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# Afghanistan: From Here to Eternity?

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“With home-bred hordes the hillsides teem  
The troopships bring us one by one,  
At vast expense of time and steam  
To slay Afridis where they run  
The ‘captives of the bow and spear’  
Are cheap alas! as we are dear.”

— Rudyard Kipling,  
“Arithmetic on the Frontier”

American policy in Afghanistan is at a crossroads, or so it appears. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld suggested in May 2003 that the war on terror in Afghanistan was in “cleanup” or “mop up” phase.<sup>1</sup> Overshadowed by the swift American military victory in Iraq, the images of airmobile troops and special operations forces rooting out al Qaeda in remote Afghanistan mountains took a back seat to images of M1A1 Abrams tanks sweeping through the desert destroying Iraq’s Republican Guard. Indeed, by the end of 2003, the problematic aspects of the American-led reconstruction effort in Iraq continued to dominate discourse.

At the same time, critics darkly hinted that Afghanistan was “another Vietnam” when aspects of the ongoing but low-level Taliban terrorist activities popped up in the media in the fall of 2003. Those seeking to attack American reconstruction policy in Iraq point to Afghanistan and claim that it is somehow a failed prototype, that the credibility of the American reconstruction effort in Iraq is somehow linked to the credibility of the American-led effort in Afghanistan. These are dangerous and simplistic arguments. Afghanistan is a complex

place in its own right: it has a unique ethnic makeup, geography, social structure, economics, and military factors. It is by no means analogous to Iraq in any way. Imprecise perceptions, some deliberately constructed, could distort the reality of the situation in Afghanistan and where the United States stands after two years of operations there. If we are not clear about what the issues are, we may create unrealizable expectations about what can be accomplished, with the kind of subsequent media backlash which is extant in Iraq.

### *The Critics*

Criticism of American Afghanistan policy can best be characterized as reflexive reactions based on obsolete worldviews combined with juvenile demands for instantaneous success. If it is not successful by now, it therefore must be a failure. Some examples: When describing necessarily violent activities undertaken by American-supported anti-Taliban factions, anti-American journalist Robert Fisk in the *Independent* (UK) uses phrases like “This is just how the Americans began in Vietnam,” and asserts that “Afghanistan is on the brink of another disaster.” Of course, in this view, America is to blame.<sup>2</sup> Analyst Jim Lobe penned an article entitled “Afghanistan Quagmire,” in which he shrilly stated that “Afghanistan is beginning to look like a quagmire rather than a victory, with echoes of the confusion and uncertainty and persistent bloodshedding of Vietnam.”<sup>3</sup>

In other cases, organizations with specific interests in the Afghanistan situation have raised criticisms to bolster their proposed policies (and perhaps potential involvement) without taking into account the wider view necessary to take in the magnitude of the problems in Afghanistan. Human Rights Watch demands that the UN-mandated but now NATO-led Kabul stabilization mission, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF),<sup>4</sup> should be expanded into other urban centers to provide “greater security” for reconstruction, the protection of women’s rights, the return of refugees, and to reign in “regional warlords.”<sup>5</sup> Josh Pollack in DFI International’s *Current Defense Analyses* argues that heavy weapons must be stored, and combatants must be demobilized and then be reintegrated into society. ISAF, therefore, should be expanded and provided with the capability to “stop any Afghan fac-

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tion from playing a spoiler role” while at the same time building up “a capable, centralized, and balanced indigenous military force.”<sup>6</sup>

The International Crisis Group, like the others, argues that the “international community” must increase ISAF to 25,000 to 30,000 troops and expand it to other population centers to “monitor potential disputes” which could disrupt the political process. The development of a legal system and a human rights monitoring mechanism could then be introduced.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, after consulting some refugees in Iran, the Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research at Harvard University is more than willing to provide detailed if unsolicited advice on how Afghans should run their country, with suggestions like “the new administration should prevent discrimination against any ethnic or political group” and “disarm everybody throughout the country.” The implications of these arguments are that some international force should run the show in Afghanistan, not American-led forces or even the Afghans.<sup>8</sup>

There are two distinctly conflicting visions of Afghanistan, once the Vietnam faux-analogists’ unhelpful assertions are discarded. The “ideal” vision of Afghanistan held by numerous Western observers consists of something which resembles a semi-modernized quasi-European state with a prosperous economy, where there is little or no political violence and everybody’s human rights are protected by a strong central government which can project power throughout the territorial confines of what we call Afghanistan.

This vision is tempered by two realities. The first is the impact of events that the United States put in motion in Afghanistan after 11 September 2001, given the circumstances of Taliban control over the territory of Afghanistan and al Qaeda’s presence in it, leading to the collapse of the regime. The second reality relates to what the current power brokers in Afghanistan will allow in the wake of all of this. These two realities will not be altered all of a sudden by the pronouncements of the pundits and the demands of the NGOs. Perhaps they should not be radically altered. If we are going to formulate a future American policy and strategy for Afghanistan, we have to operate in the realm of the possible, keeping in mind that mid-course corrections are not always achievable or even desirable.

### ***The Unfolding Strategy***

The close proximity of any analysis of American actions in Afghanistan to unfolding events dictates that we rely on public pronouncements and media analysis for our understanding. We do not see behind the scenes too well, despite the release of Bob Woodward’s *Bush At War*<sup>9</sup> and the availability of information on the internet. American objectives in Afghanistan are, however, clearly stated, if not made widely available. First is the destruction of al Qaeda’s networks, training camps, stockpiled resources, and communica-

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***“The Operation Enduring Freedom campaign in Afghanistan, in fact, is the complete antithesis of American involvement in Vietnam.”***

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tion systems. Second is the destruction of any governing entity providing support or sanctuary to al Qaeda: this was primarily the Taliban regime. Third, reconstruction efforts would be undertaken to ensure that international terrorism could not use Afghanistan and its people as a haven or operating base in the future.<sup>10</sup> Incidentally, American objectives in Vietnam were never this clearly stated, let alone achieved, particularly in the critical 1963-65 phase of that war. The vague language used at that time indicated that American forces were to “stop communism in South East Asia” and “train the south Vietnamese army.”<sup>11</sup>

The Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) campaign in Afghanistan, in fact, is the complete antithesis of American involvement in Vietnam in the 1960s. The first phase<sup>12</sup> of the war in Afghanistan lasted from approximately 7 October 2001 to 6 or 7 December 2001. In those two months, the first American objective was achieved with a combination of special operations forces, anti-Taliban proxy armies, and selective use of airpower to support both. The irony is that the Taliban regime collapsed far ahead of schedule. Mazar i Sharif, for example, was expected to hold out well into 2002, as were other urban locations like Herat. US Central Command (CENTCOM) plans originally conceived the first phase as a shaping campaign pending the introduction of large-scale conventional forces to reduce these strong points alongside the indigenous proxy forces. In early 2002, the equivalent of an airmobile brigade group was deployed, but this formation was much smaller than the unneeded but planned-for division or corps-sized options.<sup>13</sup>

There was some debate among American departments and allies as to how to achieve the second and third objectives. One school of thought saw American-led OEF forces completing their offensive operations against al Qaeda and the Taliban, withdrawing, and then handing over stability operations to a European-led stabilization force, which would first establish itself in Kabul and then spread to the other population centers. Another school of thought drew out the transition phase so that both forces coexisted, with the security assistance force slowly replacing OEF forces, perhaps over the course of a year. In both schools of thought, training cadres from the OEF forces or the

planned security assistance force would establish the foundations for a multi-ethnic national army, which would in turn replace the expanded security assistance force around the territorial confines of Afghanistan.<sup>14</sup>

The rapid collapse of the Taliban, among other factors, threw this debate off the rails. Attempts to deploy British forces to the Kabul region to act as a stabilization force were blocked by an irate Northern Alliance command. Subsequent attempts to establish an International Security Assistance Force in the Kabul area were stymied and delayed, again by the Northern Alliance. The size and mandate of ISAF were subjected to UN meddling stemming from the Bonn Agreement, which gave the Northern Alliance a veto over what the force was capable of doing. At the same time, some in CENTCOM saw an expanded ISAF as a competitor for OEF forces outside of Kabul, with all the associated problems of coordinating two separate international forces in a complex environment.<sup>15</sup>

The winner of the debate was the US Secretary of Defense. A guiding principle for American planners was to keep the American “footprint” in Afghanistan as small as possible. Analysis of the Soviet experience indicated that the larger a foreign force stationed in Afghanistan is, the more targets it produces, which in turn increases the size and intensity of any insurgent effort directed against it. The OEF force did not have to expand beyond brigade group size once the Taliban regime had collapsed. If the 4,500-member ISAF stabilization force (1,500 combat arms, 3,000 support personnel) expanded outside of Kabul in the face of indigenous non-Taliban opposition, it would require substantial American assistance to extract or protect it, which in turn would increase the size of the footprint.

What emerged from this analysis was that the nature of the second phase of operations in Afghanistan amounted to a stabilization campaign conducted by OEF forces rather than ISAF, even though the brigade-sized ISAF deployed to Kabul in the spring of 2002. The intention was still to hand off to some other entity, not necessarily an expanded ISAF, once the stabilization phase was complete, but the Iraq situation in late 2002 and early 2003 dominated events and diverted resources.

On the surface, and to media observers, all operations conducted in Afghanistan since January 2002 look the same. ISAF patrols Kabul alongside the police forces and exerts control over the Kabul International Airport. OEF airmobile light infantry, working with special operations forces and indigenous allied forces, hunt any al Qaeda that have slipped through the net and the remnants of the Taliban regime who are conducting an insurgency along the southeastern border of Afghanistan. When one examines these operations in detail, however, it is clear that the geographical area (and the population that inhabits it) influenced by the Taliban is steadily decreasing, that the number of

American troops on the ground has decreased since January 2002, and that the ability of the Taliban to launch sizable military actions has substantially decreased from company-sized operations (the size of the forces encountered during Operation Anaconda in spring 2002) to roughly platoon-sized operations or smaller. In many cases, mines are emplaced and individual rocket attacks are conducted, along with the odd ambush, but the intensity and scale of activity have noticeably decreased over time. As far as can be determined, no man-portable, surface-to-air missiles have been successfully deployed against OEF aircraft. There has been no equivalent repeat of “the Year of the Stinger”<sup>16</sup> like that faced by Soviet forces in the 1980s.

As in any war, there are still casualties. For example, in one month-long period (March 2003) there were two anti-tank mine attacks, one with a secondary device designed to kill survivors or rescuers; one attack with an improvised explosive device; a successful ambush against a Special Forces patrol, leaving two dead and one wounded; and an unsuccessful ambush against a convoy from the 82d Airborne. A car-bomb also was detonated in downtown Kabul, with little effect on its intended target. In all of these instances, OEF forces and the Afghan Militia Forces tracked down and killed or captured those responsible. In another case, there was a tragic crash of an HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopter, which killed all six crew members and medical staff.<sup>17</sup>

So Afghanistan remains a war with casualties. Media pronouncements that the war is heating up, however, and that a new Taliban-led jihad is in the offing, are greatly exaggerated.<sup>18</sup> Since May 2003, there has been one operation in which the Taliban fielded a force larger than a platoon, but it was defeated by indigenous forces supported with OEF airpower. To suggest that the activities of Taliban remnants during the latter half of 2003 are somehow the equivalent of the Tet Offensive in Vietnam in 1968 defies reality. Indeed, the temporary media focus on the low-level attacks made it appear as though there was some sort of resurgence, when in fact there has been a constant low level of violence and the media has been preoccupied with other matters like Iraq.

There are no indications thus far that the populations in any area outside of southeastern Afghanistan want the Taliban back in control. In certain districts of the provinces adjacent to Pakistan, the attitude of the Pashtun-dominated populations appears to be malleable: they do not necessarily support Taliban rule, but will if it is established or if the allegiance of their local leaders shifts. On the other hand, if there is an appearance of too much ethnic Uzbek or ethnic Tajik control from Kabul, it may generate sympathy among Pashtuns toward their relatives in the Taliban. Efforts are taken by OEF forces to stave off potential Taliban exploitation of these realities. Whether OEF forces or other organizations can continue to do this over the long term remains to be seen.

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The violent activity conducted by Taliban remnants and their sympathizers will never completely stop. We should not expect it to. We should expect, however, that there will be no more large-scale military operations by enemy forces—that is, anything larger than a ten-man ambush party or, at worst, some platoon-level equivalent action. We should expect to see the minimization of enemy attempts at subversion among the civilian population, particularly the Pashtun populations in southeast Afghanistan.

OEF forces cannot and should not do this alone, however. Indeed, there have been calls for the rapid expansion of the Afghan National Army (ANA), and some of its units have worked alongside OEF forces in counter-Taliban operations. It will take time, much longer than originally anticipated, to form a multi-ethnic national army. The other military power in Afghanistan, however, is collectively wielded by the Afghan Militia Forces or AMF. These are the personal armies of the tribal and ethnic chieftains who fought the Taliban. Usually called “warlords,” these leaders were integral to successful operations against the Taliban in the first phase of the war. Special operations forces work closely with them to coordinate OEF air and fire support, conduct tactical training, and provide advice when required. The loyalties of these chieftains and the people they control and represent can shift for a variety of reasons, as OEF commanders found out during Operation Anaconda in 2002. It is critical that the members of any military force operating in Afghanistan understand, to the extent possible and at all levels, the intricacies of the tribal relationships and religious affiliations of the groups it interacts with. Failure to do so will result in the failure of mission objectives at all levels. Have no doubt: the lines walked by OEF commanders are extremely fine ones in Afghanistan, and it requires significant agility and political dexterity to maintain the situation there. There are legitimate grounds for pessimism if this balancing act fails.

There are competing views as to the role of the chieftains in the future of Afghanistan. The school of thought that demands a strong central government backed up by the ANA ignores these power brokers at its peril—or worse,

demands that they be disarmed and tried for human right violations. The chieftains are, in fact, the men who control Afghanistan. They must be part of the solution and made to feel that they are, since it was their people who ultimately bled to take down the Taliban and al Qaeda alliance. No way has been found to merge the ANA and the AMF. Indeed, problems similar to those encountered by Zimbabwe and South Africa in the creation of new armed forces after regime change are minor compared to the ANA-AMF problem.

It is highly unlikely that these chieftains will work with an expanded ISAF or other international force as closely as they have with the OEF forces. Indeed, an expanded ISAF will be viewed with suspicion and probably seen as a precursor force to outright imposition of ANA control and therefore central government control. That is a prescription for renewed civil war, something similar to the events of the post-Soviet, pre-Taliban period in the early 1990s, or worse.

The issue of poppy and drug production on the territory of Afghanistan is extremely difficult to address. What, exactly, is its relationship to the existing power structures? It can be assumed that some chieftains are involved and use it as a means of revenue generation. Does it in fact drive their actions and operations or support them? The belief by some that Afghanistan will become the “next Colombia” is, perhaps, exaggerated, but drugs will be a factor in any future political instability. It appears as though 90 percent of the drugs and drug products in the region winds up in Europe, not North America; the other 10 percent is scattered along the way in former Soviet republics. If this is in fact a European problem, there may have to be a European solution.<sup>19</sup> Apparently the heroin extracted from poppies in the region is substandard compared to similar products produced elsewhere in Asia and is not in as much demand, at least for the time being. Like terrorism, drug production tends to gravitate toward and find a base in lawless regions. Having inflexible, overly moralistic policies for dealing with those who deal in drugs may be unrealistic in this environment if there are other priorities.

So where do we stand in early 2004? The first two objectives, the elimination of the Taliban regime and the uprooting of al Qaeda’s base and support structures in Afghanistan, have been achieved. The third, reconstruction of Afghanistan and its institutions to prevent the re-use of the country as a base for al Qaeda, is in progress and will take time. It is clear that we must forestall, as long as possible, a repeat performance of the inter-chieftain civil war which gripped Afghanistan after the collapse of the Soviet- and then Russian-backed Najibullah regime in the early 1990s. Can we do that over the long term? There are historical grounds for pessimism: it could be argued that Afghanistan never really had a strong central government with effective European-style institutions. Expecting such progress within the next five years may be expecting too much.

There is a possibility, a hope raised by many NGOs, that the people of Afghanistan have had enough of war and instability. Cyclical inter-tribal and inter-ethnic violence, however, appears endemic to Afghanistan. How do we prevent that? Can we Western outsiders using our means prevent it? Can we create enough influence within certain key groupings to prevent it? Can we build and strengthen a multi-ethnic army and security service before ethnic and tribal violence starts up again? We are talking about nothing short of societal transformation—and some will resist it. They will seek outside help, and they will get it. One possible solution is to hedge our bets by assuming that there will be another civil war in the future and ensuring that certain chieftains retain strong connections to the United States. If Afghanistan descends into civil war again, a repeat performance of the proxy operations conducted in the fall of 2001 can be arranged if it looks like al Qaeda or affiliated organizations are attempting to reestablish themselves in or around Afghanistan.

OEF and ISAF forces are essentially buying time to effect this transformation or at the very least provide a strong base for it. These missions are doing so with the deployment of foreign troops. The United States has to ensure that it does not keep deploying larger and larger numbers which will increase the footprint and therefore vulnerability. If OEF and ISAF forces cut and run too early, the United States will be perceived in some quarters as having failed to live up to the promises made. The Taliban might reconstitute itself and bring back al Qaeda, putting us back to square one. If OEF and ISAF forces stay too long, however, there is a danger of repeating the Soviet experience, or the forces may wind up trapped between competing armies in another civil war.

To suggest that American policy has failed in Afghanistan because of these facts is reaching too far and requires substantial amounts of intellectual dishonesty. The only other option was to not attack the Taliban regime and to avoid any involvement with Afghanistan. Such a course of action was not a realistic option after the events of 11 September 2001.

### ***Points to Ponder***

For those involved in formulating future policy in Afghanistan, and to those who comment on it, the following observations seem worthy of consideration.

- Most of Afghanistan constitutes a post-Apocalyptic environment closer to *Mad Max: The Road Warrior* than to *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. The ecological damage wrought by the Soviet Union and its puppet government in Kabul is staggering. The ideological and spiritual damage wrought by the Taliban on the Afghan peoples is the mental equivalent of the drought caused by the deliberate destruction of irrigation systems and aquifers by So-

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viet explosives and tanks. The illiteracy rate approaches 80 to 90 percent.<sup>20</sup> Most infrastructure has deteriorated, and there is virtually no industry. In some cases, “doctors” in remote villages are the second-generation descendants of Western-trained medical people. Essentially, Afghanistan is at the same Year Zero that Cambodia was at when the Khmer Rouge were finished implementing their murderous program. Many civil institutions are, in some cases, led by men in their 70s because they are the only living corporate memory from pre-Soviet times.

- The so-called “warlords” and their violent operating methods are a reality. It is critical that the more zealous members of international legal institutions recognize that antagonizing them or calling them to account under Western legal structures is completely counterproductive to the reconstitution of Afghanistan. We must resist the inclination to be judgmental. We need to work with them. Those who don’t want to participate will have to be co-opted, since outright removal will trigger waves of violence that could wreck what has been built thus far. Constructive engagement could lead to moderation.

- Democracy and human rights in Afghanistan—by our standards and by our concept of time—are perhaps not possible in the short term. The complexities of inter-tribal and inter-ethnic politics in Afghanistan make Bosnia look like an easy problem to solve. Given the high level of illiteracy and the probable high levels of political intimidation that will accompany any Western form of electoral process, the mere concept of democracy cannot be expressed, let alone take hold in the near term. We need to think in terms of “modernization” as opposed to “democratization.” The Afghan peoples have a traditional system: can they modify and update it to satisfy us? Should they?

- A robust OEF force and a robust ISAF force are critical instruments in the ongoing stabilization effort. OEF forces particularly have been effective at eliminating al Qaeda and Taliban influence in the territorial confines of Afghanistan. They have, in fact, bought time for the stabilization effort. They have prevented Taliban remnants from interfering with the effort in dramatic ways. They also serve as nascent coercive forces and influences to

keep some elements in line. What we do with those instruments and how that is received by the Afghans will be an important factor.

- The United Nations has a serious credibility problem in Afghanistan. It is not considered reliable by Afghans generally. In many cases, soldiers from OEF and their accompanying civil-military cooperation efforts are more effective, but this state of affairs is temporary and related to influence generation, information gathering, and force protection as much as humanitarian assistance. A handover from the OEF force to some sort of structure must eventually take place. But what will that be? Who will control it and provide security? The current Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) concept is a step in the right direction. By coordinating humanitarian and reconstruction assistance at the province level, “buy in” from provincial chieftains is more likely than it is with some monolithic UN structure or one run by the Kabul-based central government. The danger lies in selecting the means to protect it: OEF, ISAF, ANA, or local AMF? Which will increase the “footprint” to unacceptable levels?

- For the time being, the primary external problem to the Afghanistan effort will be events in Pakistan. Taliban remnants as well as al Qaeda hide out in certain border regions abutting Afghanistan. The ability of the Musharraf government to go after and defeat them in detail is questionable given the volatile nature of the post-9/11 Pakistani political landscape, and the fragmented and paranoid character of inter-ethnic and tribal problems within Pakistan’s borders. Ethnic Pashtun tribes straddle the Durand Line (i.e., the Afghan-Pakistani border) which facilitates a seamless flow of illicit trade. Obsolete variants of Islam flourish in that region, and it remains a breeding ground for continuous problems. Northern Alliance suggestions in Bonn during the fall of 2001 that a UN peacekeeping force be introduced along the border to guarantee Afghan territorial integrity may emerge, producing a Kashmir-like problem with attendant high levels of violence. The development of Afghanistan must take into account Pakistan. It may even be the case that the United States’ Pakistan policy is more important, and that its Afghan policy becomes an adjunct to it.

- A CIA analyst argued prior to the invasion of Iraq that al Qaeda “allowed” Afghanistan to collapse so that American forces could be lured into Afghanistan and bled just as the Soviets had.<sup>21</sup> It is evident that al Qaeda has instead focused its efforts in order to bleed American forces in Iraq. Recognizing, of course, that al Qaeda can attack targets in both areas, Iraq is more accessible to terrorists and presents more targets for the time being. If the situation in Iraq changes and the American presence is reduced, it is possible that al Qaeda or affiliates may re-focus their attention on Western forces operating in Afghanistan, be they OEF forces or ISAF forces.

## Conclusion

Determining where the United States should go from here with regard to Afghanistan is no easy task. Selection and maintenance of the aim will require careful and detailed analysis to avoid what the critics have already projected into the political consciousness through the media and analytical community. What is very clear, however, is that the future and fate of the Afghan peoples will rest on the decisions that they and their leaders take. If the situation devolves, it will be because choices have been made by those exerting power throughout Afghanistan. To suggest that the United States does or should exert fine control over those processes is patently incorrect.

We must remember what the primary purpose of the American presence in Afghanistan was and is: the destruction of al Qaeda, its Taliban shield and support structure, and the prevention of the territory's use as a sanctuary for continued al Qaeda operations. So far, those aims have been achieved. The Vietnam analogy remains, for the time being, the wishful thinking of a small group of misinformed or misleading pundits.

## NOTES

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2. Robert Fisk, "Afghanistan is on the Brink of Another Disaster," *Independent* (UK), 15 May 2003.
3. Jim Lobe, "Afghanistan Quagmire," *Foreign Policy in Focus*, 6 September 2002.
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5. Human Rights Watch, "Afghanistan: US Should Act on Expanding Security," <http://www.hrw.org/press/2002/08/afghan0830.htm>.
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9. Bob Woodward, *Bush At War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002). This "Team Woodward" work should be read with skepticism: see Christopher Hitchens, "Aural History," *Atlantic Monthly*, June 2003, pp. 95-103.
10. Operation Enduring Freedom briefing given to the author, Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, March 2003.
11. See Charles Morrissey, "From In-Country to In the Pentagon: United States Military Policy and the Training of the South Vietnamese Army," Ph.D. dissertation, Bowling Green State University, May 2002.
12. Note that CENTCOM campaign planning is based on a four-phase operational planning template. I have chosen not to use it in this case and have assigned my own definitions of the phases for the purposes of this article.
13. Not-for-attribution interviews.
14. Maloney, "The International Security Assistance Force."
15. Ibid.; not-for-attribution interview.
16. Operation Enduring Freedom briefing provided to the author, Kandahar Air Field, Afghanistan, March 2003.
17. The author was accompanying Operation Enduring Freedom forces in southeast Afghanistan at the time when these attacks took place.
18. Paul Anderson, "Taleban Leader Warns of Jihad," BBC News, 4 May 2003, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/3000565.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/3000565.stm).
19. Briefing provided to the author, Kabul, March 2003.
20. Note that this figure is in excess of UN estimates, which sit at around 70 percent. The Ministry of Education representative in Kandahar province believes that 90 percent is a better estimate.
21. See Anonymous, *Through Our Enemies' Eyes* (Washington: Brassey's, 2002).