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Averting Failure in Afghanistan

Seth G. Jones

The current US and NATO strategy in Afghanistan involves establishing security with a light footprint. However, the deteriorating security environment demonstrates that this strategy has not been successful. Establishing security during stability operations is largely a function of several factors that foreign powers can influence: the number and performance of troops and police, amount of money, establishment of a peace treaty, and duration of the operation.¹ The United States and NATO have failed to meet most of these benchmarks. In particular, the amount of troops, police and financial assistance has been among the lowest of any stability operation since the Second World War, and there has been no peace settlement. The US decision to hand control of the volatile southern provinces to NATO has also triggered deep concerns among Afghan leaders about America's long-term commitment, as well as NATO's ability to fight a counterinsurgency campaign. The result has been increasing insurgent violence in the south and east, a continuing drug problem, and entrenched warlords that retain power in much of the country. These developments are unfortunate, since they may undermine Afghanistan's success in building democracy and improving social and economic conditions.

The deteriorating security environment

The low level of resources and the absence of a peace treaty have led to a deteriorating security environment. The number of insurgent attacks, and the number of deaths from such attacks, has increased. Public opinion polls show that while many Afghans believe the country is moving in the right direction, most are deeply concerned about the security environment.² Warlords and regional commanders are still powerful, though there has been success in decreasing the

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power of some. The cultivation of opium has risen dramatically since 2002, and Afghanistan still lacks an effective rule of law.

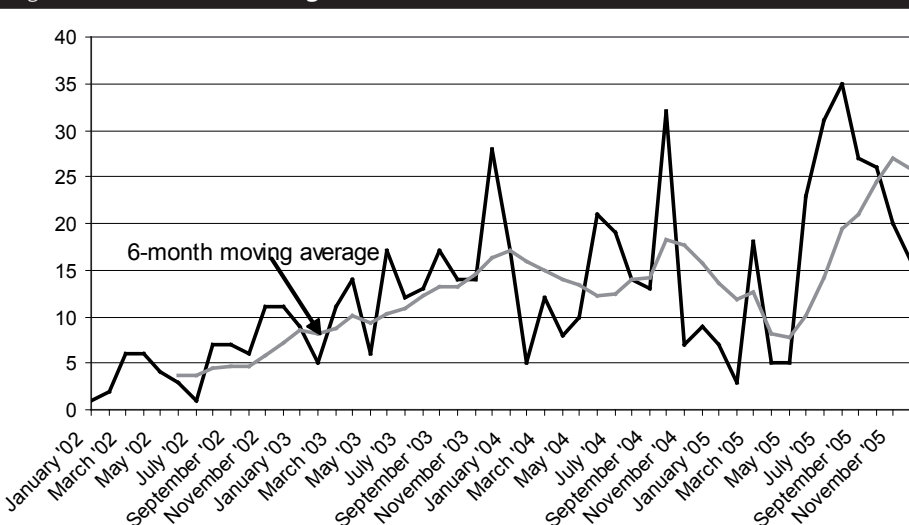
Reliable security data in Afghanistan are limited. In the absence of a viable central government or a central statistics agency, few data have been systematically collected since 2001. Reliable crime statistics – including homicide rates – do not exist, except for a few precincts in Kabul. In the justice sector, there are no quantitative data on such indicators as the recidivism rate or the average number of days a prisoner is in detention before an adjudication hearing. There are also no reliable data on security indicators before 2001, making it difficult to compare levels of violence since 2001 with levels during the Taliban era. There are, however, at least five proxy indicators for the level of security in Afghanistan. Careful examination indicates that most have worsened rather than improved.

Insurgent attacks

The first is the ability of insurgents to conduct attacks, especially against Afghan targets, over time. Are they increasing, decreasing or remaining constant? This indicator is more useful than the number of insurgents or their resources, since it is directly linked to the ability of insurgents to cause violence among the Afghan population.³ It is also more useful than insurgent attacks against US and NATO forces, which tell us virtually nothing about the security of the Afghan population. A key element of counterinsurgency campaigns is the impact *on the local population*, not foreign forces.

The number of attacks since January 2002 has increased (Figure 1).⁴ Indeed, Taliban, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami and foreign jihadists⁵ have shifted their strategy from targeting coalition forces, in 2002 and 2003, to attacking Afghan civilians and personnel from non-governmental organisations (NGOs). A partial explanation may be that US Army forces involved in *Operation Enduring Freedom* increased from under 10,000 in 2003 to nearly 20,000 by 2005.⁶ Faced with a larger and more viable fighting force, Taliban and other insurgent forces shifted toward softer and easier targets, such as Afghans organising or involved in election work, NGO workers and Afghan citizens believed to be cooperating with coalition forces or the government. The shift may also reflect the insurgent attempt to destabilise the October 2004 presidential elections and 2005 parliamentary elections by targeting Afghan and international personnel

Figure 1. Number of Insurgent Attacks, 2002–05



Sources: RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Database. The data incorporate insurgent attacks against Afghans, international aid workers and coalition forces.

involved in organising, registering and participating in the elections. Attacks have occurred throughout the country, though most have been in the south and east in Nangarhar, Paktia, Paktika, Khowst and other provinces.⁷

The result has been a lack of security for Afghans and foreigners, especially those living in the east and south. Road travel in many areas is dangerous and crime continues to be a major problem. As one security assessment concluded: 'The level of criminal activity – characterised by increasing numbers of armed robberies, abductions, and murders even in areas controlled by the Afghan ANA [Afghan National Army] and police patrols – is still high.'⁸ Inter-factional fighting continues among regional commanders in Herat, Nangarhar, Nuristan, Logar, Laghman, Badghis and other provinces.⁹ Afghan National Police and Afghan National Army forces have also engaged in pitched gun battles with each other.

Public perception of security

Public opinion polls show that Afghans consider the absence of security, which includes threats from warlords, insurgent attacks and other violence such as crime, the most significant problem facing the country.¹⁰ Approximately two-thirds of Afghans believe the most important priority of the Afghan government should be to disarm commanders and warlords, strengthen the army and police, eliminate the Taliban and remove al-Qaeda.¹¹ Most Afghans believe the country is going in the right direction, and political and social conditions have improved. But they are still deeply concerned about the security environment, which could undermine this progress.¹²

Power of warlords

Warlords and regional commanders remain strong throughout the country, though the government has made some progress in curbing the power of several, including the removal of Herat Governor Ismail Khan and Kandahar Governor Gul Agha Shirzai.¹³ Pashtun warlord Pasha Khan Zadran has a force of several hundred militia and controls much of Khowst province. The northern part of the country has become a scene of rivalry between two major United Front factions, Jama't-e Islami and Jumbesh-e Melli Islami. Their leading figures, Abdul Rashid Dostum and Atta Mohammad, have been affiliated with the government of President Hamid Karzai. Other major warlords include Gul Agha Shirzai, who still retains some militia forces, and Shi'a leader Karim Khalili. Khalili's Hizb-e Wahdat-e Islami dominates Bamiyan province and the central Hazarajat region. The Taliban, remnants of al-Qaeda and members of Hezb-i-Islami have also been active along the Afghan–Pakistani border. In Herat province, there are a number of lesser commanders, including Amanullah Khan, Abdul Salam and Zaher Naibzada.

Neighbouring states and other outside powers have contributed to the power of warlords by providing financial assistance, weapons and political support. Pakistan has provided assistance to some Pashtun factions through its Inter-Service Intelligence Directorate (ISI).¹⁴ There is some evidence that Russia has provided equipment and assistance directly to Afghanistan's former defence minister, Abdul Qasim Fahim, as well as Atta Mohammad and Rashid Dostum. Iran has provided assistance to warlords in the west.¹⁵ The United States and coalition forces have given assistance to warlords and military commanders in the south and east as part of *Operation Enduring Freedom*.¹⁶ This support has been a double-edged sword. The United States allied with a number of warlords, such as Hazrat Ali and Mohammed Fahim, in 2001 to defeat the Taliban and other armed forces.¹⁷ However, a continuation of this policy weakens the central government.

Support to warlords has been a double-edged sword

Drugs

The cultivation of opium poppy also undermines security because insurgent groups profit from the drug trade.¹⁸ Indeed, the drug trade is a source of revenue for warlords, insurgents and criminal organisations in control of Afghanistan's border regions, as well as for members of the Afghan government.¹⁹ This strengthens the power of non-state actors at the expense of the central government. The cultivation of opium poppy has markedly increased since reconstruction efforts began in 2002. Poppy cultivation rose from 74,045 hectares in 2002 to 131,000 hectares in 2004, and then dipped slightly to 104,000 in 2005. The income of Afghan opium farmers and traffickers is equivalent to roughly 40% of the gross domestic product of the country, which includes both licit and illicit activity. Afghanistan's share of opium production is also 87% of the world total. The number of provinces where opium poppy is cultivated increased from 18 in 1999 to all 32 in 2005.²⁰

Rule of law

Finally, the absence of a viable criminal justice system has made it difficult to ensure security. World Bank data indicate that Afghanistan is in the bottom 1% of countries worldwide in the effectiveness of its rule of law.²¹ There have been several barriers to improving the justice sector. First, the central government's inability to exert control over the country affects justice sector reform. Warlord commanders, who maintain de facto control over areas seized following the overthrow of the Taliban, have established authority over some local courts. Factional control of courts has led to intimidation of centrally appointed

judges. Secondly, the government's inability and unwillingness to address widespread and deep-rooted corruption reduces the effectiveness of the justice system. Corruption is endemic, partly because unqualified personnel loyal to various factions are sometimes installed as court officials. The Supreme Court and Attorney General's Office have been accused of significant corruption.²² A corrupt judiciary is a serious impediment to Afghanistan's ability to establish security and a viable rule of law, since it cripples the legal and institutional mechanisms designed to curb corruption.

The lingering insurgency

Perhaps the most significant long-term security challenge in Afghanistan is dealing with the insurgency. It began in the spring of 2002, when insurgent forces commenced offensive operations to overthrow the interim Afghan government and coerce the withdrawal of US and coalition forces. The spring 2002 offensive marked an important shift in the strategy of the three major opposition groups: the Taliban, Hezb-i-Islami and foreign jihadists. From September 2001 through March 2002, opposition groups were largely forced to conduct defensive operations in response to the US, Northern Alliance and coalition efforts to overthrow the Taliban and conduct such follow-on missions as *Operation Anaconda*.²³ By April, however, opposition forces regrouped and began to conduct a series of attacks in Kandahar, Khowst, Jalalabad, Kabul and other Afghan provinces.²⁴ This marked the beginning of the insurgency.

The Taliban and Hezb-i-Islami are the primary indigenous resistance groups. The Taliban seek to impose a radical interpretation of Sunni Islam, derived from the Deobandi school of thought, in Afghanistan.²⁵ While some Taliban have agreed to disarm through the government's reconciliation programme, most have not.²⁶ Hezb-i-Islami seeks to overthrow the Afghan government and install Gulbuddin Hekmatyar as leader. They have received some assistance from Tehran, though relatively little from Islamabad.²⁷ Hekmatyar served as Afghan prime minister from March 1993 to 1994 and again briefly in 1996. The Taliban and Hezb-i-Islami have loosely hierarchical organisational structures. The bulk of the insurgency is divided into civilian support, the underground, guerrillas and front commanders.

The *civilian support network*, or auxiliary, organises civilians and provides logistical support.²⁸ The success or failure of the guerrillas depends to a great extent on the civilian network's ability to gain support from the indigenous population. These individuals assist the guerrillas by acquiring supplies, conducting information and intelligence campaigns, operating medical facilities, conducting counterintelligence operations, recruiting new guerrillas or sup-

porters, operating a compartmentalised communications system and acquiring and maintaining equipment. The *underground* includes the insurgency's political and financial support network, and is the main element focused on subverting the Afghan government. It consists mainly of Taliban supporters and is involved in the drug trade. The *guerrillas* are the armed insurgents, who conduct military and paramilitary operations. In 2004, US and coalition forces noted a significant shift in the size of guerrilla units, from large bands of up to a hundred fighters to much smaller units of less than ten. This enabled guerrillas to evade detection by coalition forces and allowed them to blend into the population when necessary.²⁹ Finally, the *front commanders* provide strategic command. They do not exert power the way a military general does; rather, tactical and operational control is often delegated to guerrilla units, which act as 'franchises'. Key figures include Gulbuddin Hekmatyar for Hezb-i-Islami, and Mullah Mohammed Omar and Jalaluddin Haqqani for the Taliban.³⁰

The foreign jihadists comprise an amalgam of loosely knit Muslim extremists, many of whom are loosely affiliated with al-Qaeda. Perhaps the most prominent is Abdul Hadi al-Iraqi. He was born in Iraqi Kurdistan in about 1960 and rose to the rank of major in Saddam Hussein's army before joining the jihad in Afghanistan in the late 1980s. Most jihadists are from neighboring Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, though there are occasional jihadists from Sudan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia and Chechnya. Like other guerrilla units, the foreign jihadists often act as 'franchises', with autonomy at the tactical and operational level, but may take strategic guidance from more senior al-Qaeda commanders. They are not hierarchically organised and form small, dispersed units bound together by ideology rather than organisational structure. They are generally adherents of salafism, adopt a strict interpretation of Islam and embrace jihad against the United States and other allied governments.³¹ Their strategic objectives are much broader than those embraced by Hezb-i-Islami and Taliban forces. Furthermore, while most Taliban and Hezb-i-Islami insurgents are part-time fighters and have civilian jobs by day, the foreign jihadists are professional fighters. They are generally much better equipped, trained and motivated than other insurgents, though they have not always been tactically competent. Foreign jihadists play a key role as trainers, shock troops and surrogate leaders. Indeed, there is some coordination between the foreign jihadists and the other insurgents, though it appears to be primarily at the tactical level.³²

Insurgent forces have conducted a wide variety of attacks against US, coalition and Afghan security forces, as well as Afghan and international civilians. Insurgents rely on asymmetric tactics similar to those used against British forces during the nineteenth-century Anglo-Afghan wars. There are also some sim-

ilarities to tactics used by mujahadeen forces against Soviet and Democratic Republic of Afghanistan Army forces during the Soviet–Afghan war.³³ Insurgent tactics since the spring of 2002 have included yielding the population centres

There have been a handful of suicide attacks

to US and Afghan forces, operating from rural areas, distributing propaganda to the local population and opposition forces, threatening and intimidating the local population, and conducting armed attacks. Armed attacks include ambushes and raids; shelling using 107mm and 122mm rockets and 60, 82, and 120mm mortars; and improvised explosive devices. Most shelling and rocket fire is not accurate, though there is some evidence that insurgent forces consider harassment of enemy forces and populations as valuable as accurate fire. There have also been a handful of suicide attacks.³⁴

In response to the insurgency, US and NATO strategy has incorporated both strike and civic-action operations in conjunction with Afghan forces. As Lieutenant General David W. Barno, former commander of Combined Forces Command–Afghanistan, argued, the key objective has been to ‘create an integrated security structure that extends the reach of the Afghan government’ and that can establish security throughout the country.³⁵ Strike operations have also included capturing and killing insurgents, seizing weapons caches, denying insurgents freedom of movement and trying to improve border security. US and NATO forces have conducted a range of civic-action operations to provide assistance to the government and population, and to help reduce the root causes of instability,³⁶ including short- and long-term programmes aimed at terminating or alleviating human suffering; training, equipping and advising Afghan security forces; assisting in police, fire, rescue and disaster preparedness and response missions; and assisting Afghan civil agencies.

The United States and NATO also established provincial reconstruction teams under US and NATO command.³⁷ Each team of 60–100 personnel comprises civil affairs units, special operations forces, force protection units, psychological operations personnel and civilians. The provincial reconstruction teams have helped build health clinics, schools, government buildings and other infrastructure in major Afghan cities. They are a key part of the counterinsurgency campaign in winning indigenous support, extending the authority of the central government, and helping facilitate development and reconstruction. Provincial reconstruction teams also aim to support reform of the Afghan security sector: demobilising and disarming militias; building an accountable national army and national police force; stamping out the drug trade; and building a legal system.

A winning plan for Afghanistan

The current strategy has failed to establish security in Afghanistan. A more successful strategy will require a revised game plan and sufficient resources to implement it. The core objective of Afghan, US and NATO leaders should be to establish a secure environment in which Afghan people and goods can circulate safely, and licit political and economic activity can take place free from intimidation. This means focusing on the safety – and ensuring the support – of the local population. No attempt to subvert reconstruction and stabilisation efforts will make headway unless it has popular appeal. A second objective should be to ensure that the Afghan government has the capacity to establish and sustain a secure environment on its own. This means that indigenous military forces are able to defeat internal and external threats to the state.

The first pillar of a winning plan is increasing the number and capability of international and Afghan forces. There are roughly 18,000 American soldiers and 12,000 NATO soldiers in Afghanistan. There are approximately 55,000 Afghan National Police, 25,000 Afghan National Army soldiers and several thousand Afghan Militia Forces involved in internal security activities, for a total of roughly 85,000. Based on per capita estimates of successful stability operations, the total number of international and indigenous police and other security forces in Afghanistan should be about 200,000.³⁸ There are currently fewer than 120,000, creating a 'security gap' of 80,000 police and soldiers. It is difficult to believe that the United States and other NATO countries have the political will to entirely fill this gap. This is especially true, since the US presence will likely decrease to at least 16,000 forces in 2006 as the US hands control of the southern provinces to NATO. Afghan leaders have expressed concern that the decrease in US forces is a signal of a declining commitment to Afghanistan because it does not correspond to an improvement in the security environment. Afghan leaders have also expressed concern that NATO lacks the political will and capabilities to fight a sustained counterinsurgency campaign against the Taliban, Hezb-i-Islami and foreign jihadists.³⁹ But increasing international military forces from 32,000 to 50,000 would be a laudable goal. The lingering insurgency and the deteriorating security environment are acute reminders of the cost of failing to provide sufficient military resources to Afghanistan.

Perhaps more importantly, the number of Afghan forces – especially Afghan police – should be increased. While it is not clear how Afghan and international officials decided on the target of 55,000 Afghan National Police, this works out to a ratio of approximately 180 Afghan police per 100,000 inhabitants.⁴⁰ This level is extremely low compared to other countries in the region. For example, Jordan's ratio is approximately 600 police per 100,000 inhabitants, Kazakhstan's

is 464, Kyrgyzstan's is 340 and Russia's is 1,222. Afghanistan's police ratio is also small compared to developed countries like the United States and Germany, with ratios of 244 and 292 respectively.⁴¹ Police are the front line in establishing law and order, and should be the primary focus of international reform efforts. Based on an analysis of other stability operations, the level of domestic police in Afghanistan should be at least 250 police per 100,000 inhabitants after five years.⁴² This means increasing the number of Afghan police to approximately 75,000. Over the long run, Afghan police and army forces can fill the security gap. But properly training and equipping them will take time.

The second pillar is a strategy for dealing with the insurgents and warlords. Both pose a long-term threat to the stability of Afghanistan. The absence of a peace treaty makes this task more difficult. In dealing with insurgents, the most effective strategy will be to co-opt as many as possible by convincing them to give up arms in exchange for amnesty. For the rest, the United States and NATO will need to conduct a sustained unconventional warfare campaign that combines strike operations and civil-military activities. This means working by, with and through Afghan security forces to undermine popular support for insurgents, and killing or capturing those who won't be co-opted. Some Taliban have agreed to disarm through the Afghan government's reconciliation programme, which is open to all Taliban members except senior leaders linked to terrorism or major war crimes.⁴³ But many have not. Part of the problem has been the half-hearted nature of the reconciliation programme, which should become a major plank in the counterinsurgency campaign. Pakistan also needs to play a major role in cooperating with a revamped reconciliation process. Taliban and Hezb-i-Islami militants should be strongly encouraged to give up the insurgency in exchange for amnesty and a chance to participate in the political process. Negotiations could also begin with senior Taliban and Hezb-i-Islami leaders about a formal peace settlement. Termination of civil wars usually requires settling with insurgent organisations, for example the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front in El Salvador and Resistencia Nacional Mozambicana in Mozambique.

The United States and NATO need to establish a long-term strategy of removing warlords from power through peaceful means where possible, and force if necessary. The relatively peaceful removal of Herat Governor Ismail Khan and Kandahar Governor Gul Agha Shirzai demonstrates that peaceful removal of major warlords is sometimes a viable option. But this will require a sustained commitment to removing warlords and replacing their militias with Afghan National Police and Afghan National Army forces. Most can probably be persuaded to step down through financial incentives and the threat of force, but some may require forcible removal. The United States allied with a number of warlords, beginning

in 2001, to defeat the Taliban and other insurgent forces. This strategy must end. It weakens the central government by preserving the power of warlords.

The biggest obstacle to the success of this strategy is Pakistan. Insurgents have used Pakistan as a staging area for offensive operations in Afghanistan. Western intelligence sources have identified insurgent crossing points along the Afghan–Pakistani border.⁴⁴ A significant portion of the Afghan insurgency’s military and political leadership is based in Pakistan. Insurgencies with well-established infrastructures and base areas, which can operate in protective terrain, cannot be quickly defeated.⁴⁵ Taliban insurgents operating in the southern Afghan provinces of Kandahar, Oruzgan, Helmand and Zabol have significant support networks in Pakistan’s North-West Frontier and Baluchistan provinces. They have ethnic and political support from Pakistan’s Pashtuns. Taliban prisoners captured in Afghanistan repeatedly say they received training in such areas as the Mansehra district. The Taliban and foreign jihadists conduct most of their financing and recruiting operations on the Pakistani side of the border.⁴⁶ There is some evidence that Pakistan’s ISI has continued to provide assistance to the Taliban for both ideological and geostrategic reasons. Some within the ISI sympathise with the jihad against US and other Western forces, and some wish to preserve a Pakistani foothold in Afghanistan.⁴⁷ Moreover, foreign jihadists operating in the Afghan provinces of Paktia and Paktika have found support across the border in Peshawar and Waziristan.⁴⁸ Organisations like the Mutahidda Majlis-e-Amal, an Islamist party in Pakistan’s North-West Frontier province, also provide funding to insurgents.

Since much of the support base for Afghan insurgents is in neighbouring Pakistan, allied collaboration with Pakistani forces needs to improve. This includes strengthening border controls along the Afghan–Pakistani border. American special forces have played a critical role in stopping infiltrators and training Afghans to patrol their borders over the last two years. But greater Pakistani participation is needed to block insurgents and their supplies. Pakistani forces need to conduct an unconventional war that undermines popular support for the insurgents, captures or kills leaders and guerrillas, and destroys their support network. New Taliban recruits have replaced those killed or captured. Operating behind the scenes in deference to Pakistani sensitivities, the United States could help by providing intelligence, surveillance and perhaps small special-forces and CIA units.

New Taliban recruits have replaced those killed or captured

President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan faces serious obstacles to wiping out the insurgent base of support in his country. Since the 11 September 2001

attacks in the United States, he has placated the West with unfulfilled promises of reform and crackdowns on extremists, and simultaneously catered to Islamic political parties in order to retain their support. Pushing Musharraf and Pakistan to act will require finding pressure points. Perhaps the most significant is tying American assistance to Pakistani cooperation. The United States gives Pakistan more than \$700 million in military and economic assistance each year. This assistance covers economic development, trade and counterterrorism. The United States should tie continued assistance in some of these areas – as well as implicit American support in multilateral bodies like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund – to progress in defeating Afghan insurgents and their support network. The United States and NATO can also focus on a second pressure point. President Musharraf wields power through a military government that seized control in 1999, but the West has been remarkably quiet about the shortcomings of democracy in Pakistan. In the absence of cooperation on counterinsurgency, the United States can and should increase pressure on Pakistan to pursue democratic reforms.

The third pillar of a successful strategy is to increase financial assistance. Gary Schroen, who led the first CIA team into Afghanistan, estimates that assistance to Afghanistan should be between \$3 billion and \$4bn per year.⁴⁹ This is a good benchmark. Based on estimates that \$100 per capita each year should be a minimum level for successful stability operations,⁵⁰ total assistance to Afghanistan should be at least \$3bn per year. This is double the assistance that Afghanistan will likely receive in 2006. The needs in Afghanistan are great. According to World Bank estimates, nearly 50% of Afghanistan's children under five years of age are malnourished, only 13% of the population has access to a safe and reliable water supply, and the adult literacy rate is 29%.⁵¹ In the security sector, the focus of assistance should be on continuing to build and train the Afghan National Police and Afghan National Army, and to establish the justice sector. The absence of a viable justice system makes it virtually impossible to deal with drugs and warlords. No major drug traffickers have been prosecuted in Afghanistan. Nor have any warlords, despite the involvement of many of them in organised crime and human-rights violations.

The final pillar is time.⁵² The United States should have learned this lesson when it abandoned Afghanistan in 1989 following the withdrawal of Soviet forces. The country soon became a safe haven for international terrorist groups. This mistake cannot happen again. Time is a key factor in establishing security. Defeating the insurgency, curbing the drug problem and rebuilding the justice system require a long-term strategy and a long-term international commitment to success. As the *9/11 Commission Report* concluded, a failure to stabilise

Afghanistan would decrease the security of the United States, Europe and other countries if it again became a safe haven for terrorists and criminals.⁵³ While the responsibility for providing security ultimately resides with Afghans, international efforts are critical. The Taliban, Hezb-i-Islami and foreign jihadists are betting that the West doesn't have the political will to remain in Afghanistan for the long run. Proving them wrong is the key challenge.

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Notes

- 1 I define stability operations as comprehensive efforts after major combat to establish security and rebuild state institutions. Several terms, such as peacebuilding, complex peace operations and nation-building, have been used to describe these activities. See, for example, Roland Paris, *At War's End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 38; Kimberly Zisk Marten, *Enforcing the Peace: Lessons from the Imperial Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 4; James Dobbins et al., *The UN's Role in Nation-Building: From the Congo to Iraq* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2005), pp. 1–2; James Dobbins, 'The UN's Role in Nation-building: From the Belgian Congo to Iraq', *Survival*, vol. 46, no. 4, Winter 2004, pp. 81–102; James Dobbins, 'America's Role in Nation-building: From Germany to Iraq', *Survival*, vol. 45, no. 4, Winter 2003, pp. 87–110.
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- 3 There are no good statistics on the numerical strength of Taliban forces, though most indicators suggest they are weaker than they were in 2001. Data extrapolated from several sources suggest that they may possess between 2,000 and 4,000 full-time fighters. Interviews with US Army personnel, July 2004 through August 2005; *Security and Foreign Forces: Afghanistan* (Coulsdon: Jane's Information Group, 2004), available at <http://www.janes.com>.
- 4 RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Database, <http://www.rand.org/ise/projects/terrorismdatabase/>. Based on a review of data collected from such sources as the Afghanistan Non-Governmental Organisation Security Office, it appears that the RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Database slightly underestimates the number of attacks and deaths.
- 5 I use the term 'foreign jihadists', rather than al-Qaeda, because these individuals are an unorganised amalgam of salafi jihadists from the Middle East,

- Central Asia and North Africa. The term 'al-Qaeda' erroneously implies a structured organisation, which is incorrect in the Afghan case.
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 - 9 Carlotta Gall, '21 Killed in Afghanistan Attacks Directed at Provincial Governor', *New York Times*, 15 August 2004; *ANSO Security Situation Summary*, Weekly Report 039, 24–30 September 2004, p. 7; *ANSO Security Situation Summary*, Weekly Report 036, 3–9 September 2004, p. 5; *ANSO Security Situation Summary*, Weekly Report 038, 17–23 September 2004, pp. 7–8.
 - 10 Asia Foundation, *Voter Education Planning Survey*; International Republican Institute, *Afghanistan: Election Day Survey*. Opinion polls are a useful outcome measure for the security environment because they provide a gauge of public perceptions. Ideally, we would analyse poll results over time and identify changing patterns in public views of the security environment, but with only two polls available this is impossible.
 - 11 International Republican Institute, *Afghanistan Election Day Survey*, p. 16.
 - 12 *ABC News Poll: Life in Afghanistan*.
 - 13 Frederick S. Starr, *U.S. Afghanistan Policy: It's Working* (Washington DC: Johns Hopkins University, Central Asia – Caucasus Institute, 2004), pp. 4–5.
 - 14 Author interviews with senior US and Afghan officials, Afghanistan, October 2005.
 - 15 Interview with senior Afghan government officials, Afghanistan, November 2005; Barnett R. Rubin and Andrea Armstrong, 'Regional Issues in the Reconstruction of Afghanistan', *World Policy Journal*, vol. 20, no. 1, Spring 2003, p. 34; Mark Sedra, *Challenging the Warlord Culture: Security Sector Reform in Post-Taliban Afghanistan* (Bonn: Bonn International Center for Conversion, 2002).
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 - 18 Raymond A. Millen, *Afghanistan: Reconstituting A Collapsed State* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, April 2005), pp. 8–11.
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