervention that brought it down after al Qaeda's attacks of September 11. For nearly a decade, the international community has supported Afghanistan's political, social, and economic reconstruction and opposed the return to power in Kabul of the Taliban.

International support and the Afghans' own commitment to their country's development have nurtured the still-fragile political and administrative institutions of the current Islamic republic. On the other hand, the resurgence of the Taliban across much of the country underscores that they are undeniably a force in Afghan society whose exclusion entails a very high cost. A majority of the Afghan people, despite the improvements they have seen over the past decade, seem anxious for the contending factions to achieve a negotiated end to the war.

After more than two decades of civil war, during which no faction has been able to achieve decisive and lasting victory, after nearly ten years of U.S. and NATO military intervention, Afghanistan is again at a fork in the road.

Peace is possible in Afghanistan, if Afghans on all sides can overcome their deep divisions, if the international community does not waver or fragment, and if all learn the lessons from the mistakes and failures of the past ten years. We have seen how the international community's unity of purpose in the past has contained and then resolved intractable conflicts—Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique, and the former Yugoslavia are but a few. In some cases, the international community has had to sustain a long-term engagement to maintain the peace, as in Bosnia-Herzegovina; in others, democratic development has been disappointing. But the wars in all of them are over, and no one wants to resume them.

For Afghans and the international community alike, 2011 can be the year when allies and adversaries reach the strategic conclusion that this war must end in a compromise peace, and commence the serious negotiations that will be required to achieve it.

## SETTLING INTO STALEMATE

Even as the discussion of peace talks has grown over the past year, the war has ramped up to new heights of intensity and numbers of casualties. In major tests of their counterinsurgency strategy, American military commanders have used their increased troop levels to launch large-scale campaigns in Marja and Kandahar aimed at disrupting the Taliban's consolidation of power across much of southern Afghanistan. The Taliban have widened the reach of their attacks into non-Pashtun areas

of the north previously thought to be peaceful and secure. They escalated the number of their attacks in 2010 by 64 percent over the previous year.<sup>1</sup> A growing number of civilians are the victims of the Taliban terror campaign. American drone attacks and special operations strikes have taken a growing toll on insurgents. Three hundred mid-level Taliban commanders and shadow governors are reported to have been killed in 2010. The numbers of combatant casualties are going up on both sides, even as civilian casualties resulting from International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operations reportedly decline.<sup>2</sup>

The present effort—widely understood as a strategy intended “to break the Taliban’s will, to divide the movement, and to settle with as many leaders as are willing to deal”<sup>3</sup>—gives hope to those who believe that “victory is attainable—if the troops and their civilian counterparts are given time to complete their mission.”<sup>4</sup> They believe the longstanding strategy of Kabul’s allies for defeating the insurgency may finally be poised to succeed.

However, ranking American and allied officials now openly acknowledge the need to broaden the approach from military to political action. Britain’s senior military chief warned as early as 2007 against the “common misperception that the issues in Afghanistan... can be dealt with by military means,” explaining that “these problems can only be resolved politically.” The American secretary of defense told the U.S. Senate in early 2009 that “there is no purely military solution in Afghanistan.” The senior commander of ISAF, also an American, insisted in 2010 that “military action is absolutely necessary, but it is not sufficient.” The international community clearly seems to be coming to the conclusion that war in Afghanistan will not end with one side’s military victory over the other. As the U.S. secretary of state observed in early 2011, “We will never kill enough insurgents to end this war outright.”<sup>5</sup> The current transition plan of ISAF’s Western troop contributors for returning security responsibility to Afghan hands by 2014 tacitly assumes that, after most international forces have departed, the Afghan government would still face a continuing and open-ended insurgency.

“We will never kill  
enough insurgents to  
end this war out-  
right.”

— HILLARY CLINTON

Meanwhile, despite proclamations of inevitable victory from Taliban leaders in Pakistan, some former Taliban privately seem to accept that its progress in recent years has provoked sufficient counterforce to contain it. This makes the prospect of a return to the pre-December 2001 regime increasingly remote. The Islamic republic that emerged from the Bonn process has delivered some tangible economic and social improvements. It is re-building long-shattered national institutions across ethnic and local loyalties. It is developing a sizable army that aspires to professional standards and that, despite problematical ethnic imbalance in its officer corps, appears to enjoy the respect of much of the Afghan public.

Taliban forces are sustaining punishing blows that appear to be decimating their mid-level leadership, with the risk to the movement of local commanders becoming less responsive to any central leadership and devolving into autonomous, locally based militias. The lock they had regained over Pashtun areas in the south and east of the country has been disrupted, at least in the short term, by intensified U.S.-led military operations. Moreover, NATO's commitment at its November 2010 summit in Lisbon to continued military support

Neither side can expect to vanquish the other militarily in the foreseeable future.

of the Afghan government through 2014—and Vice President Joseph Biden's assurance that his country's forces could remain longer, if desired by Kabul—extends the potential time horizon of the war. The alliance between the government and the forces deployed by NATO remains a formidable obstacle to any prospect of an outright Taliban victory.

This suggests clearly that the war in Afghanistan may already be settling into a stalemate: neither ISAF nor the Afghan government is likely ever to subdue the insurgency in the Pashtun heartland or indeed in other areas of the country where the insurgency is spreading. But the Taliban cannot expect to win control over major cities or the northern half of the country. Neither side can expect to vanquish the other militarily in the foreseeable future. This growing sense of stalemate helps to set the stage for the beginning of a political phase of the conflict.

## PRESSURES OFF THE BATTLEFIELD

The uncertainties of the battlefield are having an impact on the political realities, which in turn may impact the battlefield.

One of those realities is the weariness of the Afghan public. We note that, even discounting for the difficulty of reliably quantifying public sentiment in a country like Afghanistan, an overwhelming share of Afghan respondents—83 percent in a respected 2010 survey—wants to see negotiations between the government and the insurgency.<sup>6</sup> Nationwide, opposition to the American military presence has risen sharply since 2006, though a substantial majority of respondents still welcome that presence.<sup>7</sup> In the battleground provinces of Helmand and Kandahar, however—largely Pashtun-populated areas where the Taliban's grip has been tightest—researchers in the summer of 2010 found overwhelming majorities of men surveyed insisting that cooperation with foreign forces is wrong. They apparently reject NATO claims to be “protecting” the local population and believe that the foreigners disrespect their religion and tradition.<sup>8</sup> Hostility to the international forces appears to be less pronounced in areas where they perform as peacekeepers rather than combatants, such as in Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif—ethnically heterogeneous areas where the influence of the Taliban is much weaker.

Many of the most influential figures active in the Kabul political system were formerly leaders of the Northern Alliance in its battles with the Taliban. They secured their positions of power when the United States joined them in their struggle against the Taliban, armed and funded them, and for all practical purposes gave them the opportunity to seize near total control of the country. They consequently were in a dominant position at the 2001 Bonn conference. They understandably are among the most adamant in opposing accommodation of the insurgency—which President Hamid Karzai seemed to acknowledge in appointing the former head of the alliance, Burnahaddin Rabbani, as president of his High Peace Council in 2010. But they too are facing pressures; they are keenly aware that their position is no longer secure, given the brittleness of the Afghan government and the expansion of the insurgency over the past five years. Some may benefit from a war that leaves them in control of half the country and perhaps, for a few, in positions to tap into the resource flows funding the war.

Sparring between  
Kabul officials and  
allied governments  
only aggravates the  
already declining  
support among  
Western publics....

But an ongoing Taliban campaign of attacks and assassinations does put their personal security at risk. Unpredictability threatens their authority and networks of patronage.

Although President Karzai has twice won election with substantial though shrinking pluralities, his government's seeming incapacity to provide good governance, render justice, and effectively fight corruption have sparked growing disaffection. This is a factor—especially reinforced by Taliban's intimidation

campaigns—that partly explains the dramatic decline in voter turnout in recent years from the levels recorded in the first hopeful elections of the Islamic republic. The increasingly hard-edged pressure from the Karzai government's international supporters for greater responsiveness in addressing these concerns is placing strains on the partnership between the government and its international backers, in particular the Western countries providing vital military as well as financial assistance.

The sparring between Kabul officials and allied governments only aggravates the already declining support among Western publics for sustaining their security assistance. Among Europe's largest troop contributors, according to the annual transnational survey underwritten by the German Marshall Fund, the share of citizens voicing optimism about stabilizing Afghanistan in a single year slid 3 percentage points in Britain (to 34 percent), 11 points in Italy (to 28 percent), 12 points in France (to 18 percent), and 13 points in Germany (to 10 percent). Across the European Union, 64 percent in 2010 called for their country's troop contingents in Afghanistan to be reduced or entirely withdrawn—up from 57 percent the year before.<sup>9</sup>

In the United States, competing surveys in 2010 found 58 percent of respondents opposed to the war in Afghanistan, even as a majority agreed a Taliban return to power would be a "very serious threat" to American national security. Sixty percent told pollsters in

October that the war is a lost cause; three-quarters are convinced the war is stalemated, with “neither side” winning. Only a quarter would leave U.S. troops in Afghanistan for “as long as it takes” to fulfill the mission.

Not to be completely discounted is the financial pressure of the military deployments on national treasuries at a time of sharp economic retrenchment following the world economic crisis that began in 2008. The political debate in all the NATO countries with troops on the ground is intensified by the war’s cost to the exchequer while domestic needs are slighted—Britain’s current deployment costs an annual \$6.6 billion, Canada’s \$1.7 billion, Germany’s \$1.4 billion, and Italy’s \$1 billion. These numbers, of course, are dwarfed by U.S. annual outlays—reaching \$119 billion in the current year.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, the insurgency is also facing its own political pressures. The Taliban never accepted defeat in 2001 and were determined to regroup, reorganize, and fight again. They have done so to surprising effect, with apparent support from some in the Pakistani intelligence services. Their initial successes in 2006–08 were such that they believed their hopes of restoring the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, purely and simply, were within grasp. The new U.S. and NATO military strategy has most likely demonstrated to the Taliban that their optimism was premature. As they have expanded their reach beyond their most dedicated base—where they can claim the mantle of Pashtun nationalism—Taliban commanders and officials have increasingly encountered sharp resistance from the population when they have sought to re-impose the stern morality code of emirate days. The ban on music, for instance, was so unpopular that Mullah Omar was forced to issue a fatwa giving local field commanders discretion on enforcing the emirate’s social edicts—and most have opted for a relatively relaxed attitude.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, international assistance programs, even if they have often been inefficient, have helped raise living standards and expectations in much of the country, in stark contrast with the preceding two decades. With a competing regime in Kabul also appealing to Afghans through economic gains, Taliban leaders are under pressure to find an accommodation with public wishes.

Taliban leaders are also feeling pressure to explore a negotiating track because of the new ambivalence that many detect in Pakistan.

While the Pakistani military continues to have a decisive role on all matters pertaining to Afghanistan, the civilian leadership of Pakistan is openly hostile to the Taliban insurgencies of both countries, insisting that “both are creating havoc.”<sup>12</sup> The signals that Pakistani officials sent in 2010 about their potential helpfulness in bringing insurgent leaders to the negotiating table—coupled with an insistence on being consulted in any talks, enforced by arrests of senior Taliban who might talk with Karzai’s government without Pakistani clearance—have created additional uncertainty for the Taliban on Pakistan’s long-term intentions. This is an uncertainty that has become a more pressing threat, with U.S. attacks directly on Taliban targets in Pakistan and pressures on the Pakistani government to suppress militants on its territory.

Essentially, increasing uncertainty about the future, whether it is experienced in Kabul, Islamabad, Quetta, or Western capitals, combined with a likely stalemate in military operations, make a clarification of the longer-term intentions of key stakeholders all the more urgent.

## UNDERSTANDING RECONCILIATION

There remains considerable ambivalence in NATO capitals about the kind of political process and political solution to which the military efforts against the insurgency are supposed to lead.

Reintegration—understood as the effort to bring Taliban defectors, individually or in small groups, out of the insurgency and back into “normal” society, with jobs, income, and security—is an important tactical tool in a military campaign, but is not in itself a political strategy. Until recently, the program was erratically resourced and implemented; recent donor investment in strengthening the program has coincided with a marked downturn in the number of Taliban fighters volunteering to defect.<sup>13</sup> Reintegration programs are actually more successful when they are implemented after rather than before a peace agreement. Their goal then changes, as they no longer target “defectors,” but aim at reintegrating into civilian life demobilized former combatants and providing them with an alternative future. To work most effectively, they require a peaceful environment and a

viable economic development strategy. Afghanistan has not reached that stage yet.

Reconciliation is altogether a different concept: it assumes one ends the war by reconciling bitterly opposed senior leaders to working with each other. We believe that securing defections of insurgents or trying to co-opt senior-level commanders is unlikely to be sufficient to bring peace, and that reconciliation with the Taliban—if possible at all—will eventually have to involve creating a broader political framework to end the war. But in a fluid situation where reporting lines are uncertain, the distinction between reconciliation and reintegration of defectors may not always be so clear.<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, in the midst of a war, signaling a willingness to negotiate can undermine a message of determination and strength that is an important element of a military campaign. All sides will be wary of sending such signals, or fearful of being manipulated in the process. If anything, parties sometimes compensate by seeking bedrock concessions from the other side as preconditions for talking (rather than, more realistically, as negotiating goals).<sup>15</sup> Timing and the clarity of political intent are in that respect of crucial importance.

## THE RIGHT TIME?

When is the best moment to signal readiness to negotiate an end to the conflict? In 2001, there was little interest in, and even less political room for, reaching out to the Taliban movement: it had, after all, been routed after having allowed al Qaeda to use Afghanistan as a base from which to prepare and direct global terrorist operations and particularly the September 11 attack on the United States. The declared Taliban determination to fight on was carelessly dismissed. Virtually no effort was made after the Bonn conference to reach out either to their leadership or to their rank and file. By 2011, many in the international community have a different concern—that any sign of political engagement with the Taliban now might be read as adding momentum to their resurgence. According to that logic, it would be important to delay any substantive political engagement until the momentum of the insurgency has been clearly broken.

The longer negotiations are delayed, the higher the price is likely to be for restoring peace at the end.

This task force argues that the best moment to start putting together a genuine policy of reconciliation is now. For the defenders of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, whose forces are still being augmented with increasingly sophisticated targeting and operational capabilities, the optimal window would seem to be before their capacities peak, not when force levels have commenced a downward trajectory and the insurgency can confidently assume that the worst is over.

For the insurgency, the prospects for negotiating a share of national power are not likely to become appreciably brighter by waiting till 2014: the toll inflicted on the insurgency by military operations is real and growing, the future evolution of Pakistan is uncertain, and it is far from assured that political dynamics in Kabul would over time lead to a government more willing to engage in negotiations. Fragmentation in the insurgency and a resurgence of those elements of the Northern Alliance most opposed to a negotiated settlement might result in another protracted civil war if no peace agreement has been reached by 2014. Moreover, the prospect that the Americans could find a way to reduce the size of their force deployment—easing political pressures at home for a total withdrawal—and yet maintain force lethality for years to come turns the logic of non-negotiation on its head: what if the only way to get the Americans truly out is with a negotiated settlement in which their departure is part of the deal?

While the United States is certainly capable of maintaining a reduced but highly capable force level in Afghanistan indefinitely, a negotiated settlement of Afghanistan's contested political order that definitively excludes al Qaeda and any other jihadi terrorist network from Afghan soil should present benefits. Perhaps most important for the Obama administration, it could be an internationally endorsed and viable exit strategy from a costly and potentially long and possibly inconclusive war. All wars end with political consequences, often

surprising and unpredictable—at home as on the battlefield. Shaping those consequences through considered choices in a negotiating process should be far preferable to the United States than having them shaped by circumstances that Washington cannot control or even influence. The large military effort undertaken since 2009 has provided the time and built the platform for achievement of core American objectives in a negotiation. Arriving at Afghanistan’s ultimate arrangements through a negotiating process—in which the United States plays a central role as the country’s most deeply invested ally—would seem now to be in order.

Indeed, for all sides, the longer negotiations are delayed, the higher the price is likely to be for restoring peace at the end. Quite apart from the costs of waging war, in lives and money, during the period that leaders continue to put off peace talks, there are other important factors to bear in mind: higher reconstruction costs to repair the inevitably increased destruction from prolongation of war, bloated payrolls for ever-expanding security forces (which, even with a settlement, can safely be demobilized only gradually into a shattered and jobless economy), and the continued hemorrhaging of Afghan talent sufficiently trained to provide public administration or private-sector dynamism.

As it is, a process leading to negotiations and finally a peace settlement is likely to be a prolonged and very uncertain affair. The gulf between the Taliban insurgency and the constituencies of the Afghan republic is wide; and the concerns of the international stakeholders vary and occasionally clash. Some wonder whether any negotiation could achieve enough of the core goals of all the parties that they could accept the compromises on other goals needed to lock in other parties. The experience of the international community in extinguishing other conflicts in war-torn countries shows that a cessation of hostilities is rarely the first item on a negotiating agenda. In many cases, the opposing sides have continued to seek negotiating advantage through fighting on the battlefield, or conversely, feared that a ceasefire before settlement of the political issues would be “peace” enough for the enemy.

This task force believes that, while negotiations will involve difficult trade-offs and priority-setting, a substantive agreement that would end the war in a way that is acceptable to all parties concerned

is possible. This is true even though the political issues separating the sides are many and complex. It is time for the Afghans and the international community—the Americans included—to heed General David Petraeus’s exhortation about “resisting temptations to pursue winner-take-all politics.”<sup>16</sup> The sooner a peace process starts, the better the odds that a genuine peace can be reached, perhaps even ahead of 2014.

## Chapter 2

### THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A SETTLEMENT

War between Afghan factions precipitated the Soviet Union's direct intervention in 1979, and the conflict there has had clear international dimensions ever since. Outside interference in the form of weapons and cash fed by neighbors and others to all factions consistently fanned the conflict. The events that unfolded after the September 11, 2001, attack on the United States offered an opportunity to end the internal conflict in Afghanistan. The Bonn process was conceived to do just that. But, far from ending, the internal conflict rages today just as intensely, with major international participation. If a peace settlement is achievable, it will therefore have to address two sets of issues:

- ▲ At the national level, a political order acceptable to Afghans will need to be negotiated. At the moment, the war is at the center of everyone's concern. But as soon as a negotiation is seriously considered, the most difficult hurdles will be found among the Afghans themselves. It will be their responsibility to reach a compromise. The international community will need to provide encouragement, support, and incentives.
- ▲ At the international level, since there are clearly non-Afghan aims pursued in the present conflict, a settlement will also have to address the many security concerns of international stakeholders and the commitments they will need to make to sustain the peace.

## THE AFGHAN DIVISION OF POWER

At the heart of this conflict, as in so many others, is the contest for power: Who will exercise it, over what areas of national life, and to what purposes? Negotiated power-sharing pacts are often, at one level, highly personal—which individual gains authority over what ministry or province? At another level, they are collective—how will ministries be allocated among rival groups? In the case of Afghanistan, the ministries of defense and interior, but also education and justice, will be particularly sensitive.

### AFGHANISTAN'S POLITICAL ORDER

Beyond the parceling out of power over the public administration, a negotiated settlement may have to address some elements of the underlying political system. This is true even though the position of many in the international community and in the Kabul government remains that negotiations with a potent insurgency can only begin after the insurgents agree to accept the 2004 constitution.

Peace agreements settling other bitter internal conflicts have often required alterations to the political order prescribed by those countries' constitutions. The process for writing Afghanistan's current constitution began eight years ago, when the country's interim president appointed by decree a constitutional drafting commission and prescribed a public consultation process that focused on broad principles. A constitutional *loya jirga* of 502 delegates selected from every province debated the text in December 2003 and, on January 4, 2004, assented to the document: the chairman of the *jirga* asked participants to "please stand if they supported the text" and everyone but two stood up.

The mujahideen leaders of armed militias whom the Taliban had driven out of most of Afghanistan before 2001 were visible and active at the constitutional *jirga*. The Taliban were not. But the Taliban today are very much a factor in Afghanistan's political life, and cannot remain excluded if this war is to end.

Of course, the Taliban have not given much indication of how they would want to reconstitute Afghanistan's political order, other

than repeating their maximalist goal of restoring the emirate regime and excluding foreign military forces. It is noteworthy that during their years in power, they ignored the notion of constitutional governance. The emirate was the only one of Afghanistan's many political regimes of the past half-century that saw no need for a constitution.<sup>1</sup> If the Taliban were again to form a government through military victory, they might well revert to the emirate's opaque political processes, with no need for democratic elections. But if they make a strategic choice for a negotiated settlement, they will surely demand clear political rules that guarantee them political space and their opportunity to contend for greater political power. That being the case, the current constitution is more than likely to end up as the point of departure in hammering out a revamped political system.

## CENTRALIZED ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY

The biggest issues of political order and power that preoccupied the constitutional *jirga* at the end of 2003 dealt with the centralization of administrative authority. There was a fear that independently elected governors in the provinces would only reinforce the country's centrifugal tendencies and endow local warlords with permanent fiefdoms. One of our co-chairs was present at the constitutional *jirga*, and addressed delegates about a pervasive "fear" in that political process, which, he said, "is in the heart of practically every Afghan because there is no rule of law yet in this country. The people of Afghanistan are afraid of the guns that are held by the wrong people and used not to defend them and not to wage a jihad..., but to frighten people, to terrorize people, to take advantages for their own."<sup>2</sup>

Whether inspired by fear of resurgent warlordism or yearning for a more effective government, the large majority of delegates were in support of a centralized system. The United States and the United Nations went along with the consensus, and the *jirga* decided in favor of a government administration controlled by the presidency in Kabul. It is the president who appoints provincial governors and the rest of the administration. In theory, this allows him to place people in charge of government in the provinces who are not beholden to local interests. A certain distance, the constitution writers assumed,

Eventually accepting elections as the basis for allocating power is likely to be a key element of a power-sharing agreement....

could reduce pressures for nepotism and corruption, allowing the local face of the public administration to represent the interests of the nation as a whole. While some of President Hamid Karzai's appointments may fulfill that expectation, many others have seemed to reflect the need to balance the claims of various constituencies. And alas, far too many officials have been implicated in the venality that features so prominently in the media as well as in Taliban propaganda.

Though the emirate had run as centralized a political regime as any in Afghanistan's recent history (and historically, Pashtuns have been centralizers), the Taliban would likely want to ensure that the key provincial posts to which their members were appointed could not be revoked at will by the occupant of the presidential palace—whether Karzai or a successor. Perhaps a central mechanism could be constructed to satisfy this concern, to sidestep the risks to national unity perceived in decentralization or “federalism.” There alternatively might be utility in a devolution of political authority for selection of governors from within their respective provinces. This could allow Taliban leaders to assume an administrative role in their Pashtun strongholds. Afghans are acutely conscious, however, of the risks decentralization could pose to the nation's territorial integrity. They still demonstrate a serious sense of loyalty to the Afghan nation. Across the political spectrum, they have responded negatively to foreigners' misguided proposals to introduce a federal system based on ethnic partition, with Pashtuns voicing particularly strong opposition.

It is not obvious how these competing considerations would shake out in negotiations among Afghans. Tajiks and other ethnic groups, long sensitive to Pashtun domination, might see merit in looser administrative control from Kabul. The existing provincial councils—elected but powerless—might see an opportunity during the peace negotiations to revive calls for delegating budgetary

and revenue authority to the provinces. Even the identity of those provinces, though far from a core issue between the Karzai government and its Taliban foes, could end up on the negotiating table. The current regime (like its centralizing predecessors) carved a number of new provinces out of traditional ones, prompting calls for their reconsolidation.

## PRESIDENTIAL POWER AND DEMOCRACY

Although other Afghan constitutions in the twentieth century provided for a prime minister who would actually manage the government, the drafters of the 2004 constitution opted for a strong presidency. They placed their bets on President Karzai's leadership, believing that through an empowered presidency his commitment to political openness and his readiness to work with the international community would permit Afghanistan to rebuild successfully. They feared that a diarchy with a president and a prime minister might lead to a dangerous polarization. Still, even at the time, there were doubts. The model of a head of state who controls all government agencies through his appointees, tempered only by legislators' power to block appointments, was not an obvious fit for a country of Afghanistan's ethnic diversity. This was especially true if the president were to appoint the leading provincial and district officials. A 51 percent, winner-take-all regime risks alienation of the other 49 percent, especially if an insecure or acquisitive victor directs all the benefits of governing to his political base. This could be particularly risky in a country awash in weapons and well-schooled in their use.

The Taliban have not publicly evinced much interest in debates about the relative advantages in an ethnically heterogeneous society of a presidential as opposed to a parliamentary system. They were traditionally skeptical of "democracy" on ideological grounds, and their emirate never relied on elections to choose its leaders. They have vehemently denounced the elections of the Karzai regime. Led since 1996 by a "commander of the faithful," they have scorned any alternative political system as illegitimate and un-Islamic.

Still, eventually accepting elections as the basis for allocating power is likely to be a key element of a power-sharing agreement;

Taliban policies on women and girls have actually inspired vigorous resistance within Afghanistan itself....

a contentious issue then will be the electoral system. Especially difficult will be the possible replacement of the present single, non-transferable vote system initially chosen, in part, because of fear that a system more favorable to the emergence of political parties might lead to further fragmentation along ethnic lines of Afghanistan's political life. The choice of the current electoral system also reflected a widespread concern that former mujahideen

leaders in command of armed militias in the provinces would end up controlling political parties in a party-list electoral system. Such choices might be revisited in a negotiation. In that process, Afghan society's contending factions could reach agreement on compromise electoral solutions—many of which might be adopted without revision of the constitution.

## PRINCIPLES TO GOVERN AFGHAN SOCIETY

### ISLAM AS BASIC LAW

The Taliban, since their inception, have pressed to strengthen the role of Islam in every corner of Afghan life, and they justify their struggle as driven by that goal. On the face of it, they would seem already to have won that battle in the 2004 constitution, which explicitly affirms the Islamic character of the republic and stipulates that no law may contradict the “beliefs and provisions” of Islam. No legal political party can have a program “contrary to the principles of the sacred religion of Islam.” At the same time, parties are barred from embodying a divisive “Islamic school of thought” (*mazhab-i fiqhi*). The constitution further mandates the state's implementation of a nationwide school curriculum based on the provisions of Islam. It requires the state to ensure “the elimination of traditions contrary

to” Islam.<sup>3</sup> Virtually all major Afghan political parties accept these provisions and affirm the centrality of Islam to the Afghan identity of both government and society.

The reality of Afghan life in areas under the government’s control, however, seems, to many clerics and pious Taliban, as quite the opposite of the simplicity and modesty expected of Muslim morality. For the most devout fighters, of course, the struggle has been about replacing impious officials disdainful of justice with pious ones zealous for it. But the call for intensified Islamization may have institutional implications too—with possible pressures for tighter control of dress codes or behavior (policed in emirate days by the ministry for the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice), and for enhanced roles of clerics and their nominees in the political arena and the justice system.<sup>4</sup>

## HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN

The many Afghans who remember emirate rule as suffocating value the current constitution’s guarantees of human rights, including the right to life, to freedom from torture and home invasion, to free speech and privacy of communication, to unarmed demonstration and freedom of religion.<sup>5</sup> But among the most dramatic and contentious of the constitution’s enumerated rights are those for women, whom the emirate had consigned to a notoriously constricted status, coerced in dress, barred from work, and banned from schools. The flight of the Taliban in late 2001 constituted, therefore, an unprecedented act of women’s liberation, which in itself morally legitimated the new regime at home and especially abroad. The constitution unequivocally prohibited discrimination between citizens “whether man or woman.” It required “effective programs for balancing and promoting of education for women.” It further set aside seats for women in the parliament.<sup>6</sup>

These provisions would have been anathema to the emirate regime. Their preservation, undiluted, is a top priority for Afghan women’s groups and for their international supporters. Advocates in the West of a sustained NATO military effort often point to Taliban misogyny as prime justification for continuing the struggle. The

Taliban policies on women and girls have actually inspired vigorous resistance within Afghanistan itself, in circles far wider than the country's educated elites: even in the countryside, many men would like to see their young daughters in school. Villagers' opposition has recently kept Taliban forces from closing girls' schools in many areas that have fallen under their sway. Seeing that even traditionalists under the Afghan government's authority no longer contest electoral set-asides and girls' education, Taliban spokesmen have dropped hints of new flexibility on questions of women's rights. According to some in and outside Afghanistan, including the minister of education of the Karzai government, their position has changed on this critical issue. Still, many Afghans continue to doubt the reality of such changes,<sup>7</sup> which negotiations will certainly clarify.

## JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Throughout decades of repressive regimes and chronic war, Afghans have endured the entire spectrum of atrocities, torture, and war crimes. Calls for the 2001 Bonn conference to initiate a post-conflict justice process for the investigation of heinous crimes by combatants and officials during the struggle just past were quickly stifled. The victors could not be sure that only the vanquished Taliban would be found responsible. Indeed, Afghan participants in the Bonn conference—and there were no Taliban among them—were almost unanimous in pressing (unsuccessfully) to include a blanket amnesty in the outcome document. They renewed their attempt at the Constitutional *loya jirga* and they were equally unsuccessful as the United Nations and the European Union strongly opposed the project on both occasions, though they had more success with the first elected parliament.<sup>8</sup> Nine years after Bonn, there are renewed stirrings among Afghan civil-society groups—echoed by international nongovernmental activists—about a need for accountability, though it is not obvious that the Afghan government, the Taliban, or even the international community would strongly press this issue on a negotiating agenda.<sup>9</sup> With Afghanistan having ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in 2003, there is a global

institution that has authority to act against war crimes and crimes against humanity, although some of the most egregious crimes pre-date its coming into force.

## MAINTAINING SECURITY

### AFGHAN SECURITY FORCES

The control of the Afghan National Army and the national police is of particular sensitivity to both the government and the Taliban. This issue is where the country's ethnic fissures appear most strikingly as a proxy for the country's deep political divisions. Despite the efforts of the American military to rebuild an Afghan army on the basis of professionalism, the senior officers remain largely Northern Alliance figures, and disproportionately Tajik. Among junior officer and enlisted ranks, the ethnic imbalance is reportedly being righted, in part because the American military now demands proportionate ethnic diversity in the units it trains. Still, many Dari-speaking northerners remain suspicious of purported hegemonic ambitions among Pashtuns (whether Taliban or not), and while the minister of defense is a Pashtun, Pashtuns from the country's south are particularly underrepresented at all levels of the armed forces. One of the impediments to Afghan national forces' success in securing Marja and Kandahar following the American offensives in 2010 may be Pashtun perception of the Tajik-commanded army as itself something of an alien force, at least in contrast to the Taliban.

The Taliban will almost certainly make it a condition of an agreement that their former enemies not have a monopoly on coercive power. A Taliban demand for incorporation of their fighters into the post-settlement army and police could prove one of the more contentious issues in a negotiation. Meanwhile, revenue constraints, and a likely decline in foreign funding of the security sector if the war ends, may force a downsizing of the army: such reduction will be welcome from a development standpoint, but its political implications might prove problematic for the durability of the peace.

## INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE STABILIZATION OF AFGHANISTAN

Only the Afghans can find answers to the difficult political issues that have been outlined. The international community, however, can make compromise less difficult to reach if the negotiation takes place in a context where Afghans share a common hope of development that will lift their country out of its extreme poverty. The international community can buttress a political settlement by providing incentives that help establish a self-sustaining Afghan economy, by insisting on international safeguards to deter violations of the agreement during the transition period, and by conditioning its continued support on the actual performance by all Afghan parties of their obligations as part of an accord.<sup>10</sup> Economic and social development—shared equitably across the population—will be essential for the stabilization of Afghanistan.

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

For all its importance in terms of Afghanistan's long-term economic growth, the current volume of trade and investment, and of revenues derived from it, is far too small to support the complex process of demobilization, political accommodation, and re-shuffling of patron-client networks required for successful execution and implementation of a political settlement. One key challenge of a political settlement will be how to refashion international aid to Afghanistan once hostilities have largely been brought to a close and current streams of income tied directly to the war effort are ended. The exact parameters of such a multi-year commitment of support will have to be negotiated, but over the past nine years the international community has had considerable experience in setting targets and partially delivering on them through a series of international conferences, starting in Tokyo in 2002 and most recently in Kabul in 2010.

Financial assistance, of course, is critical—but optimal levels of such support might hinge more closely upon project design as opposed to funding levels. The National Solidarity Program—one of a family of national development programs through which Afghan stakeholders have

been able to partner with international agencies across the countryside—has been singled out as a successful approach to development despite modest levels of financial commitment. The program was developed in 2002 by the Afghan government in partnership with the World Bank, and implemented through the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development. The program worked through block grants made directly to villages, which created Community Development Councils to oversee projects.<sup>11</sup> Projects implemented in accordance with village or district initiatives have had more local support—and protection—than those

imposed from above, a distinction that even the insurgency reportedly observes in its selection of targets for attack. They have also been a successful experience of concrete democracy that can help build support for democratic processes firmly rooted in local realities.

One of the most important areas for the international community's economic assistance is in agriculture, as a majority of Afghans still live in rural areas, and agriculture is key to generating the employment and easing of poverty that will be crucial to the country's stability. An end to the war will facilitate ramping up of rural development projects—to which Japan in particular has committed a substantial share of its development assistance—in Afghanistan's northeastern region, which has the water and arable land to serve as the country's breadbasket in times of peace. In the countryside, most of all, successful development projects integrate both the social and the economic dimensions: health, education, water, roads, and electrical power consistently appear at the top of villagers' priority lists.

Basic infrastructure development in urban areas, where many of the returning refugees have settled, is likewise vital to stable and sustainable economic growth. Many of the development projects that foreign assistance supports in urban areas are of far larger scale

A wider range of donors, including neighbors in the region, will need to make firm commitments for development aid for post-war Afghanistan....

than those that impact the lives of rural villagers, and they entail different formats for public consultation and “buy-in.”<sup>12</sup> The growth of Afghan construction companies will be important in directing infrastructure job creation to Afghans, and in expanding economic opportunities for Afghan entrepreneurship in the long term.

An important part of sustainable, long-term international support for the country’s development will be the renewed commitment of multilateral development agencies—and in particular that of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, which have relatively ample funding streams and are credited with having successfully worked in Afghanistan’s challenging environment. The World Bank has been the lead international agency working with the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund on the national solidarity program; major bilateral resources for the fund have come from Britain, Canada, Germany, Norway, and the United States.

A wider range of donors, including neighbors in the region, will need to make firm commitments for development aid for post-war Afghanistan (contingent, presumably, on the Afghan parties implementing the settlement). India, in particular, but also Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, have made significant commitments in recent years. That circle can be widened. Financially supportive governments will want assurance, however, that the Afghan government will have the institutional capacity to manage development activities, particular through the establishment of an accountable banking system. Then the World Bank, by providing a framework for long-term, reliable financing, can be a stabilizing hedge against national legislators losing interest in funding Afghan commitments once their troops have come home.

## NATURAL RESOURCES

The long-term management and development of natural resources will also be an area where the international community can have a positive impact in terms of establishing a self-sustaining economy. Afghanistan’s significant natural resources remain largely unexploited, primarily as a result of conflict. However, even the prospect of significant revenues from extractive industries could become a divisive issue, fueling existing conflicts, igniting future conflict over

resources, or compounding problems with corruption.

Afghanistan's natural resources consist of abundant mineral deposits and smaller hydrocarbon resources located primarily in northern Afghanistan. Untapped mineral deposits are estimated in value at close to \$1 trillion, with the largest discovered deposits being of iron and copper.<sup>13</sup> In 2006, the United States Geological Survey estimated that northern Afghanistan had 1,596 million barrels of crude oil, 15,687 billion cubic feet of natural gas, and 562 million barrels of natural gas liquids.<sup>14</sup> In 2007, the state-owned China Metallurgical

Group made the winning bid of \$3.4 billion for mining rights to the vast copper deposits at Aynak, and the royalties paid to the Afghan state constitute the government's largest single revenue source.<sup>15</sup>

To the extent requested, the international community should offer its assistance to Afghanistan to ensure equitable utilization of natural resources and distribution of these potentially significant natural resource revenues. A range of revenue management arrangements could be employed in establishing an Afghan framework, including decentralized mechanisms of control, revenue resource funds, or centralized distribution determined by population levels and need. The international community could also provide Afghanistan with technical assistance in negotiating utilization agreements with neighboring countries on untapped natural resources.<sup>16</sup> Afghanistan is currently a candidate to become a member of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative,<sup>17</sup> and the international community should support its candidacy as a key step to promoting international standards. Providing a sustainable base of revenues will be critical to Afghanistan's development and its long-term security as a sovereign and independent nation. Establishment of a fair, open legal and institutional framework to deal with natural resource revenues will be a

The international community should make a multi-year commitment to supporting secondary, post-secondary, and vocational education in Afghanistan....

key step in attracting much needed foreign investment in this sector and in energy infrastructure.

## CAPACITY-BUILDING AND EDUCATION

One of the major areas of improvement in Afghan life has been the rapid expansion of primary schooling, with enrolments sextupling since 2001 and now including a third of young Afghan girls. The high rate of illiteracy among twenty-year-olds that has complicated the recruitment efforts for the security forces, not to mention the business sector, should decline substantially in a few years as a result. But the international community's single-minded emphasis on funding primary education has resulted in neglect of the next levels of education that would develop human capacities for increased performance in business, government, health, and communication. The international community should make a multi-year commitment to supporting secondary, post-secondary, and vocational education in Afghanistan, modifying the national development plan it had established in 2002 that put all education support into expanding primary schooling. While basic literacy rates are increasing, the lack of post-primary schooling is now depriving Afghanistan of a new generation of Afghans adequately prepared for public administration and management across all sectors.

## THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

Integrating war-torn Afghanistan into an increasingly interconnected regional economy, centering on natural resources, trade, and transit, will benefit the Afghans, help support the sustainability of a political settlement, and be a major gain for Afghanistan's immediate neighbors as well as India. Already, there have been talks at senior government levels among countries in the region on tying Afghanistan economically into a larger regional economy.<sup>18</sup> This could include trade through and across Afghanistan, serving as a gateway to Central Asia, South Asia, and Iran; all parties stand to gain significant economies of transportation if a safe ring road,

border crossings, and road and rail linkages are available. The recent renewal of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement is suggestive of the future possibilities for regional trade and establishes an initial framework that could be expanded on a regional basis. The agreement will allow goods from Afghanistan to transit Pakistani territory en route to India, although the arrangements are not reciprocal at the moment for Indian goods destined for Afghanistan. Based on the agreement, Pakistan will now be able to export its own goods to Central Asia via Afghanistan.

A broader regional border control and transit agreement could conceivably be negotiated as part of, or parallel to, an Afghan peace settlement. Direct investment from Pakistan, Iran, India, and China would be a welcome contribution to both the economic recovery of Afghanistan as well as a useful way to underscore the political commitment of those neighbors to the successful, continuing execution of a political settlement. Additionally, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan has led the Silk Road Initiative, which is aimed at engaging those countries that have historic and political links with Afghanistan but are not directly contiguous. This is yet another potentially useful project to expand positive regional linkages and interactions and to encourage greater economic cooperation.

The issue of regional economic cooperation has also been given an added dimension with revived plans for a trans-Afghan pipeline. The proposed natural gas pipeline would traverse Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. Turkmenistan holds extensive natural gas deposits, and developing a stable infrastructure for export and distribution of natural resources has been a longstanding regional issue.<sup>19</sup> Previous iterations of the project have generated a great deal of controversy since the mid-1990s.<sup>20</sup> While the pipeline project may not materialize due to competing interests, it is indicative of Afghanistan's potential as a future regional commercial hub, with trade flowing toward Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East.

The benefits that a peaceful Afghanistan would bring, not only to the Afghans but to the whole region, should be an incentive for all parties to resolve their differences through compromise. But no settlement will be sustainable if it does not address the international security dimensions of the conflict.

## AFGHANISTAN AND INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

The total and permanent eviction of al Qaeda from the country remains, undoubtedly, the most important priority for not just the United States, but also the neighbors to Afghanistan's north and Russia, and indeed the rest of the international community as well. No political settlement will be acceptable to the international community unless it provides a convincing answer to the threat of international terrorism emanating from Afghanistan.

### SEVERING LINKS BETWEEN THE TALIBAN AND AL QAEDA

Severing the Taliban's relationship with al Qaeda and similar groups will be a litmus test for the credibility of any political settlement in the eyes of the international community. While there have been reports of tensions between the two prior to the September 11 attacks, when the Taliban were providing al Qaeda and its foreign fighters with sanctuary in their country, the fact remains that, despite persistent, significant international pressure, the Taliban would not abandon their al Qaeda connection.<sup>21</sup> Since the collapse of the Taliban government in late 2001, there have been reports of fissures within the movement over its relationship with al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. Such reports suggest that termination of any Taliban-al Qaeda connection could successfully result from a negotiation.<sup>22</sup>

There are, however, serious doubts in the international community that the Taliban and al Qaeda are separable. Tactical cooperation among the various militant factions involved in insurgent activity on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistan border, especially the linkages between the Haqqani network and al Qaeda in North Waziristan,<sup>23</sup> can only reinforce such doubts. The international community will resolutely insist that an acceptable and durable political settlement must include a verifiable severing of ties with al Qaeda and guarantees that Afghanistan could never again be a base from which transnational terrorists could threaten international peace and stability.<sup>24</sup>

A political settlement in which the Taliban agreed to be a part of a pluralistic governing structure would have far-reaching symbolic importance in the larger struggle against violent extremism and

transnational terrorism. One potentially useful message of the end of the conflict would be an announcement by the Afghan insurgents, including Mullah Mohammad Omar as the head of the Taliban and its spiritual leader, that the jihad has come to a close and that the political settlement represents a definitive cessation of hostilities. This public statement could also reaffirm clearly the dedication of the Taliban to national Afghan goals and again emphasize the severing of ties with al Qaeda and any other transnational terrorist networks. It could declare that Afghanistan will not be used as a safe haven for terrorist groups and will not be allowed to serve as a base for regional destabilization.

## COUNTER-TERRORISM CAPACITY

The rise of a Pakistani Taliban movement that has grown ominously in strength and aggressiveness in Pakistan's borderlands further complicates the question of suppressing al Qaeda terrorism. Even in the event of a severing of ties with the leadership of the Afghan Taliban, there may still be the related concern about the capacity of al Qaeda and other foreign militants to continue operating in Afghanistan through newly established local proxy groups<sup>25</sup> or from across the border, with militant groups in the tribal areas of Pakistan continuing to threaten the consolidation of peace. Agreements negotiated between the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan, with adequate enforcement, can go a long way toward addressing the latter threat, and the two countries should receive strong and effective support from the UN Security Council, through which provision could also be made to provide continued counter-terrorism capability during a transition period.

## CONTAINING THE THREAT OF NARCOTICS

One of the most immediate concerns for nearly all Afghanistan's neighbors, and for Russia as well, is the explosion of opium production in Afghanistan over the past decade.<sup>26</sup> Afghanistan has long been

an illicit exporter of cannabis and opium, save for a brief period late in the emirate's rule when it successfully suppressed the crops. However, in the chaotic conditions of the countryside since the Taliban's flight, the narcotics industry has considerably expanded. Officials in countries affected by the drug trade fear that—regardless of whether the financial beneficiaries of the Afghan narcotics industry are, as variously alleged, the Taliban, corrupt officials in the administration, entrenched narco-mafias, or all three—whatever Afghan government that emerges from this conflict will be hard pressed to give priority to stamping out the deadly trade.

The negotiated settlement cannot fail to address this issue. The international community should sponsor and support vigorous anti-narcotics efforts by the Afghan authorities with close international assistance and cooperation. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which is already present in Afghanistan, should be empowered to monitor closely Afghan narcotic production and trafficking and perhaps to certify the adequacy of that cooperative effort.

For the Taliban, counter-narcotics policy could be an opportunity to demonstrate their good faith and commitment to a skeptical world that they can be responsible partners in a postwar political order. The Taliban have always affirmed that drug trafficking is a violation of Islamic law that should be banished. A political settlement should test that longstanding position.

## WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN FORCES

The proclaimed priority of the Taliban remains the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan. The demand reflects in part their conviction that the Kabul authorities would collapse without the support of foreign troops, and their view that through that compliant regime Western forces are corrupting Afghan society with their alien values. Key regional players, with the possible exception of India, are also keen to see a withdrawal of NATO forces over time to assure their own long-term security.

A willingness of ISAF troop contributors, and particularly the United States, to accept a phased withdrawal will thus be an important component of any political settlement. In negotiating a phased withdrawal with the Afghans, there will need to be consideration of the capacity of the declining force levels to deter signatories from reneging on their obligations during the transition period, as well as a consideration of whatever residual elements, if any, the future Afghan government might wish to request after major forces have withdrawn, and what ongoing military training, assistance, and support—if any—the Afghan government would seek for its own security forces.

For Afghanistan's neighbors, the desire for a firm commitment on withdrawal is tempered by considerations of potential destabilization that could undermine their security and fuel external regional interventions in Afghan affairs. The desire for a withdrawal to be measured and phased is likely preferable even for Iran, which remains implacably opposed to the continued U.S.-led international military presence on its eastern border. Similarly, other key international parties that are uncomfortable with that presence, such as Russia and China, may well be reassured by a clear timeline for its phase-out. The Security Council will also have to consider what residual support, if any, its members would be willing to provide to deal effectively with the ongoing challenges of preventing a sanctuary for al Qaeda and upholding the broader counter-terrorism conditions of a political settlement.

## DEPLOYING A PEACEKEEPING FORCE

The presence of some international security presence to help guarantee the terms of the settlement has been an important component of many peace accords. In most cases—Cambodia, East Timor, Mozambique, Liberia, to cite a few—the international forces have served as peacekeepers, providing reassurance to the parties. In only a few has the international presence been mandated to enforce the settlement and coerce recalcitrant parties. Enforcement operations

Afghan efforts to overcome the internal divisions of the country will be successful only if they enjoy the support of the broader region.

have been limited to deterring marginal spoilers, not a key party to a peace agreement. The same should apply to Afghanistan, where a peacekeeping force could only be deployed on the basis of a ceasefire and peace implementation agreement that includes the Taliban.

To be sure, primary responsibility for implementation of the intra-Afghan accord must rest with the Afghan parties. Still, a political settlement is likely to require some form of monitoring and peacekeeping presence representing the international community, preferably under the auspices of the United Nations, to deter violations. The precise nature of that presence, which would support, verify, and monitor the whole range of commitments entered into by the parties, would have to be hammered out during the negotiations. The key questions will be the composition of the force, its size, and most importantly its mandate. Its primary mission would be to support the implementation of a political settlement. It could also verify and monitor the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of various armed Afghan forces that have been fighting on both the Taliban and government sides, contribute to border security, and support the reform of the Afghan National Police. The Security Council's resolution authorizing the peacekeeping force, which would most likely be under a United Nations chain of command, could also set out the schedule for the phased withdrawal of the NATO-led ISAF, which is currently deployed under authority of an earlier UN resolution.

As is the case with any peacekeeping force, no belligerent party to the conflict would sensibly be included in the force, but even among ISAF troop contributors there may be peacekeeper providers that could continue under UN command. It may be particularly desirable to encourage participation by Muslim states with capable armed forces and experience in peacekeeping missions in the interim

UN force. This could include Turkey (an ISAF contributor, but not seen as a belligerent), Indonesia, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates, as these countries might also be acceptable to the relevant Afghan parties, Afghanistan's neighbors, and the international community at large.

## AFGHANISTAN'S FUTURE STATUS IN THE REGION

Afghan efforts to overcome the internal divisions of the country will be successful only if they enjoy the support of the broader region. While Afghanistan can and should greatly benefit from the development of its economic relations with the region and from bilateral aid provided by regional powers, it is of vital importance that such relations develop in a context of regional understanding in a negotiated settlement. Pakistan's concerns about "encirclement" by states aligned with India and about incitement of restive populations in its Pashtun and Baluch borderlands, Iranian anxiety about threats to Shiite communities or its own encirclement, and India's bitter experience of Islamist terrorist infiltration linked to Pakistan (and Afghanistan) need to be addressed.

To ensure that Afghanistan does not again become a pawn in regional rivalries, Afghan neutrality has sometimes been mentioned as a solution. Afghans will however be wary of any arrangement that could give the appearance of limiting their sovereignty. There is an urgent need to move away from broadly limiting definitions of the status of Afghanistan: the concept of not becoming a party to any alliance relationship (nonalignment) and the obligations that would entail seems better to reflect Afghan aspirations, and it might well provide the best framework for all interested countries to develop a cooperative relationship with Afghanistan, free of strategic rivalry and related mistrust.

Practical provisions spelling out the nature of Afghanistan's future in this regard may therefore need to be incorporated into a settlement—provisions that will be internationally supported, and preferably endorsed, by the UN Security Council. They could include negative assurances<sup>27</sup> (guarantees not to interfere), as in the Geneva

accords of 1988 that ended the Soviet-Afghan war (though, it is clear, those accords did not end every foreign signatory's interference in Afghan affairs), and positive assurances<sup>28</sup> (guarantees of support), as was the case in the Dayton Peace Accords.<sup>29</sup>

While the exact nature of the many compromises that will need to be made in a difficult negotiation is obviously impossible to predict with any kind of precision, this task force believes that the building blocks of a political settlement are both present and already known. A national compromise between the Afghan factions may now be possible. But it will not happen without strong regional commitment, and it will not be sustained without a broader international engagement. International divisions have often made Afghanistan's own internal divisions worse. International coherence and unity of purpose will be essential to Afghan reconciliation.

## Chapter 3

### MOVING INTO A POLITICAL PROCESS

**H**aving explored the major issues that are likely to preoccupy negotiators, how do we get a process started? What are the steps and factors to consider?

Deep skepticism understandably remains about the prospects for a negotiated solution to the war, and especially about the Taliban's real interest in negotiations. There are currently numerous channels of communication with the insurgency. Probing has already started through initiatives of the Afghan government, and President Karzai has begun discussions with the Pakistani security establishment about a potential political settlement. Other approaches to the insurgency—unstructured and largely tactical—have been undertaken through other, less formal channels.

Though tentative, these contacts seem to indicate an interest in a political process and openness to talks among at least some sections of the insurgency. Still, the true intent of the Taliban and their willingness to engage seriously in a political process cannot be discerned prior to actual engagement. Efforts to establish a political process—with a framework to capitalize on openings, ensure coherence, focus contacts, and organize regional diplomatic efforts—will at least clarify practicable options and seed the possibility for further peace-building efforts.

#### AN EXPLORATORY PHASE

To date, we know of contacts led by the Afghan government with various Taliban and other insurgent leaders; attempts by Pakistan to position itself as the broker for the Taliban leadership, including the Haqqani network and the Quetta Shura Taliban; and various

A more promising option ... is reliance on an internationally designated facilitator.

uncoordinated informal initiatives. Each of these avenues for engagement has an important purpose, but each has drawbacks that make it unlikely to be by itself the exclusive channel to achieve a negotiated settlement.

A political process aimed at resolving core differences and addressing legitimate grievances will require Afghan leadership and commitment. As the head of the

Afghan government, President Karzai will necessarily lead the political process on the Afghan government side and help shape the future course of negotiations. For the process to be successful in charting a sustainable political settlement, however, the president will need the input and assent of members of his own government, parliament, and Afghan civil society groups, some of whom have expressed skepticism regarding the feasibility and desirability of a negotiated settlement with the Taliban.

A political process also has to reconcile the concerns of a number of international stakeholders. Pakistan—long a champion of an inclusive political settlement—will be critical to the viability of a peaceful resolution, as will the other parties in the region and more distant international stakeholders whose interests and concerns will also have to be reconciled. And given the current efforts of the United States, NATO, and the broader international community in Afghanistan, they too must play key roles in any future political process and negotiations.

## AN INTERNATIONAL FACILITATOR

Given the clashes over legitimacy that underlie this conflict, the fear that proposing political negotiations would be seen by the adversary as proof of weakness, and the sheer number of stakeholders involved, it would be awkward for one of the principal parties to the conflict to set aside its prior conditions for talks in hopes that this can initiate a

negotiating process. One alternative—a major power stepping in to mediate between the combatants, as the United States did between Israel and Egypt in 1979 and in the former Yugoslavia in 1995—is not practicable when the most militarily engaged combat force is that of the United States itself. It is hard to imagine enemies of one of the leading parties to trust that party fairly to structure and direct a negotiation.

A more promising option, and the one that in the past quarter-century has had the most successful track record in bringing long-running conflicts to a negotiated end, is reliance on an internationally designated facilitator. Such a third-party actor can broach sensitive issues regarding possible negotiations without undermining the relevant players' respective negotiating positions. An internationally designated facilitator would be entrusted to explore openings and convey messages—and to do this effectively, a facilitator would need to be able to access and engage credibly with insurgent actors. A facilitator would also have to enjoy the confidence of regional countries and key international stakeholders. Further, a facilitator would need to operate within an elastic timetable based on the likelihood that a political process would be extended.

The choice of an internationally backed facilitator would help to establish a structure for beginning the process for bridging the deep divides among the various parties in conflict. A facilitator would undertake an exploratory phase of contacts and discussions, to determine whether there is enough potential convergence among the various parties, internal and international, for productive negotiations on a political settlement to commence. A facilitator would also open the process of establishing trusted channels of communication, eliciting commitments to a political process, seeking out pathways beyond each side's established preconditions, and gathering input to begin the arduous task of framing the parameters and terms of a political settlement.

The role of the facilitator could be filled by one person, with institutional support from a multilateral organization such as the United Nations. It could also be a role for a team, or for one country, or a group of countries, or an organization, such as the Organization for the Islamic Conference; or a combination of these various options (though combinations of actors have often proved a recipe for confusion).

Of these options, the United Nations has the greatest institutional experience in providing such a facilitating role. Its mediators have often earned respect as honest brokers, including in Afghanistan as far back as the 1980s. The current situation is far more complex than at that time, however—foreshadowed by the large number of Afghan and international delegations that took part in the Bonn conference of 2001. Appointment by the UN secretary-general of a personal representative or envoy to lead this phase represents the best option for leading an exploratory engagement; it could conceivably be the head of the UN mission in Afghanistan, assuming suitable separation from the mission's mandate to assist the Afghan government. The facilitator would need to be of sufficient stature as to enjoy access at senior levels to government officials in the relevant countries—and to the insurgency. The exploration would carry the most weight if the appointment and mandate of the facilitator were also approved either concurrently or subsequently by the UN Security Council, perhaps with an initial six-month mandate.

The facilitator will face an immensely complex challenge, far more layered than the United Nations' mediation of the Afghan conflict in the 1980s, which embraced directly only four governments (the Soviet Union, its Afghan ally, the United States, and Pakistan) but excluded the mujahideen resistance, for whom Pakistan was presumed to speak. At the Bonn conference in 2001, a number of Afghan factions and many other countries were present and participated in varying degrees. For Afghanistan today, the facilitator at the outset will need to consult with a wide array of parties just among the Afghans: the president of the republic and his appointees; leading figures, in parliament and outside, that are critical of the Karzai administration; Afghan civil society groups; and leaders of the three principal insurgent factions.

The facilitator will also need to consult with the capitals of the main international stakeholders: Pakistan, where much of the Taliban leadership has taken refuge; the five other countries that border Afghanistan (China, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan); several in the region's next wider circle (such as India, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey); and the leading financial and troop contributors, including the European Union, Japan, and especially the United States.<sup>1</sup> More informally, the facilitator may wish to seek the perspectives of

the intergovernmental agencies and the international nongovernmental organizations that have been working in the field in Afghanistan. The facilitator should report to the UN secretary-general (and perhaps the Security Council, when it becomes involved).

These soundings should allow the facilitator to identify the Afghan protagonists' readiness to explore compromises with the others, possibly to start outlining a prospective negotiating agenda, and to move them to the next step—beginning to structure conversations among them, perhaps in proximity talks or perhaps directly. This stage may be informal or even unacknowledged, since it can help avoid issues of who participates and when and on what basis. Still, if these talks are going to go anywhere, there will have to be a clear and unequivocal signal, particularly from the Taliban side, that they are prepared to enter into a compromise settlement.

## A STANDING CONFERENCE?

If the facilitator's soundings find sufficient readiness for compromise among the parties to proceed, they will need to shift to more formal negotiating tracks—and because there are so many international stakeholders, the facilitator will need to structure a negotiating process that can include them when the concerns most important to them are considered. At this point, if not sooner, a secretariat could be established to support the talks. The facilitator might consider the utility of a standing international conference—one that would provide formal scaffolding for a multi-tiered negotiating process.

- ▲ A primary nexus from the start will be the Afghan parties: their agreement on a resolution of the country's divisive political and social issues will be at the heart of a comprehensive peace.
- ▲ Available at the facilitator's call should be the relevant international representatives appointed to work with the facilitator, who will have to keep them engaged. Their assurances, guarantees, or other powers of persuasion are likely to be helpful in winning assent from the various Afghan parties to the resolution of particularly thorny issues.

- ▲ The facilitator should seek to discover opportunities for agreement among the neighbors in the region, especially on their security concerns, resolution of which could have a positive effect on the internal Afghan negotiations.
- ▲ As agreement ripens on Afghan political arrangements, the negotiating tracks on international concerns that require the postwar Afghan government's assent could begin active work.

While the conference might convene in plenary, if ever, only to launch the negotiating process and later to ratify its results, it could provide a regular diplomatic venue for the parties' authorized negotiators who would be most actively engaged—any venue presumably being acceptable to all the parties and geographically convenient to most of them. The Bonn conference could provide a model for an open architecture, open agenda, and inclusivity for all states and parties interested in participation; the facilitator and the secretary-general or Security Council could flesh out the specifics as the process unfolds.

## GETTING BEYOND PRECONDITIONS

The Afghan government and the international community that supports it, for their part, as well as the Taliban insurgency, have all set out preconditions for entering into negotiations with their adversaries that also describe their major goals in the conflict. The three-fold conditions set down by the Afghan government and its backers are that the Taliban must sever ties with al Qaeda, lay down their arms, and accept the current Afghan constitution.<sup>2</sup> The Taliban's preconditions are withdrawal of all foreign forces from Afghanistan, along with release of detainees and "de-listing" of Taliban individuals from the UN sanctions list; they also have indicated that they wish to constitute the new government for the country.<sup>3</sup> These preconditions or conditions are issues that could best be addressed as part of the negotiating agenda. The facilitator will have the task of convincing all parties to come to the table in an open manner.

The preconditions from both sides should inform the course of negotiations, as they reflect the highest priority issues for them. While fulfillment of each specific point would presumably be a part of a final political settlement, these issues could also be raised along the way in discussions of possible confidence-building measures intended to help improve the atmosphere for a comprehensive settlement while at the same time avoiding roadblocks to proceeding to talk. The facilitator would have to ascertain the possibilities for moving beyond stated preconditions toward negotiations. The facilitator would be well positioned through proximity talks to offer bridging proposals to all parties to resolve such impasses.

### AFGHAN GOVERNMENT PREPARATIONS FOR A POLITICAL PROCESS

Managing a complex political negotiation requires a capable and representative negotiating team with strong administrative support, which the Afghan government does not yet have. President Karzai at present lacks the resources or the institutional capacity to engage effectively in a complex negotiation, and needs a representative negotiating team with institutional support behind it. This is not a gap that the international community can fill. Obviously, the facilitator and other parties' negotiators will interact with whomever the government designates as its authorized representatives, but the president would do well to focus on how to make that team as strong as possible.

The government's most powerful claim to legitimacy is that it represents the broad range of Afghans across ethnic, sectarian, and gender lines, in contrast to the narrow if passionate support base inside Afghanistan for the insurgency. It is a heterogeneous constituency, and the issues arising from the prospect of engaging with the Taliban will present the government with challenges in maintaining cohesion among the disparate groups. Maintaining confidence in the process will likely be critical to avoiding civil conflict even within the government coalition, making efforts at greater inclusiveness in the decision-making process of particular importance.

UNAMA can provide a critical Afghanistan-based contribution to a broader negotiating process....

Given their experience of Taliban rule, many Afghans among the former members of the Northern Alliance, non-Taliban Pashtuns, and leading civil society actors have expressed deep reservations about any attempts to reach an accommodation with the Taliban. These sentiments are especially pronounced among those ethnic and religious minorities that suffered most severely under the Taliban, such as the Hazara, who remain deeply distrustful of the Taliban. Many of

the former leaders of the Northern Alliance, some of them arrayed in uneasy alliance with the Karzai government, share similar concerns regarding political reconciliation with the Taliban. Many Afghans interpreted President Karzai's dismissal in June 2010 of Amrullah Saleh, a deep skeptic about contacts with the insurgency, as the head of the National Directorate of Security as a defensive measure in preparation for an increased push for negotiations with the Taliban. The move also highlighted the ethnic divisions that continue to define Afghan politics and the anxieties about political reconciliation. These societal divides make outreach by the government of Afghanistan a critical factor. This would require sustained and broad public consultations to develop practicable positions with sufficient popular support across ethnic lines to sustain any prospective political settlement.<sup>4</sup>

In entering a serious political process, the government of Afghanistan will be acknowledging that the Taliban insurgents can have a place in Afghan political life, just as the Taliban will be acknowledging that all other Afghans must be part of it too. Hence the negotiations will, in political terms, center on their positive participation in the country's future political discourse. This will only be sustainable if the government of Afghanistan develops a broad national consensus on the wisdom of pursuing a political settlement among the country's diverse ethnic communities who continue to harbor significant suspicion and resentment against the Taliban. The government of Afghanistan, working with the support of the international community,

must seek the input of these groups in an effort to ensure broad unanimity of purpose and to limit the prospect for further exacerbating ethnic, religious, and other divisions.

Despite concerns regarding the nature and scope of the representation on the High Peace Council, it could serve as a platform to begin establishing an open national dialogue aimed at achieving greater consensus on negotiations with the insurgency and the shape of the Afghan political order. It could also help guide public debate within Afghan society about the goals of such negotiations. To undertake these functions effectively, the activities of the council ought to be transparent to the public and provide the opportunity for engagement by civil society actors and groups. The High Peace Council could then serve in part as a bellwether of public opinion.

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan has built a fair amount of credibility with the Afghan public with its outreach to civil society, and it is uniquely positioned to support Afghan society's debate on negotiations countrywide. This could be an important task for UNAMA's recently announced Salaam Support Group, as it could provide an institutional framework for a national dialogue while also offering expert technical support on the potential agenda for negotiations. UNAMA could usefully help support district and provincial-level dialogue on the prospects for negotiations and the concerns of various communities. This could include the Provincial Peace and Reintegration Committees, as outlined in the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program, along with provincial council members, where applicable, provincial members of parliament, and civil society representation, to ensure a broad-ranging and representative dialogue. Where possible, district and provincial dialogue might successfully include Taliban sympathizers in the countryside, testing the thesis of some advocates that *de facto* reconciliation can take hold at a local level even before the harder issues at the national level are negotiated.<sup>5</sup>

The pains UNAMA has taken to maintain its impartiality and openness to all Afghans have led to sometimes testy relations, especially at election time, with the political leaders of the government it is mandated to assist. That mandate almost unavoidably makes it suspect in the eyes of many in the insurgency, which will make its contribution especially delicate as a negotiating process gets under way. UNAMA's roles in informing the work of the facilitator and in

the process of peace-building, both during negotiations and after the conclusion of a settlement, can be invaluable: through its presence in Kabul and in the rest of the country, UNAMA can provide a critical Afghanistan-based contribution to a broader negotiating process that entails shuttle diplomacy among various capitals, but will need to remain closely connected to internal Afghan dynamics.

## ENGAGING THE TALIBAN IN A POLITICAL PROCESS

Contacts and lines of communication with the Taliban have to this point been characterized by their tactical orientation. These interactions have often focused on issues of immediate concern, such as the status of detainees. With the focus of the insurgency squarely on the military struggle, the Taliban have eschewed establishing a political wing to complement their military efforts, although they have set up shadow governors in most Afghan provinces. For a political process to go beyond back-channel and other exploratory discussions, the Taliban will need to develop coherent lines of communication and put forward credible interlocutors who can speak for the insurgency and its commander networks. Still unclear is whether the Taliban factions will present a unified negotiating team or if the facilitator and the negotiating process will need to engage simultaneously with various actors and networks within the insurgency.

The insurgency has decentralized military decision-making by vesting significant tactical authority with commanders in the field. This relative decentralization is also reflected in the regional shura structures that are representative of the geographic linkages that define and influence the behavior of networks within the insurgency. There also appear to be various subgroups organized topically to cover areas such as military affairs, detainee issues, and information operations. Within this decentralized model there is still an operating organizational structure and some level of centralized command and control,<sup>6</sup> although the extent varies regionally. In this regard, it is useful to note the important distinction between decentralization and fragmentation. While the insurgency is driven by personal relations and is often localized, connections between the networks of the insurgency give the Taliban a degree of organizational

coherence and resemble a “network of networks.”

The Quetta Shura, to all appearances, is still the central node of authority within the insurgency. Mullah Omar, as *‘Amir al-Mo’mineen* (Leader of the Faithful), is said to retain substantial moral authority within the Taliban and more broadly within the insurgency. His importance to the movement at present appears to be partly symbolic, and individuals within the ranks of the insurgency refer uniformly to Mullah Omar as the head of their movement. While

anecdotal reports suggest that generational shifts may be putting stress on the organizational discipline of the insurgency, Mullah Omar’s position and importance have endured, and no alternative leadership figures have emerged to rival him. However, his interactions are by all accounts extremely limited, and even senior Taliban figures seem not to have access to him.

While the appearance of cohesion is important for the Taliban, broad-based solidarity is easier to accommodate in a war-fighting setting where tactical decision-making has been granted to various levels of commanders in the field. While the Quetta Shura and ultimately Mullah Omar apparently maintain a certain level of coherent command and control, it is not clear that these same leadership structures will be the conduit for talks.

While Mullah Omar may have both legitimacy and some coercive power within the insurgency, even he may be constrained in the terms he could negotiate, by his location inside Pakistan, the semi-consensual nature of the Quetta Shura, and the decentralized nature of the insurgency. There are many potential fractures within the Taliban, given their contending personal and regional affiliations.<sup>7</sup> There is also some question about the relationship between the Haqqani network and the Quetta Shura. While figures within the Haqqani network have expressed their interests in a political process, they have also emphasized their fealty to the Quetta Shura.

In the course of [the facilitator’s] contacts, the question of who really speaks for the Taliban leadership may become clearer.

The issue of detainees is also a constant point of emphasis for the Taliban....

Finally, Hezb-i-Islami (Gulbuddin Hekmatyar) remains largely an independent organization, although it has formed alliances with the Taliban.<sup>8</sup> Political figures connected to Hekmatyar have been forward-leaning in seeking out an alternative political path to end the insurgency. In light of their current diminished role as a fighting force, reaching a separate accord with Hezb-i-Islami would not impact seriously the course of fighting

and could distract from a larger political settlement. In the view of many who have dealt with him, Hekmatyar has a proven record in breaking commitments. The group would still likely seek to be part of a broader political settlement.

In light of these factors, major engagement with the Quetta Shura represents the logical starting point for political dialogue. Still, the facilitator heading a political process would likely be engaged with various leadership levels within the insurgency, as with the governmental side. In the course of these contacts, the question of who really speaks for the Taliban leadership may become clearer.

The durability of a political settlement would be strengthened if the leadership structures within the insurgency have sufficient control over their foot soldiers to carry out their decisions. This appears now to be complicated by reported radicalizing trends that correspond to generational shifts within the insurgency.<sup>9</sup> The issue is also a point of concern for some within the insurgency who argue—along with some outside analysts—that ISAF's growing success in eliminating the mid-level leadership in Taliban units will bring more radical and uncontrollable leaders to the fore.<sup>10</sup>

The consequences of these potential shifts should be a factor in political and military planning if a serious political process is launched, as the attitudes of rank and file Taliban will help shape the possibility for negotiations. Preserving an honorable exit from fighting for these fighters will be a necessary prerequisite for influencing internal deliberations among the Taliban.

Even in the optimal circumstance of a deal between the government side and the main arms of the insurgency, there will likely

remain individuals and networks outside of any negotiations or political settlement; the fact that Pakistan and other neighbors have continuing problems with armed factions within their own borders suggests that even a comprehensive settlement may not yield complete peace and serenity in Afghanistan. The very success of the Kabul government's allies in decimating the ranks of Taliban fighters in parts of Afghanistan may lead some of the surviving commanders to spurn any deal made with leaders operating in the relative safety of Pakistani havens.<sup>11</sup> Such internal dissenters would likely find encouragement and perhaps assistance from spoilers in the ranks of the Tehrik-e-Taliban of Pakistan, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, al Qaeda, and other foreign militant organizations that would perceive a possible political accord as an existential threat. The broadened coalition that governs Afghanistan after a settlement, and all members of the international community, will need to isolate and suppress the recalcitrant elements that continue in violent opposition to the negotiated reconciliation.

Furthermore, conflict and violence in Afghanistan cannot solely be linked to the Taliban, as criminal elements and organized crime syndicates with little or no connection with the insurgency have used the cover of conflict to achieve their own ends, such as drug trafficking, through violent means. Such criminal elements will not be responsive to the formal actions of senior insurgent leaders.

There do appear to be internal divisions within the Taliban over the question of a political path. Those who profess to favor a political track as a means to achieving the Taliban's goals would like to see the United States, NATO, and the international community take a series of steps to create a more favorable climate for talks, such as removal of individuals from the UN Al-Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee list, established under UN Security Council Resolution 1267, adopted by the council in 1999, which freezes assets, bans travel, and imposes an arms embargo on "individuals and entities associated with the Taliban, Usama Bin Laden and the Al-Qaida organization." Some in the Taliban construe it as a list for targeting or assassination, and many say their de-listing should be a precondition for negotiation. Many in the international community see the removal of names as an incentive to completing a settlement and a reward for demonstrated behavior.

Some Taliban have expressed an interest in establishing a liaison office in a secure location. Establishing a focal point for the Taliban's designated representatives—presumably the designated negotiating venue—might consolidate the political process and limit outside influence. The desire to establish a liaison office is a reflection of broader concern about the ability of the Taliban to function as an independent political movement, free from Pakistani supervision. Even in the case of third-party hosting of a Taliban liaison office, contacts would likely continue in Kabul, elsewhere in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other locations. This is a reflection of the geographic dispersion of insurgent networks and leaders and the complicated relationships that exist within the insurgency.

Enabling frequent travel of designated Taliban representatives will require close cooperation and coordination with other actors, including ISAF and Pakistan, to ensure that those members of the Taliban engaged in the political process will have guarantees of safe passage and the ability to travel freely to and from contacts without fear of arrest or detention.

The issue of detainees is also a constant point of emphasis for the Taliban, and key high-level Taliban detainees could fill an important role in supporting a political process if contacts and dialogue gain momentum. The presence of these figures provides the international community with an opportunity to attempt to engage them in support of a political process, perhaps through seeking the assent of high-level Taliban detainees to Taliban engagement. Certainly, when the Afghan government itself seeks release of a detainee held in allied custody to be part of the peace process, as President Karzai and the High Peace Council requested in the case of the former emirate's interior minister, a supportive international community should respond positively as best it can.<sup>12</sup>

As exploratory contacts with the Taliban proceed, the prospects for a political settlement could be enhanced by public endorsement by the Organization for the Islamic Conference and other interested parties from the Muslim world, such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey. Strong public support throughout the Muslim world for a peaceful resolution to the war in Afghanistan would help to reinforce a key message that would accompany a peaceful settlement, namely, the impermissibility of continued fighting under the banner of jihad. Bearing

this in mind, support for a political process from Muslim religious institutions such as the Egyptian al-Azhar University and the Saudi High Scholars Authority could give a religious sanction to the process.

## CONFIDENCE-BUILDING AND OTHER SUPPORT MEASURES

Once negotiations are under way, the facilitator or the parties themselves may find it useful to strengthen the credibility of an emerging peace settlement through confidence-building measures that help demonstrate to their more hard-line supporters the viability of peace. Such measures can thus have an important function beyond simply establishing trust among the leaders, by serving as a concrete example to their publics that a peace settlement can produce real gains.

A facilitator in touch with all sides of the conflict would be able to broach near-term issues of interest to various parties as potential confidence-building measures, and could be well situated to coordinate agreement and implementation of such measures while considering issues of reciprocity and sequencing.

One potential option might be exploration of local ceasefires, if the belligerent parties prove predictably reluctant to press for a broad, nationwide ceasefire early in the negotiations. Without proper monitoring mechanisms in place, a failed ceasefire could create a major setback. However, there may still be space for de-escalatory, district-level ceasefires. Even if seen as “one-off” deals, they would be a tangible signal of a shift in the ultimate intentions of the conflicting parties and of their openness to begin the process of limiting hostilities. Initial efforts could be directed at those conflict areas where local insurgents are understood to be driven by more localized concerns and grievances; a local ceasefire initiative might create some confidence before seeking to expand to areas of greater strategic significance. In any event, by focusing on local ceasefires, the parties will also minimize the inevitable damage to the process itself from those arrangements that end in failure and reversion to fighting.

An adjunct to local ceasefires can be found in the facilitation of humanitarian access. There is anecdotal evidence that some humanitarian organizations are already functioning with tacit or explicit approval of the Taliban in certain areas under their control. The national

Detainee policy and the release of Taliban detainees generally must be tightly coordinated with other political efforts and linked to a successful political process.

polio vaccination initiative launched by United Nations agencies in October 2010 is a recent example.<sup>13</sup> Discussions on humanitarian access could involve agreement to suspend fighting temporarily and to guarantee safe passage for humanitarian workers. Agreements could also be negotiated to secure special protection areas for specified periods of time to facilitate humanitarian actions such as mass immunizations. For the Taliban, specifically, agreements on humanitarian access might be attractive as an attempt to support their legitimacy, and such steps would encourage more responsible behavior with respect to civilian noncombatants. Improved humanitarian access

will have positive effects on purely humanitarian grounds and might create an additional channel for communication and a further opportunity to demonstrate good faith interactions.

Agreements on humanitarian access may also open the way to other uses of guarantees of safe passage. This concept is known in Afghanistan as *rahdari*, or road letters. Establishing such a mutually recognizable privilege requires channels of communication and would facilitate the undertaking of various nonlethal and nonhostile activities by the Taliban or members of the Afghan government. This could begin with legitimate business activities but could also expand at a later date to include mediation and other de-escalatory efforts.

A major reciprocal de-escalatory measure to broach is the curtailment or limiting of targeted killings by ISAF and the Taliban. In the case of ISAF, this could involve an end to targeting of mid-level commanders, including shadow governors, and for insurgents an end to attacks on ISAF forces with improvised explosive devices and targeting of Afghan government officials and their local supporters.

By excluding foreign jihadi fighters from specific areas under their control, the Taliban could begin to establish that their own agenda and

aspirations lie within Afghanistan and do not threaten the international community. Such a move could be initiated in conjunction with a localized ceasefire, but could also be undertaken as a show of restraint in its own right even without a complete cessation of fighting in a given area. In moving away from groups whose agenda is distinctly transnational and aimed ultimately at targeting the international community through the use of terrorist tactics, the Taliban will increase confidence in their ability to disassociate from and sever ties with such groups as part of a political settlement.

Additional steps could be undertaken by the Taliban within their areas of control, where the nature of their behavior will be an important signaling device to either reassure or undermine faith in the possibilities for a negotiated settlement. Reopening of schools and ensuring their safety, particularly for girls, would signify an important pragmatic concession.

The Taliban have insisted steadfastly on the necessity of dealing with Taliban detainees, as they do on the removal of individuals from the Resolution 1267 sanctions list, and the release of detainees is one of their frequently asserted preconditions. On an individual level, the freeing of detainees offers an avenue for their reconciliation with the Afghan government as a term of release, and perhaps could enter the mix of interim confidence-building measures. However, detainee policy and the release of Taliban detainees generally must be tightly coordinated with other political efforts and linked to a successful political process. The broader resolution of the issue of Taliban detainees will ultimately be a key component of a political settlement.

## IMPROVING AFGHAN GOVERNANCE

It has been said many times, but improving governance, limiting corruption, and enhancing the rule of law are, and will continue to be, urgent tasks for the government of Afghanistan, both now and in the period during which a political process is under way. Such action would strengthen public support and cohesion among the fractious constituent parts of the current political system and increase the odds for near-term stability. Conversely, continued failure to act on them

can only undermine its base. Reforms will improve the credibility of the Afghan government among various constituencies, including those that have expressed concerns and reservations about engaging with the Taliban. Improvement in these areas could also stem the effectiveness of Taliban recruitment, which has often been spurred by grievances with the behavior of the Afghan government.<sup>14</sup> Resentment of government malfeasance has also aggravated localized conflicts and created conditions conducive to armed opposition.

In the end, a political settlement with the Taliban will almost certainly hinge on Taliban agreement to join a revamped Afghan political order that deals with issues insurgents have denounced in the existing system, including official abuse and corruption. Official malfeasance has also contributed to local grievances that have fueled the insurgency and expanded its reach. A preemptive focus by Kabul's leaders on weaknesses in their governance may thus undercut the attractiveness of the insurgency, help blunt its momentum, and enhance the prospects for the political settlement.

ISAF and the international community, too, have an interest in supporting credible reform measures ahead of negotiations. Lax supervision of, and overreliance on, private contractors is rightly seen by Afghans as itself a major factor in corruption. Together with the government of Afghanistan, ISAF might work to streamline their detention policies and expedite transparent review of cases. Since new elections may well be part of the final political accord, it is crucial to build confidence that they will fairly represent the popular will. The United Nations might start working with Afghan electoral authorities on how to improve the conduct of elections based on lessons learned from the contested elections of 2009 and 2010, including a review of current voter registration procedures and a reappraisal of the current electoral system and existing voter registry.

## PAKISTAN'S FUTURE ROLE

Given its decades of involvement with Afghan militant factions, most recently the Taliban, Pakistan will inescapably be a major player in the negotiations among widening circles of international stakeholders. It is unclear whether Pakistan has developed a political strategy

for the potential endgame in Afghanistan or is simply now working to position itself most advantageously for a potential political process. Indications are that there is a multiplicity of views toward the Taliban and Afghanistan inside the Pakistani security establishment: Some remain invested in the Taliban, while others see them as becoming more of a liability, even as the country's elected leadership sees them as of a piece with Pakistan's own native-grown Taliban and a dangerous inspiration to them.

All the hints of change, however, do not seem to have produced tangible results so far. No effort should be spared by all stakeholders to insure that Pakistan is indeed on the side of peace. Pakistan's influence with the Taliban remains important and at times decisive. This role, however, should not obscure the fact that the insurgency's strength rests with its resilience and its continued regenerative capacity within Afghanistan. It is not simply a creation or proxy of the Pakistani security establishment.

As the war has progressed, the relationship between the Taliban and Pakistan has evolved, and there are considerable tensions within the relationship.<sup>15</sup> The Taliban understand their need for continued Pakistani support to maintain the insurgency in Afghanistan. There is broad recognition of their dependence on the Pakistani safe haven and a parallel recognition of the limitations that this imposes on their control of their own political agenda. The arrests in Pakistan in 2010 of key Taliban figures reportedly involved in political outreach with Kabul, such as Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, have also complicated analysis of Pakistan's strategy with respect to the Taliban. The Taliban are keenly aware of these developments, and they have shaped the expectations and attitudes of many among the Taliban.

For this segment of the Taliban, there is a clear sense of their heavily circumscribed position in Pakistan and the corresponding pressures that result from the presence of their families in the country. To operate with a certain degree of freedom in Pakistan, Taliban must have acquiescence from the security services and cannot function covertly. Those who exceed the permitted bounds are hassled and may suffer stronger forms of coercion, including arrest. In contrast to Pakistani members of the Tehrik-i-Taliban, Afghan Taliban have been accorded some license in Pakistan, but still find their freedom of movement and operation tightly constrained.

Pakistan can help a political process in significant ways. Indeed, without its active involvement and positive engagement such a process is unlikely to succeed. While Pakistan is critical to sustaining the insurgency, its actual influence over the Taliban is uncertain. Seen from Kabul, Pakistan's influence and control over the Taliban seem extensive and decisive, due to its provision of conditional sanctuary inside Pakistan and its logistical support. While Pakistan's cooperation and engagement seem a prerequisite for a political process, Islamabad does not speak, and should not be understood to speak, for the Taliban.

Pakistan remains entwined with Afghanistan due to the presence of linked Pashtun communities on both sides of the border, and its official relations with Afghanistan are complicated by the continuing dispute over the Durand Line border. Pakistani officials express concern about the apparent (if perhaps historically understandable) hostility of some senior Afghan officials toward Pakistan. Improving official relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan's civilian and security authorities, and dealing directly with each country's concerns, would have a salutary effect on the outlook for a political process.

Pakistan's desired end-state for Afghanistan will also be influenced by its own internal threat perceptions. Although Pakistan desires a friendly Afghan government, it would not necessarily champion a return of the Taliban to a position of undisputed dominance and power in Kabul. The re-Talibanization of Afghanistan would have deleterious effects upon Pakistan's internal balance of power, which has been intimately connected to the Afghan war and the cooperative networks that have fueled violence on both sides of the border.

Pakistani officials claim to view their security interests in Afghanistan primarily with reference to India. Emblematic of these is the issue of Islamabad's troubled region of Balochistan, where Pakistani officials allege India has been able to foment unrest by exploiting its enhanced role in Afghanistan. Pakistan has also focused on the presence of Indian consulates in Afghanistan and on major construction projects undertaken by India. Pakistan's security concerns with respect to Afghanistan can best be met through an agreed resolution to the war there. As such, Pakistan may be expected to use its purported influence over the Taliban as leverage to advance its own security interests as part of a political settlement.<sup>16</sup>

Pakistan's leadership has affirmed its willingness to participate in a political resolution to the conflict and emphasized its ability to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table and influence their decision-making. The facilitator will need to ascertain whether these statements are actually being realized in measurable changes on the ground. The countries that have invested so much in Afghanistan's stabilization and development, as well as the facilitator, will want to see Pakistan provide unfettered access to key Taliban leaders in Pakistan and guarantees for the safety and protection of the facilitator and those insurgent leaders engaged in a political process.

## ENGAGING REGIONAL PARTIES AND KEY INTERNATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

Pakistan is not the only neighbor with deep interests in Afghanistan. The 1990s saw Afghanistan as the site of regional proxy conflict, with India, Iran, Russia, and Tajikistan supporting the Northern Alliance against the Pakistani-supported Taliban. The potential for them to support Afghan allies in future conflicts remains, especially if ISAF's planned withdrawal leaves behind an unsettled Afghanistan. By comparison, the larger unity of purpose of the international community has allowed most of Afghanistan's neighbors to show relative restraint during the current conflict. The facilitator's consistent engagement with these neighbors in the various tracks of the negotiations will be essential in structuring a sustainable political settlement.

The facilitator and the rest of the international community must reassure these neighbors that their legitimate interests—economic and political, as well as security—will be addressed by a political settlement. For India and Iran, it will be essential that Pakistan demonstrate its intention to be a constructive participant and not the sole arbiter of Afghan political dynamics. Both Iran and India have historic ties with Afghanistan and increasing bonds through aid, trade and commerce, and their positive engagement in a political process can have a stabilizing influence on the country and Afghanistan's development.

India in particular remains wary of an inclusive political settlement that accords legitimacy to the Taliban as an Afghan political

actor, which Indians fear will lead to Taliban domination of a postwar state and reestablishment of safe havens and training facilities for terrorist groups that attack India. Such concerns are understandable, and widely shared. By engaging actively with the facilitator and the negotiating process, India could ensure a settlement in which it could better protect its historic ties, economic links, and legitimate security interests in Afghanistan than it could by resuming support for anti-Taliban Afghan factions after ISAF phases out—particularly because there seems little possibility of a military solution that would be more favorable.

Iran has several important interests in Afghanistan—maintaining its economic and cultural ties with Herat and its strong relationship with the largely Shi'a Hazara community, stopping the flow of drugs across its borders, and avoiding a conflict with the United States and NATO coming out of misunderstanding, accident, or serious differences over the future of Afghanistan. For Iran, the difficulties presented by ongoing bilateral tensions and conflict with the United States complicate the possibility for cooperation in Afghanistan and color assessments of their national security priorities there. Nonetheless, these tensions are not a permanent bar to cooperation in Afghanistan, and the two countries have previously acted in concert in constructive ways, particularly during the Bonn conference, but also with regard to the anti-drug activities and refugees. Given the similarity of long-term U.S. and Iranian interests in Afghanistan, from suppression of narcotics flows to a carefully negotiated place for the Taliban in postwar Afghanistan, this remains an issue on which they should find common ground and perhaps even try to rebuild bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

China's long-time close relations with Pakistan would also be an important asset to the facilitator in the unfolding political process. Although China is unlikely to take a lead role in the negotiations, it does have important security and economic interests at stake in Afghanistan. In a robust political process supported by the United States and the international community, China might be persuaded to use its positive relationship to nudge Pakistan toward a settlement.

The Central Asian states, as well as Russia and China, have an important stake too in what happens in Afghanistan, which should

encourage their active participation in the negotiating process. Continuing conflict risks increased flows into their territory of Uzbek, Chechen, Uighur, and other seasoned jihadi fighters from Afghanistan and Pakistan—and of growing narcotics trafficking emanating from Afghanistan. Thus, increased intelligence sharing and border enforcement in the near term and as part of a resolution of final status issues will be helpful in assuring these states that an end of hostilities in Afghanistan will not lead to the spread of militancy and criminality throughout the region. A political settlement would also present an opportunity to address the sensitivities and concerns of a number of countries in the region regarding a long-term U.S. military presence in Afghanistan and Central Asia. There seems to be a potential alignment between those countries, the American administration, and the insurgency on the need for a withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan as the critical bargains in a negotiated settlement are implemented.

## THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES

The United States is the essential interlocutor from the international community in charting a path toward the conflict's resolution. It and its NATO allies continue to provide the ISAF support that is so critical for Afghanistan's security. Washington should accordingly play a lead role in the negotiations that may take place, and in helping to set up the structures that lead to negotiations.

U.S. support will be essential for the political process even to start, and then for the negotiating process to progress through its various stages. The United States should be actively engaged as the UN secretary-general consults with the various parties to assure that the facilitator he selects will be widely supported and broadly acceptable, including to the contending Afghans, to Pakistan, and to others in the region and beyond—and of course to the United States. It will have to work closely with the non-Taliban Afghan parties, the Pakistanis, and others wherever possible as the facilitator ascertains whether a negotiation is now feasible and workable. Once a negotiating process

gets under way, the Americans will need to maintain close contact with all the parties they can—perhaps informally during the intra-Afghan phase of the conference, and in a more formal and direct way when the stage of seeking regional and multilateral agreements is reached. Indeed, it would not be too much to say that the United States will be a—if not the—most essential party in the process, and the process cannot prosper without full American support and leadership.

By announcing the American intention to begin a drawdown of U.S. military forces (at an unspecified pace over an undetermined period of time), President Barack Obama has spurred all parties—including the Pakistanis, the Taliban, the Karzai government, and the Kabul opposition, as well as other external stakeholders such as India and Iran—to begin focusing on how they can achieve their core interests in a negotiated end game. By solidifying allied commitment to ISAF at least through 2014, the United States has helped clarify to all sides that negotiations are the only viable option for successfully ending the war.

Some key stakeholders in Afghanistan and the region continue, however, to harbor doubts on the ultimate intentions of the United States. They may pursue hedging strategies, making the launch of a genuine negotiating process more difficult. Further signals that the United States supports unambiguously the launch of a political process will be essential in that regard.

On the parts of the talks that concern Afghans domestically, the United States will be appropriately reticent, though on matters regarding clear international norms, such as human rights and political freedoms, it may be expected to join with the Europeans and the United Nations in pressing actively for the Afghan settlement to uphold those legal standards. The United States also can support the facilitator in finding ways around deadlocks through its contacts with Afghan parties that respect its influence. Other parts of the negotiations will necessarily involve the United States and its allies, particularly in establishing lasting security for Afghanistan. The presence or departure of foreign troops, ongoing military and security training and support for the post-war Afghan government, and regional relationships are all areas where the United States in particular, and its NATO partners in general, have major roles to play. The facilitator

should be in close dialogue with the United States, NATO, and ISAF on these issues.

For the same reason, the United States needs to maintain ongoing dialogue with all the international actors. It has patiently and energetically done so with a deeply conflicted Pakistan, which can certainly do more to bring the conflict to an end. And it needs to open the door to direct dialogue on Afghan issues with Iran—just as Iran, for its part, should be prepared to engage diplomatically with the Americans in a concerted effort to end the war, as it had so constructively done at the end of 2001.

The process to reach a settlement will be arduous and circuitous. Much of it will have to be conducted behind closed doors. It is possible that a final agreement could involve a concluding event, akin to the Bonn conference, to endorse publicly the political settlement and the official role of neighboring and interested parties.

## CONCLUSION

Bringing peace to Afghanistan after more than thirty years of war is a daunting task. But no side can now be confident of securing a military victory; none in the past thirty years has proved durable. As the country's contending sides slip into uneasy stalemate, the time to open negotiations to end the war is upon us. The building blocks of a settlement can be discerned, and the parties must tell the Afghan people whether they are prepared to try to explore a compromise.

We believe an international facilitator, designated through the United Nations, can discover by talking to all the potential parties whether now is in fact the time for negotiation. If so, the negotiating process will be complex, and the negotiations themselves potentially arduous. The central and most immediate part of the process will focus on the Afghan parties themselves—which should include the government, the Taliban insurgents, the Kabul republic's "loyal opposition" (including heirs of the old Northern Alliance, including Uzbek, Tajik, and Hazara leaders), and other not yet clearly defined elements of Afghanistan's traditional and new civil society.

In tandem with the intra-Afghan negotiations, the next ring of influence and talks would certainly involve at a minimum Pakistan and the United States, the largest backers of the battling Afghan sides. Just beyond should be Iran, India, and the neighboring Central Asian states. Also crucial participants, if perhaps of somewhat less immediacy on some issues, will be Russia, China, the European Union and some of its leading constituent states, Japan, and Turkey as perhaps a unique bridge among all. As the Afghan negotiations proceed, these international stakeholders should work in harness—ideally, in UN parlance, as “Friends of Afghanistan”—and be available to help influence the Afghan parties in a common direction.

As these talks progress, the international stakeholders will need to give time and attention to beginning to put together the framework agreements defining the role of the outside parties toward the new Afghanistan and cover, *inter alia*, the country’s neutrality and non-alignment, respect for its territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence, and future international cooperation with Afghanistan.

Nothing here is certain to succeed, and no one can guarantee that a durable peace—much less a “Central Asian Valhalla”<sup>17</sup>—will emerge at the end of the road. Like all diplomatic processes, Afghanistan’s will take its own path and occasionally surprise even the participants. Still, we are persuaded that this may prove the best route for Afghans and the international community to achieve their essential goals and end this draining war. We have seen the international community succeed in bringing an end to other seemingly intractable conflicts. Sustaining a durable peace in Afghanistan will require continuing support from the international community, perhaps for many years. But it will be a fraction of the cost of continuing the current war, and we may all be more satisfied and happy with the results.

## SUMMARY OF TASK FORCE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recent fighting in Afghanistan has slowed the slide in the Afghan government's authority, but after thirty years of war neither side today can expect soon to vanquish the other militarily. This growing sense of stalemate opens the way to a political phase to conclude the conflict.
2. Simply co-opting senior-level Taliban into joining the Kabul regime is unlikely to bring peace to Afghanistan; reconciliation with the insurgents will eventually have to involve creating a broader political framework to end the war.
3. The best moment to start a political process toward settlement and reconciliation is now.
4. For the United States, a negotiating process allows it to shape the ultimate political outcomes with more confidence than by reliance on a prolonged and inconclusive war. The large military effort undertaken since 2009 has provided the time and built the platform for achieving core U.S. objectives through negotiation.
5. A political process will have to address both domestic Afghan governance issues, and the security concerns of the states in the region and the broader international community.
6. Afghans themselves must have the responsibility to reach compromises on the internal Afghan issues.
7. International resources will be crucial to sustaining a peace settlement, and should be contingent on Afghans honoring the accord.

8. To secure a stable Afghanistan, widely shared economic and social development will be crucial, and a wider range of donors, including from the region, will need to make and honor firm aid commitments.
9. Renewed commitment of the multilateral development agencies, especially the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, will be required for long-term, reliable financing.
10. The international community should assist Afghanistan in negotiating utilization agreements for mining its mineral deposits and in establishing a legal framework for natural resource revenues.
11. The international community will need to start supporting long-neglected secondary, vocational, and university education.
12. A regional border control and trade transit agreement should be considered as part of, or parallel to, an Afghan peace settlement.
13. The keystone of the settlement, in terms of international security, will be a verifiable severing of Taliban ties with al Qaeda and like-minded groups, guaranteeing that Afghanistan never again shelters transnational terrorist networks.
14. The international community should provide for measures supporting a counterterrorism capability during a transition period.
15. The settlement will need to guarantee vigorous anti-narcotics efforts with close international assistance and cooperation.
16. The withdrawal of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and particularly of U.S. troops, will almost certainly be an essential component of a settlement.
17. A political settlement is likely to require an interim UN monitoring and peacekeeping presence to support its implementation.

18. No belligerent party to the current conflict should be part of the UN peacekeeping force, and Muslim countries in particular should be encouraged to take part in it.
19. To reassure neighboring states' concerns about each other, a precisely negotiated guarantee of Afghanistan's "nonalignment" with regard to its neighbors and others will be needed, including positive and negative security assurances backed by the UN Security Council.
20. The most promising option for establishing a political process would be through an internationally designated facilitator. A facilitator might be an individual, a group, a state or group of states, an international organization, or some combination of these.
21. The United Nations has the greatest institutional experience in providing such a facilitating role, and the UN secretary-general should appoint a representative to head this facilitative phase.
22. If the facilitator's soundings find enough interest in a negotiated peace among the relevant parties, a negotiating process might be structured in a way that includes the various stakeholders in the negotiating process when their concerns are on the table.
23. A standing international conference could provide formal scaffolding for a multi-faceted negotiating process.
24. At the center of the process from the start will be the Afghan parties, who must resolve the core internal divisions; international supporters may be helpful from the sidelines.
25. The neighbors in the region, and the broader international community, will be more directly engaged in parallel tracks on regional security, economic integration, and post-conflict peacekeeping, and particularly as the Afghans near agreement on their governance arrangements.

26. The preconditions that both sides have set for talks should no longer prevent the start of direct negotiations, and should be acknowledged as their respective goals in a political settlement.
27. President Hamid Karzai needs to build a capable and representative negotiating team with strong administrative support.
28. President Karzai's High Peace Council would serve well as a platform for open national dialogue on negotiations.
29. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is uniquely positioned to support Afghan civil society's debate on negotiations around the country, especially through district and provincial level dialogue.
30. The Taliban will need to put forward credible interlocutors who can speak for the insurgency and its commander networks. The facilitator will likely have to engage with various leadership levels in clarifying who really speaks for the Taliban.
31. As negotiations proceed, reciprocal confidence-building measures may be useful in demonstrating the viability of an emerging peace settlement.
32. The Afghan government needs to improve governance, limit corruption, and enhance the rule of law as a political process gets under way if it is to sustain Afghan public support. The international community assisting it similarly needs to support credible reform measures, such as reform of lax reliance on private contractors.
33. Pakistan's active involvement will be needed for successful negotiations.
34. India can better protect its historic ties and economic links in Afghanistan in a negotiated settlement than by supporting anti-Taliban Afghan factions after ISAF phases out.

35. The United States is the essential interlocutor from the international community in charting a path toward the conflict's resolution. It will need to maintain an ongoing dialogue with all parties to the extent possible during the negotiating process.



# NOTES

## CHAPTER 1

1. Afghanistan NGO Security Office, quarterly report, last quarter 2010.

2. According to NATO statistics, alliance air strikes killed or wounded 169 Afghans in the first nine months of 2008, and half that number—88—in the comparable period of 2010, apparently a consequence of tightened restrictions on air attacks imposed by senior commanders during the Obama administration. Dexter Filkins, “U.S. Uses Attacks to Nudge Taliban toward a Deal,” *New York Times*, October 15, 2010.

3. Dexter Filkins, “In Afghanistan, the Exit Plan Starts with ‘If,’” *New York Times*, October 16, 2010.

4. Paul D. Miller, “Finish the Job: How the War in Afghanistan Can Be Won,” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2011. Similarly, Max Boot argues that “victory is still achievable”: Max Boot, “Afghanistan: The Case for Optimism,” Council on Foreign Relations, September 2, 2010. Boot calls the prospects for an “acceptable” negotiated settlement “far-fetched” and discounts the previous eight years of war: “it is only in the past year that they [U.S. and allied forces] have begun to wage war in earnest.” Boot acknowledges, however, that the scenario for victory requires “ameliorating Afghanistan’s crippling governance woes,” something “that will not be easy to do.”

5. British Air Force Chief Marshall Sir Jock Stirrup, “Stirrup: ‘No Military Solution in Afghanistan,’” *The Telegraph*, October 25, 2007. U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, reported by Radio Free Europe, “Defense Chief Calls Afghanistan ‘Greatest Military Challenge’ for U.S.,” January 28, 2009, [http://www.rferl.org/content/Defense\\_Chief\\_Calls\\_Afghanistan\\_Greatest\\_Military\\_Challenge\\_For\\_US/1375703.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Defense_Chief_Calls_Afghanistan_Greatest_Military_Challenge_For_US/1375703.html). General David Petraeus, National

Public Radio interview, September 15, 2010, transcript at <http://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=129857868>. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, Remarks at the Asia Society, New York, February 18, 2011, <http://kabul.usembassy.gov/sp-021811.html>.

6. The 83 percent of respondents to the Asia Foundation's *2010 Survey of the Afghan People* who were supportive of negotiations with the insurgency was even higher than the 71 percent who backed them in 2009, even as more than half those surveyed disavowed any sympathy for the insurgents. Afghans' reported concern about pervasive corruption in the government spiked in the most current survey. Relevant additional data are cited in Jeffrey Laurenti, *Afghanistan Agonistes*, The Century Foundation, forthcoming.

7. According to survey research conducted for ABC and others, Afghan public support for the U.S. troop presence fell steadily from 78 percent in 2006 to 62 percent in 2010, and opposition rose from 21 percent to 37 percent. At the same time, confidence in the ability of the international forces to provide security plummeted, from 67 percent to 36 percent (and those voicing lack of confidence doubled, from 31 percent to 64 percent). *Afghanistan: Public Opinion Trends and Strategic Implications*, Charney Research, presentation for the RAND Corporation, January 24, 2011.

8. *Afghanistan: The Relationship Gap*, International Council on Security and Development, July 2010. Three times as many of the respondents (all men) said working with foreign forces is wrong (74 percent) as opposed to right (24 percent), and that the foreigners disrespect Afghans' religion and traditions (75 percent) rather than respect them (23 percent). Two-thirds (68 percent) rejected the claim that NATO is protecting the local population, while 29 percent supported it; 59 percent opposed a military offensive against the Taliban in Kandahar, while 38 percent backed one. Curiously, a sizable majority nonetheless believed that NATO and the Afghan government (55 percent) rather than the Taliban insurgency (39 percent) are winning the war, and even in these two highly Talibanized provinces, respondents have more confidence in the Afghan government (27 percent), Afghan national army and police (24 percent), or traditional tribal elders (20 percent) than in the Taliban (10 percent) or NATO/ISAF (1 percent).

9. *Transatlantic Trends 2010*, Transatlantic Trends, September 2010, 15–16.

10. Critics note that the U.S. expenditure amounts to \$1 million put behind each soldier for the superstructure of weaponry, air support, intelli-

gence, and the like that goes far beyond the salary and subsistence of each uniformed service member (or \$4 million of military effort against each Taliban fighter in the field).

11. Antonio Giustozzi, “Negotiating with the Taliban: Issues and Prospects,” The Century Foundation, 2010, 16; referencing also Tom Coghlan, “The Taliban in Helmand: An Oral History,” in Antonio Giustozzi, *Decoding the New Taliban: Insights from the Afghan Field* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 140.

12. “Let us not distinguish between the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistani Taliban because both are creating havoc. We have suffered on account of Pakistani Taliban, but Tehrik-i-Taliban in Pakistan has been no friend to Pakistan. And I think that distinction with the passage of time is blurring and there’s a greater understanding developing within Pakistan that they are no friends of ours, they are no friends of Afghanistan. And that is why this democratically elected government has taken steps to improved relations with Afghanistan.” Mahmood Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Council on Foreign Relations, September 21, 2010, [http://www.cfr.org/publication/22997/conversation\\_with\\_mahmood\\_shah\\_mahmood\\_qureshi\\_minister\\_of\\_foreign\\_affairs\\_islamic\\_republic\\_of\\_pakistan.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/22997/conversation_with_mahmood_shah_mahmood_qureshi_minister_of_foreign_affairs_islamic_republic_of_pakistan.html).

13. “The flow of Taliban fighters seeking to reintegrate has slowed to a trickle,” reports the *New York Times* (Rod Nordland, “Lacking Money and Leadership, Push for Taliban Defectors Stalls,” *New York Times*, September 6, 2010). In contrast to “the 9,000 Taliban who sought to join the government side” in 2004–09, there were just one hundred defectors registered in the four months after April 2010; and even with the redoubled allied military assault since the spring, the Afghan government’s reintegration chief claimed a total of 960 Taliban combatants signed up for reintegration in the entire year. Report by Masoom Stanekzai to the meeting of Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, January 2011. On the other hand, desertions from the Afghan National Army—which even officially had been at epidemic levels of 10 percent through last year (with an even larger percentage who have refused to re-enlist)—have also fallen. Anthony Cordesman, *Afghan National Security Forces: What It Will Take to Implement the ISAF Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Center for International and Strategic Studies, 2010), 92. Accounts like that of the special-operations killing of defector Mullah Sahib Jan may further depress defector applications for reintegration (Jeremy Scahill, “Killing Reconciliation,” *The Nation*, October 27, 2010).

14. Reported contacts with senior-level leaders of the insurgency in 2010 were decried at the time as disinformation by former senior officials of the Taliban now living under government control and surveillance, intended to sow discord among Taliban factions. Abdul Salam Zaeef, one-time Taliban ambassador to Pakistan who spent four years in confinement in Guantánamo and now lives, nominally “reconciled,” under government control in Kabul, bluntly told an interviewer, “There is nothing going on, no negotiations between the Taliban and the Americans or the Taliban and the government.” An unnamed U.S. official cited by the McClatchy News Service did not disagree. “Exaggerating the significance of it is an effort to sow distrust within the insurgency.” Scahill, *Killing Reconciliation*. The “senior Taliban” concerned was later found to be an imposter.

15. The Obama administration has broached the subject of negotiations in its public pronouncements, with Secretary Clinton acknowledging that “reconciling with an adversary that can be as brutal as the Taliban sounds distasteful.” Even as she has hinted at edging toward negotiations, however, she has reaffirmed three longstanding preconditions: “If former militants are willing to meet these red lines, they would then be able to participate in the political life of the country under their constitution.” Clinton, Remarks at the Asia Society.

16. David H. Petraeus, “Learning Counterinsurgency: Observations from Soldiering in Iraq,” *Military Review*, January-February 2006.

## CHAPTER 2

1. The emirate’s de facto charter was Sharia itself, and its leaders saw little space in the sacred texts for participatory politics. “The Sharia does not allow politics or political parties,” one of Taliban emir Mullah Omar’s chief aides, Mullah Wakil, told Ahmed Rashid as the movement consolidated power. “That is why we give no salaries to officials or soldiers, just food, clothes, shoes, and weapons. We want to live a life like the Prophet lived 1400 years ago, and jihad is our right. We want to recreate the time of the Prophet, and we are only carrying out what the Afghan people have wanted for the past 14 years.” Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 43.

2. Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Remarks at the Closing Ceremony of the Constitutional Loya Jirga, January 4, 2004. “The men whose conduct Brahimi was addressing were at the center of the CLJ [Constitutional *Loya Jirga*] process,” notes J. Alexander Their, “The Making of a Constitution in Afghanistan,” *New York Law School Law Review* 51, no. 3 (2006/07): 570.

3. Afghanistan Constitution, Articles 1, 2, 3, 35, 54; English translation, [http://www.afghan-web.com/politics/current\\_constitution.html](http://www.afghan-web.com/politics/current_constitution.html).

4. The ministry for the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice had actually been established in 1992 by the victorious mujahideen, and though abolished after the fall of the emirate, it was revived by judicial order in 2003. The judicial system is often seen as the most likely avenue for accommodating the Taliban’s clerical constituency into the organs of the state, reflecting both their own interests and the overwhelmingly conservative predisposition of the courts already. The existing constitution gives priority to its own provisions and other legislation, but does provide, “When there is no provision in the Constitution or other laws regarding ruling on an issue, the courts’ decisions shall be within the limits of this Constitution in accord with the Hanafi jurisprudence and in a way to serve justice in the best possible manner. Courts shall apply Shia school of law in cases dealing with personal matters involving the followers of Shia Sect in accordance with the provisions of law.” Afghan Constitution, Articles 130 and 131.

5. *Ibid.*, Articles 2, 23, 29, 34, 36, 37, and 38.

6. *Ibid.*, Articles 22, 44, 83, and 84.

7. As a result of the underground networks established to provide girls with at-home schooling during the Taliban years, and the post-emirate opportunities for mobilizing women, “the female half of the Afghan people have the confidence and mutual contacts to defend their legitimate rights against any who would try to limit them,” Orzala Ashraf Nemat writes in her paper for the task force. But she hints that pressures from neighboring countries and the broader international community may be needed to consolidate women’s gains. “Thanks to various local, national, *regional and international factors*, it will be impossible for any political settlement among armed men in Afghanistan to put women back into the margins of the society” [*emphasis added*]. Orzala Ashraf Nemat, “Afghan Women at the Crossroads: Agents of Peace—Or Its Victims?” The Century Foundation, 2011.

8. Supporters of amnesty in the new parliament secured passage of an amnesty law covering crimes committed between 1978 and 2006.

9. “Anger over the lack of accountability for past and ongoing crimes committed against civilians has been a recurring theme in Afghan politics since 2001,” Mary Kaldor and Marika Theros found in their research into Afghan civil society. “Few Afghans support an amnesty for those who have committed the most egregious crimes; indeed, many believe that the absence of justice has helped pave the way to continued violence.” Kaldor and Theros, “Building Afghan Peace from the Ground Up,” The Century Foundation, 2011, 30.

10. The experiences of Afghanistan over several decades and of Pakistan in its agreements with militants in the Pashtun borderlands suggest that concerns about local parties’ scrupulous adherence to their agreements may not be exaggerated. See Hassan Abbas, “Militancy in Pakistan’s Borderlands: Implications for the Nation and for Afghan Policy,” The Century Foundation: 2010, 13–23.

11. Clare Lockhart, “Afghanistan: Framing the Context and Options for the Way Forward,” Aspen Strategy Group (unpublished manuscript).

12. One of the most ambitious urban projects is the Kabul metropolitan area development project, which aims to direct the capital’s rapidly growing population into an adjacent metropolitan area with adequate transportation and power grids. This initiative (see [www.dcca.gov.af](http://www.dcca.gov.af)) has drawn particular international support from the Japanese.

13. James Risen, “U.S. Identifies Vast Mineral Riches in Afghanistan,” *New York Times*, June 13, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/14/world/asia/14minerals.html>.

14. Arne Straud, Mohammad Hakim, Sediqa Newrozi, Akbar Sarwari, and Aled Williams, “Afghan Hydrocarbons: A Source for Development or for Conflict?” Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2010, 8. The report indicates that the bulk of undiscovered crude oil is expected to be found in the Afghan-Tajik Basin and the bulk of undiscovered natural gas is expected to be found in the Amu Darya Basin.

15. The Chinese group bid \$1 billion dollars higher than any of its Western competitors, and committed to more infrastructure development as part of its project—a model Afghan authorities hope to replicate. Despite some grumbling in the American press about the contract, a U.S. correspondent noted, “Had an American company won Aynak, some Afghans noted wryly,

critics inevitably would have accused the United States of waging war to seize the country's mineral wealth. Moreover, if China succeeds in developing Aynak and generating revenue for the Kabul government, that helps achieve an American goal." Michael Wines, "China Willing to Spend Big on Afghan Commerce," *New York Times*, December 29, 2009.

16. Straud et al., "Afghan Hydrocarbons," viii.

17. The website of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative is found at <http://eiti.org/>.

18. In Istanbul in 2010, the presidents or foreign ministers of Afghanistan, China, Iran, Pakistan, and Tajikistan joined their Turkish host in committing to "enhance region-wide connectivity through the establishment and further development of trade and transit, energy and transport corridors and to encourage participation of their private sectors in regional development programmes." *Statement of Istanbul Summit on Friendship and Cooperation in the "Heart of Asia,"* January 26, 2010, [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/istanbul-statement-on-friendship-and-cooperation-in-the-\\_heart-of-asia\\_.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/istanbul-statement-on-friendship-and-cooperation-in-the-_heart-of-asia_.en.mfa).

19. Joshua Foust, "Post-Soviet Central Asian National Interests in Afghanistan," The Century Foundation, 2010, 7.

20. Rashid, *Taliban*, 159–80. In addition to concerns related to the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan, the project has serious geopolitical ramifications for Russia, Iran, and China that could create significant opposition to its realization. Further, in light of Turkmenistan's existing contractual obligations, there are questions about the feasibility of the project at this juncture and for the foreseeable future.

21. According to some analysts, tensions in the relationship between the Taliban and al Qaeda were particularly significant in the early period of Taliban rule; see Zahid Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle with Militant Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 42. A recent uncorroborated first-hand account from Noman Benotman, a former senior leader of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group who was in Afghanistan and interacted with al Qaeda and its leaders, suggests that some senior Taliban leaders sought to warn the United States of an impending attack, but that such warnings, directed through their diplomatic presence in New York, lacked specificity and were not actionable. Camille Tawil, "The Other Face of Al-Qaeda," Quilliam Foundation, November 2010 (a six-part series of articles originally published in *Al-Hayat* and translated by Maryam El-Hajbi and

Mustafa Abulhimal), [http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/images/stories/pdfs/the-other-face-of-al-qaeda.pdf?dm\\_i=JI3,AZ98,3031IN,UGW9,1](http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/images/stories/pdfs/the-other-face-of-al-qaeda.pdf?dm_i=JI3,AZ98,3031IN,UGW9,1). It is perhaps noteworthy that when Osama Bin Laden arrived in Afghanistan in 1994, he was the guest of the then mujahideen government in Kabul, as the Taliban had not yet emerged.

22. According to Kandahar-based analysts Alex Strick van Lischoten and Felix Kuehn, Taliban leaders have “seemed to concede in public commentary that they would be required to provide guarantees against Afghanistan being used as a terrorist sanctuary.” Alex Strick van Lischoten and Felix Kuehn, “Separating the Taliban from al-Qaeda: The Core of Success in Afghanistan,” New York University Center on International Cooperation, February 2011, 7. Mullah Omar himself appeared elliptically to address the concern about al Qaeda’s possible return to Afghanistan in his 2010 *Eid ul-Fitr* message, insisting that Taliban foreign policy would be based “on the principle that we will not harm others nor allow others to harm us.” Kuehn and Strick van Lischoten acknowledge that some Taliban leaders even during emirate days sought to break the tie with al Qaeda, but, for most, “this review and rethinking of the past came about only following the collapse of their government, and it took several years for the leadership to come to some consensus in acknowledging this even in private.” *Ibid.*, 8.

23. Anne Stenersen, “Al-Qaeda’s Allies: Explaining the Relationship Between Al-Qaeda and Various Factions of the Taliban After 2001,” New America Foundation, April 2010, 2 (arguing that the “general finding is that al-Qaeda functions as a ‘force multiplier’ for local groups, supporting them with manpower, specialist knowledge, and propaganda, and acting as an adviser and negotiator. Moreover, al-Qaeda’s presence in the area is said to have strengthened the link between local insurgencies in Afghanistan and Pakistan and the global jihadist current.”)

24. U.S. secretary of state Hillary Rodham Clinton reaffirmed in February 2011 that, for the country with the largest troop deployment in Afghanistan, the central issue regarding the Taliban remains the connection with al Qaeda. “The Taliban and al-Qaida are distinct groups with distinct aims, but they are both our adversaries and part of a syndicate of terror that must be broken....Al-Qaida cannot be allowed to maintain its safe haven, protected by the Taliban, and to continue plotting attacks while destabilizing nations that have known far too much war.” Hillary Rodham Clinton, Remarks at the Asia Society, New York, February 18, 2011.

25. Stenersen, “Al-Qaeda’s Allies,” 14.

26. Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov has insisted on “the need to qualify the Afghan *drug threat* in the UN Security Council as a *threat* to international peace and security,” and the UN Security Council’s resolution extending ISAF’s authorization until the end of 2011 recognized “the threat posed by illicit drug production, trade, trafficking to international peace and security” and called on ISAF to support efforts to tackle production and trafficking. “Afghan Drugs Threaten Global Security—Lavrov,” RIA Novosti, June 9, 2010; and UN Security Resolution 1943, October 13, 2010.

27. A negative assurances regional accord might include a declaration by all parties, including the post-war Afghan government, that Afghanistan is a permanently nonaligned country; an Afghan commitment not to permit its territory to be used against the interests of any of its neighbors, and the neighbors’ commitment not to permit their territory to be used against the interests of Afghanistan; and agreement by Afghanistan and Pakistan not to press territorial claims along their common border, and to refer these claims to a special border regime.

28. A positive assurances regional accord might include a set of more active commitments to Afghanistan over time, including agreement by Afghanistan and its neighbors—particularly Pakistan—to demarcate, mutually recognize, and mutually police their common borders; and international commitment to support Afghanistan’s new government of national reconciliation.

29. *The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, signed formally December 14, 1995, The Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, <http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/bosnia/dayframe.html>.

## CHAPTER 3

1. In one potential sign of convergence, the National Consultative Peace Jirga summoned by the Afghan government in June 2010 singled out two Muslim countries for special recognition in its concluding declaration—countries that persons associated with the Taliban insurgencies have also cited as possible interlocutors: “We express our gratitude for the sincere efforts by the Muslim countries especially by Saudi King (the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques) and Republic of Turkey to help ensure peace

in our war stricken country and want that the efforts continue, speed up and expand.” *The Resolution Adopted at the Conclusion of the National Consultative Peace Jirga*, Loya Jirga Tent, Kabul, June 2–4, 2010, [http://www.genderconcerns.org/article.php?id\\_nr=170&id=Declaration%20Afghan%20Peace%20Jirga%202%20to%204%20June%202010,%20Kabul](http://www.genderconcerns.org/article.php?id_nr=170&id=Declaration%20Afghan%20Peace%20Jirga%202%20to%204%20June%202010,%20Kabul).

2. In the joint statement issued by Presidents Barack Obama and Hamid Karzai following their May 2010 meeting, each party reiterated its support for political reconciliation and appeared to offer some flexibility on this oft-repeated set of conditions that the Taliban must meet as a prerequisite for entering into talks. The United States, for its part, has left somewhat vague whether these three red lines, first laid out during the Bush administration, are actual preconditions for negotiations or criteria for its outcome. Indicating that these issues could in fact become the subject of a negotiating process, Burhanuddin Rabbani, the former president of Afghanistan and the chairman of President Karzai’s High Peace Council, stated that “during the negotiations, it is possible to show flexibility on some issues which look complicated and difficult,” and went on to elaborate that “tough stances are part of negotiations at the beginning when issues are discussed by two sides. We should not be disappointed by such statements.” Sayed Salahuddin, “Afghan Peace Council Flexible on Taliban Talks Terms,” Reuters, October 14, 2010, <http://in.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-52196620101014>.

3. In Mullah Omar’s August 2010 *‘Eid* statement to mark the end of Ramadan, he duly noted his demand for the international community to “withdraw your soldiers from our country unconditionally and as soon as possible.” However, in an October 2010 statement issued in the name of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the Taliban uncharacteristically revealed a level of flexibility on this point, stating, “The rationale for reconciliation can be only convincing when, at least, the invading Americans put signature [sic] on a document before the people of Afghanistan and the world, binding them legally to withdraw their forces from Afghanistan in a given time-frame.” “New statement from the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan: ‘Known Figureheads and the Futile Reconciliation Slogans,’” posted on Jihadology website, October 18, 2010, <http://jihadology.net/2010/10/18/new-statement-from-the-islamic-emirate-of-afghanistan-known-figureheads-and-the-futile-reconciliation-slogans/>.

4. Minna Jarvenpaa, "Making Peace in Afghanistan," forthcoming, draft circulated in July 2010 as a non-paper under the title "Political Settlement in Afghanistan: Preparing for the long game, not the end-game."

5. This kind of UNAMA support role could help assure that often-marginalized groups, such as both new and traditional civil society actors in the provinces, would have an opportunity to contribute in a broad and inclusive political process. This would also help dispel fears over the possibility of a rushed and narrow political deal that resolves intra-Pashtun issues over power between the Afghan government and the insurgency without accommodating the much wider concerns of various strata of Afghan society. The research of Mary Kaldor and Marika Theros underscores that "both the government and the insurgents lack strong support among the people, and neither is seen as legitimate representatives of the public interest. Indeed, many respondents suggested that a political pact between a corrupt government, abusive commanders, and the insurgency would only deepen the feeling of insecurity for people and communities." Marika Theros and Mary Kaldor, "Building Afghan Peace from the Ground Up," The Century Foundation, 2001, 30.

6. Antonio Giustozzi, "Negotiating with The Taliban," The Century Foundation, 2010.

7. Thomas Ruttig, "How Tribal Are the Taliban?" Afghan Analysts Network, June 2010, 13.

8. The relationship between the Taliban and Hezb-i-Islami is not without friction. As the Taliban have expanded their reach further north into areas within Hezb-i-Islami's traditional sphere of operations, there have been local instances of outright violent conflict.

9. Analysts have pointed to tactical shifts as indicative of broader radicalizing trends within the insurgency. Strick van Linschoten notes that these shifts can be seen "in terms of their tactics in the number of beheadings. That would not have happened before. It is the same in terms of their attitude to authority, killing elders for example, and also talking back to Quetta, the senior leadership, in not being completely subservient to them. You see it in the general fragmentation also: the Taliban shadow governor in Kandahar city doesn't have control over all Taliban groups any more. A lot of civilian killings in the city aren't ordered from Quetta. They often comes [*sic*] from small groups." "View from Kandahar: 'Petraeus Believes in Military Victory,'" Deutsche Welle, December 20, 2010, <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,6346567,00.html>. A June 2010 suicide bombing of a wedding

party outside of Kandahar that killed forty was also seen as indicative of radicalizing trends. While the Taliban denied involvement in the attack, suspicions centered on insurgent activity as the attack targeted individuals with links to local anti-Taliban militias. "Suicide Bomber Kills 40 at Afghan Wedding Party," Associated Press, June 11, 2010, [http://todayszaman.com/newsDetail\\_getNewsById.action;jsessionid=9A755A0F0855C612BD155103DE045F78?newsId=212752](http://todayszaman.com/newsDetail_getNewsById.action;jsessionid=9A755A0F0855C612BD155103DE045F78?newsId=212752).

10. Kuehn and Strick van Lischoten call the new generation of commanders "potentially a more serious threat" because it is "not interested in negotiations or compromise with foreigners" and is more drawn to al Qaeda's jihadist ideology. "Al-Qaeda operatives have been known to seek out direct contact with such younger Taliban field commanders inside Afghanistan." Alex Strick van Lischoten and Felix Kuehn, "Separating the Taliban from al-Qaeda: The Core of Success in Afghanistan," New York University Center on International Cooperation, February 2011, 9–10.

11. Carlotta Gall reports that Taliban field commanders are increasingly balking at orders from Pakistan-based Taliban leaders to return to Afghanistan to attack U.S. and other international forces. To date, according to her Taliban source, "the field commanders would obey their orders to resume the fight, however reluctant they might be," adding, "We are tired of fighting and we say this among ourselves. But this is our vow, not to leave our country to foreigners." Carlotta Gall, "War-weary Midlevel Taliban Admit Rift with Top Leaders," *New York Times*, February 22, 2011, 1.

12. The High Peace Council called for the release of Mullah Khairullah Khairkhwa, who served as both interior minister and governor of Herat during the emirate regime and was taken to the U.S. base at Guantánamo, Cuba, after his capture in 2002. The council announced its intention to send a delegation to Guantánamo to "to discuss the possible release of Taliban detainees as a goodwill gesture to boost reconciliation talks with insurgents." Rod Nordland, "Karzai Calls on the U.S. to Free a Taliban Official," *New York Times*, February 9, 2011; "Afghan Peace Delegation Headed to Gitmo for Talks," Associated Press, February 22, 2011.

13. "UN Agencies Help Launch Initiative to Combat Polio and Worm Infestation," UN News Centre, October 3, 2010, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=36324&Cr=Polio&Cr1>.

14. Stephen Carter and Kate Clark, "No Shortcut to Stability: Justice, Politics and Insurgency in Afghanistan," Chatham House, December 2010, <http://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/-/id/985/>.

15. There were tensions even from the start of the movement, when the Taliban spurned Pakistani efforts to woo warlords to back the Taliban against Burhanuddin Rabbani's mujahideen regime in early 1996: "The Taliban declined to have anything to do with the other warlords whom they condemned as communist infidels." Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000), 44.

16. As Christine Fair notes in her paper for the Task Force, "Pakistan has sought to increase its influence in Afghanistan since 1947, with varying degrees of intensity, and has failed in most senses, as Kabul—with the exception of the Taliban government—always has been closer to Delhi than to Islamabad." Conversely, "India is interested in retaining Afghanistan as a friendly state from which it has the capacity to monitor Pakistan and even, where possible, cultivate assets to influence activities in Pakistan." Christine Fair, "India in Afghanistan and Beyond: Opportunities and Constraints," The Century Foundation, 2010, 9.

17. "If we set ourselves the objective of creating some sort of Central Asian Valhalla over there, we will lose, because nobody in the world has that kind of time, patience and money," defense secretary Gates told the Senate Armed Services Committee in January 2009. Ann Scott Tyson, "Gates Predicts 'Slog' in Afghanistan," *Washington Post*, January 28, 2009.



## ABOUT THE TASK FORCE MEMBERS

LAKHDAR BRAHIMI, *Task Force Co-Chair*, is a member of The Elders, a group of elder statesmen created at the initiative of Nelson Mandela and chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. He was special representative of the UN secretary-general and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (2001–04), where he led the implementation of the Peace Agreement reached at the Bonn conference, which he had chaired. He also served as the secretary-general’s special envoy for Afghanistan from July 1997 until October 1999. He briefly served as UN special envoy to Iraq (January to June 2004). His previous diplomatic positions include special envoy of the Arab League to Lebanon, where he oversaw the end of that country’s seventeen-year long civil war. He served as foreign minister for Algeria (1991–93), and led a United Nations Observer Mission that observed the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa that resulted in Nelson Mandela’s election as president.

THOMAS R. PICKERING, *Task Force Co-Chair*, is vice chairman of Hills and Company, an international consulting firm providing advice to U.S. businesses on investment, trade, and risk assessment issues abroad, particularly in emerging market economies. He retired in 2006 as senior vice president, international relations for Boeing. He has had a career spanning five decades as a U.S. diplomat, serving as under secretary of state for political affairs, ambassador to the United Nations, ambassador to Russia, India, Israel, Nigeria, Jordan, and El Salvador. He also served on assignments in Zanzibar and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. He holds the personal rank of career ambassador, the highest in the U.S. Foreign Service.

**BARBARA K. BODINE** is lecturer in public policy and director of the Scholars in the Nation's Service Initiative, a program at the Woodrow Wilson School. She was ambassador to the Republic of Yemen (1997–2001). She also served in Baghdad as deputy principal officer during the Iran-Iraq War, in Kuwait as deputy chief of mission during the Iraqi invasion and occupation of 1990–91, and again, seconded to the Department of Defense, in Iraq in 2003 as the senior Department of State official and the first coalition coordinator for reconstruction in Baghdad and the Central governorates.

**HİKMET ÇETİN** was the NATO senior civilian representative (SCR) for Afghanistan (2004–06). He was elected to Turkish Parliament in 1977 as a member of the Republican People's Party (CHP). He has served as the deputy prime minister, minister of foreign affairs, and speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly.

**STEVE COLL** is president of the New America Foundation, and a contributor at the *New Yorker* magazine. Previously, he spent twenty years as a foreign correspondent and senior editor at the *Washington Post*, serving as the paper's managing editor from 1998 to 2004. He is the author of six books, including *On the Grand Trunk Road: A Journey into South Asia* (1994); *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (2004), which won the Pulitzer Prize; and *The Bin Ladens: An Arabian Family in the American Century* (2008).

**JAMES DOBBINS** is the director, International Security and Defense Policy Center, RAND National Security Research Division. He has been assistant secretary of state for Europe, special assistant to the president, special adviser to the president and secretary of state for the Balkans, and ambassador to the European Community. He has served as the Clinton and Bush administration's special envoy for Afghanistan, Kosovo, Bosnia, Haiti, and Somalia. After September 11, he was named as the Bush administration's representative to the Afghan opposition with the task of putting together and installing a broadly based successor to the Taliban regime. He represented the United States at the Bonn conference that established the new Afghan government.

**ROBERT FINN** was the first U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan in more than twenty years, from March 22, 2002 until November 27, 2003. He is currently a professor in Turkic studies and international relations at Princeton University. He was a member of the Foreign Service (1978–2005). In 1992, he opened (as *chargé d'affaires*) the U.S. Embassy to Azerbaijan and served as *chargé* and deputy chief of mission there for three years. He also served as the U.S. ambassador to Tajikistan (1998–2001). He also has served in Turkey, Croatia, and Pakistan.

**JEAN-MARIE GUÉHENNO**, former UN under-secretary general for peacekeeping operations (2000–08), is a nonresident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and the Arnold A. Saltzman Professor of Professional Practice at the School of International and Public Affairs of Columbia University, where he is the deputy director of the Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies. Guéhenno spent a part of his career in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France, including terms as head of cultural affairs of the French Embassy in the United States (1982–86), director of the policy planning staff (1989–93), and ambassador to the Western European Union (1993–95). He also was the chairman of the Institut des Hautes Études de Défense Nationale (1998–2000).

**IGOR SERGEYEVICH IVANOV** is a professor at Moscow State Institute for International Relations. Previously, he served as minister of foreign affairs (1998–2004), and secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation (2004–07). He represented the USSR and then Russia as Ambassador to Spain (1991–93). He has also worked as a researcher at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, USSR Academy of Sciences.

**WALTER KOLBOW** served as parliamentary state secretary and deputy minister of defense (1998–2005). He was deputy chairman of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) parliamentary group in the German Bundestag (2005–09) and served as member of the Afghanistan Task Force of the SPD parliamentary group (2006–09). He was a member of the German Bundestag's Defense Committee (1980–2009), where he served as SPD spokesman. He was a member of the German

Delegation to the North Atlantic Assembly and of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

**LAWRENCE J. KORB** is a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress and an adjunct professor at Georgetown University. Prior to joining the Center for American Progress, he held executive positions at the Council on Foreign Relations, the Brookings Institution, and the American Enterprise Institute. He served as assistant secretary of defense for manpower, reserve affairs, installations, and logistics (1981–85) and on active duty as a naval flight officer.

**SADAKO OGATA** is president of the Japan International Cooperation Agency. She served as the UN high commissioner for refugees (1991–2000), representative of Japan on the UN Commission on Human Rights, and envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary at the Permanent Mission of Japan to the UN. She was special representative of prime minister of Japan on Afghanistan assistance, a member of the Advisory Committee on Genocide Prevention, and UN secretary-general's High Level Panel on Threat, Challenges and Change. Prior to her diplomatic career, she was dean of the Faculty of Foreign Studies at Sophia University in Tokyo, as well as director and professor at the Institute of International Relations.

**JAMES SHINN** teaches at Princeton University's School of Engineering and Applied Science. He served as assistant secretary for Asia in the Department of Defense (2007–08). Before coming to the Pentagon, he was the National Intelligence Officer for East Asia, first at the Central Intelligence Agency and then for the director of national intelligence (2003–06). He was the senior fellow for Asia at the Council on Foreign Relations (1993–96). He served in the East Asia Bureau of the Department of State (1976–79), and then spent fifteen years as a manager and entrepreneur in Silicon Valley.

**FRANCESC VENDRELL** served as EU special representative for Afghanistan (2002–08) and for the two previous years as the secretary-general's personal representative for Afghanistan and head of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan. While director

of the Asia and Pacific Division of the UN Department of Political Affairs (1993–99), he served concurrently as the secretary-general's deputy personal representative for East Timor, special envoy for Cambodia and Papua New Guinea, and as adviser on Myanmar. He was the secretary-general's deputy personal representative for the Central American Peace Process (1987–92).

WANG YINGFAN served as vice chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chinese National People's Congress (2003–08). Prior to that, he served as permanent representative of China to the United Nations (2000–03). He was successively posted in the Chinese Office of the Chargé d'Affaires in Britain, Department of Interpretation and Translation of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Chinese Embassies in Ghana and the Philippines. After 1980, he served in the Department of Asian Affairs, and as ambassador to the Philippines (1988–90), director general of the Department of Asian Affairs of Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1990–94), assistant foreign minister (1994–95), and vice foreign minister (1995–2000).



## DESCRIPTIONS OF THE BACKGROUND PAPERS

### *NEGOTIATING WITH THE TALIBAN:*

#### *ISSUES AND PROSPECTS*

*by Antonio Giustozzi*

The resilience of the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan over the past half-dozen years has dispelled illusions of a military “victory” excluding them, and an end to the thirty years’ war in Afghanistan seems certain to involve their reintegration in some form into Afghan politics. In considering possible negotiations with the Taliban, one particular concern is how united, or disunited, the Taliban really are. Giustozzi lays out how the Taliban are structured and organized, with an eye to assessing the impact of their organization and *modus operandi* on their willingness to negotiate and honor a political settlement.

### *INDIA IN AFGHANISTAN AND BEYOND: OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS*

*by C. Christine Fair*

The international community has been ambivalent about India’s profile in Afghanistan. While the Afghan government and its international partners welcome India’s constructive role, many also worry about the negative externalities associated with India’s footprint in the country, particularly with respect to Pakistan, which has long feared Indian encirclement and complains sharply about India’s expanding presence in Afghanistan. In this report, Fair outlines India’s current interests in Afghanistan, how it has sought to achieve its aims, and the consequences of its actions for India, Pakistan, and the international efforts to stabilize Pakistan and Afghanistan.

**POST-SOVIET CENTRAL ASIAN NATIONAL INTERESTS IN  
AFGHANISTAN**

*by Joshua Foust*

Afghanistan's neighbors that garner the most attention in policy debates about resolving its conflicts are Iran and Pakistan. The five post-Soviet states to Afghanistan's north—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—also will have a hand in determining Afghanistan's future, though their relevance is often discounted and there is little understanding of exactly what their role might be. The paper explains how and why these bordering countries do not view the war in Afghanistan in the same terms as do the United States, Russia, Europe, or the UN Security Council collectively. While these states are currently preoccupied with internal issues, Foust sees considerable opportunity for increasing cooperation among countries in the region in an effort to aid the international community's efforts in Afghanistan.

**MILITANCY IN PAKISTAN'S BORDERLANDS:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE NATION AND FOR AFGHAN POLICY**

*by Hassan Abbas*

Abbas provides a critical perspective on past Pakistani policy toward jihadist militant groups, the growth of their influence in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Kyber Pukhtunkhwa Province (KPP), and what steps need to be taken in order to reverse their momentum. Abbas argues that Pakistan's civilian and military leadership will have to transition from a short-term strategy of deal-making and army offensives to a long-term political solution that will erode the gains made by militant groups in these areas since 2002.

**BUILDING AFGHAN PEACE FROM THE GROUND UP**

*by Marika Theros and Mary Kaldor*

Despite the efforts and expenditures of the international community and the government in Kabul, security in Afghanistan remains elusive, Kaldor and Theros argue, often because in many Afghan provinces foreign and government forces are seen as an intruding

presence. However, civil society initiatives at the grassroots local level can build a cooperative framework for resolution of the Afghan conflict that can facilitate larger solutions. Bottom-up approaches to conflict resolution could complement and strengthen top-down efforts in addressing the regional dimensions of the conflict in Afghanistan-Pakistan.

### ***A GENDER AT RISK:***

#### ***SAFEGUARDING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN AFGHAN SOCIETY***

*by Orzala Ashraf Nemat*

Despite the Taliban-fostered image that Afghanistan's traditional society is not ready to accept women's rights, Orzala Ashraf Nemat argues, the past thirty years—including women's experience of circumventing Taliban repression—have laid the groundwork for fierce defense of the increasingly active role of women in public life. Much work remains to be done on linking Islamic principles with the efforts of Afghan women for peace, security, political participation, and legal rights.

### ***Forthcoming***

#### ***THE CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER***

*by Michael Semple*

Afghanistan's 2004 constitution established, at least on paper, a unitary and centralized government mandated to respect fundamental human rights, but many continue to question the legitimacy and effectiveness of that regime, not least of all anti-government elements such as the Taliban. The existing constitution remains the only practical basis upon which a political process could be launched. However, a joint reform mechanism to develop amendments for the constitution may have to be a part of any negotiated agreement and prior improvements in governance could help address grievances during the insurgency. A political accommodation between the government of Afghanistan, the insurgents, and other stakeholders will require concrete structural reforms. However, there is little prospect of achieving an Afghan consensus around any attempt to overhaul existing political institutions.

*Forthcoming**AFGHANISTAN AGONISTES:**THE MANY STAKES IN A THIRTY YEARS WAR**by Jeffrey Laurenti*

Afghans largely recognize that their country has made considerable gains over the past decade, project director Jeffrey Laurenti argues in this background paper for the task force, but unreconciled internal divisions and the conflicting priorities of Afghans' foreign friends have aborted the country's return to stability. The concentric circles of neighborly interests in Afghanistan have been partly harmonized through the United Nations, with the critical exception of Pakistan's, but a new fluidity may be opening possibilities for convergence on restoring peace and security.

These background papers can be found at  
[www.tcf.org/publications/2011/3/afghanistan-task-force-white-papers](http://www.tcf.org/publications/2011/3/afghanistan-task-force-white-papers)



