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THE ETHICS OF AMERICA'S AFGHAN WAR

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To address the concerns of those whose futures are at stake, moral inquiry into America's Afghan war must consider specific and detailed alternatives, not just "Stay or go." I will argue that the United States has had a moral duty, at least since the end of 2010, actively to pursue negotiations with the Taliban and Pakistan to achieve a political settlement, conceding control of the Pashtun countryside to the Taliban. This project ought to include ending the U.S. offensive in that part of the country and rapidly reducing U.S. forces in the country as a whole to, at most, a residual force for training, logistic and air support, emergency defense of cities, and closely targeted attacks on international terrorist operations. Every day spent on more violent paths has added to the toll of deaths and wrecked lives wrongfully caused by the United States in Afghanistan.

In addition to shedding light on the morality of American conduct in Afghanistan, this inquiry will, I hope, shed light on the ethics of war. It needs to, since current just war theory does not provide sufficient guidance in crucial tasks. The agenda of alternatives that must be assessed to reach a moral judgment of America's Afghan war has to be set in a morally revealing way, much more specific than simply making or not making war. Open questions about the moral significance of speculations regarding outcomes and of death and injury inflicted on combatants fighting in an unjust cause have to be resolved in order to tell which options in Afghanistan pose morally excessive dangers. The most plausible moral justification (or so I will argue) for extensive U.S. combat in Afghanistan seeks to sustain America's preeminent role in the current global balance of power, yet this goal does not readily fit standard lists of just causes for war. Finally, individuals making morally responsible choices concerning U.S. conduct in Afghanistan must take account of enduring moral defects in U.S. foreign conduct; the standard task of just war theory, the description of what a just government would do in its warring, does not provide adequate guidance in this struggle with imperfection. To overcome these obstacles to moral judgment, I will consider relevant alternatives, relevant costs, possible justifying aims, and American imperfections, in that order.

THE MENU OF CHOICES IN AFGHANISTAN

The justification of a violent foreign initiative should specify its goal and an initial strategy for achieving it. Of these two aspects, the goal has priority. In its absence, one cannot judge whether the likely killing and maiming have sufficient point, the strategy cannot be intelligently implemented, and plans for violence cannot be intelligently revised in light of success or failure. So it was quite appropriate that the Obama administration's deliberations over America's Afghan war, as reported in Bob Woodward's *Obama's Wars*, were dominated, in every session, by debates over the specification of the goal, and it is quite disturbing that no specification emerged that set revealing terms of success and failure. "Defeat the Taliban" lost its allure and "degrade

the Taliban" gained favor, but interpretations of that degradation ranged from harm and disruption, inhibiting the Taliban's capacity to advance, to virtual defeat, reducing the Taliban to no more than a furtive sporadic intruder.¹

As a first step toward the crucial choice among alternative projects. I will present an expert consensus on background facts about the Taliban's resources. It will suggest an initial tentative specification of the crucial choice of goals.

Gilles Dorronsoro's reports after his frequent recent trips to Afghanistan are especially trenchant statements of dominant views among those with wide, deep, independent experience of Afghanistan. Now at the Carnegie Endowment, formerly a professor at the Sorbonne, author of the deepest book-length account of the sociopolitical impact of modern conflict in Afghanistan, his research there began in 1988. Returning from a trip in the summer of 2010, he noted:

The Western coalition is in a quagmire in the south. ... In the districts where the fighting is most intense, the population is primarily on the side of the insurgents. The Taliban are more aggressive than ever. ... At this point, 80 percent of Afghanistan has no state structure left. This means that there is no credible Afghan partner for the United States to work with. ...As the only effective force in many areas, the Taliban are beginning to build a shadow state.²

Whatever their hopes may be, the leaders of America's Afghan war have shared much of this assessment. Testifying to the Senate Armed Services Committee on December 2, 2009, in defense of the surge in U.S. forces announced the previous day, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff noted that the Taliban were the "dominant influence in 11 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces."³ By the following September, the proportion of key districts rated as dangerous or as unsecure (the worst rating) in the U.S. command's central tabulation of success and failure had increased from 29 percent to 34 percent. In March 2010, 40 percent of these districts were rated "population sympathizes with insurgency" or "population supports insurgency," as opposed to 24 percent rated as sympathetic to the Afghan government. (None was rated as supporting the government.)⁴ According to tabulations by the U.S.-NATO command, the number of attacks by the Taliban and their allies was two-thirds greater in 2010 than in 2009.⁵ In a memorandum during the deliberations leading to the surge, David Petraeus, the future commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, acknowledged, "The Taliban provides better governance, security and dispute resolution than does the government of Afghanistan in some areas."⁶

In their base in the Pashtun countryside in the South (broadly speaking, including much of eastern Afghanistan), the Taliban -- who have a Pashtun leadership and, generally, Pashtun fighters -- have especially rich resources. They are often strongly supported by local clergy, who exercise leadership in village courts that impose draconian justice based on a rigid and sexist interpretation of sharia law which has broad acceptance in this region.⁷ (In general, Afghans strongly favor communal adjudication over the state courts as more trustworthy, less corrupt, closer to their norms and values, and more effective at delivering justice.)⁸ Ideological opposition among rural Pashtuns to modernizers in Kabul combines with plausible fears of abuse and inequity from a government dominated by northern ethnic groups, led by the warlords who spearheaded the American invasion of 2001. High-ranking officers of the Afghan National Army and officers and enlisted men in units in the Pashtun South are predominantly Tajiks, the base

of support of the central armed force in the anti-Taliban military coalition of 2001.⁹ After the Soviet withdrawal, the northern militias played a leading role in a battle for control of Kabul in which 25,000 people, mostly civilians, may have been killed in 1994 alone, in bombardments and raids that reduced a third of the city to rubble.¹⁰ Certainly, Pashtuns will not forget the atrocities of the Uzbek warlord Rashid Dostum, a leading figure in the 2001 invasion whose forces massacred many captured Taliban (3,000 or more on a plausible estimate), often by tossing them into the cargo containers that litter the sides of Afghan highways, machine gunning the containers, and leaving those contained to suffocate and bleed to death.¹¹ Toward the end of Hamid Karzai's presidential campaign in 2009, Dostum barnstormed the Uzbek north for Karzai, who had invited him to return to the country and reappointed him to the post (largely ceremonial) of chief of staff of the Afghan National Army.

Non-Muslim troops from foreign countries add fuel to these fires of resentment. The senior U.S. civilian representative in Zabul province noted in his letter of resignation in September 2009, "The Pashtun insurgency . . . is fed by what is perceived by the Pashtun people as a continued and sustained assault, going back centuries, on Pashtun land, culture and religion by external and internal enemies. The U.S. and NATO presence ... as well as Afghan police and army units that are led and composed of non-Pashtun soldiers and police, provide an occupation force against which the insurgency is justified."¹² In an October 2010 survey of men between the ages of fifteen and twenty-nine in the two provinces that were the current central sites of the U.S. anti-Taliban offensive, "foreign occupation" was by far the most common response to the question, "What is the most important reason for young men joining the Taliban?"-- the choice of two-thirds in the districts that were the foci of fighting.¹³

Support for the insurgency in some parts of the country does not entail broad nationwide support, despite the contempt throughout Afghanistan for the corruption and ineffectiveness of the central government. Outside of the Pashtun countryside, the Taliban are widely hated and feared. The powerful reasons include the Taliban's part in the massacres of the post-Soviet civil war, their atrocious attacks on the Shia Hazara people of central Afghanistan during their regime, their severe constraints on women when they ruled, attacking rights that women had enjoyed in the cities and in parts of rural Afghanistan, and their repressive regulation then of day-to-day life in Afghan cities, including clothes, beard-length, music and kite-flying. The Taliban's current proclamations and the practices of local Taliban shadow-governments are more permissive than when they ruled the country.¹⁴ Still, most Afghans do not want to live under Taliban rule.

Nationwide opinion polls, especially the annual polls conducted for ABC, the BBC, ARD German TV and other news organizations, provide evidence of this repugnance. In the ABC/BBC/ARD/*Washington Post* poll released in December 2010, 11 percent supported and 88 percent opposed the presence of Taliban fighters in Afghanistan, while 9 percent preferred to have the Taliban rule the country, as against 86 percent who preferred the current government.¹⁵ As in all nationwide Afghan polls, this evidence (obtained with great courage, in the face of daunting obstacles) must be treated with care because of skewing toward the relatively educated and prosperous and away from Taliban strongholds. Fifty-four percent of the respondents were literate in a country with an adult literacy rate of 28 percent; 6 percent were unemployed, in a country in

which the government puts unemployment at over 40 percent. Governmental districts where 15 percent of Afghans live were excluded for security reasons, and, within the rest, 10 percent of the settlements initially selected for polling were excluded and replaced because of insecurity.¹⁶ In any case, responses to politically explosive questions posed in the midst of a civil war by people whose culture, residence, and occupation align them with one side, often asked of people who have not been brought up with the category of independent opinion researchers, are shaky evidence. The steeply increasing power in the South and East and increasing pockets of dominance to the north of the side that is vastly less well armed, supplied and funded are also a valuable opinion indicator -- without overriding the evidence of opposition by a large national majority.

The widespread Afghan opposition to the Taliban includes armed resistance, not just adverse opinion. Admittedly, the Afghan National Army is burdened by a high attrition rate (about 25 percent per year), illiteracy (80 percent of recruits), and notorious reluctance to go on the offensive, with some outright collaboration with the Taliban.¹⁷ Still, this army plays a defensive role in much of the country, and enjoys much more support than U.S.-NATO forces (twice as much in the ABC/BBC/ARD polls). In any case, organized violent opposition to the Taliban does not depend on the National Army. After the overthrow of the Taliban, the militias that had consumed Afghanistan in a frenzy of deadly competition for power and plunder before the first rise of the Taliban achieved basic peace with one another. In 2001, a contingent of these warlord-led militias had no trouble overthrowing the Taliban regime and driving the Taliban from the country in a month long offensive, with massive U.S. air support but only tiny U.S. participation on the ground, by cadres of Special Forces.¹⁸

A tally of the Afghan Taliban's resources must, finally, take account of Pakistan's support -- above all, its provision of sanctuaries within its borders. Hopes for ending this vital resource by inveigling and conditioned aid are an enduring theme of the Obama administration's deliberations, in which Pakistan played a larger role than Afghanistan in the first formal report on the Afghan war. But the Pakistani military provides the Afghan Taliban a haven for excellent strategic reasons. India, the regional rival to whose containment the military is dedicated, has become the major regional sponsor of the Kabul regime. For example, India's Border Roads Organisation has restructured the Afghan highway system, creating a new route to an Iranian port not far from India, which could become a more attractive outlet than Karachi for the cities of landlocked Afghanistan and an effective gateway for Indian troops and supplies.¹⁹ Like the external rivalry with India, the internal need to keep Pakistan from breaking into pieces pushes toward support for the Afghan Taliban. The Pashtuns of Pakistan (two-thirds of this self-conscious ethnic group) are only separated from the Pashtuns of Afghanistan by an artificial border imposed by Britain for imperial purposes in 1893. The Pakistan political elite reasonably fear that if discontented Pashtuns to the west of the line were to turn away from Afghan ambitions, they would join with Pashtuns to the east of the line in the recurrent struggle for an independent Pashtunistan, with rebellious secessionist Baluchis as allies.²⁰ Pakistan will break its ties with the Afghan Taliban when regional rivalry with India ceases and Pakistan becomes a well-integrated nation.

In contrast, one foreign resource, which was important to the Taliban regime, is not important in the current insurgency: Islamist fighters from abroad and, in particular, al-Qaeda. During the start of the Obama administration's deliberations, when the

commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan was asked about al-Qaeda's presence in Afghanistan, he responded, according to Woodward's narrative, "We haven't really seen an Arab here in a couple of years;" Woodward remarks, "For all practical purposes, there was no al Qaeda there." A subsequent intelligence assessment of the al Qaeda presence was "20 to 100 people there at most."²¹ While the Taliban wish al-Qaeda well, there is a strong expert consensus that their ambitions are wholly Afghan, and that they would be willing to exclude al-Qaeda as part of an Afghan settlement. In any case, al-Qaeda has every reason to prefer the relative safety of its sanctuaries in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan to much more dangerous exposure to hostile armed forces in Afghanistan.

Rough and incomplete as it is, this quick survey of obstacles and resources that the U.S. encounters in shaping the Afghan polity suggests that the moral assessment of goals of American violence in Afghanistan ought to concentrate on three alternatives:

1. Ultimate basic victory: the destruction, throughout the country, of the Taliban's ability to impose authority and of their significant threats to security.
2. Political mitigation: compromise through a political settlement achieving peace and limiting the reach and rigor of the Taliban's authority beyond the Pashtun countryside, as part of the normal Afghan mix of limited governance from the center and regionally dispersed power.
3. Protection against global terrorism: the exclusion of al-Qaeda and other terrorists of international reach from sanctuaries and resources that would significantly intensify the danger they pose.

These are the salient alternatives because the best strategies for achieving each might impose very different costs on those at risk, including both Afghans and foreign troops, through engagement with very different powers and interests of the Taliban. Morally responsible choice among these goals and strategies (along with any others) depends on a clearer view of the morally significant costs of alternative violent U.S. initiatives and of the moral importance of their various potential benefits.

MORAL COSTS

As a help in assessing costs, moral inquiry into U.S. violence in Afghanistan might usefully continue with a survey of different kinds of grave harming that are apt to be involved. The most prominent category of harms providing strong moral reasons not to launch a violent initiative are "civilian casualties": death or serious injury that would be inflicted on those who do not themselves take part in a violent project, inflicted either by violently attacking them or by directing violence at others that misses its target. The tallies of civilian casualties in the Afghan conflict that have serious international standing are issued by the Human Rights Unit of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, most recently in collaboration with the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, a monitoring agency of the Kabul government. The tallies add up findings that UNAMA and AIHRC regard as clearly and reliably established by the work of their Kabul-based investigators. In 2010, these findings included 440 civilians killed in military action by pro-government forces, the vast majority by U.S.- NATO forces, all as collateral damage.²² UNAMA and AIHRC's exclusion of inconclusive results of their investigations -- investigations burdened by terrible insecurity -- guarantees that this is an

underestimate. Still, this evidence does not, by itself, indicate harm on a scale likely to rule out an endeavor protecting against dire threats to a country of 30 million people.

According to the 2010 tally, antigovernment elements were responsible for 2080 civilian deaths, mostly through suicide attacks or improvised explosive devices that targeted troops, their suppliers, police, officials or locally prominent political supporters of the regime or served as landmines on roads, claiming, in collateral damage, many victims who were, quite uncontroversially, innocent civilians.²³ Civilian casualties caused by Taliban would rarely if ever be a basis for moral criticism of an attack by U.S.-NATO forces: each attack is meant to disable Taliban who might otherwise harm or endanger civilians in these ways. But in a morally responsible political choice to launch or continue a violent foreign initiative, its provocation of counterviolence that kills and maims civilians has to be taken into account. The fact that Taliban violence is directed at forces seen as oppressive and seeks to impose an alternative peace makes it a serious concern that the United States and its allies inflame lethal harming that would not otherwise occur.

Still, concern for civilian victims of individual attacks by both sides is just a part of due concern for the lethal impact of continued U.S. and NATO violence in Afghanistan. The most important death tolls are of a different kind.

According to the most widely used UN health estimates, 257 out of 1,000 Afghans die before the age of five, the highest under-five mortality in the world, essentially unchanged since 1990. Good government is not needed to reduce high rates of under-five mortality: the accumulation of basic sanitary improvements, the diffusion of cheap means of preventing death from infection, and improved means of transporting sick children are enough. Since 1990, under-five mortality has declined from 130 to 89 per thousand in wretchedly governed Pakistan. Substantial local economic resources are not needed. The landlocked desert pauper-state of Niger, the paradigm of a country bereft of economic resources, has moved from 305 per thousand in 1990 to 167. Adjacent to Afghanistan, the former Soviet Central Asian republic Uzbekistan is a paradise by comparison, in which under-five mortality declined from 74 per thousand to 38 in the same period.²⁴

Everywhere one looks among the most basic facts of death and suffering, the record is largely the same. Afghan life expectancy is now the lowest in the world, 44.6 years, barely increased from 41.3 in 1990. (In 1990, Afghanistan and Niger were essentially tied. Since then, life expectancy in Niger has risen from 41.6 to 51.5 years.) Afghanistan leads the world in birth and pregnancy-related deaths, which occur in 1.4 percent of live births. The average of live births for an Afghan woman who survives the childbearing years is 6.6, so that women of that age have, as a group, overcome a 9.2 percent chance of maternal mortality.²⁵

The cause of this entrapment in depths of suffering is, in large measure, the incessant disruption of subsistence and construction by thirty years of war. In a 2009 nationwide survey by the Red Cross, in which three-quarters of the respondents lived outside the main current provincial venues of combat, asked about their personal experiences of the armed conflict in Afghanistan, 60 percent reported being forced to leave their homes and live elsewhere (the response of 83 percent in 1999); 52 percent reported "lost my means of income"; 35 percent reported "a member of my immediate family was killed during the armed conflict." Of those who dated their most recent

serious loss from armed conflict, two-thirds identified it as occurring within the previous nine years.²⁶ If a U.S. initiative in Afghanistan is more apt than an alternative to stoke this inferno, continuing the incineration of the fabric of life, that is an exceptionally strong moral reason to take the other course.

Finally, America's war in Afghanistan produces, and must produce, death and injury of combatants. By the end of 2010, 2,281 U.S. and NATO troops had died in military conflict in Afghanistan, including 499 Americans in 2010 alone.²⁷ The Afghanistan interior and defense ministries estimate that 2102 Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police members died in conflict with insurgents in 2010.²⁸ In addition, the war kills and maims Taliban in much greater numbers. How many is unclear, partly because of the reluctance of the U.S.-NATO command to release estimates. In 2007, when U.S.-NATO forces were a quarter of their present level, the results of the Associated Press's own inquiries added up to 4,500 militant deaths in battle, prompting a NATO official to assess the whole toll as close to 7,000.²⁹ In November 2010, U.S. officials told reporters that 1,288 Taliban had been killed by Special Forces raids alone in the previous three months.³⁰ At least as many must be seriously injured as killed, in medical circumstances guaranteeing high eventual mortality. To what extent should such casualties count as moral costs in assessing continued American violence?

The question might seem absurd. The Taliban wreck the peace that Afghanistan desperately needs, under a leadership who hope to impose a regime that would be worse than the corrupt, incompetent governance to be expected if they were to give up their fight. Killing fighters engaged in this unjust and violent project may be cause for regret, but it might seem to dishonor their potential victims to count such costs as a reason not to deploy countervailing violence.

However, even if the unjust violence of the Taliban provides a moral justification for killing by a soldier engaged in combat with them, these considerations are not cogent moral reasons to neglect foreseeable Taliban deaths in a political choice among over-all goals and strategies. First, continued American violence can lead to people fighting for the Taliban who otherwise would not -- directly, when inflamed resentment at foreign invasion is a source of recruitment, or indirectly, when Taliban leaders make use of local grievances, the desperation of the unemployed, or coercive conscription to replenish their forces. Second, the death of a Taliban fighter is a grave loss to his family. Third, the foreseeable deaths of people engaged in a violent, unjust project can, in themselves, provide a reason not to launch the counterviolence needed to stop them. For example, Pakistan's armed forces have given refuge, training, and encouragement to militants who use deadly violence to disrupt India's rule in Kashmir and aspire to a repressive sectarian replacement. Through this sponsorship, they have engaged in an unjust deadly project. Arguably, only the virtual elimination of the Pakistani armed forces would stop this project. This need would not justify nuclear strikes whose only consequences would be the ending of the project and the deaths of the 921,000 members of the Pakistani armed forces.

The imperative to take account of deaths that an initiative might cause to fighters on an unjust side is especially strong for an outside party deciding whether to intervene to protect people in a foreign country from those fighters: no prerogative of self-defense justifies putting the unjust fighters' interests to one side. The imperative is even stronger when justice and injustice are mixed on both sides. Suppose that in continuing their fight

those fighters on an unjust side would respond, in part, to serious grievances and that their goal is to establish a genuine peace, which they regard, mistakenly, as just. They are not bent on depredation, genocide, or enslavement. They will, if successful, mitigate some injustices. They seek to establish a political community based on the common good of those in their territory, appealing to a moral code that is widely shared. Suppose that the outside agent has a chance of producing a peace that is more just, though very seriously flawed, through an initiative that is likely to require killing a great many more of those fighters than a more accommodating alternative. Not to care how many more in choosing would show contempt for human life, not respect for those who deserve justice.

FAILED CAUSES

Given the array of forces and resources in Afghanistan, extensive, long-term U.S. engagement in relentless counterinsurgency would be required for what I have called "basic defeat" of the Taliban -- that is, the destruction, throughout the country, of their ability to impose authority and their significant threats to security. My argument will be that this U.S. initiative would be morally wrong. What would be morally justified is brief use of the 2010 surge, followed by rapid reduction of U.S. combat forces, as part of a strategy of partial political accommodation of the Taliban.

Some justifications of killing and maiming by U.S. forces in Afghanistan appeal to familiar just causes of national self-defense and rescue from grave and systematic injustice. I will start by considering what violent U.S. initiatives could be justified in these ways.

A certain specification of national self-defense is the main public justification for sending large numbers of U.S. troops into combat in Afghanistan. On December 1, 2009, announcing the surge of an additional 30,000 U.S. troops, to raise the total to 100,000, President Obama began his case by noting, "I make this decision because I am convinced that our security is at stake in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This is the epicenter of violent extremism practiced by al Qaeda."³¹ However, the difference that extensive U.S. combat in Afghanistan, as opposed to targeted counterterrorism, would make to homeland security is inadequate to justify the substantial increase in killing and maiming and the continued destruction of the fabric of Afghan life. Closely targeted strikes by U.S. Special Forces and drones, based in northern Afghanistan or, for that matter, the U.S. base in Kyrgyzstan, combined with the activities of America's Afghan allies, could continue to keep Afghanistan from being a haven for al-Qaeda, who would have enduring and compelling reasons to continue to use such sanctuaries as northwestern Pakistan and Yemen, instead. Hamburg, London and New York would continue, as now, to be better urban centers for advanced coordination of attacks in the United States and Europe than Kandahar. In contrast to this situation, extensive U.S. attacks on the Afghan Taliban, added to attacks on al-Qaeda, would make no significant difference to safe havens.³² However, they would make one important difference to terrorism of global reach: they would continue to inflame outrage and humiliation at violent U.S. intrusion throughout the Muslim world, helping recruitment to international terrorism.³³

Rescue from grave and systematic injustice is also on many lists of just causes for war. Since Taliban control of the Pashtun South and East would impose much injustice on the people of the region, this just cause could be part of a justification for the massive,

long-term American counterinsurgency required to destroy the Taliban in their base while ending major incursions elsewhere.

Suppose, however, that mere protection of non-Pashtun regions from severe impositions by the Taliban could be achieved with much less devastation through a settlement partly accommodating the Taliban. The consequent losses in justice in the Pashtun belt would probably be small -- not because the injustice of imposed constraints on women, sexuality, education, and culture would be small, but because the outcome would not be very different from the terms of life in the Pashtun countryside if the insurgency were to disappear.³⁴ Indeed, relentless counterinsurgency might well produce an increase in repressive or predatory Taliban violence. U.S. counterinsurgency centrally relies on closely targeted attacks on Taliban commanders using advanced technology, a tactic that increases the proportion of fighters led by fanatics or thugs.³⁵ In any case, the devastation needed for victory would undermine the autonomy, the capacity to live a life shaped by one's own goals, that gives the protection of human rights its point. If the supposition about greater human costs of striving for victory is right, nationwide counterinsurgency to combat grave and systematic injustice would be a travesty of justice.

THE JUST ALTERNATIVE: PARTIAL ACCOMMODATION

The most direct strategy for pursuing the alternative goal of partial accommodation would be for the United States to join in negotiations with Pakistan, the Taliban leadership, and the Kabul government, seeking an Afghan settlement including the Taliban in a governing coalition and granting substantial power to the Taliban in the Pashtun South and East while protecting non-Pashtun regions from their rule; in return, the United States would commit itself to the withdrawal of combat forces (with provision for targeting al-Qaeda intrusions) and the continuance of aid. This strategy would offer the Taliban control of the territory where their secure authority is a likely prospect, make them subject to the pressure of the powerful yearning for a negotiated peace that dominates public opinion in every part of the country, undermine the nationalist appeal that is their most powerful basis for recruitment, and free Taliban from the personal perils of their continued insurgency. Above all, this strategy would mobilize the power and interests of Pakistan -- its control over vital Taliban resources and its interests in a stable Afghanistan in which India's influence is contained and Pashtun aspirations are met.³⁶

Perhaps the Taliban leadership would not participate, or initial negotiations would fail. Then, considerations favoring the pursuit of the settlement now would favor rapid U.S. withdrawal from the South and reduction of U.S. forces stationed in Afghanistan to a residue for training, attacks on international terrorism, air support for Afghan forces, and protection of severely threatened urban centers. In contrast, resuming the U.S. southern offensive as the presence of NATO allies dwindles in the North would prompt yet more expansion of the Taliban's influence in northern Pashtun pockets and other disaffected areas, making it much harder to contain their dominance regionally in an eventual national settlement.³⁷ As Indian influence grows, the Pakistani stake in a stable Afghan settlement would decline. A resumed U.S. offensive would continue to rely on the killing of Taliban commanders, eliminating leaders who could play a productive role in shaping a settlement, declared or de facto.³⁸

The humanitarian argument for pursuing relentless counterinsurgency, nonetheless, is that this pursuit of a political settlement or any similar strategy of accommodation is too apt to fail and thereby plunge Afghanistan into a long and terrible civil war. This certainly might be the sequel to the effort to accommodate. But in assessing this objection, one must be careful to compare the alternative strategies fairly, in light of the same assumed background circumstances. In particular, the objectors have a view of Afghan circumstances in which the sequel to the attempt at accommodation is likely to be grim; so one ought to consider the outcome of their preferred strategy in the same daunting circumstances. A long terrible conflict in the wake of the failure of accommodation would reveal an Afghan array of forces, interests and passions sufficiently favorable to the Taliban to make them an unappeasable force with enduring nationwide strength. If this is the underlying array, Afghanistan is also apt to flair up into terrible conflict after years of U.S. efforts to root out the Taliban, once the United States departs. This would make those efforts worse than pointless, magnifying the central agony of Afghanistan by postponing the time at which the fires of war finally burn out.

Granted, if there were strong evidence that those who would be subjected to the Taliban's authority in a partial accommodation generally gave their informed consent to deadly perseverance in U.S. efforts to root out the Taliban, one ought to take account of this desperate desire for rescue. But this is not the actual evidence. For example, in the November 2010 ABC/BBC/ARD/*Washington Post* poll, people were asked whether they were willing to accept "an agreement to stop the fighting [which] ceded control over certain provinces to the Taliban"; in Helmand and Kandahar provinces, which were those most likely to be ceded and the main theaters of the U.S. anti-Taliban offensive, a substantial majority were willing to accept the concession of control (63 percent in Helmand, 58 percent in Kandahar). People were also asked whether they would "want U.S. and NATO/ISAF forces to leave sooner, or to stay longer" if "the security situation in our country gets worse in the next six months." Balancing perils and prospects of perseverance, 60 percent of the respondents in Helmand and 52 percent of the respondents in Kandahar said "Leave sooner," despite the exclusion from the poll of the districts most imperiled by intensified fighting.³⁹

The moral argument against relentless counterinsurgency as a means of humanitarian rescue in Afghanistan partly depends on the political relationship between American troops and the Taliban's injustice, the fact that the troops would be intervening from abroad to protect people of a foreign country from local injustice. In contrast to humanitarian interveners, people defending their own human dignity in resisting invasion or rebelling against tyranny can be justified by a mere fighting chance of success, without the substantial evidence for expected benefit that I have required. In the previous section, on moral costs, the same political distance between American troops and the Afghans they affect increased the seriousness of Taliban deaths as a moral reason against continued American violence. In addition, a further moral consequence of the relationship of foreign rescue might seem to block all engagement of U.S. forces in perilous pursuit of justice in Afghanistan. When American lives are put at risk in a foreign cause, there is a special need to justify this endangerment to them and their compatriots. However, this further need is met by the prior history of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan. America's deep and harmful involvement in Afghanistan over the last thirty

years, which I will subsequently describe, has created a special, demanding national political duty to relieve Afghan suffering.

The strategy of partial accommodation of the Taliban is the morally permissible way to discharge this responsibility. As compared with immediate total evacuation of foreign troops, it would reduce risks of intensified civil war. It would protect most Afghans from impositions of the Taliban that they rightly dread at a cost that they seem willing to endure. It is the most promising means of hastening the end of the decades of conflict that wreck prospects of legitimate self-advancement.

FROM JUST CAUSE TO GEOPOLITICS

In Woodward's narrative of the deliberations that led to the Afghan surge, Joseph Biden cogently swats down every attempt to justify extensive U.S. engagement as a defense against al-Qaeda. The appeal to human rights imperiled by the Taliban is limited to a brief comment by Hilary Clinton, early on. Yet the surge triumphs. No doubt, this is in part testimony to the military commanders' stubborn pursuit of vastly increased resources and the political implications of that pursuit. (CIA Director Leon Panetta: "No Democratic President can go against military advice, especially if he asked for it. . . . So just do it. Do what they say.")⁴⁰ But it also reflects the force of a different kind of consideration, the consequences of Taliban success for U.S. global power. "If we're not successful here," James Jones, the national security adviser, proposes, "people will say the terrorists won. And you'll see expressions of these kinds of things in Africa, South America, you name it. Any developing country is going to say, this is the way we beat [the United States], and we're going to have a bigger problem."⁴¹ The day after the surge was announced, Defense Secretary Robert Gates, whose memoir's subtitle thirteen years before had already proclaimed him "The Ultimate Insider," offered a similar view as a central part of his justification of the surge to the Senate Armed Services Committee: "What makes the border area between Afghanistan and Pakistan uniquely different . . . is that this part of the world represents . . . the historic place where native and foreign Muslims defeated one superpower and, in their view, caused its collapse at home. For them to be seen to defeat the sole remaining superpower in the same place would have severe consequences for the United States and the world."⁴²

Jones' and Gates' remarks point toward a distinctive rationale for nationwide counterinsurgency in Afghanistan, based on the goal of protecting the dominant position of the United States in the global power structure. They emphasize one ingredient, the need to preserve the fearsomeness of the United States as a deterrent to defiance. If bands of lightly armed insurgents were to overcome the current onslaught of America's awesome firepower and achieve their most important strategic goal, secure authority in the Pashtun belt, this would invigorate hopes for armed struggle and strengthen recruitment among discontents throughout the Middle East, South Asia, and the Horn of Africa, potentially destabilizing such U.S. strategic linchpins as Saudi Arabia. Iran's regional ambitions and its commitment to policies opposed to U.S. interests would be less inhibited. As Jones suggests, the reverberations might be felt far and wide, invigorating defiance in Thailand, Indonesia, or Venezuela, or countries whose potential for trouble is as yet undetected.

A second ingredient is the strategic importance of Afghanistan itself. As in past centuries, it bears the curse of a politically weak crossroads. It is close to Russia, with contested Central Asian republics in between, and shares a border with China. It is an exceptionally promising conduit for ready transport of the increasingly important fuel natural gas. And it is the most volatile site for comparative losses and gains of the major regional rivals, Pakistan and India -- the latter of which is a major strategic partner of the United States, on the way to becoming its most important Asian partner.

Finally, the effects of giving up domineering influence over Afghanistan extend far beyond Central Asia to the crucial global threat to American power, the rise of China. Pakistan is not just a rival to India, the major regional beneficiary of continued U.S. dominance of Afghanistan, but China's major South Asian ally. If the restructuring of Afghan transportation gives primacy to the Iranian port that India is helping to build, it will prevail over a port near Karachi that China is helping to build. China's zeal for increased access to natural resources has already created a basis for Chinese influence in Afghanistan that will be hard to constrain: a twenty-five-year lease on the largest copper deposit in the country combined with an agreement to construct a 400 megawatt power plant for the project that would also supply electricity to much of Kabul, and, in order to transport the copper ore, a commitment to construct the country's first railroad, linking Afghanistan to China over the Hindu Kush. The price that China is paying for the mineral rights alone is \$3.4 billion. Afghanistan's annual gross domestic product is around \$11 billion.⁴³

The ideal basis for advancing U.S. geopolitical goals in Afghanistan would be the elimination of the Taliban as a threat to governmental authority throughout the country. As strategic critics of long-term counterinsurgency in Afghanistan emphasize, this goal is very hard to reach. But long-term counterinsurgency could accomplish less and still largely achieve the geopolitical goals by denying the Taliban the triumph of secure authority over any extensive territory. Indeed, the mere postponement of the Taliban's ultimate success through massive counterinsurgency has strategic benefits, for all its human costs. Establishing an extremely high price for militant opposition to U.S. interests, it creates a disincentive. In contrast to the similar project in Vietnam (where setting "a higher price for the future upon all adventures of guerilla warfare" became the major argument for escalation),⁴⁴ U.S. counterinsurgency now deploys volunteer armed forces, suffering vastly lower casualty rates and death rates on account of radically improved killing technology and battlefield medicine. Afghanistan's utterly different terrain, combined with new technology, makes it possible to avoid the global outrage provoked by Vietnam, with its massive toll of civilian victims of carpet bombing and free-fire zones.

These rationales make it a plausible speculation that the global strategic gains from long-term, extensive counterinsurgency in Afghanistan would be worth their cost in American lives, treasure and reputation. But this is no more than a plausible speculation. While relentless counterinsurgency might prevent a Taliban triumph that invigorates anti-U.S. forces throughout the world, it also would intensify grievance and resentment toward the United States. While military strength is now the only qualitative superiority of the U.S. over other countries and blocs, U.S. economic advantages are still significant. The monetary costs of the Afghan war might weaken this means of competition for global power, which may be more important than military superiority. (The two,

however, are closely linked. By sustaining alliances and client regimes, U.S. military strength aids access to natural resources, promotes American opportunities for loans and services supporting infrastructural development, and encourages market-led courses of development that are advantageous for U.S. firms.)

If the goal were to rescue Afghans from injustice, a mere plausible speculation that this goal is best served by relentless counterinsurgency would not justify inflicting a large extra burden of killing and maiming on Afghans. They are owed more caution. But if the goal of maintaining America's position in the global power structure is sufficiently important that it can justify large-scale violent initiatives, then a moral prohibition against killing for a speculative advantage is out of place. In a war, waiting for a strong warrant to suppose that an attack will yield sufficient benefit to justify its carnage is a recipe for defeat. Similarly, never initiating large-scale violence in a country when it is just a plausible speculation that this will help to preserve a global position of power is a recipe for losing power. (Such a ban would be especially stultifying if a great power's sponsorship of foreign violence, by client regimes or insurgents or invaders, without deployment of its own forces, is counted as a relevant violent initiative -- as it should be, on moral grounds.)

Of course, in order to justify large-scale killing, the goal of continuing U.S. preeminence must have great moral importance. For such moral praise, one need look no further than eminent strategic *critics* of America's Afghan war. In effect, their endorsement of the goal they share with proponents of long-term, extensive counterinsurgency completes the argument that I have sketched that engagement in this violence is not wrong. Leslie Gelb, President Emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations, has criticized the war as requiring "cost in lives and treasure for a cause that makes little strategic sense."⁴⁵ He takes U.S. world power to be "that precious guarantor of liberty and security," and calls for staunch resistance to "the danger of becoming merely first among major powers and heading to a level somewhere between its current still-exalted position and that of China today. ... Were this to happen over time, it would leave nations without a leader to sustain world order and help solve international problems."⁴⁶ Stephen Walt has vigorously criticized long-term relentless counterinsurgency in Afghanistan as a strategic mistake, "High Cost, Low Odds" as he puts it in a trenchant title.⁴⁷ In his view, "[T]he central aim of U.S. grand strategy should be to preserve its current position for as long as possible."⁴⁸ U.S. primacy, he explains, "contributes to a more tranquil economic environment. That tranquillity in turn facilitates global prosperity ... [It] also gives the United States a greater capacity to work for positive ends -- the advancement of human rights, the alleviation of poverty and disease, the control of weapons of mass destruction, etc. -- although it provides no guarantee of success."⁴⁹

How should a moral critic of long-term, extensive counterinsurgency in Afghanistan respond to the geopolitical argument? A critic who is guided by traditional just war theory might deny that the requirement of a just cause for war is met. Certainly, the preservation of the balance of power should not be on the list of just causes in the quasi-legal formulary of public justifications and criticisms by governments. In this discourse, only the pressure to fit a violent initiative into a very short list of diplomatically endorsed just causes constrains government action in practice, and if this cause were included in the list, dominant powers would be unconstrained. But in the

moral appraisal of violent foreign initiatives, the dismissal of balance-of-power rationales is inappropriate. A shift in the balance of power can have momentous consequences. That the accumulation of allies, clients and foreign bases by the Soviet Union would have brought about an unacceptable global loss of freedom unless stopped by violent American initiatives was a justification for those initiatives worthy of careful assessment, not dismissal. The assessment of a balance-of-power goal as important enough to justify large-scale killing obviously has to connect it with morally important concerns, not just goals of power. But the same should be said of national self-defense, the least controversial just cause.

Granted, in one important current revision of just war theory, incisively defended by Jeff McMahan, a just cause is said to involve opposition to threatening activity of individuals of a kind that makes it morally permissible to kill them to end their threat (if the other components of just war are satisfied). But McMahan's criterion is accompanied by shrinkage of the traditional scope of "just war" to one genre of justified war. Although he notes that "the burden of justification is . . . very substantially greater in the absence of a just cause," he accepts that agents who are not engaged in such activity may be killed, justifiably and intentionally, if this is sufficiently important in pursuing a sufficiently important goal.⁵⁰ So a sufficient connection with great goods at stake in the struggle to maintain American preeminence could, in principle, justify a war.⁵¹ In any case, the United States can nearly always identify some violent threat that could rightly be stopped lethally if there is no expectation of disproportionate harm. This is certainly true of the Taliban's violent imposition of injustice in Afghanistan.

Accepting the moral relevance of the balance-of-power argument, a moral critic of relentless counterinsurgency in Afghanistan could follow the lead of Gelb, Walt, and other strategic critics. While assuming (at least for the sake of argument) that a grand strategy that continues American preeminence for as long as possible is justified, she could argue that relentless counterinsurgency in Afghanistan would not fit the most promising grand strategy. Such a strategy would attempt to reduce America's need to kill and maim to contain defiance and promote advantageous access to natural resources, economic opportunities, strategic places, military facilities and alliances. It would do so by eliminating motivations to be defiant or to reduce American access to foreign advantages. For example, a political settlement with the Afghan Taliban could be part of a new policy of nonaggression toward Islamist movements so long as they do not practice terrorism of global reach or turn off the spigots of oil. Other ways of reducing incentives to opposition could include a radical change in policy toward Israel and Palestine, ready acceptance of a broader range of courses of economic development, and forthright provision for special needs of developing countries in a greenhouse gas regime. Through savings in military expense and gains in appreciation of U.S. leadership, this grand strategy of accommodation might seem as apt to prolong U.S. primacy as a strategy of domineering influence including assertive violence in such territories as Afghanistan.

However, this hopeful proposal leaves out something very big, China. The fewer the client regimes that rely on their American patron for protection against militant opposition, often Islamist, the more extensive China's access to natural resources that fuel China's growth. The more extensive the global departures from Washingtonian prescriptions for development, the fewer the opportunities for U.S. firms and the greater the scope for China's initiatives in government-to-government deals. The more equitably

reductions in carbon dioxide emissions meet the special needs of developing countries, the more rapidly the Chinese economy will overtake the U.S. economy. Hopes for a grand strategy of accommodation are also constrained by the inevitable existence of some regional powers (such as Iran and Pakistan) whose leaderships seek advantages that conflict with interests that the United States shares with its main regional allies. Their ambitions cannot be accommodated without a loss of influence by the United States. Of course, accommodation is a matter of degree. But the fewer the concessions and inducements, the greater the defiance that must be contained, making it more uncertain that relentless counterinsurgency in Afghanistan is out of place.

Rather than insisting on a gentler means to the geopolitical goal of continuing American primacy as long as possible, the moral critic of counterinsurgency in Afghanistan should question the global goal itself. "As long as possible" is very far short of "forever." Within decades, not centuries, the exalted position of the United States will end with the ascendancy of China, very likely accompanied by the rise of other current developing countries such as India and Brazil to the status of great powers. Except for the special case of Great Britain and the United States, bound by strong ties of culture, language and history, such shifts have been the source of oceans of bloodshed. Rather than seeking to maintain U.S. primacy as long as possible, a morally justified grand strategy would seek to manage America's decline in global power so that the transition is as tranquil and orderly as possible.

Granted, realistically, a shift in power creates uncertainties that have human costs. Global markets hate uncertainty, and regional troublemakers love to exploit it. Perhaps more rapid decline will increase these costs. But perhaps it will not: a postponed day of reckoning can be especially tumultuous. In any case, a realistic assessment of the likely human costs of the end of American primacy has to be accompanied by a similarly clear-eyed view of the likely effects of America's continued use of that primacy, based on the actual tendencies of the United States in world affairs.

In the making of U.S. foreign policy, when violent foreign initiatives are assessed, guesses about what will best promote U.S. global power are decisive; avoidance of consequent deaths of people in developing countries does not have substantial countervailing influence, independent of that goal. The rich data concerning deliberations at the top, including the Johnson tapes, the *Pentagon Papers*, the Nixon tapes, the Bush-Scowcroft memoirs and Bob Woodward's books, confirm this. The prerequisites for electoral success, the patriotic emphases of American culture and education, and the content and framing of news reports all work to sustain a project of domineering influence, often violent, in which foreign devastation does not have negative force remotely corresponding to its strength as a negative moral reason.

This process of policy-making produces vast death and destruction. Just within the two current major sites of U.S. military intervention, there have been many examples of this carnage:⁵² the provision of U.S. aid to opponents of a new pro-Soviet regime in Kabul "in order to draw the Russians into the Afghan trap" as Zbigniew Brzezinski later boasted,⁵³ a trap in which over a million, mostly civilians, died, in conflict fueled by further, massive U.S. aid to Islamist insurgents; continued funneling of arms and subsidies to favored warlords after the Soviet withdrawal, to restrict the influence of Iran, stoking ferocious power-struggles and a reign of lawless terror that killed over a hundred thousand more;⁵⁴ U.S. efforts to prevent a decisive victory of either side in the Iraq-Iran

War, including the sharing of "deliberately distorted or inaccurate intelligence data ... to prevent either Iraq or Iran from prevailing,"⁵⁵ prolonging the agony of the longest conventional war of the century, in which half a million died; the use of precision-guided weapons in the first Gulf War to destroy the power stations on which refrigeration, water supply and sewage treatment depend, in attacks intended to strike "against 'all those things that allow a nation to sustain itself.' ... to let people know, 'Get rid of this guy and we'll be more than happy to assist in rebuilding'" ;⁵⁶ further U.S. initiatives during and soon after the first Gulf War, including sanctions blocking reconstruction, that produced over 100,000 Iraqi deaths, apart from Iraqi soldiers, within a year after the start of military operations;⁵⁷ vigorous defense of the sanctions by the Clinton administration, blocking imports needed to restore sanitation and health care in Iraq in a public health crisis that ultimately lead to 100,000 or more excess deaths among Iraqi children under five;⁵⁸ the invasion and occupation of Iraq, which produced over half a million excess deaths.⁵⁹ Adding the U.S. intervention in Vietnam (which produced about 400,000 civilian deaths),⁶⁰ the lethal disorder created in the Congo by support for Mobutu, America's most destructive client, and the restoration of mayhem in Somalia through the 2007 invasion by America's client, Ethiopia, would, alone, increase the death toll by millions more.

Those who celebrate the strategic goal of continuing U.S. primacy as long as possible describe it as a source of tranquility and security. While this is not wholly wrong, the project of preeminence is also a source of vastly lethal disorder and insecurity. Similarly, U.S. dominance of the world trade and finance regime has been a source of stability and also of the tumult of structural adjustment, which seems to have lowered economic growth by about 1.5 percent on average, while inducing much displacement and insecurity.⁶¹ If extensive counterinsurgency in Afghanistan is to be morally justified by its role in a grand strategy of continuing U.S. primacy as long as possible, there must be strong evidence of large moral benefits from continuance of U.S. preeminence for as long as possible, as opposed to somewhat quicker decline in American power through failure to use violence to stave off losses when the stakes are no higher than in Afghanistan. The fact that the grand strategy of maximally extended preeminence would often require launching individual deadly initiatives for speculative gains makes it all the more important to establish large benefits from the grand project as a whole. Taking American preeminence as it is apt to be, not as it might be imagined, there seems to be no strong evidence of enough moral gains from this project to justify the carnage of extensive counterinsurgency in Afghanistan, as a sufficiently promising means of advancing a sufficiently worthy goal.

MORAL CHOICE AND POLITICAL REALITY

One has a responsibility to do more than sit in moral judgment of the conduct of governments, especially one's own. One ought to join with others in trying to influence this conduct. Despite what has been said by way of moral judgment, current political realities might seem to weaken, even to block, the demand for active opposition to extensive counterinsurgency in Afghanistan. No one will be elected U.S. president on a platform of graceful decline in American power. Nor is it at all likely that the United States will jeopardize stable access to natural resources on favored terms by ceasing to

prop up client regimes. Given these and other realities, the project of extending American preeminence for as long as possible may well be the best politically feasible grand strategy for the United States, even if it is morally inferior, as a humane basis for stability, to orderly decline sustained by greater accommodation. In this context, it might seem right to support, or, in any case, not to work against, those who propose to advance this grand strategy in Afghanistan through extensive counterinsurgency that is as sensitive to Afghan needs as victory allows, complemented with extensive aid in recovering from decades of war.

To the contrary, the realistic pursuit of moral responsibility would lead to active opposition to extensive long-term counterinsurgency, which would be all the stronger for its realism. First of all, an unblinkered realism, taking in all realistic constraints, would take account of likely outcomes favoring opposition. The patriotic concerns that make it unlikely that the U.S. electorate will embrace a strategy of graceful decline also preclude patient acceptance of American deaths as a price that must be paid to discharge moral debts to Afghans. So prospective gains from relentless counterinsurgency are greatly reduced by the significant probability of precipitous withdrawal of U.S. forces, thwarting both humanitarian and geopolitical goals after increasing Afghan suffering. By the same token, dismissal of the strategy of graceful decline as politically unrealistic ought to be accompanied by severe discounting of the likelihood of extensive American repair of Afghan devastation. The failure of the United States to do much to help Afghans after the 2001 invasion until the resurgence of the Taliban forced greater involvement reflects American attitudes and interests that have not fundamentally changed. Finally, tendencies in U.S. foreign conduct that I previously sketched would intensify further dangers: the danger that counterinsurgency will not be properly inhibited by concern for Afghan lives and the danger that support for beneficent U.S. military intervention in Afghanistan will encourage future adventures, excessively harmful but hard to stop given America's commitment to preserve credibility among both enemies and clients.

In addition to relying on distinctive expectations, the realistic pursuit of individual civic responsibility seeks to implement distinctive strategic alternatives, which can be very different from foreign policy strategies of a government. A U.S. citizen who shares the assessment of the enduring tendencies of U.S. foreign policy that I have defended seeks to play a responsible role in a political process involving both a government prone to moral excess and people, mostly far outside the corridors of power, who do their best, through argument, advocacy or protest, to reduce the excess. A conception of the most morally promising process of restraining the pursuit of geopolitical power may be her own main strategic guide, with no commitment to support the best grand strategy that the United States can be expected to adopt.

When realism informs moral responsibility, someone who accepts the moral reasoning of the previous sections will be all the more strongly opposed to extensive U.S. counterinsurgency in Afghanistan. The prospects of exit in midcourse and of abandonment of reconstruction when tasks of destruction end severely reduce expectations of benefit, without in any way reducing the widespread outrage at violent U.S. intrusion that fuels Islamist militance and international terrorism. For most of us, who play no role in the planning of foreign policy, full appreciation of relevant realities also justifies bluntness in opposition to extensive counterinsurgency. While there are better and worse ways of ending the U.S. combat presence, qualifications attached to

calls for withdrawal are readily manipulated by generals who want to defeat their enemy and presidents who do not want to be seen as having sacrificed American lives in vain. Our foremost responsibility is to call for an end to America's Afghan war, contributing to a movement that imposes maximum pressure to cease fire, make concessions, reduce forces, and depart. By avoiding illusions of control over the form that this process will take while debunking rationales for continued counterinsurgency, this blunt public opposition promotes distrust in America's tendency to do the right thing when it engages in or sponsors violence in developing countries. This drag on future excess could be the most important moral benefit of controversy over America's Afghan war, a fitting tribute to enormous suffering.

¹ In the final lawyerly "terms sheet," written by the president, which all participants accepted as their final orders, the objectives were said to include "Denying the Taliban access to and control of key population and production centers and lines of communication" and "Degrading the Taliban to levels manageable by the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)" (Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010], p. 386). If this means an end to the Taliban's capacity to exercise control for any significant period over any significant part of Afghanistan's sparse highway system (largely, one national ring road), or enabling the ANSF eventually, without foreign support, to protect the authority of the national government in every significant part of Afghanistan, then the U.S. goal is eventual virtual defeat of the Taliban. But perhaps the goal would be reached when the ANSF, with significant residual U.S. military support, can prevent Taliban seizure of the national government and the largest cities and Taliban control of vital aspects of Afghanistan's economy. In subsequent advocacy and explanation, the objective became, if anything, more obscure.

² See Dorronsoro, "Afghanistan Will Only Get Worse," *International Herald Tribune*, September 14, 2010, pp. 1f. Other illuminating contributions to the consensus include Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Dorronsoro, *Afghanistan at the Breaking Point* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010); Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Giustozzi, *Empires of Mud: War and Warlords in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); Giustozzi, *Afghanistan: Transition without End* (London: Crisis States Research Centre [London School of Economics], 2008); Syed Saleem Shahzad [Pakistan Bureau Chief of the *Asia Times* (Hong Kong)], *Pakistan, the Taliban and Dadullah* (Bradford: Pakistan Security Research Unit [University of Bradford], 2007); James Fergusson, *Taliban* (London: Bantam Press, 2010); and the fieldwork collected in Giustozzi, *Decoding the New Taliban* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009). See also Dorronsoro, Giustozzi, Robert Crews, Ahmed Rashid, and others, "An Open Letter to President Obama" (December 2010), www.afghanistancalltoreason.com.

³ Admiral Michael Mullen, U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, "Hearing to Receive Testimony on Afghanistan," December 2, 2009; available at www.senate.gov/~armed_services/Transcripts/2009/12%20December/09-65%20-%202012-2-09.pdf, p. 13.

⁴ U.S. Department of Defense, "Report [to Congress] on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan," April 2010; available at www.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/Report_Final_SecDef_04_26_10.pdf, pp. 35-7; and U.S. Department of Defense, "Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan," November 2010; available at www.defense.gov/pubs/November_1230_Report_FINAL.pdf, p. 52. In the earlier report, of December 2009 security ratings, a fourth of key districts had not been assessed. In the March 2010 tabulation, in which only 6 percent of districts were unassessed, 34 percent were rated as dangerous or insecure. There is no rating by popular support in the November 2010 report. In all of these tabulations, the dangerous/insecure, Taliban -sympathetic/supporting districts are concentrated in the Pashtun countryside.

⁵ See Ian Livingston *et al.*, "Afghanistan Index," Brookings Institution, February 28, 2011; available at <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/Programs/FP/afghanistan%20index/index.pdf>, p. 10.

⁶ Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, p. 243.

⁷ On the evolution and importance of the network of clerical support, see Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending*, ch. 9; Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop*, pp. 43-6.

⁸ See Center for Policy and Human Development and U. N. Development Program, *Afghanistan Human Development Report 2007* (Kabul: University of Kabul, 2007), p. 96; Sanayee Development Organization, *Linking Formal and Informal Conflict Resolution Mechanisms in Afghanistan* (Kabul: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2008); available at library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/kabul/05655.pdf.

⁹ See Antonio Giustozzi, "Afghan Army Far from Fitting Fit," *Asia Times* May 9, 2008; Keith Richburg, "U.S. Makes Small Strides in Getting Afghan Army Fitting Fit, But Hurdles Remain," *Washington Post*, February 1, 2010; International Crisis Group, "A Force in Fragments: Reconstituting the Afghan National Army," May 12, 2010; available at www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/190-a-force-in-fragments-reconstituting-the-afghan-national-army.aspx, pp. 7, 10-12, 19f.

¹⁰ See Human Rights Watch, "Military Assistance to The Afghan Opposition," October 2001; available at www.hrw.org/backgrounder/asia/afghan-bck1005.htm, p. 4.

¹¹ See Rafaele Rivais, "Ce documentaire qui accuse les vainqueurs de crimes de guerre en Afghanistan," *Le Monde*, June 13, 2002; Carlotta Gall, "Witnesses Say Many Taliban Died in Custody," *New York Times*, December 11, 2001; Gall with Mark Landler, "Prison Packed with Taliban Raises Concern," *New York Times*, January 5, 2002.

¹² Karen DeYoung, "U.S. Official Resigns over Afghan War," *Washington Post*, October 27, 2009, "PDF: Letter of Resignation [of Matthew Hoh]," p. 2

¹³ International Council on Security and Development, *Afghanistan Transition: Missing Variables* (2010), available at www.icosgroup.net, p. 48. In Helmand and Kandahar provinces as a whole, this was the response of 45 percent. Asked whether they supported or opposed a military operation against the Taliban in their area, 55 percent in the two provinces as a whole chose "Oppose," a proportion rising to 78 percent in the two districts that were current centers of counterinsurgency (p. 19). Asked "Do you think that working with foreign [i.e., U.S.-NATO] forces is right or wrong?" 58 percent in the whole survey said it was wrong, a proportion rising to 79 percent in the districts in which current fighting was intense (p. 24).

¹⁴ See, for example, Dorronsoro, *Fixing a Failed Strategy in Afghanistan* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2009); p. 16; Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 327.

¹⁵ ABC News, "Afghanistan Poll: Where Things Stand 2010," December 6, 2010; available at abcnews.go.com/Politics/Afghanistan/afghanistan-poll-things-stand-2010/story?id=12277743, "pdf with full analysis," questions 9, 25.

¹⁶ See ABC News, "Afghanistan Poll: Where Things Stand 2010," "pdf with full analysis," pp. 54, 55 and "Report on methodology"; United Nations Development Program, *International Human Development Indicators*, "Adult literacy rate"; available at hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators; U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, IRIN News, "Afghanistan: Family-Related Determinants of Poverty," April 8, 2010; available at www.irin.news.org (unemployment).

¹⁷ See Thomas Johnson and Chris Mason, "Refighting the Last War," *Military Review* [U.S. Army Combined Arms Center], p. 6; Livingston *et al.*, "Afghanistan Index," pp. 7-10; Andrew Tilghman, "Illiteracy, Desertion Slow Afghan Training," *Army Times*, August 24, 2010; ICOS, *Afghanistan Transition: Missing Variables*, p. 35.

¹⁸ See Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending*, chapter 10 for a brief, cogent narrative.

¹⁹ See Shahzad, *Pakistan, the Taliban and Dadullah.*, p.6; Barfield, *Afghanistan*, pp. 344f.

²⁰ See Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop*, pp. 27f.; Shahzad, *Pakistan, the Taliban and Dadullah*, pp. 4f. In the October 2010 ICOS survey, 57 percent say that Pashtuns "should have their own independent country (Pashtunistan)," p. 32.

²¹ Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, pp. 71, 162

²² United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, *Annual Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict 2010* (Kabul: UNAMA, 2011), pp. 21-35.

²³ In addition, 257 deaths were reported without attribution to either side, for a total of 2777 civilian deaths. See *ibid.*, pp. x, 1-20 and also UNAMA, *Mid Year Report 2010: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict* (Kabul: UNAMA, 2010), pp. 1-11. UNAMA's classifications of victims, which follow respectable usage in the United States, are potentially controversial. Except for those harmed while "taking an active part in hostilities," UNAMA counts as civilians people who are active in the central government's effort to sustain the political order it seeks to impose, including "public servants who are not used for a military purpose in terms of fighting the conflict ... political figures or office holders ... civilian police personnel who are not

being used as combatants" (*Annual Report 2010*, Glossary). Prior to its recent collaboration with AIHRC, UNAMA's glossaries explicitly included in this category "members of the military who are not being used in counter insurgency operations and not taking a direct part in hostilities including when they are off-duty" (*Mid Year Report 2010*, Glossary). U.S.-NATO forces do not seek to exempt from attack Taliban political commissars, shadow governors, or those mainly engaged in enforcing the writs and judgments of the Taliban in the territories they control. Their death or injury seems to play no role in UNAMA-AIHRC tallies of civilian casualties. A more stringent specification of the "civilian" category would reduce the tally, but would also increase the salience of the question of how deaths outside this especially protected category should figure in the moral assessment of an intervention.

²⁴ See United Nations Development Programme, "International Human Development Indicators," Under-five mortality, hdrstats.undp.org -- taking current rates to be the latest available estimates, for 2008.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, "Life expectancy at birth", "Maternal mortality ratio (new estimates)"; World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2010* (Washington, D.C., 2010), Table 2.19. Statistical estimates for extremely poor countries are always rough, and vary from source to source. For example, in addition to its main tabulation, UNICEF provides alternative statistics according to which there has been a reduction in Afghan under five mortality since 1990 (at essentially the same rate from 1990 to 2000 as from 2000 to 2009), and Afghanistan is not the world's worst. But Afghanistan is close to worst, very slightly better-off than Chad and tied for second-worst with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Its rate of improvement is much lower than the norm for least-developed countries. See www.childinfo.org/mortality_ufrmrcountrydata.php.

²⁶ International Committee of the Red Cross, *Afghanistan: Opinion Survey and In-Depth Research, 2009* (Geneva: ICRC, 2009), Sample Profile, Question3A/B, Question 5.

²⁷ icasualties.org, tabulating tolls from Coalition governments.

²⁸ Agence France Presse, "Over 10,000 Died in Afghan Violence in 2010," January 6, 2011.

²⁹ Jason Straziuso, "Record 151 U.S. Troops Die in Afghanistan in 2008," Associated Press, December 31, 2008.

³⁰ Christina Lamb, "Afghan Surge Is Proving Effective," *The Australian*, November 15, 2010. See also Kimberley Dozier, "Petraeus Touts Special Operations Missions in Afghanistan," Associated Press, September 3, 2010.

³¹ Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Iraq," December 1, 2009; available at www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan, p. 3.

³² Cogent arguments along these lines, supported by U.S. intelligence findings, are a recurrent theme in Woodward's narrative of the Obama administration's policy review. See Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, pp. 70f., 153f., 166-8, 170, 187, 191. See also, Dorronsoro, *Fixing a Failed Strategy*, pp. 27-9; Stephen Biddle, "Is It Worth It?: The Difficult Case for War in Afghanistan," *The American Interest*, July/August 2009, pp. 2f.

³³ Despite their general opposition to the organizationally separate Pakistani Taliban, 79 percent of Pakistanis in a recent poll want the U.S.-NATO mission in Afghanistan to end now, and 88 percent believe that the United States definitely (78 percent) or probably (10 percent) has a goal of weakening and dividing the Islamic world. See Program on International Policy Attitudes (University of Maryland), "Pakistani Public Opinion on the Swat Conflict, Afghanistan, and the US"; available at www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/jul09/WPO_Pakistan_Jul09_quaire.pdf, Questions 3, 10d-US8, 20, 34a, 37a.

³⁴ On the actual practice of women's rights in Afghanistan, see United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, *Harmful Traditional Practices and Implementation of the Law on Elimination of Violence against Women in Afghanistan* (UNAMA: Kabul, December 2010). The report notes that police and courts loyal to Kabul themselves impose repressive strictures. Especially in the countryside, they pervasively ignore laws protecting women's rights. But traditional strictures are enforced by punishing women for "moral crimes," such as running away from brutal husbands. One half of women in government jails are imprisoned for "moral crimes." See pp. 61f. See also Barfield, *Afghanistan*, pp. 202, 262.

³⁵ Concerns about these "new crazy guys" are vigorously expressed by experienced Taliban leaders in Tom Coghlan, "The Taliban in Helmand: An Oral History," Antonio Giustozzi, ed., *Decoding the New Taliban*, p. 133. Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn trenchantly describe this dangerous side-effect of the counter-insurgency in *Separating the Taliban from al-Qaeda* (New York: NYU Center on International Cooperation, 2011), pp. 9-II.

³⁶Through the start of 2011, the United States has only publicly supported negotiations between the Karzai administration and Taliban commanders which are basically aimed at their surrender and reintegration. A Wikileaks cable from the U.S. embassy in New Delhi on January 28, 2010 reported assurances to the Indian Foreign Secretary by Richard Holbrooke, Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan that "the United States cannot be party" to any "political negotiations designed to give Taliban elements a share of power ... because the Taliban is allied with al Qaeda and the social programs of the Taliban are unpalatable." See "U.S. Embassy Cables: No Power-Sharing with the Taliban, Holbrooke Pledges," *Guardian*, December 2, 2010, p. 3. Subsequently, while the U.S. sometimes facilitated further informal discussions, Holbrooke publicly insisted that all talks "follow the 'red lines' that are absolutely critical because we have a strategic interest here," including red lines that seemed to preclude genuine accommodation ("anyone deciding to rejoin the political system in Afghanistan has to ... lay down their arms and participate in the constitution with particular attention to role of ... women.") See Erik Kirschbaum, "Holbrooke Warns against Exaggerating Afghan Talks," Reuters, October 11, 2010.

³⁷ Without shrinking the broad swathe of districts in the Pashtun South and East that UNAMA rates as "very high risk" because of insurgent activity, the fall 2010 offensive was associated with a net upgrading of fourteen districts elsewhere to "high risk." See Yaroslav Trofimov, "Afghan Security Deteriorates," *Wall Street Journal*, December 27, 2010.

³⁸ The 2007 killing of the chief Taliban commander in Afghanistan, Mullah Dadullah, is a significant past example. See Shahzad, *Pakistan, the Taliban and Dadullah*; "Afghan Taleban Commander Killed." *BBC News*, May 13, 2007. On the continued endangerment of opportunities for a political settlement, see van Linkschoten and Kuehn, *Separating the Taliban from al-Qaeda*, pp. 9-11.

³⁹ I am greatly indebted to Gary Langer, Director of Langer Research Associates, which conducted the poll, for this information about provincial responses. In the country as a whole, 59% wanted U.S.-NATO forces to leave sooner if the security situation got much better, while 41% wanted these forces to leave sooner if it got much worse. These responses about pace followed a question about when withdrawal should start. Nationwide, 27 percent preferred that forces begin to leave in the summer of 2011, 28 percent said that they should leave sooner than that, while 17 percent said they should stay longer, and 26 percent volunteered "depends on the security situation." Nationwide, 65 percent said that they were willing (37 percent, very willing) to "accept an agreement between the central government and the Taliban." See ABC News, "Afghanistan Poll: Where Things Stand 2010," "pdf with full analysis," questions 31, 36-8.

⁴⁰ Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, p. 247.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

⁴² U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, "Hearing to Receive Testimony on Afghanistan," December 2, 2009, pp. 6f.; Robert Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

⁴³ See Michael Wines, "China Willing to Spend Big on Afghan Commerce," *New York Times*, December 30, 2009; World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2010*, Table 4.2.

⁴⁴ National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, memorandum of February 7, 1965, in Department of Defense, *The Pentagon Papers: The Senator Gravel Edition* (Boston: Beacon Press, n.d.), iii, p. 690.

⁴⁵ Leslie Gelb, "Four More Years of War," *Daily Beast*, October 24, 2010, p. 1.

⁴⁶ Gelb, "Necessity, Choice and Common Sense," pp. 13, 1f.

⁴⁷ Walt, "High Cost, Low Odds," *The Nation*, October 21, 2009.

⁴⁸ Walt, *Taming American Power* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), p. 219.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁵⁰ See McMahan, "Just Cause for War," *Ethics and International Affairs* 19 (2005), p. 16. As a historical example approximating unjust yet justified war, he offers Russia's invasion of Finland to create coastal defenses needed to keep Leningrad from being easy prey to Nazi Germany.

⁵¹ The previous analogy between an attack within a war and a war within a project of maintaining a balance of power suggests that this burden of justification might not require a strong warrant for believing that the grave losses would solely result from a failure to violently draw the line in the particular country in question.

⁵² For a much fuller account of relevant episodes, see Richard W. Miller, *Globalizing Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 166-90.

⁵³ *Le Nouvel Observateur*, January 15-21, 1998, p. 76 [but not in the shorter edition sent to the United States]; "How Jimmy Carter and I Started the Mujahideen," *Counterpunch*, October 8, 2001, www.counterpunch.org/brzezinski/html (whole interview in English translation).

⁵⁴ See Human Rights Watch, "Military Assistance to the Afghan Opposition"; Ahmed Rashid, "Analysing Anarchic Afghanistan," *Third World Quarterly* 16 (1995), p. 737 (estimate of over 100,000 killed as a result of civil conflict from mid-1992 through 1995); Scott Baldauf, "Life under Taliban Cuts Two Ways," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 20, 2001 (estimate of 400,000 civilian deaths in the 1990s as a result of the humanitarian crisis due to the civil war).

⁵⁵ Stephen Engelberg, "Iran and Iraq Got 'Doctored' Data, U.S. Officials Say," *New York Times*, January 12, 1987, p. A1.

⁵⁶ Descriptions of the objective by a senior Air Force officer "who played a central role in the air campaign but declined to be named" and an unnamed "Air Force planner," reported in Barton Gellman, "Allied Air War Struck Broadly in Iraq," *Washington Post*, June 23, 1991, p. A1. Gellman attributes similar characterizations of this goal of "long-term leverage," in less pithy formulations, to Colonel John A. Warden III, deputy director of strategy, doctrine and plans for the Air Force.

⁵⁷ See Thomas Ginsberg, "War's Toll: 158,000 Iraqis and a Researcher's Position," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 5, 2003, p. A05; Andrew Cockburn and Patrick Cockburn, *Out of the Ashes* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), pp. 23, 38, 39; Nora Boustany, "Violence Reported Spreading in Iraq; Army Units Clash," *Washington Post*, March 6, 1991, p. A26; Boustany, "U.S. Troops Witness Iraqi Attack on Town in Horror, Frustration," *Washington Post*, March 31, 1991, p. A20.

⁵⁸ See Richard Garfield, "Morbidity and Mortality among Iraqi Children from 1990 through 1998" (1999); available at www.casi.org.uk/info/garfield/dr-garfield.html; Mohamed Ali, John Blacker and Gareth Jones, "Annual Mortality Rates and Excess Deaths of Children under Five in Iraq, 1991-98," *Population Studies* 57 (2003): 217-26; Joy Gordon, "Cool War," *Harper's Magazine*, November 2002, www.harper.org/CoolWar.html.

⁵⁹ See Gilbert Burnham, Riyadh Lafta, Shannon Doocy and Les Roberts, "Mortality after the 2003 invasion of Iraq," *The Lancet* 368 (2006): 1421-8 (mid-point estimate of 654,965 excess deaths in the forty months after the invasion, 601,027 of them violent); Amir Alkhuzai et al., "Violence-related Mortality in Iraq from 2002 to 2006," *New England Journal of Medicine* 2008 (358): 484-93 (entailing about 400,000 excess deaths in the same period, with an estimate of 151,000 violent deaths, after attempted compensation for the omission of 10% of the initial sample because of inadequate local security); Opinion Research Business, "New analysis 'confirms' 1 million+ Iraq casualties," January 28, 2008; available at www.opinion.co.uk/Documents/Revised%20Casualty%20Data%20-%20Press%20release.doc (based on a poll shortly after the fourth and most violent post-invasion year, asking Iraqis how many members of their household had died as a result of violence in the conflict since 2003, yielding an estimate of about a million such deaths).

⁶⁰ See James William Gibson, *The Perfect War* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986), pp. 229f.; Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 442-53.

⁶¹ See Adam Przeworski and James Raymond Vreeland, "The Effect of IMF Programs on Economic Growth," *Journal of Development Economics* 62 (2000), p. 297; Axel Dreher, "IMF and Economic Growth," *World Development* 34 (2006), p. 779. Przeworski and Vreeland analyze data for structural adjustment in 135 developing countries from 1970 through 1990. Dreher analyzes data for structural adjustment in 98 developing countries from 1970 through 2000.