

**OVERCOMING THE OBSTACLES TO ESTABLISHING
A DEMOCRATIC STATE IN AFGHANISTAN**

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PREFACE

The U.S. Army War College provides an excellent environment for selected military officers and government civilians to reflect on and use their career experience to explore a wide range of strategic issues. To assure that the research conducted by Army War College students is available to Army and Department of Defense leaders, the Strategic Studies Institute publishes selected papers in its “Carlisle Papers in Security Strategy” Series.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Antulio J. Echevarria II', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

ANTULIO J. ECHEVARRIA II
Director of Research
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DENNIS O. YOUNG enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1978 and was awarded an active duty ROTC scholarship in 1981. He received his commission into the Military Intelligence Branch that same year. His previous assignments include Director, CJ2X, Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan; Chief, Intelligence and Operations Division, G2, U.S. Army Japan; Battalion Commander, Garrison Battalion, Ft. Meade, MD; Chief, Office of Defense Cooperation, U.S. Embassy, Vienna, Austria; Deputy Commander, 702nd Military Intelligence Group, Ft. Gordon, GA; Company Commander, 721st MI BN, 703rd MI BDE, Kunia, HI; 2nd INF BDE LNO, 25th ID, Schofield Barracks, HI; assistant BN S3, 125th MI BN, 25th ID, Schofield Barracks, HI; Chief, Combined Military Interrogation Center (CMIC), 524 MI BN, 501st MI BDE, Korea; Chief, Combined Liaison Team, 524th MI BN, 501st MI BDE, Korea; Chief, Counterintelligence Division, G2, I Corps, Ft. Lewis, WA; Special Security Officer, G2, I Corps, Ft. Lewis, WA; BN S2, 1-67 ADA BN, 9th ID, Ft. Lewis, WA; Team Leader (SGT) 372nd ASA Company, 25th ID, Schofield Barracks, HI. Colonel Young's military education includes the Military Intelligence Officer Basic and Advanced Courses, the Counterintelligence/Human Intelligence Officers Course, the Post Graduate Intelligence Program, the Defense Language Institute Korean and German language courses, and the Army Command and General Staff College. He holds a B.A. from Weber State University, a master's degree in International Relations from Ohio University, and a master's degree in National Security Studies from the U.S Army War College.

ABSTRACT

After the Taliban regime was driven out of Afghanistan in late 2001, the United States and other members of the international community undertook efforts to establish and stabilize a liberal democratic form of government in that country. Such an undertaking is a monumental task, fraught with many obstacles and challenges. This paper looks at several of the obstacles to democracy in Afghanistan, to include the absence of a democratic history and tradition, an endemic culture of corruption, a pervasive narcotics trade and drug trafficking problem, tribalism and ethnic divides among the population, and finally the lack of support or assistance from neighboring Pakistan. The author proposes five possible strategies and adjustments to current efforts by the international community, led by the United States and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). If these strategies are adopted, the environment in Afghanistan will be more secure, the government more stable, and liberal democracy will have a much greater chance of taking hold and flourishing. Afghanistan and this region of the world will also be less likely to harbor terrorist operations and organizations such as al-Qaeda and the Taliban to threaten the democratic nations of the world.

OVERCOMING THE OBSTACLES TO ESTABLISHING A DEMOCRATIC STATE IN AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan is a central focal point of the global war on terrorism. On September 11, 2001 (9/11), Osama Bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network of terrorists launched their destructive, world-altering attacks against the United States. In response, President George W. Bush declared that full-scale efforts were underway “to find those responsible and to bring them to justice.”¹ Less than a month later, on October 7, 2001, the United States commenced an assault on the Taliban state in Afghanistan, which had allowed Bin Laden to train terrorist followers and to plan and facilitate attacks from inside Afghanistan. This terrorist sanctuary and safe haven had to be eliminated in order for the United States and the world community to be safe from future acts of violence by al-Qaeda.

Quick retaliation and revenge were the initial and immediate U.S. goals in attacking al-Qaeda and the Taliban. The international community was extremely sympathetic to the United States and supported its efforts to bring those responsible for the 9/11 attacks to justice. The war that commenced in Afghanistan was called Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and was to be waged with a new mode of warfare. This new type of engagement was formulated under a philosophy of neoconservatism,² an ideology adopted and championed by former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Vice President Dick Cheney, former Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, and former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith. Old military operation plans for invading Afghanistan were scrapped in favor of Rumsfeld’s new brand of conflict. This new kind of war relied primarily on special operations forces and air power, followed by support from light infantry to secure the area.³ Intelligence from agencies like the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the use of proxy armies, such as the Northern Alliance⁴ in Afghanistan, were other key elements in this form of combat. Little effort was put towards planning effective nation-building strategies, securing international economic aid, etc., as stabilization and rebuilding efforts were to be undertaken by some other entity or organization, not the United States.

This new style of warfare proved to be extremely successful in the short run. Several factors went right for the United States and the Northern Alliance, and Rumsfeld’s ideas of modern warfare seemed to be validated. The Taliban was removed from power and driven from the country, along with Bin Laden and his al-Qaeda followers. Both groups fled across the border to Pakistan. Afghanistan would no longer be a sanctuary for terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda and other repressive theocratic regimes such as the Taliban.

A different challenge remained in the wake of military operations – the challenge of rebuilding Afghanistan as a functioning, liberal, pro-Western democracy. Democratizing Afghanistan is necessary in order to keep the Taliban from working their way back into power and to prevent al-Qaeda and other like-minded terrorist organizations from using Afghanistan as a training ground and a safe haven from which to launch attacks on the United States and other countries. The nation of Afghanistan, however, has never really been a democratic state, and the concept of democracy is a foreign one to the Afghan people. Their history is overwhelmingly dominated by examples of autocratic rule by kings, warlords, foreigners, and religious extremists. In addition, the task of rebuilding

a nation, particularly one as abject and destitute as Afghanistan, requires a monumental effort in terms of resources such as money, people, and time. Wars are not cheap; reconstruction is even more costly. But the international community was very willing at this time to partner with the United States in rebuilding Afghanistan. U.S. European allies, under the direction of Germany, spearheaded that effort.⁵

Security was another major issue that needed to be addressed when considering the reconstruction and stabilization of Afghanistan, and was a problem that would undoubtedly require a long-term commitment. President Bush indicated during the presidential campaign of 2000 that the United States was not and should not be in the nation-building business. He stated, "I would be very careful about using our troops as nation-builders."⁶ Consequently, both the United States and the international community eagerly sought an international organization to provide and lead stability operations in Afghanistan. All eyes turned to the United Nations (UN).

The UN had not been extremely effective, however, in recent operations in the former Yugoslavia (Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo), in Somalia, or in Rwanda. It also demanded an effective security force to protect it during its governance and in carrying out its humanitarian and reconstruction efforts.⁷ In late 2001, as part of the Bonn Agreement, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was created as an umbrella for the UN in conducting its vital missions and separating it from the fighting forces of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. ISAF is comprised primarily of NATO countries, most prominently Great Britain, Germany, Canada, and Italy. The British were the first to lead this organization.

ISAF and the UN are keys to the stabilization and nation-building efforts in Afghanistan. The resources, financing, manpower, and training necessary to turn Afghanistan into a self-governing liberal democracy that supports the West and is a staunch ally in the global war on terrorism are to come from the nations that make up ISAF, in partnership with the United States and the rest of the international community. But the task of democratizing and rebuilding Afghanistan is not, and will not, be a quick or simple one to accomplish. The foundation for establishing a government based on democratic principles is weak or nonexistent in Afghanistan. In addition, three other major impediments to the Western liberalist tradition of democracy taking hold in this country are present.

First, the endemic and epidemic culture of corruption, both in and out of government, is a way of life and of doing business in Afghanistan and complicates the establishment of a rule of law, which is fundamental to a democratic state. Instituting a liberal democracy is further compounded by the country's overwhelming reliance on the opium poppy crop as its primary agricultural commodity and the backbone of its economy, along with the resulting narcotics trade. This illegal and deadly, yet lucrative, industry is an indispensable livelihood for millions of Afghan people. Finally, the factionalism created by the various tribes with their own languages, cultures, and ethnicity, coupled with powerful warlords and tribal leaders who rule locally and regionally, makes unifying the country under a single, democratic form of government difficult and complex. There has been a distinct lack of nationalism and unity in Afghanistan in the past, except against outsiders or foreign invaders. These three obstacles, as well as the average Afghan's lack of understanding of democratic ideals and principles, must be overcome in order to bring stability, prosperity, and democracy to Afghanistan.

Prior to beginning the campaign in Afghanistan, former Secretary of State Colin Powell warned the Bush administration about the consequences of invading a sovereign nation. He used an analogy referred to as the "Pottery Barn" rule: "You break it, you own it."⁸ In the case of Afghanistan, the pottery was already smashed into a thousand pieces before the United States even entered the store. Nonetheless, the hopes, dreams, problems, and very lives of millions of Afghans now hang in the balance.

Recent History: Historical Lack of a Democratic Foundation in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's roots as a nation state go back centuries, and its history is filled with war. The Afghan people have an independent spirit and a long history of being fierce and excellent warriors, fighting among themselves for domestic rule, only uniting to turn away intrusion and domination by foreign armies and peoples. Tribal warfare as well as wars against occupying powers such as the British, the Soviets, and the Taliban have resulted in what is now the state of Afghanistan.

Beginning in 1839, the British successfully invaded and subjugated the Afghan tribes, making Afghanistan part of their East India Company.⁹ The overland routes through the mountainous passes of Afghanistan were strategically important in transporting goods from India and the Far East to Europe. The British did not want this key territory to become part of greater Russian expansion during the mid-19th century. The Afghan tribes failed to unite and organize a cohesive resistance to the British invasion. As a result, the British, confident of their ability to hold Afghanistan, sent most of their troops back to the subcontinent of India, the jewel of the British Empire.¹⁰

The Afghan tribes, for the most part, did not like the occupation. The British were never accepted as rulers, merely tolerated. The tribes were pacified during this time, primarily through large payments of cash to the various tribal leaders in exchange for their quiescence. The tribal chiefs were well-known for being a tough warrior class, hiring themselves out to other tribes, factions, and armies when the price was right. Even with payoffs, however, the occupation did not last. The tribes ultimately united temporarily, forming loose alliances to eject the British invaders from their homeland. These Afghan forces attacked the British armies remaining in the country, finally driving them out of Afghanistan in 1842. The British saw this retreat and defeat as "so shockingly absolute in its failure that [it] dazed [the] Victorians."¹¹

The British launched a punitive expedition in 1843, defeated the Afghans, and reinstated Dost Mohammed as the ruler, uniting most of what constitutes the territory of modern Afghanistan. Mohammed ruled the kingdom of Afghanistan with great ruthlessness, seizing territories from his brothers and other local warlords. This type of conquest was in the tradition of the "mighty Mongols," who dominated people and territory with power and arms. The Afghan people had been subjected to this type of rule for centuries, and this warlord ethos is engrained in the fabric of Afghan society. Mohammed's rule continued until his death in 1863, after which anarchy again engulfed the country. Dost Mohammed's son, Sher Ali, finally wrested control from his brothers and declared himself king in 1869.¹²

Because of its geographical location and position in the region, Afghanistan has long suffered numerous incursions by foreign intruders. Afghanistan, in fact, continues to this

day as a crossroad between empires, religions, ideologies, and global wars on terrorism. In the 1870s, however, the country lay between two burgeoning colonial empires – Great Britain and Russia. During the reign of King Sher Ali, Great Britain pressured Afghanistan to accept British diplomatic missions.¹³ The king acquiesced, causing the Russians to demand representation as well. The back and forth competition between the Russian and British empires for worldwide colonial conquests and influence became known as the “Great Game.”¹⁴ This “great game” was played out in central Asia, particularly in Afghanistan. This rivalry between nations began shortly after the Napoleonic wars and continues, in one form or another, to modern times.

In late 1878, the British again invaded Afghanistan to begin the Second Anglo-Afghan War. This offensive occurred as a result of some major miscommunication between Afghanistan and Great Britain, fueled by the rivalry between the British and the Russians over the establishment of diplomatic relations in Kabul. This second war was violent and costly, ending after much loss of blood and treasure on both sides. The British obtained territorial concessions from Afghanistan, established a permanent diplomatic mission in Kabul, and left behind Abdur Rahman as the new Afghan leader. Rahman, known as the “Iron Emir,” ruled with ruthless power, attempting to break up the Afghan tribes and to reduce the influence of the religious clerics, the mullahs.¹⁵

Because of continuing competition between the British and the Russians over territory, actions were taken in 1893 during the rule of Emir Rahman to delineate the borders of the British Indian Empire and Afghanistan. Sir Henry Mortimer Durand, a diplomat and civil servant of colonial British India, was commissioned to establish Afghanistan’s eastern border. This seemingly insignificant event has had far-reaching effects that continue to reverberate today. In marking off this border, Durand casually and carelessly drew a line, known as the Durand line, directly through Pashtun territory, at times dividing villages, families, and farmland.¹⁶ This border between Pakistan and Afghanistan remains a source of controversy and contention.

Rahman was succeeded as emir of Afghanistan upon his death in 1901 by his son, Habibullah. Habibullah ruled until he was assassinated in 1919, when his son, Amanullah seized power. Amanullah was an ardent nationalist who wanted independence for Afghanistan. The British, however, were reluctant to grant full independence, despite the fact that Afghanistan had remained neutral during World War I. As a result, within 2 months of taking power, Amanullah initiated the third and final Anglo-Afghan war with an attack on India.¹⁷ By this time, the British were war-weary; within a month, the hostilities ended with the signing of the Treaty of Rawalpindi on August 19, 1919, granting Afghanistan freedom to govern their own affairs. The Afghan people still celebrate this day as their independence day.¹⁸

Finally free from the British Empire, Afghanistan was established as a kingdom, not a democracy. Democracy is a concept that remains unfamiliar to the Afghan populace. He who holds power and is able to demonstrate it rules in Afghanistan. The government and leadership of Afghanistan have changed hands several times since 1919, not in peaceful democratic ways, but through violent means. Wars, both internal and external, assassinations, coups d’etat, and political intrigue in the courts of the kings and emirs have all characterized the political and governmental situation in recent Afghan history. Democracy has never taken hold, and foreign governments are still looked upon with great suspicion by the inhabitants of Afghanistan.

Soviet Invaders: Still No Democracy.

The Soviet Union was the first country to recognize the new independent state of Afghanistan in 1919, establishing diplomatic relations. In 1921, they signed a Soviet-Afghan friendship treaty, the first such agreement for both of these new nations.¹⁹ These actions marked the beginning of concrete Soviet influence in Afghanistan.

In 1947, after World War II, the British granted independence to India, subsequently deciding to create two new countries—a Hindu India and a Muslim Pakistan. This key political event signaled the practical end to British influence in the region and opened the way for further emergence by the Soviets.

Immediately following the formation of the new Pakistani state, the Afghan government contacted Pakistan, requesting a restructuring of the Durand line so as not to divide the Pashtun tribe. The Pakistani government refused the request. This rebuttal has led to a deep and continued distrust between the two nations and has created a condition for constant interference from Pakistan in the internal politics of Afghanistan which continues to this day.

The “great game” being played by the Soviet Union in the region continued; however, the Soviets now faced a new adversary. The Americans replaced their British opponents. Both the United States and the Soviet Union sought spheres of influence in the world, fighting wars of propaganda and utilizing proxies as foils to one another’s power and authority. The Soviets had a distinct advantage in Afghanistan, however, as three countries which bordered Afghanistan to the north—Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan—were all members of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). This geographic proximity provided the Soviets built-in location and opportunity for establishing and perpetuating their influence in Afghanistan.

Despite early appeals from the Afghan government, efforts by the United States to provide military and economic assistance to Afghanistan were thwarted, primarily by the new Pakistani government. Pakistan opposed assistance to Afghanistan, in large part, because of the Pashtun border dispute. In addition, as a result of the lack of trust between the two nations, Pakistan wanted to see Afghanistan remain as weak as possible.²⁰

The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was able to cement its influence in Afghanistan in the 1950s by reinstating significant economic and technical assistance. The Soviets constructed roads, dams, schools, airfields, and irrigation systems.²¹ Beginning in 1956, the Afghan military received massive aid from the Soviets. The influx of Soviet weapons, training, tactics, and military advisers ensured that Soviet doctrine and the Russian language became centerpieces of the Afghan armed forces. This aid continued until the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

In the domestic political arena, Afghanistan was ruled at this time by King Zahir Shah, who ascended to the throne in 1933.²² In 1953, a cousin and brother-in-law of the king, Mohammed Daoud, gained tremendous power and influence when he became the Prime Minister. In this position, Daoud instituted increasingly harsh policies in an attempt to control the Afghan tribes as well as the ruling elite. The Afghan armed forces also fell under his control. Daoud further sought to strengthen ties and relationships with the Soviet Union. Unhappy with his political positions and practices, King Zahir Shah requested Daoud’s resignation in 1964. Daoud complied, and the king then set out

to experiment with democracy for the first time. He drafted a new constitution which allowed the people of Afghanistan to elect one-third of the representatives to a bicameral legislature; the king himself appointed one-third of the representatives, and the final third were selected indirectly by the provincial assemblies.

This experiment with democracy initiated two key changes to the Afghan political structure. First, political parties on both ends of the spectrum were allowed to grow and develop in power and popularity. Second, the new constitution prohibited royal family members from holding high political office. This stipulation precluded Daoud and others in the family from further involvement in the Afghan political system. The fledgling democracy attempted by King Zahir Shah did not stand for long, however. In 1973, while King Zahir Shah was out of the country in Italy, Daoud, with the support of the Afghan military, staged a bloodless coup and seized the government. He abolished the monarchy and declared Afghanistan a republic, appointing himself as President and Prime Minister.²³

The Soviets exploited Afghanistan's democratic trial by increasing their ideological ties to the now officially recognized Afghan communist party, called the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA).²⁴ In 1978, another coup led by communist military officers of the PDPA toppled Daoud's government, executed him and his family, and installed Nur-Mohammed Taraki as President of the newly-established Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, a move strongly supported by the Soviet Union.²⁵ Taraki implemented a new socialist agenda which barred the practice of Islam. These new social reform efforts led to an unexpected backlash by the Afghan tribes and created an insurgency against the Soviet-backed communist government in Kabul. The Taraki government responded with punitive military measures, arresting and executing many of the holy Muslim warriors called the mujahideen.

After yet another bloody coup for power, the Soviets sensed that the Afghan communist government was unraveling, and that the Afghan military was overwhelmed. The Brezhnev Doctrine, introduced by Leonid Brezhnev and the Soviet Army, called for intervention by the Soviets to back any threatened communist regime.²⁶ As a result, an invasion to crush the insurgency in Afghanistan and support communism was planned and initiated by the Soviet Union. The invasion began on December 24, 1979, when elite Soviet troops landed at Kabul airport.

By January 1, 1980, the Soviet Union had 85,000 troops in Afghanistan. The mujahideen rebels now turned their attention to the Soviet invaders and their occupation of Afghanistan. The unified forces of Afghan tribes and rebel fighters proved to be a formidable enemy for the Soviets. This new war against foreign intervention and occupation led to a call to arms of Muslim soldiers from around the world, stirring up a resurgence of Islam and laying the ground work in Afghanistan for what would become, first a regional jihad, then a global one. The United States would see the effects of this movement on 9/11.

For 9 years, the Soviet military conducted an unsuccessful campaign against the Afghan mujahideen rebels. Finally, in February 1989, the Soviets withdrew their troops, leaving a communist government led by Najibullah in power.²⁷ This government survived until 1992 when his communist regime was overthrown by a coalition of Afghan tribes from the mujahideen who wanted a new Islamic state for Afghanistan. Following this internal victory, the mujahideen coalition reverted to its centuries-old practice of tribal

warring and infighting, resulting in a major civil war. This civil war paved the way for a new invader and source of influence on Afghanistan – the Taliban. When the Taliban seized Kabul in 1996, their first act was murdering Najibullah.

The Taliban: A New Obstacle to Democracy.

The constant infighting among the mujahideen militias following the withdrawal of the Soviet Union led to anarchy in Afghanistan. The return to tribalism and warlordism created a weak central government in Kabul, exposing a void which would soon be filled by a scholarly new religious movement known as the Taliban. The word Taliban means religious students, and the movement began as a group of students who studied in the madrassas (schools) in Pakistan, particularly in Quetta. In 1994, this group left Pakistan, crossing over into the Khandahar Province of Afghanistan. The movement took hold amid the chaos of southern Afghanistan, and fighting soon commenced against what the group saw as the corrupt government of Kabul. Mullah Omar, a Pashtun, emerged as the Taliban's supreme leader and pushed into Khandahar City, seizing control.²⁸ For the next 2 years, the Taliban continued its self-imposed mission of unifying and purifying Afghanistan. By 1998, the Taliban had consolidated its hold by capturing most of Afghanistan, with the exception of the capital of Kabul and a northeastern section of the country. Eventually, the Taliban forced the mujahideen government of Kabul to the north. Two prominent warlords, however, resisted the infiltration of the Taliban. These two leaders, Dostum, who previously fought on the side of the Soviets, and Massoud, united to fight this new foe.²⁹ From this resistance in the Panjshir Valley north of Kabul emerged the Northern Alliance.

One key component of the success of the Taliban in wresting control of Afghanistan was the group's use of bribery. They were able to buy allegiance to their cause, paying off corrupt commanders and officials in order to win support for their side.³⁰ This pattern was widespread in the British Indian Empire under British rule and continued in Pakistan once that country gained its independence. Bribery was perpetuated further by the Taliban in Afghanistan. The support the group received from the government of Pakistan was another major factor contributing to the success of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Pakistan had been involved in both overt and covert efforts to influence the internal politics of Afghanistan since 1947. Pakistan wanted a government in Afghanistan in which they wielded influence and control. During the Taliban rule in Afghanistan from 1996-2001, Pakistan's military and its Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Directorate were heavily involved in Afghan politics and in influencing the Taliban.³¹ This influence continues as Pakistan provides safe haven for the Taliban in its Northwest Frontier territories and Waziristan along the Pashtun belt. In addition, Pakistan's President Musharaf has been reluctant to aggressively pursue the leadership elements of the Taliban and al-Qaeda operating within the borders of Pakistan. The Taliban continues to recruit from within Pakistan's madrassas to increase its numbers and to bolster its strength and following.³²

The Taliban government was a total theocracy. While in power, the Taliban ruled Afghanistan authoritatively, according to their own interpretation of Islamic law. Again, the people of Afghanistan were subjected to a style of leadership and form of government that was nothing like a liberal democracy, offering them no experience or clear frame of reference for what was to come.

The Coalition forces, led largely by the United States in conjunction with the Northern Alliance, defeated the Taliban in 2001, bringing an end to their rule in Afghanistan. This defeat did not mean the end of the Taliban, however; they simply melted into the mainstream Afghan population or took refuge across the Durand line, Afghanistan's eastern border with Pakistan. Since its defeat, the Taliban has regained some power and influence in Afghanistan, particularly in the southern and eastern regions. As a result, the Taliban remains a significant threat to democratic efforts in Afghanistan.

Ethnic and Linguistic Divides of Afghanistan: Complications for a United Democracy.

The Afghan people are not a homogeneous society. Afghanistan is a country of 31 million inhabitants comprised of several diverse tribes, ethnicities, languages, and religions. This diversity presents some unique and complicated challenges to overcome when rebuilding the country and establishing a liberal democratic form of government.

The citizens of Afghanistan historically have lacked a sense of national identity. Afghanistan's inhospitable terrain and the absence of a good road network have hindered national unity and fostered tribal-centric communities.³³ Tribal identity and loyalty are of paramount importance to the people living within the boundaries of modern-day Afghanistan.³⁴ When questioned about their origin or ethnicity, most Afghans will respond that they are Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara, or from some other ethnic tribe found in Afghanistan and neighboring countries; they do not think of themselves as Afghan. There is also no tradition in Afghanistan of reliance on a central state or form of government. In the past, the Afghan people have relied primarily on their tribe for support and guidance, uniting together with other tribes only when necessary to fend off outsiders or defend themselves from invaders of their homelands.³⁵

Linguistic diversity offers another obstacle to unifying Afghans. Half speak Dari, a dialect of Persian; 35 percent speak Pashto, a language which is also widely spoken in western Pakistan along the Pashtun belt. The remaining 15 percent speak other tribal dialects.³⁶ These language differences not only pose problems in communication, but also increase and accentuate feelings of individualism and separatism among the people.

While there is less religious variance among the people of Afghanistan than other types of diversity, a difference does exist that has the potential to affect democratic unification. The majority of Afghan people are Sunni Muslim, but the country also incorporates a minority population that is Shia Muslim. This disparity adds another element of prejudice, segregation, and source of possible conflict to the already difficult task of unifying Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is a fragmented country, with its people divided along various tribal, ethnic, linguistic, and religious lines. The diverse and complex ethnic and linguistic structures of Afghan society have created many points of friction and flashpoints for violence between and among Afghans over the years.³⁷ Only in times of crisis or when faced with threat from outside has a sense of national unity existed. On several occasions in Afghanistan's history, national boundaries have been drawn and attempts made to create and stabilize a central government. These attempts have failed, largely due to the resistance of and loyalty to local tribes and religious structures already in place.³⁸ The

vast diversity found in Afghanistan has produced many obstacles to building a liberal democracy and a strong and integrated nation.

Endemic Corruption: A Hindrance to Democratic Stability.

Corruption is a major impediment to stabilization and nation-building in any country. Corrupt practices can be manifest in small, petty ways or be grand and pervasive in scale; corruption can exist in any nation and infiltrate any system of government. By its very nature, however, corruption undermines the principles of democracy and makes difficult all efforts towards good governance.³⁹ Afghanistan is a clear example of the problems encountered in attempting to establish a new liberal democracy in a state replete with widespread corruption.

Corruption is endemic among all the tribes in Afghanistan. Tribal leaders were bribed for their oyalty to the British Empire during the Anglo-Afghan wars. These tribes also extorted money from armies or caravans seeking safe transit through the Kyber Pass.⁴⁰ Later, the tradition of corruption continued as tribes were paid for their patronage and loyalty by several successive Afghan kings and emirs. During the Soviet occupation of the 1980s, Soviet advisers and Afghan communist party officials on one side, and the mujahideen fighters on the other side, continued corrosive corruption practices. Black market operations and the diversion of relief supplies to markets to be sold for profit were examples of popular corruption schemes.⁴¹ The mujahideen also profited from their own black market operations utilizing large sums of money they received from various sponsors, including the United States, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, in their fight against the Soviet Union.⁴² In addition, the mujahideen benefited from the arms and money pipeline from Pakistan to Afghanistan. The rebel fighters would receive a weapons delivery, then skim a few guns from the total number to sell on the side and make a profit.⁴³

Another factor contributing to this culture of corruption in Afghanistan came via Pakistan. Pakistan has had its own deep-rooted tradition and prevalent practice of corruption among government officials and businesses since its inception as a nation after World War II.⁴⁴ Many of the Afghan refugees who fled to Pakistan and later returned observed widespread corruption in the distribution of food and supplies at the Pakistani refugee camps.⁴⁵ Members of the Taliban movement also witnessed this practice of corruption in Pakistan, subsequently bringing the custom with them to Afghanistan and making use of it during their time in power.

Five years after the defeat of the Taliban, corruption is still rampant in Afghanistan, apparent at every level of government – local, provincial, and federal. Fraudulent practices, for example, are extremely prevalent in the departments of the Afghan National Police and in the judiciary, profoundly affecting the security situation in Afghanistan. Border police, local and provincial officers, particularly police chiefs, are heavily involved in corruption, primarily revolving around the lucrative drug trade. The Afghan National Police (ANP) are ill-equipped to resist the lure of corruption as they are poorly paid and lack necessary supplies and equipment, particularly vehicles and weapons with ammunition. In addition, there is a high incidence of illiteracy among members of the Afghan National Police. This lack of education makes training and proficiency more

difficult to achieve, increasing the susceptibility of these police officers to corruption.⁴⁶ The judicial system is also infested with corrupt judges and officials who demand bribes in order to perform functions that they should be responsible for performing as a rule of law. Bribes, extortion, and other illegal payments and trades occur frequently and easily in this type of environment.⁴⁷

A further difficulty stems from the fact that, in general, the Afghan people lack a basic understanding of their own rights as citizens and how the rule of law applies to their everyday lives. In addition, there is a growing frustration among the Afghan populace with the impunity of their government officials, some of very high rank, including cabinet officers, governors, judges, and police.⁴⁸ This loss of confidence by the citizenry in those in positions to serve and protect, coupled with the indication that no disciplinary action will be taken to stop the cycle of corruption, continues to perpetuate the problem.

Dr. Emil Bolongaita of the Kroc Institute indicates that controlling or eliminating corruption in post-conflict nations such as Afghanistan is critical to successfully accomplishing stabilization and other nation-building goals. Dr. Bolongaita posits that unrestrained corruption poses four major obstacles to achieving post-conflict success. These obstacles are: First, corruption, both real and perceived, diminishes enthusiasm for support from donor countries and organizations due to a lack of trust or confidence, resulting in smaller levels of aid. Second, little actual aid provided to a nation or government reaches its people when corrupt agencies and officials first siphon off a portion for their own profit. Third, "corruption fuels a vicious cycle of public sector debt and mass poverty." Fraudulent practices create a need for more money to replace previous money stolen, causing nations to borrow funds which, in turn, are subject to more corruption. Mass poverty of the population is then reinforced. Finally, corruption and greed lead to further conflict.⁴⁹ All of these obstacles documented by Dr. Bolongaita are present in great abundance in Afghanistan, making it extremely challenging to establish and stabilize a western liberal democracy in that nation.

Opium Poppy Cultivation: Another Impediment to Democracy.

Opium poppies have been growing in Afghanistan for centuries. This flower flourishes in Afghanistan's dry, parched climate with its abundant sunshine. According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, opium poppy production is currently at an all-time high. This crop is now cultivated in all 34 Afghan provinces and accounts for 92 percent of the world's opium poppy production.⁵⁰ Afghanistan is also the world's leading producer of opium, the narcotic obtained from opium poppies.⁵¹ In addition, the opium poppies grown in Afghanistan provide the basic raw material for 75 percent of the world's heroin.⁵²

The cultivation of opium poppies in Afghanistan has exploded, despite massive eradication efforts by the United States, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the Afghan government. One major reason for the resilience and persistence of this agricultural endeavor is that the opium poppy remains the farmers' most profitable crop in a very economically impoverished country. Opium poppies and the resulting heroin trade are Afghanistan's largest industry, making continued production financially beneficial for all involved.⁵³ The drug economy in Afghanistan is responsible for almost 50 percent of the nation's entire gross national product (GNP), and more than 3 million

Afghan citizens depend on the opium poppy for a living.⁵⁴ Farmers and their families are unwilling to abandon such a gainful crop for a less lucrative alternative.

Evidence indicates that the Taliban also profits significantly from the drug trade in Afghanistan, exploiting it to increase its membership and support from the local populace. Today the Taliban uses a system of intimidation known as the “night letter.” With this tactic, farmers and other local citizens are offered protection in exchange for increasing their opium poppy production and sharing their crop with the Taliban. Conversely, the people are threatened with harm if they do not cooperate.⁵⁵ These efforts by the Taliban are working in direct opposition to the eradication program being initiated by the United States and others.

The corrosive effect that opium poppy cultivation has on the economy of Afghanistan is substantial. Because so much of the economy is based on the poppy crop and associated drug trade, other legitimate crops and enterprises do not have the opportunity to take hold. The economic imbalance drives up money exchange rates, increasing prices for other goods and services, and makes non-opium related products uncompetitive.⁵⁶

Afghanistan’s reliance on the opium poppy crop and subsequent drug trafficking also poses a great threat to its security and stability, to reconstruction efforts, and to establishing the rule of law. The illegal drug trade, for example, funds the many armed militias which support local and regional warlords. These former commanders in the mujahideen and Northern Alliance, along with other warlords and tribal leaders, facilitate the drug mafia in gaining strength day-by-day. Moreover, the drug trade has contributed to massive corruption within the government from top to bottom. Drug kingpins are often aided by government officials at all levels, including police and judges. Drug trafficking is a primary tool for financing not only local militias and warlords but the Taliban and government officials as well.⁵⁷ These officials and warlords operate with impunity, being exempt from prosecution.

The present Afghan government under the leadership of President Karzai has shown a willingness to eradicate some of the opium poppy crop in an attempt to resolve some of the destructive problems that the cultivation of the plant creates. However, this government has not been serious about going after those behind the illegal drug operations – the drug traffickers, profiteers, and their accomplices at all levels of government.⁵⁸

Recommendations for Overcoming Obstacles to Democracy.

The means and methods of establishing a liberal democracy in Afghanistan, which has no historical precedent for such a government, of building a strong and independent nation, and of stabilizing a precarious security situation are complex, difficult, and expensive. Appropriate and effective measures will require huge expenditures in terms of time, troops, monetary aid, and international assistance from the United States, NATO, and the international community. Recommendations for overcoming the obstacles to establishing a liberal democratic state in Afghanistan are as follows:

(1) Establish practices of good governance at all levels in the Afghan government. Setting up good governance practices is critical to laying a strong foundation for government.⁵⁹

At the national level, the Ministries of Interior and Justice need immediate attention. Both are infected with rampant corruption that needs to be eliminated. First and foremost,

President Karzai and the federal government must crack down and dismiss all corrupt judicial officials, including those at the highest levels. The government must also quickly develop anticorruption measures and controls and aggressively implement them to turn back the tide of runaway corruption. For instance, corruption as a problem needs to be specifically spelled out in documents, agreements, and legislation. These tough political decisions must be made to bring transparency and accountability to the governing process. Once corrupt officials have been terminated, the same transparent procedures must be incorporated for all hiring and position appointments. These new practices must stem the patronage and crony system used currently in most government agencies in Afghanistan.

Further, seasoned professionals need to be provided by the international community (NATO and the UN) and the United States to serve as mentors and trainers for judges, prosecutors, and defense lawyers in Afghanistan. These advisers should work directly for the Afghan government, not for the donor organizations. The donor organizations have their own requirements, priorities, and agendas which can lead to inefficiencies and are sometimes ineffective for change to occur in Afghanistan.

Also at the federal level, higher wages must be paid to officials in the judiciary as well as to the police, particularly the federal border police. The United States and the international community currently assist with aid to pay for increased wages. However, an effective tax and revenue collection system needs to be initiated by the Afghan government.⁶⁰ Once donor funds cease, it is imperative that an effective means of paying good wages to government officials, judges, and police is in place. In addition, a budget process should be implemented to help wean the Afghan government off its reliance on the donor system.

The costs for funding other national services such as the Afghan National Army (ANA) must also be generated and collected by the federal government of Afghanistan.⁶¹ Conscription is a possible and perhaps better alternative to the highly paid all-volunteer force the ANA is currently using, modeled after the U.S. armed forces.

In addition to addressing problems at the federal level, government systems at the local and provincial levels need immediate aid and capacity-building assistance, perhaps even more urgently than national or federal bureaucracies in Kabul. For one thing, the police need to be localized, not centralized as they are now. A restructuring plan for shifting police from federal jurisdiction to provincial and local levels needs to be devised and implemented.

The Bonn Agreement and the subsequent interim, transitional, and current governments of Afghanistan have not adequately addressed the problems arising from the drug kingpins and the regional and local warlords.⁶² They must be prosecuted and their power and influence neutralized at all levels of government. Furthermore, the Afghan governments have only marginally disarmed and demobilized illegal militias and other armed groups. This issue must also be addressed and resolved in order to strengthen the rule of law so that ordinary citizens will have faith, confidence, and trust that their government and its legal system can and will protect them in their everyday lives.⁶³

In the end, Afghanistan must do what all nations that have a successful liberal democracy have done: eliminate corruption; reform the judicial system and police

departments; pay higher wages to government workers, especially judges and police; and be transparent and accountable to the nation's populace. These changes require better legislation and legislators, better government at all levels, beginning with local and provincial governments, and better and more consistent leadership from the top down, with less bureaucracy. Good governance is paramount to establishing a working and stable liberal democracy in Afghanistan.

(2) **Increase economic aid from donor nations and organizations.** The international community, including the United States, needs to contribute much more in monetary aid, reconstruction assistance, and resources to Afghanistan. Since 2002, the United States has donated between \$5 and \$10 billion a year for rebuilding Afghanistan. The rest of the international community has donated far less than that amount.⁶⁴ Even though the Bush administration is asking for \$11.8 billion for this year, the sum is woefully inadequate to reconstruct and stabilize a country as broken and needy as Afghanistan.⁶⁵

The current situation in Afghanistan will require a minimum of 10 more years of sustained assistance and at least double the current contributions of money and resources from both the United States and the international community. Sufficient and necessary funds must be made available by donor nations to establish good governance, develop political and economic infrastructures, implement required judicial and police reforms, stabilize security forces, fund reconstruction projects, and create economic opportunities for businesses and citizens. One of the biggest problems facing Afghanistan is the high rate of unemployment, particularly among young men. This difficulty continues to fuel recruitment for the Taliban and fosters an environment where anti-government, anti-coalition feelings can grow and develop. Meaningful employment projects need to be established to alleviate the high unemployment. In addition, more job skills training and educational opportunities must be provided for the Afghan citizens to increase their ability to provide for themselves and their families in legitimate and productive ways.

Economic aid and reconstruction efforts also must be concentrated more fully in the underdeveloped areas of the countryside and less in the larger cities, especially the capital city of Kabul.⁶⁶ The southern and eastern areas of Afghanistan are particularly important as the Taliban is strong and most effective there. Constructive aid and development in these areas will generate greater security, which will, in turn, weaken the Taliban. For instance, major road systems must be constructed and paved, electrical power grids need to be built and/or their capacity increased, and communication networks must be developed and installed. Because of arid climate conditions, water resourcing is also critical to rebuilding. Wells need to be dug, and water projects for irrigation implemented.

Efforts such as the recent Afghanistan Compact continue to focus international attention and support on rebuilding Afghanistan.⁶⁷ Economic aid is being provided and improvements are being made, but much more remains to be done. Currently, all donor aid is administered by the donor nations and organizations themselves, and sometimes a significant portion is lost to administration and security costs, with little trickling down to meet the needs in Afghanistan. As a result, a better system needs to be implemented to account for donor funds. Furthermore, monetary donations should be put in trusts for the government, allowing the Afghans some decisionmaking power in determining how the funds are allocated and spent.

(3) **Provide more troops and security forces to secure Afghanistan.** Additional security forces from the United States, NATO, and countries within ISAF are needed

to secure Afghanistan and to create a safe environment for reconstruction efforts. To protect a large, populous country like Afghanistan that is fighting an active insurgency, a minimum of 100,000 troops are required, 250,000 at best.⁶⁸ Currently, 35,000 troops are under ISAF command in Afghanistan, 22,000 of which are U.S. forces, far fewer than the number needed. The international community, particularly NATO countries, must contribute more forces for greater periods of time.

The nation-building process and peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan will last for decades. Afghanistan needs a long-term commitment from the United States, NATO, and the international community in order to sufficiently rebuild its infrastructure and to create a high level of trust with the Afghan people that they will not be abandoned. This assurance will assist in raising popular support and prevent locals from being intimidated by the Taliban to join or support their cause.

All security forces in Afghanistan must have as their core mission capturing or destroying al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and other insurgent groups. This mission now falls mainly on U.S., British, Australian, and Canadian forces. In addition, all forces need to have a common standard for rules of engagement. Of particular importance, the use of national caveats by various nations must end or be greatly reduced, especially in security operations under ISAF.⁶⁹ The elimination of these caveats would give the ISAF command more options and flexibility and promote greater cohesion among all ISAF forces.

The 26 provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) need many more mentors with political, economic, and reconstruction expertise. These teams would greatly benefit from more agency and personnel support from the U.S. State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and U.S. Department of Agriculture. These personnel must be skilled and experienced, not the mostly junior employees these U.S. government agencies are currently contributing in small numbers. Familiarity with Afghan culture and languages, particularly Dari and Pashto, would be extremely helpful.⁷⁰ These department workers must stay for longer periods in order to build experience and trust with the provincial governments and local populace. The PRTs also need more international and coalition involvement, relying less on U.S. military forces and other personnel.

Each Afghan province needs more input and accountability with regards to funding for the PRTs. Current policy keeps the authority for making financial decisions in the hands of donor nations. The provincial governors, elected councils, and tribal elders need an active voice in how their provinces are administered and governed.

Special attention must be focused on training and equipping ANA and ANP forces. Their capabilities to pursue and defeat al-Qaeda and the Taliban must be rebuilt and strengthened. This effort will take years of consistent patience and effort by the United States, ISAF, and the international community. The ANP, in particular, needs better mentoring programs by many more seasoned police from the international community. The ANP must establish better leadership with clean lines of authority, necessary oversight, appropriate discipline, and a method or forum to hear public complaints.⁷¹ These practices will allow the Afghan government to root out corruption and gain the trust of the citizenry, stabilizing the country. Afghanistan's security is key to its stability, which is critical to the overall success of the fledgling democratic government.⁷²

(4) Institute measures to stop the illegal narcotics trade in Afghanistan and transform the drug culture resulting from opium poppy cultivation into legitimate

economic enterprises. In order to inhibit the drug trade in Afghanistan, the rule of law must first be firmly established by the Afghan government and supported by the international community. Every individual must be held accountable for violating the law and punished accordingly, including high ranking government officials involved in illegal drug activities. Powerful drug lords and kingpins must be arrested and punished, not just farmers involved in low-level drug trafficking.

Better civilian oversight of the judicial system and law enforcement, particularly with regard to judges, the ANP, and border police, must be instituted.⁷³ The ANP and border police need better training in the science of evidence gathering, evidentiary chain of custody, and the preservation of evidence for trial; specific procedures for carrying out these activities must be outlined and implemented. More advanced, technological methods of detection are needed to identify drug smuggling at airports, border checkpoints, and along major road networks. ISAF and the United States need to provide more aircraft, particularly helicopters, to be used to track and arrest drug trafficking suspects. Local communities must also be involved in interdicting drug criminals and enforcing the law. A nationwide public relations campaign is needed to build support for anti-drug policies among the Afghan population.

The opium poppy eradication program being conducted by ISAF and the international community, with limited assistance from the government of Afghanistan, is failing. This program will not succeed unless a viable source of income is found to replace that currently being generated by the narcotics business, especially for the farmers growing the opium poppies. If an eradication program is conducted, it should be handled by the Afghan government, not foreign forces or agencies, and it should be limited in scope.

A better solution to eradication of opium poppies is to legalize and cultivate the poppies as a crop for export. The legal framework for producing opium poppies to be used as medicine already exists in Afghanistan. A new law allowing this practice was signed by President Karzai on December 17, 2005.⁷⁴ In addition, a precedent for this type of production was set by the United States and the international community with Turkey and India. These two nations successfully shifted away from the illegal narcotics market in the early 1970s by licensing and legalizing opiates for medical use as painkillers such as morphine and codeine.⁷⁵ According to U.S. law, U.S. drug companies are required to purchase 80 percent of the raw materials from opium poppies from Turkey and India.⁷⁶ The global market for pain-reducing medications is growing, and a worldwide shortage currently exists for these legal opiates. If the United States and other world communities would adopt a policy in Afghanistan similar to the one in Turkey and India, comparable success could be achieved, eliminating the need for complete eradication of the crop, reducing the illegal drug trade, resolving some of the global shortage problems for these medicines, and retaining opium poppies as a marketable, income-producing commodity for farmers in Afghanistan.

The international community, led by ISAF and the United States, also needs to assist Afghanistan in developing alternative livelihoods and sources of income to farming opium poppies and provide the agricultural and scientific training and education necessary to make the change to these new products. In addition, vineyards and orchards that prospered decades ago need to be restored and returned to productivity. Other crops that would flourish in Afghanistan are saffron, sunflowers, almonds, raisins, cumin, and certain fruits and vegetables.⁷⁷

Besides cultivating new agricultural commodities, Afghanistan needs assistance from the international community in developing other forms of business and industry. The well-known carpet industry, for example, needs help to once again become a world leader in the rug exporting business. Tourism is another industry that could open up many new jobs as well as provide the impetus for the growth and development of other manufacturing industries. For this industry to take hold, however, a safe, stable, and secure environment is essential.

(5) Garner greater cooperation and support from Pakistan; increase regional involvement from other countries such as India and Iran. A great deal of assistance, support, and cooperation is needed from Pakistan in order to secure and stabilize an environment in Afghanistan in which a liberal democracy can take hold and develop. Pakistan must end the two-faced game it plays with the United States, ISAF, and NATO, saying one thing but then doing another. This neighbor to Afghanistan must stop sheltering Taliban militants and leaders as well as members of al-Qaeda and associated movements within Pakistani territory. President Musharaf must eliminate all sanctuaries and safe havens for the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Pakistan to include training camps, recruiting centers, and staging areas used to launch and support attacks on U.S., Afghan, and ISAF forces inside Afghanistan.⁷⁸ Pakistan must also work to reduce the level of religious extremism and zealotry that is being promulgated in the madrassas. These schools must be monitored for what is being taught and sanctioned and be closed down if necessary. Other religious fanatical groups in Pakistan must also be monitored and, if necessary, reigned in by the government.

Pakistan's army and, in particular, the ISI directorate, could be invaluable in disrupting and disabling to a great extent the command and control operations of al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and other associated terrorist organizations.⁷⁹ The Pakistan intelligence services could work with and share intelligence with Afghan, NATO, ISAF, and U.S. intelligence agencies. In addition, Pakistan currently exerts little, if any, control in its Northwest Frontier provincial areas like the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Waziristan. A strong military enforcement presence is needed to reduce rampant Taliban presence in these areas.

Afghanistan and Pakistan must also resolve their long-standing and bitter dispute over their common border along the Pashtun tribal belt. A UN monitored agreement for negotiated border recognition needs to be solidified to reduce strain and conflicts caused by border control issues, ethnic tensions, and transit routes used for trade.⁸⁰ At present, thousands of people openly cross the border both ways between Pakistan and Afghanistan with no checks or controls, permitting easy entrance and exit by the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and other terrorist movements. A negotiated border settlement would help remedy this problem by allowing the implementation of tighter, more effective border control procedures.

Finally, utilizing diplomatic measures to arrange a regional conference involving Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Iran, and the United States could lead to discussions that would reduce the tensions between India and Pakistan and between Iran and the United States. The new "great game" being played among the various countries for influence in and control over Afghanistan exacerbates the security and stability situation and needs to be resolved.⁸¹ Moreover, Afghanistan must not threaten to use its alliance with India

against Pakistan nor with Iran against the United States. Such actions would complicate and jeopardize the process of establishing a liberal democracy in Afghanistan.

Conclusion.

Overcoming the obstacles to bringing a liberal democratic form of government to Afghanistan will be an arduous task. In late 2001, the country was operating under a total theocracy with few freedoms and absent a functioning governmental infrastructure. To transform this inheritance into a stable liberal democracy will require a safe and secure environment, massive economic aid, and a long-term commitment from the international community, particularly ISAF, the UN, and the United States. The cost to rebuild and stabilize Afghanistan will be billions of dollars annually.

At present, no single, comprehensive national security strategy exists that specifically outlines how the United States will secure, stabilize, and democratize Afghanistan. The Bush administration has pushed for NATO and ISAF to take the lead in reconstruction and stabilization efforts. While NATO and ISAF can be effective in certain specific missions, their leadership by committee and consensus and their unwillingness to commit the necessary troops, financial support, and long-term commitment calls into question their capacity to lead the overall effort. The UN also has a mission, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), but this effort, too, is woefully inadequate to meet the monumental challenges of rebuilding, securing, and stabilizing a democratic Afghanistan.

The global war on terrorism placed Afghanistan at the forefront of efforts to stop al-Qaeda and the Taliban from perpetuating future terrorist operations and to prevent them from using Afghanistan as a safe haven for a second time. However, Afghanistan has become the "forgotten war," taking a backseat to the war in Iraq in terms of diplomacy and resources. President Karzai has implored the United States and the international community for more military forces and financial assistance to rebuild his country. Several military experts have also highlighted the need in recent months to refocus attention and efforts on Afghanistan. Former ISAF Commander General David Richards, and General James L. Jones, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, both stated that NATO members need to significantly increase current NATO force levels in Afghanistan. Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates echoed the stance that operations in Afghanistan need more troops. After a recent visit to Afghanistan, General Barry McCaffrey, USA (Retired), indicated that "rhetoric and political will cannot achieve our goals. Afghanistan needs strong U.S. interagency and Congressional support to provide the dollars, equipment, combat soldiers, ANA and ANP mentors, and vigorous NATO and Afghan leadership to pull this mission from the fire."⁸² Finally, to illustrate the urgency of needs in Afghanistan, Lieutenant General Karl Eikenberry, after serving for 2 years as the U.S. Commander in Afghanistan, told a congressional panel that "a point could be reached at which the government of Afghanistan becomes irrelevant to its people, and the goal of establishing a democratic, moderate, self-sustaining state could be lost forever."⁸³

The international community, led by the United States and NATO, should provide the military forces, economic aid, mentorship and assistance necessary to establish a stable and secure environment for a liberal democratic state to take root in Afghanistan.

In addition, the Bush administration should refocus energies, efforts, troops, and capital back to Afghanistan, again making it a major priority in the global war on terrorism. If operations in Afghanistan continue to be waged “on the cheap,” efforts to rebuild and democratize this country will likely fail, leaving behind a broken state ripe again for the infiltration of religious extremists and terrorism. Despite the obstacles and difficulties, the United States must lead the international community in a critical and successful fight for freedom and democracy in Afghanistan.

ENDNOTES

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