

STUDENT PAPER SERIES

AFTER THE DRAWDOWN: THE UNITED STATES, INDIA, AND THE CHALLENGE OF AFGHANISTAN

JESSICA BRANDT AND HANNA SIEGEL



HARVARD Kennedy School

BELFER CENTER for Science and International Affairs

MAY 2013

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This paper was completed in the spring of 2013 by Harvard Kennedy School MPP degree candidates Jessica Brandt and Hanna Siegel as their *Policy Analysis Exercise*. Brandt was an International and Global Affairs Student Fellow with the Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs in 2012-2013. The paper was submitted to:

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Executive Summary

In less than two years, the United States and NATO will draw down their presence in Afghanistan and complete a transition to Afghan security forces. Violence and instability, already prevalent, are likely to persist and worsen – with grave consequences for American interests in the region.

As a rising regional power with a strategic interest in building a stable Afghanistan, India is uniquely poised to play a constructive role. But the United States must think carefully before encouraging Indian engagement, as a variety of scenarios might disrupt U.S. relations with Pakistan, and encourage Pakistani actions that could further destabilize Afghanistan.

Over the long term, Washington should focus on deepening its Strategic Partnership with India. But as the United States withdraws the majority of its troops from the region, Washington will have to work with Pakistan to ensure the safe withdrawal of American troops and equipment, the continuation of an effective counterterrorism program, and the promotion of political stability in Afghanistan.

As the United States decreases its presence in Afghanistan, Washington's ability to control events in the region will diminish. Likewise, its leverage with respect to Indian decision-making regarding Afghanistan may also decrease. India will act to advance its interests in Afghanistan – it can and may take action there irrespective of what the United States might accept, depending on how circumstances evolve.¹

This report presents both a vision and a concrete roadmap for constructive Indian engagement in Afghanistan after the security transition in 2014. It assumes that the U.S. presence after the 2014 drawdown will be small.² It explores the challenges facing India and the United States ahead of 2014. Based on extensive interviews with former government officials and academics in both nations, it recommends actionable steps for sustained, high-level dialogue and on-the-ground action.

This report concludes that India can best advance comprehensive regional stability by:

- Investing in regional economic development initiatives that support stability by generating prosperity. Given that Afghanistan is dependent on extremely high annual aid inflows unlikely to be sustained long after 2014, increased aid and trade could be a decisive factor in offsetting state weakness.
- Training Afghan security forces in a manner that is limited, transparent, and located within India itself.
- Conducting a dialogue with Pakistan on regional challenges. Whether Pakistan chooses a path toward stability and greater regional engagement may depend significantly on the state of this dialogue.

¹ Tellis, Ashley J. Personal communication with Hanna Siegel and Jessica Brandt. March 7, 2013.

² Cloud, David S. "U.S. force in Afghanistan may be smaller than expected after 2014." *The Los Angeles Times*. December 11, 2012. <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/dec/11/world/la-fg-us-afghan-20121212>

Stability will depend in large part on whether Pakistan concludes that its interests are well served by a stable Afghan government. Therefore, a robust Afghan reconciliation process, led by the international community, must accompany India's efforts. Pakistan's security concerns with respect to Afghanistan can best be met through an agreed resolution to the conflict.

To advance this vision, the United States should:

- Redouble efforts to pursue Afghan reconciliation.
- Encourage India to pursue economic development initiatives in Afghanistan, through both direct humanitarian aid and enhanced regional trade.
- Promote changes to the current Indian training program for Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and police that will make it more sustainable and less provocative. Specifically, India should train trainers, on a timetable, and with maximum transparency, in coordination with International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF).
- Use a “hidden hand” approach to promote dialogue between India and Pakistan on regional challenges.
- Encourage India to stay out of Afghan electoral politics, but promote Indian training of Afghan civil servants.
- Promote further collaboration between U.S. policymakers within the Department of Defense working on Af/Pak (under Central Command) and those working on India (under Pacific Command), as well as with the South Asia Bureau at the Department of State.

The United States and India have a strong and shared interest in preventing extremist groups from using Afghanistan as a base from which to launch terror attacks. If our two countries work together to foster stability in Afghanistan without provoking a counterproductive Pakistani response, we can further our Strategic Partnership and advance peace and security in South Asia.

I. Introduction: Defining the Challenge

In 2014, the United States will end its combat mission in Afghanistan. Although the U.S.-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Agreement anticipates the presence of U.S. troops for a longer period, that presence is likely to be limited. After the drawdown, instability in Afghanistan will persist and possibly worsen. Simultaneous transitions across the security, economic, and political spheres threaten to undermine an already fragile situation.

The World in 2014: Threats to Stability in Afghanistan

Transition will entail the drawdown of most international military forces, the hand-over of full responsibility for security to the Afghan National Security Forces, and a likely decrease in overall international assistance to Afghanistan. These developments will have a profound impact on Afghanistan's security, economic, and political landscape well beyond 2014.

The Security Challenge

The Taliban insurgency – rooted in Afghan Pashtun society and supported by cross-border sanctuaries in Pakistan – is apt to endure well beyond the drawdown. One of the primary drivers of the conflict in Afghanistan after 2014 is likely to be a rise in the activity and influence of extremist groups, several of which are linked to Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI). These groups include the Haqqani network – which operates out of sanctuaries just a few hours from Kabul – as well as al Qaeda, Lashkar-e-Taiba, and The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.³ These groups pose a challenge for both the United States and India, which have the shared, high-priority interest in preventing terrorism and maintaining regional stability. As the end of combat operations approaches, America's ability to control events will be significantly diminished. One reason for the United States to maintain a residual force in Afghanistan is to deal with this threat.

The Economic Challenge

The Afghan economy is dependent on extremely high annual aid inflows from the international community that will not be sustained long beyond 2014. Current annual aid to Afghanistan – estimated by the World Bank to total \$15.7 billion in 2010 – is roughly the same amount as the country's total GDP.⁴ Although the international community is likely to make financial support available to the government in Kabul for the short term, as former director of defense studies for the Royal Air Force Michael Hart suggests, "it still may not be enough to offset the weakness of any

³ Gwertzman, Bernard. Interview with Max Boot, " 'Huge Uncertainty' in Afghanistan." *Council on Foreign Relations*. September 26, 2012. <http://www.cfr.org/afghanistan/huge-uncertainty-afghanistan/p29145>

Gordon, Michael R. "Time Slipping, U.S. Ponders Afghan Role After 2014." *The New York Times*. November 25, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/26/world/asia/us-planning-a-force-to-stay-in-afghanistan.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

⁴ "Transition in Afghanistan: Looking Beyond 2014." *The World Bank*. November 18, 2011. <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/AFGHANISTANEXTN/Resources/305984-1297184305854/AFTransition.pdf>

national government following Western disengagement.”⁵

According to a 2011 World Bank report, assuming effective development of Afghan minerals and an economic growth rate between 5 and 6 percent a year for a decade, Afghan government expenditures would still exceed GDP by 25 percent.⁶ These growth projections may be too optimistic. Although Afghanistan’s economic growth rate has been strong in recent years, much of that growth comes from agriculture and is thus unpredictable, particularly because of the effects of severe weather (as exemplified by the devastating 2008-09 drought). Recent strong growth rates are also driven by high, continuous aid inflows from international donors, much of which will likely taper off after 2014.⁷ Finally, this prediction is based on the assumption that security will be sufficient to allow Afghanistan’s mineral resources to be developed – it is far from clear it will be.

The Political Challenge

As the drawdown approaches, India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan all face elections, the outcome of which will have significant impact on the chances for stability in the region, as well as U.S. policy moving forward. Uncertainty is especially present in Afghanistan. According to former U.S. Special Envoy to Afghanistan James Dobbins, it is unclear whether or not the Afghan political elites will coalesce and put forward a set of plausible, broadly supported candidates. If they do not, and many candidates enter the race, it is conceivable that Afghanistan could elect a leader who wins mathematically – after runoffs – but who reflects the will of only a small percentage of Afghans.⁸ Should that occur, the new leader’s lack of broad support could lead to serious fragmentation and instability. India and Pakistan, he says, would not react positively to such a development. “I don’t think either country is likely to see fragmentation as in [its] interest,” he told us. But to the degree that fragmentation is beginning to occur India and Pakistan will begin to “hedge their bets and protect their long term interests by exacerbating the internal divisions.”⁹ If that happens, each country is likely to support –formally or informally – its preferred candidate.

⁵ Hart, Michael. “West’s Afghan Hopes Collide with Reality,” *National Interest*, February 28, 2012.

⁶ “Transition in Afghanistan: Looking Beyond 2014,” *The World Bank*. df

⁷ “Macroeconomics & Economic Growth in South Asia: Growth in Afghanistan,” *The World Bank*. Last updated February 2011. <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/EXTSARR EGTOPMACECOGRO/0,,contentMDK:20592478~menuPK:579404~pagePK:34004173~piPK:34003707~theSite PK:579398,00.html>

⁸ Dobbins, James. Interview by Hanna Siegel and Jessica Brandt. Personal interview. Washington DC, February 15, 2013.

⁹ Dobbins, Personal interview.

II. The Scope of the Challenge

Indian engagement in Afghanistan – across the diplomatic, security, and economic spheres – offers promising contributions to stability in a period of great uncertainty. But Indo-Pak rivalry threatens to adversely affect developments in Afghanistan, making it difficult, if not impossible, to achieve that goal.

India is a Ready Partner

India is the world's largest democracy, a growing economy with extensive trade links both around the globe and within the region, and a rising power in a part of the world to which the United States is “pivoting” attention and resources.

India's interests in Afghanistan are largely congruent with those of the United States. Chief among these goals are:

- Preventing terrorism
- Decreasing Taliban influence in Afghanistan
- Increasing access to Central Asia

India also seeks to project power and demonstrate its ability to provide regional security. Each of these goals is compatible with U.S. interests. Former Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran reinforced this point: “We have strong, long term convergent interests [with the United States], including in Afghanistan.”¹⁰ According to Richard Fontaine, President of the Center for a New American Security, “These shared interests translate into a series of mutual objectives – to defeat the Taliban, help build the capacity and legitimacy of the government of Afghanistan, and aid the reconstruction of the country.”¹¹

Since 2001, Delhi's engagement in Afghanistan has sought to:

- Bolster the government in Kabul by providing development aid.
- Integrate Afghanistan into broader regional political structures.¹²

That said India's involvement in Afghanistan might not be entirely benign. Controversially, it has been suggested that India is conducting intelligence operations against Pakistan from Afghanistan (as well as Iran).¹³ We should not dismiss these charges because they pose an inconvenience to the growing U.S.-India Strategic Partnership. But while Delhi's goals for Afghanistan certainly involve

¹⁰ Saran, Shyam. Interview by Hanna Siegel and Jessica Brandt. Personal interview. New Delhi, January 21, 2013.

¹¹ Fontaine, Richard. “Moving Ahead in Afghanistan: The U.S.-India-Pakistan Dynamic,” U.S.-India Strategic Dialogue,, *The Aspen Strategy Group*, 2010, 1-2.

¹² Hanauer, Larry and Peter Chalk. “India's and Pakistan's Strategies in Afghanistan: Implications for the United States and the Region.” *Center for Asia Pacific Policy*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2012. http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/OP387. Also available in print form.

¹³ Fair, C. Christine, “Under the Shrinking U.S. Security Umbrella: India's End Game in Afghanistan?” *Washington Quarterly*, 34:2. Spring 2011, 184.

minimizing Islamabad's influence, we believe that the Indian government's overall policy appears to be primarily geared towards advancing its broader domestic and regional interests, separate from its rivalry with Pakistan.¹⁴

Collaboration with India could advance multiple American objectives simultaneously. In 2011, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian affairs Robert O. Blake testified before Congress that "a strategy of sustained multi-faceted engagement with India contributes to the stability and security of the South Asia region, and the world."¹⁵ To date, U.S.-India relations have been primarily bilaterally focused, but a closer partnership on Afghanistan could be a first step towards collaboration on other global issues. The Brookings Institution's Teresita Schaeffer suggests, "In the coming decades, as both countries grapple with problems that demand global solution, the regional and global dimension of their ties will need to grow."¹⁶

India's Efforts in Afghanistan to Date

In light of these interests, India has committed \$2 billion in aid to Afghanistan since 2001, making it the fifth largest global donor, and top regional donor.¹⁷

India's engagement in Afghanistan to date has been primarily in the form of economic development. India's development dollars have gone to education, health, power, infrastructure, and food aid, among other things and several thousand Indians are on the ground in Afghanistan working on development projects.¹⁸ Food security projects have delivered millions of high protein biscuits to schoolchildren.¹⁹ Medical missions provide care to 1,000 patients a day.²⁰ Infrastructure projects have included a new Parliament building in Kabul and a road to the Iranian border.²¹ Notably, India's aid to Afghanistan has not included any conditions, a departure from its aid policies to some other countries.²²

In addition to aid, India has made substantial investments in Afghanistan. In November 2011, President Karzai awarded mining rights to Afghanistan's biggest iron deposit to Indian state-run

¹⁴ Hannauer and Chalk, "India's and Pakistan's Strategies," 1.

¹⁵ Blake, Robert O. Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, Testimony Before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, April 5, 2011.

¹⁶ Schaffer, Teresita C. *India and the United States in the 21st Century: Reinventing Partnership*. Center for Strategic and International Studies Press, 2009, 2.

¹⁷ D'Souza, Shanthie Mariet. "India-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership: Beyond 2014?" *Institute of South Asian Studies*, Issue No. 142. October 2011, 2. Bajoria, Jayshree. "India-Afghanistan Relations." *Council on Foreign Relations*. July 22, 2009. <http://www.cfr.org/india/india-afghanistan-relations/p17474>

¹⁸ Fontaine, Richard. "We Need An Indian Civilian Surge." *Center for a New American Security*. November 5, 2010. <http://www.cnas.org/node/5218>

¹⁹ Ayres, Alyssa. Interview with Hanna Siegel and Jessica Brandt. Personal interview. Washington DC, February 14, 2013.

²⁰ Tharoor, Shashi. "India Gives." *Project Syndicate*. June 10, 2011. <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/india-gives>

²¹ In order to get exports into Afghanistan, India must go through Iran, as Pakistan does not allow the transit of Indian goods. We discuss this subject more fully in the sections that follow.

²² Timmons, Heather. "Can India 'Fix' Afghanistan?" *The New York Times/International Herald Tribune*. June 7, 2012. <http://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/06/07/can-india-fix-afghanistan/>

private companies. At that time, according to the Ministry of Mines policy director, Afghanistan expected to get \$10.7 billion in foreign investment from India over the next 30 years.²³ That same month, the foreign ministers of the two countries signed four Memorandums of Understanding to cooperate in the areas of social welfare, fertilizer, coal mining, and youth affairs.²⁴

Increasingly, India has turned toward the provision of security-sector assistance. In October 2011, Afghan President Hamid Karzai and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh signed a Strategic Agreement five months in the making in which India agreed to help the Afghan government with its judiciary and diplomatic services as well as train and equip Afghan security forces. This initiative has already begun; some Afghan army, air force, and police are currently in counter-insurgency and high-altitude warfare training at military schools in India. India has also begun providing light weapons to the Afghan forces.²⁵ Initial reports suggested that between 20,000 and 30,000 ANSF soldiers would be trained by India over three years.²⁶ However, we believe that this number is far over-stated; American officials we spoke to in New Delhi told us that they understand the current program to be very limited, with numbers in the hundreds. Other reports support that assertion.^{27 28}

But notably, the Strategic Agreement does not include specifics of what India will provide, giving it the room to show restraint where it feels that is necessary in order to minimize Pakistani concerns.²⁹ Recently, President Karzai asked the Indian government for equipment for the Afghan National Security Forces. But the Indian government only fulfilled some of his requests and sources in New Delhi told us that this restraint was exercised with an eye towards Pakistani sensitivities.³⁰ For similar reasons, India has maintained that it would not send its troops into Afghanistan for training purposes. Upon signing the Strategic Agreement, India's ambassador to Afghanistan Gautum Mukhopadhyay told reporters in New Delhi, "We are doing everything here".³¹ Our assessment, based on our conversations in New Delhi, is that this policy of restraint will hold.³²

²³ Najafizada, Eltaf. "Indian Group Wins Rights to Mine in Afghanistan's Hajigak." *Bloomberg Business Week*. December 6, 2011. <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-12-06/indian-group-wins-rights-to-mine-in-afghanistan-s-hajigak.html>

²⁴ Tuteja, Ashok. "India, Afghanistan to sign four MoUs during Karzai's visit." *The Tribune*. November 5, 2012. <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2012/20121106/nation.htm#1>

²⁵ Hannauer and Chalk, "India's and Pakistan's Strategies," 22.

²⁶ "India to Train 30,000 Soldiers." *The NY Daily News*. December 7, 2011. <http://india.nydailynews.com/newsarticle/4edfc8c00169a5632e000000/india-to-train-30000-afghan-soldiers>

²⁷ Interviews by Hanna Siegel and Jessica Brandt. Personal interviews. New Delhi, January 22, 2013.

²⁸ "Afghan troops to be trained at Indian Army's jungle warfare school." *South Asia Monitor*. November 10, 2012. <http://southasiamonitor.org/detail.php?type=vign&nid=4249>

²⁹ Arnoldy, Ben. "Pressuring Pakistan, Afghanistan's Karzai signs deal with India." *The Christian Science Monitor*. October 4, 2011. <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-South-Central/2011/1004/Pressuring-Pakistan-Afghanistan-s-Karzai-signs-deal-with-India>

³⁰ American officials, Personal interviews.

³¹ Arnoldy, "Pressuring Pakistan."

³² Beyond sensitivity, there are logistical reasons that would complicate any attempt to scale up the training program or put Indian boots on the ground. First, only a limited number ANSF and police speak English, a requisite for communication. Second, it would be extremely costly and difficult to transport large numbers of soldiers to India; even if India could come up with the financial resources to do so, it seems unlikely that Kabul would send so many of its troops away in the middle of an insurgency.

Should India's security establishment conclude that engaging robustly in Afghanistan would best advance its regional interests, there are a number of options at its disposal. India has the capability to (in the order of increasing assertiveness):

- Increase development assistance to, and investment in, Afghanistan.
- Deploy additional paramilitary forces to protect Indian aid workers and infrastructure projects in Afghanistan.³³
- Continue to provide limited military training to ANSF on Indian soil.
- Expand the scope and scale of these training efforts within India.
- Provide military and police training inside Afghanistan.
- Deploy combat troops in Afghanistan to conduct COIN operations.³⁴

Delhi is unlikely to deploy combat troops in Afghanistan – an assertive measure that would be costly in material terms and a visible provocation vis-à-vis Pakistan. But neither is India likely to conclude that development assistance alone is enough to secure influence in Afghanistan.

Our assessment is that Delhi's most likely course of action is to focus on increased trade and investment and to continue limited security assistance measures. India will also probably seek to develop ties with Afghanistan's Uzbek and Tajik communities, as well as less extreme factions of the Taliban – as a hedging strategy in an attempt to expand its options for a productive relationship with Kabul.³⁵ These findings are corroborated by a recent study conducted by the Center for Asia Pacific Policy at the RAND Corporation.

Indo-Pak Rivalry Presents a Challenge

Indo-Pak rivalry threatens to adversely affect developments in Afghanistan, making it difficult to achieve stability. Islamabad is likely concerned that the withdrawal of a majority of U.S. and NATO forces from Afghanistan by the end of 2014 could open up a power struggle from which India could benefit.³⁶ Thus, Pakistan has a clear incentive to maintain or even strengthen its ties with the Afghan Taliban.³⁷

Those ties run deep. Analysts disagree on the extent to which Pakistan's ISI officially sanction support to the insurgency and whether current or former officers carry it out. Regardless, there is substantial evidence that Pakistan provides sanctuary, funding, munitions, and supplies to support

³³ According to RAND, Delhi has deployed 500 Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) personnel to protect Indian aid workers and diplomats in Afghanistan (Hannauer and Chalk, "India's and Pakistan's Strategies," 22).

³⁴ Hannauer and Chalk, "India's and Pakistan's Strategies," xi.

³⁵ Hannauer and Chalk, "India's and Pakistan's Strategies," xi.

³⁶ Tellis, Ashley J. "Beradar, Pakistan, and the Afghan Taliban: What Gives?" *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2010.

³⁷ Wilkens, Ann, "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," *Afghan Analyst Network*, March 2010.

insurgent fighters in Afghanistan.³⁸ According to the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center's Matt Waldman, "As the provider of sanctuary, and very substantial financial, military, and logistical support to the insurgency, the ISI appears to have strong strategic and operational influence."³⁹

Some of Pakistan's goals in Afghanistan are compatible with those of the United States, others less so. In Afghanistan, Pakistan seeks to:

- Inhibit Indian influence in Afghanistan to prevent encirclement and maintain "strategic depth."
- Establish a friendly and stable government that poses no threat to Pakistan.
- Curb Iranian influence in Afghanistan, which Tehran could use for access to territory from which to send Shi'a militias into Baluchistan.
- Establish Afghanistan as a conduit for trade and commercial links to Central Asia.⁴⁰

Pakistan may conclude that it can best secure the first two objectives by deepening its ties to extremist groups that operate within Afghanistan, among them the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani Network. This would have damaging consequences for Afghan stability post-2014. That said, recent developments suggest that Pakistan's security establishment is increasingly concerned about the "internal threat" posed by the Pakistani Taliban, or Tehrik-i-Taliban (TTP). This has prompted speculation regarding a strategic shift in Islamabad that could improve the prospects for Pakistani engagement in support of Afghan stability. The more likely scenario is the latter, but significant uncertainty abounds.

A Strategic Shift?

With his August 2012 Independence Day speech, Pakistan's army chief, General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani prompted speculation that thinking in Islamabad may be undergoing a strategic shift. Kayani argued that domestic extremism and terrorism pose a threat to Pakistan—defining extremists as those who seek to force their beliefs upon others, and terrorists as extremists who resort to violence.⁴¹ "The forces hostile to our motherland are benefitting from internal weaknesses and resulting uncertainty in the country," he argued. "Our efforts must be directed towards stabilizing the internal front."⁴² Many observers in both Washington and New Delhi have interpreted Kayani's emphasis on Pakistan's internal conflict as a sign of new priorities within the nation's army.

Since the speech, other senior Pakistani officials have echoed this sentiment. Pakistani officials have started to argue that fear is the core driver of Islamabad's regional policies, not ambition. Looking ahead to the 2014 drawdown, Islamabad claims it has every interest in a stable, peaceful, sovereign, and independent Afghanistan. "Peace is not possible in Pakistan without peace in Afghanistan,"

³⁸ Waldman, Matt, *The Sun in the Sky: The Relationship Between Pakistan's ISI and Afghan Insurgents*, Crisis States Research Center, June 2010.

³⁹ Waldman, Matt, *The Sun in the Sky*.

⁴⁰ Hannauer and Chalk, "India's and Pakistan's Strategies," 25-28.

⁴¹ Markey, Daniel, "Is This Time Different?" *The National Interest*, January 10, 2013.

⁴² Full Text of General Kayani's Speech on Independence Day, August 14, 2012. <http://criticalppp.com/archives/227063>

said Pakistani Ambassador to the United States Sherry Rehman during a visit to the Harvard Kennedy School in February 2013. “We do not see Afghanistan as our strategic backyard.”⁴³ During our conversation in New Delhi last month, Pakistani High Commissioner to India Salman Bashir echoed this sentiment. “It is in Pakistan’s interest that the unity of Afghanistan be maintained – an Afghanistan that is stable, peaceful, and hopefully prosperous. [We seek] good neighborly relations with a sovereign, independent Afghanistan.”⁴⁴

In Washington, some observers have been heartened by these developments. “Pakistan has concluded that... [it is] not going to recreate that stability by re-imposing the Taliban on Afghanistan. That is not going to work,” Former U.S. National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley told us. “And I think that has made Pakistan take a much more realistic approach in Afghanistan, a much more cooperative approach in Afghanistan.”

Thus far the tangible evidence of such a shift is limited, but not absent. Observed Hadley, “[Pakistan is] beginning to start using their influence with the Taliban to try and encourage them to enter into some kind of dialogue, peace process.” Pakistan has conducted dialogues with India on trade and cross-border economic issues. These discussions have paved the way for talks on other issues such as the easing of visa and travel restrictions and the resumption of popular cricket matches between the two countries. However, even these developments have been fraught.⁴⁵ Just recently, despite promises to the contrary, Pakistan postponed granting India Most Favored Nation status.⁴⁶

While Islamabad’s overtures should be taken seriously, a meaningful strategic shift is not a foregone conclusion. As former Under Secretary for Defense Policy Michele Flournoy said, “I do think they are concerned internally but I don’t see them denying safe haven to the Quetta Shura. I don’t see them putting pressure on the Haqqanis. There are certain elements that just aren’t going to change because it’s part of a long-term hedging strategy.”⁴⁷

It is possible that the emergence of the TTP just increases Pakistan’s perception of insecurity generally, and will lead Islamabad to seek ways to increase its influence in Afghanistan by supporting alternative proxy groups like the Haqqani network.⁴⁸ As C. Christine Fair, an assistant professor at Georgetown’s Center for Peace and Security Studies, recently testified before Congress, “As India continues its rise, Pakistan’s reliance upon Islamic militancy, the only tool that is has to change India’s trajectory, will increase, not decrease.”⁴⁹

⁴³ Rehman, Sherry. “Pakistan and the United States: the road to 2014 and beyond.” Speech at Harvard Kennedy School. Cambridge, MA, February 19, 2013.

⁴⁴ Bashir, Salman. Interview by Hanna Siegel and Jessica Brandt. Personal interview. New Delhi. January 18, 2013.

⁴⁵ Markey, “Is This Time Different?”

⁴⁶ “Pakistan postpones granting MFN status to India.” *The Pak Tribune*. February 26, 2013. <http://paktribune.com/news/Pakistan-postpones-granting-MFN-status-to-India-257753.html>

⁴⁷ Flournoy, Michele. Interview with Hanna Siegel and Jessica Brandt. Personal interview. Washington DC, February 14, 2013.

⁴⁸ Waldman, Matthew. Interview with Hanna Siegel and Jessica Brandt. Personal interview. Cambridge, MA, February 8, 2013.

⁴⁹ Fair, C. Christine. “U.S. Policy Toward Afghanistan and Pakistan, Part I.” Testimony before the House Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia. November 3, 2011, 37.

Although some recent signs indicate that Islamabad has calculated stability is in its interest, only time will tell how deeply that conclusion is held—and for how long under uncertain circumstances. In light of this uncertainty, Washington should do all that it can to encourage Pakistan to see stability as in its self-interest, while simultaneously planning for the possibility that may not be the case.

Contingencies: Planning for 2014

Although there is a great deal of uncertainty regarding Islamabad's perception of its interests in Afghanistan, we assess that Pakistan would most likely object to any U.S. efforts to promote robust Indian engagement in Afghanistan and respond in ways that would be detrimental to both U.S. and Indian interests. As RAND's Larry Hannauer and Peter Chalk conclude, Pakistan would "doubtless do all it could to undermine such a policy."⁵⁰

Pakistan could retaliate against the United States for encouraging a strong Indian role in Afghanistan by:

1) Undercutting the Afghan Reconciliation Process

The United States hopes that the reconciliation process will support military withdrawal by mitigating the potential for an Afghan civil war. As Hannauer and Chalk argue, "Islamabad has already demonstrated that it is willing to obstruct or even scuttle the peace process when its principal objective – a significant role for pro-Pakistani Taliban in the Afghan political system – is threatened."⁵¹ If it perceives its influence to be at risk, Pakistan could once again attempt to derail negotiations.

2) Limiting U.S. Access to Afghanistan

In the immediate term, Pakistan could prevent the flow of supplies to U.S. forces, as it has done several times in the past.⁵² (Currently, 40% of non-lethal U.S. Army supplies for its troops in Afghanistan flow through Pakistan.) In the medium term, Pakistan could limit access to ground lines of communication. Those lines, according to the commander of U.S. Transportation Command, General William Frasier, will be crucial in conducting a timely and efficient drawdown.⁵³

Although the precise troop levels have yet to be announced, our assumption is that the United States will almost certainly maintain some presence in Afghanistan beyond 2014 in order to conduct counterterrorism operations and train ANSF. That residual force will need to be resourced. A prohibition on shipping supplies across Pakistan would make the United States dependent on the longer, more costly Northern Distribution Network (NDN) for access to Afghanistan. This would not only complicate U.S. efforts to withdraw combat forces and equipment from Afghanistan, but

⁵⁰ Hannauer and Chalk, "India's and Pakistan's Strategies," 46.

⁵¹ Hannauer and Chalk, "India's and Pakistan's Strategies," 46.

⁵² Nathan Hodge, "US Secures New Afghan Exit Routes," *Wall Street Journal*, February 29, 2012.

⁵³ Hodge, "US Secures."

also to supply the troops that remain.

3) *Withholding Counterterrorism Assistance*

Islamabad could withhold counterterrorism intelligence and assistance from the United States, particularly with regard to Taliban and al Qaeda fighters operating within Pakistani territory. Considering that the legal justification for the use of American drones inside Pakistan depends on Pakistan's sovereign consent, non-cooperation from Islamabad could seriously undermine U.S. efforts to disrupt and dismantle terrorist networks that threaten American interests. That said, Pakistan's cooperation on counterterror matters has been inconsistent, and in recent months Pakistan has publically opposed the use of drones.⁵⁴ Regardless of U.S. support for Indian engagement in Afghanistan, Washington and Islamabad may be headed for confrontation over counterterror tactics.

To retaliate against India directly, Pakistan might take the following steps (in order of increasing assertiveness):

- Block Afghan exports to India.
- Pull out of the TAPI pipeline – which would transport natural gas from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan and India, as well as Pakistan – and focus solely on the Iran-Pakistan pipeline project already scheduled to begin construction in March.⁵⁵
- Turn to China for assistance on military and infrastructure development assistance. This would undermine India's efforts to project power in the region and provide Pakistan capabilities that could be used in a conflict against India.
- Escalate the conflict in Kashmir, which would likely cause domestic unrest in India.
- Increase support for the Taliban above the level of safe-haven and logistical assistance it already provides.
- Encourage attacks on Indian diplomats, aid workers, or infrastructure projects in Afghanistan, or even support "Mumbai-style" terror attacks."⁵⁶

Whether Pakistan resorts to these measures or chooses a path toward stability and greater regional engagement may depend significantly on the nature of India's involvement in Afghanistan and on the more general state of the ongoing bilateral dialogue between India and Afghanistan. It is therefore crucial that the United States promote a role for India that addresses Pakistan's concerns, without extending Islamabad a veto.

⁵⁴ Rehman, "Pakistan and the United States."

⁵⁵ "Pakistan-Iran pipeline work 'to begin on 11 March.'" *BBC News Asia*. March 1, 2013. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-21628143>

⁵⁶ Hannaeur and Chalk, "India's and Pakistan's Strategies," 8.

III. Finding the Balance: A Vision for Indian Engagement in Afghanistan after the Drawdown

A vision for India's engagement in Afghanistan must be based on three principles:

Principle I: The United States should not allow Pakistan to exercise a de-facto veto over the shape of Indian involvement in Afghanistan.

Delhi's objectives and ability to project power in Afghanistan are in line with Washington's core strategic objectives. It is far less clear that the same is true for Islamabad's objectives and attempts to exert influence. RAND has argued that, "the United States would be better off attempting to drive events in Afghanistan by promoting an active Indian role to fill the security and economic vacuum created by the drawdown – even if Pakistan responds by continuing to block U.S. supply convoys and increasing its support for the Taliban, which could worsen the insurgency in the near term."⁵⁷ That may be too strong. But neither should Pakistan be allowed to exercise a de-facto veto over the dimensions of Indian engagement in Afghanistan.

Principle II: The United States must consider Pakistan's concerns regarding Indian involvement in Afghanistan.

The nature of Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan is likely to be crucial to the outcome there. One of the primary drivers of the conflict in Afghanistan after 2014 is likely to be a rise in the activity and influence of extremist groups, several of which are linked to Pakistan's ISI. The extent to which Pakistan continues its support of these groups will bear heavily on Afghan stability. As such, Islamabad's security concerns, however inconvenient, must be considered. Washington needs Islamabad's assistance in order to remove American troops and equipment from Afghanistan in a safe and timely manner. For these reasons, Washington cannot ignore Pakistan's interests, whatever complications they pose.

Principle III: The United States should support Indian contributions to Afghanistan in the security, economic, and diplomatic spheres that promise dividends with limited disruption.

Delhi is in a position to promote political stability, boost trade, foster development, contribute to security sector capacity building, and counter the terror groups that threaten our shared vital interests.⁵⁸ Says RAND: "Indian assistance to Afghan security forces, combined with an increasingly proactive Indian role in Afghanistan's economic and commercial development, offers the best hope for entrenching, and even advancing, U.S. achievements in that part of the world."⁵⁹

Washington should promote Indian engagement in Afghanistan in ways that will maximize the

⁵⁷ Hannauer and Chalk, "India's and Pakistan's Strategies," 44.

⁵⁸ Hannauer and Chalk, "India's and Pakistan's Strategies," 57.

⁵⁹ Hannauer and Chalk, "India's and Pakistan's Strategies," 57.

impact of its contribution, but also minimize the regional political tensions arising from it. As Michele Flournoy told us, “We don’t want to give [Pakistan] the veto, but we want to avoid a situation where India is asked to do something that is only a marginal contribution, but elicits a huge negative response from Pakistan.”⁶⁰

Washington can best accomplish this by:

- Encouraging economic development initiatives, which have historically resulted in high-value contributions without great provocation.
- Suggesting modifications to the current Indian training program that enhance its sustainability and effectiveness.
- Promoting conversation between India and Pakistan on the future of Afghanistan, to the limited extent that it is possible.

Implementing this vision offers the best hope for building upon the progress the United States and the international community have made in Afghanistan and supporting regional stability broadly.

⁶⁰ Flournoy, Personal interview.

IV. Advancing this Vision: Steps Forward for the United States

Recommendation 1: Redouble Efforts to Pursue Afghan Reconciliation.

The United States must redouble its efforts to promote the Afghan reconciliation process and achieve a negotiated resolution to the conflict that incorporates the Taliban into Afghan political structures. As Matthew Waldman told us, “If Pakistan feels that its interests are being served by allies inside Afghanistan and it does not need to use force to protect those interests, there is a prospect that [Pakistan will] feel more secure and less threatened by Indian presence or activities.”⁶¹ The United States should work with Pakistan to achieve reconciliation, both to ensure that Islamabad feels its interests have a voice, and as a means to improve Washington’s relationship with Islamabad.⁶²

Although conducting a successful negotiation with the Taliban will likely require a high degree of secrecy, Washington should aim to be as transparent with India as possible in that endeavor in order to reassure New Delhi that its core strategic interests are not undermined by incorporating the Taliban into Afghan political structures. As Ambassador Marc Grossman, former U.S. Special Envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan said, “On the efforts to start an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace process, I found senior Indian officials encouraging but skeptical of Taliban intentions. Our goal was always to consult closely with New Delhi, hoping that providing insights would lower their anxiety level and encourage them to support the effort where and when they could.”⁶³ This will be no easy task to accomplish – but we argue that it is far more likely that the United States will be able to make India feel secure in spite of an Afghan reconciliation process than it will be able to make Pakistan feel secure in the absence of one.

Recommendation 2: Encourage India to Pursue Regional Economic Development Initiatives that Promote Stability by Enhancing Prosperity.

Washington should encourage India to continue its robust economic development initiatives in Afghanistan in order to promote stability by enhancing prosperity. India has the ability and the will to provide aid for economic development, as it has for many years. This form of engagement has historically been less provocative to Pakistan than engagement in other sectors. At the same time, it is likely to prove immensely helpful to the Afghan government as it seeks to meet the needs of its citizens during a period of transition. Thus, Washington should encourage Delhi to continue its current economic development projects and initiate new ones. India has specific expertise in the provisions of infrastructure, education, healthcare, and food security. Previous aid programs in these spheres have been demonstrably successful and should be expanded.

⁶¹ Waldman, Personal interview.

⁶² Munter, Cameron. Interview with Hanna Siegel and Jessica Brandt. Personal Interview. Cambridge, MA, November 27, 2013.

⁶³ Grossman, Marc. Interview by Hanna Siegel and Jessica Brandt. Personal interview. Washington, DC, February 15, 2013.

We also recommend that India and Afghanistan continue to work together on opportunities for private investment. This past June, Delhi hosted an international investment conference on Afghanistan, which brought more than 350 business representatives – including some from Pakistan – together with policymakers to discuss investment opportunities for businesses in Afghanistan.⁶⁴ This is a crucial area for further growth.

Finally, we recommend that the United States work to further regional economic integration by opening transit lines between India and Afghanistan across Pakistan, including bringing India into the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement. As Ashley Tellis of the Carnegie International Endowment for Peace suggested to us, this could serve as a confidence building measure between India and Pakistan.⁶⁵

The justification for further economic integration is four-fold:

- First, such a project will go far to embed Afghanistan in its region, politically and economically. Without connectivity, a land-locked country like Afghanistan will struggle to prosper.⁶⁶ Integration into South Asia's broader political structures is also a worthy goal.
- Second, it will lessen ties between New Delhi and Tehran. The current lack of regional supply routes forces India to transport its goods through Iran, bypassing Pakistan. This is particularly undesirable at a time when Washington seeks to apply intense economic pressure on Tehran.
- Third, it will provide substantial benefit to Pakistan's struggling economy. Pakistan faces a huge budget deficit, persistent inflation, and a stagnant economy. Opening up its supply lines would create new revenue sources through tariffs and transport rights, as well as jobs in the transportation industry and lucrative contracts for Pakistan's freight forwarding companies to replace the ones it currently has with the U.S. military.⁶⁷
- Finally, given the positive economic incentives for all parties, this is an area ripe for Washington to promote India-Pakistan collaboration and dialogue and thereby improve prospects for regional stability.

These incentives have been in place for some time now, and although Pakistan has made some promises and some progress, it has more to go. For example, although Pakistan is a member, it has not fully implemented the terms of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement.⁶⁸ Knowing this, Washington should be realistic about its ability to achieve this goal through persuasion alone.

For this reason, many experts and policymakers – including some at the Council on Foreign

⁶⁴ "CEOs should replace Generals in Afghanistan: India." *CNBC TV moneycontrol.com*, July 12, 2012. http://www.moneycontrol.com/news/world-news/ceos-should-replace-generalsafghanistan-india_723805.html

⁶⁵ Tellis, Ashley J. Personal communication.

⁶⁶ Sen, Ronen. Interview by Hanna Siegel and Jessica Brandt. Personal interview. New Delhi, January 19, 2013.

⁶⁷ Starr, Frederick. "Why Is the United States Subsidizing Iran?" *Foreign Policy*. February 4, 2013.

⁶⁸ American officials, Personal interviews.

Relations, the Aspen Institute India, and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace – suggest that conditioning aid to Pakistan is a good idea.⁶⁹ We disagree. Conditioning aid to Pakistan will only encourage Islamabad to think that we are using them instrumentally. This is dangerous at a time when Washington relies upon Islamabad's cooperation to get American equipment out of Afghanistan and to provide pivotal assistance to counterterror efforts. Further, it could push Islamabad deeper into China's corner at a time when Washington and New Delhi seek to balance China's rising influence in the region and across the globe.⁷⁰ Promoting economic integration in South Asia is an important goal, but it is not sufficiently in American interests to warrant the use of such a weighty threat. That said, it should play an important role in our bilateral dialogue with Pakistan.

Fortunately, the New Silk Road initiative – a web of transit routes across South Asia with Afghanistan as a central trading point that is already under construction – is a point of progress in this sphere. We recommend that Washington continue spearheading such initiatives in order to promote regional economic integration in ways that are not entirely dependent on Pakistan's full cooperation.

Recommendation 3: Suggest Modifications to India's Training Program for Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and Police Forces to Make it More Sustainable and Less Provocative.

Washington should not encourage India to expand the scope and scale of its current training program for ANSF forces. This would be provocative, and likely unproductive. After 10 years, billions of dollars, and the full weight of the United States and international community, there is little India can and will do now that will make a substantial difference in the quality of ANSF forces after U.S. and NATO troops withdraw in 2014.

However, Washington should not extend political capital to bring Indian security sector engagement to an end entirely. The current, limited program does not seem to have stoked an adverse Pakistani response. Nor does the program appear to be growing. India appears sensitive to Pakistan's concerns and does not seem to be planning to scale up its efforts. As Michele Flournoy told us, "India does not agree with Pakistan's perspective but they understand the dynamics and they've been sensitive not to step over a line that provokes something greater."⁷¹ The Indian government's capacity to help is also limited; it will likely not contribute substantially to the \$4 billion annual cost of maintaining the ANSF.^{72 73}

⁶⁹ "The United States and India: A Shared Strategic Future." *Aspen Institute - Council on Foreign Relations*. September 2011, 19.

⁷⁰ Burns, R. Nicholas. Conversation with Hanna Siegel and Jessica Brandt. Personal conversation. Cambridge, MA, February 28.

⁷¹ Flournoy, Personal interview.

⁷² "Billions of Dollars At Risk In U.S. Reconstruction Efforts In Afghanistan." *The Afghanistan Study Group*. February 6, 2013. <http://www.afghanistanstudygroup.org/2013/02/06/billions-of-dollars-at-risk-in-u-s-reconstruction-efforts-in-afghanistan/>

⁷³ Chaudhuri, Pramit Pal. Interview by Hanna Siegel and Jessica Brandt. Personal interview. New Delhi, January 25, 2013.

Moreover, the current program is taking place on a bilateral basis, at the request of the Afghan government. It would send the wrong message about Afghan sovereignty to undercut an attempt by the Karzai government to garner the resources it argues it needs to stand on its own. India understands this too; several Indian experts we met spoke emphatically about the importance of respecting Afghan sovereignty. “We will respond to what the Afghan government wants us to do in this respect,” said Shyam Saran. “The driver will be... the comfort level of the Afghan leadership itself.”⁷⁴

Washington should instead encourage India to modify its training program for ANSF to make it more sustainable and less provocative to Pakistan. Specifically, India should focus on training trainers, on a timetable, with maximum transparency, in coordination with ISAF.

Modifying the Program: Enhancing Sustainability and Stability

In the interest of providing effective assistance to the ANSF and preventing a Pakistani backlash, we suggest that Washington encourage India to:

- Focus on training trainers. This will be a high-value, sustainable use of India’s resources.
- Set a public timetable for the program. A phase-out plan could go far to quell Pakistani fears.
- Conduct the program transparently. This too could mitigate Pakistan’s fears.⁷⁵

As former Ambassador to India and Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Pickering told us, in a few years, Washington and New Delhi together should be able to point to a concrete number of Afghan trainers that the Indians have prepared to continue the program. At the same time, both New Delhi and Washington should be transparent with Islamabad regarding the specifics of the program, its progress, and its end date.⁷⁶ If Washington serves as a coordinator between the parties, it can keep a close eye on the evolving thinking in each capitol in an effort to maintain balance while addressing the needs of the ANSF. “If in fact we’re going to see some semblance of reduction of suspicions,” said Pickering, “then one of the things we need to push very hard on is clarity and transparency both about what India and Pakistan want and are doing in Afghanistan.”⁷⁷

Finally, Washington should encourage Delhi to conduct its training program in coordination with ISAF. As former Indian Ambassador to the United States Ronen Sen told us, “A lot of the training that has been provided might very likely be irrelevant.”⁷⁸ Several American officials we met with in New Delhi emphasized this point. “Our biggest issue right now with the Indian Army is there is not coordination between India and the ISAF training mission of what’s being done here in India,” one American official told us. “We don’t have a good understanding because there isn’t a discussion

⁷⁴ Saran, Personal interview.

⁷⁵ Pickering, Thomas. Interview by Hanna Siegel and Jessica Brandt. Personal interview. Washington, DC, February 13, 2013.

⁷⁶ Pickering, Personal interview.

⁷⁷ Pickering, Personal interview.

⁷⁸ Sen, Personal interview.

going on.”⁷⁹ Greater coordination with the training initiatives undertaken by the international community through ISAF will go far to improve the effectiveness of India’s efforts in this realm.

Washington could encourage Pakistani training of ANSF. This would open the political space to allow for an increase in the number of Afghans placed in Indian training programs. However, it may be difficult to implement such a project at this juncture. According to our conversation with the Pakistani High Commissioner, Pakistan has offered to provide training of this sort. But the Karzai government has not been eager to take Islamabad up on its offer.

Red Lines

Indian boots on the ground in Afghanistan would cross a red line. We do not anticipate that India will take such action, both because of sensitivity to the political consequences and because of practical constraints. That said, should New Delhi choose to increase the scope and scale of its training program and alter its location, Washington would be well-served to modify its response and exert political pressure to curb the program.

Recommendation 4: Promote Dialogue Between India and Pakistan on Regional Challenges.

The nature of the broader relationship between India and Pakistan will bear heavily on the extent to which the parties can reach some kind of accommodation on the future of Afghanistan. Despite limited progress on economic cooperation over the past several months, the January incursion across the Line of Control in which two Indian soldiers were killed and their bodies mutilated may make dialogue difficult to accomplish in the short term.

The Afghan government must be part of any Indo-Pak dialogue on the future of developments there. It is impossible to credibly promote Afghan sovereignty without giving the national government a voice in high-level, international discussions that concern its future.

We should acknowledge from the outset that robust U.S. diplomacy – whether an attempt to exert pressure or provide direct mediation – will likely be rejected by Islamabad and annoy New Delhi. Said the Council on Foreign Relations’ (CFR) Dan Markey, “The new U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry could reject that argument, but he should first study the discouraging history of U.S. diplomatic efforts in Kashmir. U.S. mediators have repeatedly found that American intervention encourages both sides to play Washington against one another rather than to tackle their disputes head on.”⁸⁰

Options for Dialogue

If Washington wishes to advance the conversation between India and Pakistan on the future of Afghanistan, there are several avenues at its disposal, though we argue that each has modest

⁷⁹ American officials, Personal interviews.

⁸⁰ Markey, Daniel, “How can the United States assist dialogue between India and Pakistan on Afghanistan?” *Council on Foreign Relations*. February 26, 2013.

prospects for success:

1) Establish a Regional Contact Group

The United States could establish a contact group that would bring in Afghanistan's neighbors from Central Asia, as well as Iran, China, India, and Russia. As General David Petraeus, former CENTCOM commander, articulated, "[The Coalition] will have to develop and execute a regional strategy that includes Pakistan, India, the Central Asian States and even China and Russia along with perhaps at some point Iran."⁸¹ This is the approach advocated by the commission assembled by CFR in 2011.⁸² It is not an entirely fresh concept – Ambassador Richard Holbrooke attempted to facilitate an Indo-Pak dialogue using this tactic early in the first term of President Obama's tenure. Ultimately, his efforts failed because of difficulties engaging Iran.⁸³ Sitting down with Iran will be no less politically difficult for President Obama today, at a time when the nuclear challenge is at the fore. But given Iranian influence in regional politics and its role as India's only supply route to Afghanistan, its presence in the conversation is necessary. Conversations conducted through the contact group could even be an avenue for U.S. diplomats to "get to know" the Iranians – one of the biggest stumbling blocks to nuclear negotiations. That said, the challenges posed by this format of dialogue are clear.

2) Work through the United Nations

Alternatively, Washington could promote dialogue through a multilateral organization such as the United Nations. However, Islamabad has not been particularly interested in going through the United Nations – and neither has Washington for that matter.⁸⁴ New Delhi might also be resistant to using the United Nations as a diplomatic venue for fear of setting a precedent that could be applied to the Kashmir conflict – something it is enormously hesitant to do.⁸⁵

3) Establish Quiet Five-Party Talks

As a third approach, Washington could invite Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, and China into quiet five-party talks.⁸⁶ China could be encouraged to attend based on its growing concerns regarding stability in Afghanistan after the anticipated withdrawal of the United States and NATO in 2014.⁸⁷ Close ties between China and Pakistan might serve to alleviate Islamabad's concerns about coming to the table with New Delhi and Washington. But it would be nearly impossible to overcome India's resistance

⁸¹ Petraeus, General David. "Remarks," Passing the Baton Conference, Walter E. Washington Convention Center, Washington, D.C., hosted by the United States Institute of Peace, January 8, 2010.

⁸² "The United States and India," 19.

⁸³ Markey, "How can the United States?"

⁸⁴ Markey, "How can the United States?"

⁸⁵ Markey, "How can the United States?"

⁸⁶ Markey, "How can the United States?" Markey suggests four-party talks (India, Pakistan, the United States), but we believe that Afghanistan has to be included. That said, we view a small group as potentially constructive format for dialogue. Given that it will likely be difficult to get Pakistan to the table, we do not believe including Russia in this small circle would be productive.

⁸⁷ Small, Andrew. "China's Afghan Moment." *Foreign Policy*, October 4, 2012.

to giving China a greater role in South Asian affairs.⁸⁸ Nor is it clear that giving China a greater role in South Asia is in Washington's interest.

Our Recommendation: An "All of the Above" Approach

Given the limited prospects for success through each of these avenues, the United States would be wise consider an "all of the above" approach. Such an approach would aim to bring everyone who has an interest in developments in Afghanistan to the table, organized in concentric circles. These parties include Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Iran, China, Russia, and the European Union. Within the larger contact group, the United States could establish a smaller one, consisting of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. In this endeavor, the United States should conceive of its role as a coordinator in support of an internationally led initiative. The logic of this approach is simple: Washington needs the buy-in of the larger group, its financial resources for continued Afghan reconstruction, ongoing security and electoral assistance, and above all, its pledge to do no harm. As Haroun Mir, director of Afghanistan's Center for Research and Policy Studies has asserted, "Without the cooperation of Afghanistan's neighbors, the prospect of peace and stability in the country seems remote."⁸⁹

Whatever the format, Indian "support" for Baluch separatism should be an item on the agenda.⁹⁰ India should be encouraged to provide assurances to Pakistan in an effort to address Islamabad's concerns.⁹¹ It will likely be difficult to convince India to engage in this discussion, given its position that such accusations are preposterous. Washington must be prepared to make an interests-based case that any measures Delhi might agree to would be substantively minor and yield substantial dividends for regional stability.

Recommendation 5: Encourage India to Stay Out of Electoral Politics in Afghanistan and Instead Focus on Training Civil Servants.

India should stay out of electoral politics in Afghanistan. Several senior U.S. policymakers – Lt. General Doug Lute, Deputy Assistant to the President for South Asia, among them – have suggested that India's impressive record of holding organized, large-scale, legitimate elections in spite of substantial internal challenges positions it well to provide assistance of this sort to Afghanistan.⁹² But political involvement of this type would be unnecessarily provocative to Pakistan. Given that India is already providing some military assistance to Afghanistan, engagement in the Afghan electoral process as well would be a step too far. "The farther away [Indian political aid] is from the actual elections and the more downstream to the organizing and the basics of civic society and political organization, the better," says Michele Flournoy.⁹³ There are several international

⁸⁸ Burns, Conversation.

⁸⁹ Tellis, Ashley J. and Aroop Mukharji. "Is a Regional Strategy Viable in Afghanistan?" *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2010.

⁹⁰ Waldman, Personal interview.

⁹¹ Waldman, Personal interview.

⁹² Lute, Lt. General Douglas E. Interview by Hanna Siegel. Personal interview. Washington, DC, February 13, 2013.

⁹³ Flournoy, Personal interview.

channels for election monitoring and political party development already in existence (primarily those under the auspices of the United Nations). India should be encouraged to work through these avenues.

India might be capable of providing assistance in the training of Afghan civil servants – a step that is likely to be highly valuable and only moderately provocative. India’s civil servants training program is robust; extending similar training to the Afghans could prove extremely beneficial to Afghanistan in a time of fragile transition. As Lt. General Lute told us, “[India] has a niche capability with regard to the Afghan civil service because their civil service is known across the region as an example.”⁹⁴ Washington should not discourage India if it decides to go this route. But, if India does opt to train Afghan civil servants, Washington should make a point to reassure Islamabad that this step does not fundamentally undermine its strategic interests. Doing so would convey U.S. sensitivity to Pakistan’s concerns regarding encirclement. Washington can emphasize civil servants training as a step towards enduring success in Afghanistan. “If the U.S. can signal that we’re committed to the long-term success of Afghanistan,” says Richard Fontaine, “that will reassure them to some degree.”⁹⁵

Recommendation 6: Encourage Collaboration Between U.S. Policymakers Working on Af/Pak and those Working on India.

The complex regional challenges facing Washington today require holistic thinking regarding the delicate balance of relationships among India, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. However, at the lowest levels of the policy-making process, Washington is organized in a way that undermines, rather than promotes, holistic thinking. Responsibility for Af/Pak at the Department of Defense (DoD) falls under CENTCOM and responsibility for India falls under PACOM – this “seam” leads to siloed approaches to, and perspectives on, developments in Afghanistan at lower levels of the bureaucracy, both in DoD and in the executive branch. It is not until the Assistant Secretary level that individuals have responsibility for integrating policy solutions that address South Asia as a region. Regular, structured meetings between policymakers working on South Asia – at both DoD and the Department of State – would go far to provide thorough, well-informed strategic support to those at the higher levels.

⁹⁴ Lute, Personal interview.

⁹⁵ Fontaine, Richard. Interview by Hanna Siegel and Jessica Brandt. Personal interview. Washington, DC, February 15, 2013.

V. Conclusion

The challenges that persist in Afghanistan and South Asia are complex and difficult. Addressing them effectively will require a balanced U.S. approach designed to maximize the benefits of Indian engagement in Afghanistan, while minimizing the disruptive potential for Indo-Pak rivalry. Washington's long term planning process should prioritize its Strategic Partnership with India. However, as the United States draws down its presence in this region, Washington must maintain a working relationship with Pakistan in order to ensure that U.S. interests – a safe withdrawal of American troops and equipment, an effective counterterrorism program, and the promotion of political stability in Afghanistan – are protected. Accomplishing this feat will require coordination and strategic planning, both militarily and diplomatically.

The United States should encourage India to pursue economic development initiatives in Afghanistan, through infrastructure projects, humanitarian aid, and enhanced regional trade. Washington should suggest modifications to the current Indian training program for Afghan security forces to make it more sustainable and less provocative. And it should encourage India to stay out of Afghan electoral politics, but promote Indian training of Afghan civil servants. These programs are most likely to benefit Afghan stability without provoking a counterproductive Pakistani response.

To ease the transition, Washington should take an “all of the above” approach to supporting open dialogue between India and Pakistan regarding Afghanistan in the lead up to 2014 and beyond. To give these initiatives their best chance at success, Washington should work towards an Afghan reconciliation process and achieve a negotiated resolution to the conflict that incorporates the Taliban into Afghan political structures.

Finally, Washington should adjust its own policymaking process regarding South Asia. Policymakers working on Af/Pak and India should regularly think through regional issues together in an effort to produce holistic solutions to these integrated challenges. Implementing this vision offers the best hope for building upon the progress the United States and the international community have made in Afghanistan, deepening the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership, and supporting regional stability broadly.

Interviewees

We are grateful to the following individuals for providing their thoughts and insights. In addition to those listed here, we interviewed several officials at the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi. None of the interviewees are responsible for the content of this report.

Alyssa Ayres, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State

Salman Bashir, High Commissioner of Pakistan to India; Former Foreign Secretary at the Pakistani Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Pramit Pal Chaudhuri, Foreign Editor, *Hindustan Times*

James Dobbins, Director, International Security and Defense Policy Center, RAND National Defense Research Institute; Former Special Envoy for Afghanistan; Former Special Adviser to the President; Former Assistant Secretary of State for Europe, U.S. Department of State

Alexander Evans, Coordinator of the Al Qaida and Taliban Monitoring Team under U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon; Former Senior Adviser to Ambassador Marc Grossman; Former Senior Adviser to Ambassador Richard Holbrooke

Michele Flournoy, Co-Founder, Center for a New American Security; Former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, U.S. Department of Defense

Richard Fontaine, President, Center for a New American Security; Former foreign policy adviser to Senator John McCain; Former Associate Director for Near Eastern affairs, National Security Council; Former staff member, South Asia bureau, U.S. Department of State

Colonel Robin Fontes, Fellow, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University; Former Commander, Regional Support Command – North, NATO Training Mission

Marc Grossman, Vice Chairman, The Cohen Group; Former U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan; Former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs

Mohan Guruswamy, Distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation; Chairman and Founder, Centre for Policy Alternatives; Senior Fellow, Atlantic Council's South Asia Center

Stephen Hadley, Senior Adviser for International Affairs, United States Institute of Peace; Former Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs; Former Deputy National Security Adviser

Bharat Karnad, Professor, National Security Studies, Centre for Policy Research; Former Member, National Security Advisory Board, National Security Council, Government of India

Lieutenant General Douglas E. Lute, Deputy Assistant to the President for South Asia; Former Director of Operations on the Joint Staff

Daniel Markey, Senior Fellow for India, Pakistan, and South Asia, Council on Foreign Relations; Former South Asia specialist, U.S. Department of State

Cameron Munter, Former United States Ambassador to Pakistan

Thomas Pickering, Vice Chairman, Hills & Company, former U.S. Ambassador to India; Former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, U.S. Department of State

Shyam Saran, Chairman, Research and Information System for Developing Countries; Former Foreign Secretary for the Government of India

Lt. General R.K. Sawhney PVSM, AVSM, Distinguished Fellow, Vivekananda International Foundation; Former Director General, Indian Military Intelligence

Ronen Sen, Former Indian Ambassador to the United States

Ashley J. Tellis, Senior Associate, South Asia Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Former Senior Adviser to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, U.S. Department of State; Former Adviser to the ambassador at the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi; Former National Security Council staff as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Strategic Planning and Southwest Asia

Matthew Waldman, Research Fellow, International Security Program, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School of Government; Former Senior UN official in Kabul, Afghanistan

Marvin Weinbaum, Scholar-in-residence, Middle East Institute; Former Analyst for Pakistan and Afghanistan, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, U.S. Department of State



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