



Afghanistan and Regional Geopolitical Dynamics after 11 September

Conference Proceedings

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Afghanistan and Regional Geopolitical Dynamics after 11 September: Conference Report

Introduction

In April 2002, the National Intelligence Council sponsored a conference that examined the impact of events in Afghanistan since 11 September on a variety of regional actors, including Russia, Iran, Turkey, India, Europe, Pakistan, and the Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The conference brought together government and outside experts and consisted of four workshops with presentations from ten academic and regional experts, followed by lengthy discussion sessions. The purpose of the conference was not to arrive at a consensus but to deepen understanding of the complex geopolitical dynamics at work in the region.

This conference report is intended to capture the salient points and original arguments of the proceedings. It consists of the précis of each speaker's on-the-record presentation and a summary of the ensuing not-for-attribution discussions. Although the *loya jirga* has been convened since this conference was held, references to it in the presentations and discussions have been retained because the implications of the judgments remain generally pertinent.

During the panel discussions no attempt was made to ascertain the general view of the panel or audience. Many of the points highlighted in these summaries of the panel discussions were noted because they were thought-provoking or outside conventional wisdom. They illustrate the richness of the discussion, but they do not necessarily reflect accepted or prevailing views at the conference.

Afghanistan and Regional Geopolitical Dynamics After 11 September 2002



Executive Summary **Outside Influences and Relationships**

Afghanistan is a pivot for relations among regional actors, principally Russia, China, Iran, Turkey, India, and Pakistan. The new US security presence in the region is providing additional impetus toward a redefinition by those regional powers of their strategic interests vis-à-vis each other and the United States.

- Regional actors generally assess that the United States is the only outside actor with sufficient power and influence to engineer a new stability in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, other states seek to pursue their own objectives in Afghanistan even without the economic capacity or military capability to create and sustain stability there. Participants expressed most concern over the possibility of Iranian interference in Afghanistan.
- Despite recognition of a key US role in combating regional terrorism and despite their own constraints, Russia, China, Iran and India are in many ways deeply ambivalent about the US presence in Central Asia. Many officials in Iran and China fear further encirclement by the United States, while Moscow has had to accept the humiliating reality that Russia is not capable of maintaining stability in the former Soviet region.

For some of the regional actors, the debate about the war in Afghanistan and the growing American presence in Central Asia is also a debate between political forces with different views about the future configuration of their own state.

- Participants generally agreed that US actions and events in Afghanistan could play an important role in influencing the political dynamics in Iran and Pakistan.
- In contrast, developments in Afghanistan can affect the internal balance of power in Russia and China but will not have a decisive impact on the direction of either state.

Geography, poverty, high birth rates, disputed borders, and polities run by short-time, authoritarian, post-Communist leaders make Central Asia an ideal location for al-Qa'ida to reestablish itself.

- Alternatively, Pakistan's remote northwest and pockets of Afghan territory not under Kabul's control could provide safehavens where al-Qa'ida could regroup.

- Participants nonetheless believed that al-Qa'ida is unlikely to be able to reconstitute itself to the same levels of strength, numbers, and organization that it possessed before US operations in Afghanistan.

The Central Asian states have compelling reasons to pull the United States deeper into its commitment to the region. US engagement increases the value of Central Asian states as comrades in arms against terrorism and ensures that the United States does not simply use them and depart, leaving them to contend with the aftermath.

- Participants expressed some concern that if the war in Afghanistan goes well and the US presence in the region decreases, Central Asia once again will be viewed internationally as a strategic backwater.
- Pakistan is vulnerable on both the political and economic fronts. It will be unable to avoid the fallout if Afghanistan remains—as it is now—a rickety balance of power system rather than a state.

Uncertain Outlook

Most participants emphasized that the situation in Afghanistan is still fluid, that much can change—including the nature and duration of the US presence—and that it may be premature to establish new, long-term strategic priorities.

- Some participants argued that the states of Central Asia now have an opportunity to transform the area into a regional economic zone by establishing economic and transportation routes. Most judged, however, that political enmities resulting from poor security and weak governments in some states, notably Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, push other states to strengthen rather than loosen border controls.
- The potential for war between India and Pakistan remains high and would draw attention away from international efforts to bring stability to Afghanistan.

The differing agendas of various ethnic groups within Afghanistan and the issue of the ethnic imbalance in the interim Afghan administration are likely to be enduring issues. Participants argued, however, that despite considerable, deep, and enduring differences among the various ethnic groups, most Afghans prefer to be together as part of an Afghan state.

- Discussants agreed that any new Afghan government must develop an effective means of reconciling the need for an effective central government to ensure stability across Afghanistan and the need and desire of the regions to maintain a certain level of autonomy. The phenomenon of warlordism will further complicate this already complex problem.
- Participants believed the most likely scenario for Afghanistan over the long-term is a state stumbling through a mix of anarchy, civil war, and periodic instability. Even in this situation, al-Qa'ida and the Taliban are likely to retain some sanctuaries. Some argued that the worst case scenario for the states with an interest in the region would be the establishment of a highly conservative Islamic government in Kabul.
- Various external events could distract international interest from Afghanistan, increasing the chances for continued instability. These wildcards include an Israeli-Palestinian war, a US invasion of Iraq, an Indo-Pakistan war, and the collapse of the Iranian regime.

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Workshop I

Views from the Periphery: The Impact of 11 September on Regional Actors

This workshop examined Russian, Iranian, Indian, Turkish, and European perceptions of events in Afghanistan and their impact on regional geopolitical dynamics. Participants were asked to describe how these actors understand the changing strategic landscape; to assess their possible objectives, strategies, and potential foreign policies in the context of the war in Afghanistan and its potential outcomes; and to identify the new external dynamics that could drive their decisionmaking.

The View from Russia

Celeste A. Wallander

Center for Strategic & International Studies

On one level, the impact of the US war against al-Qa'ida and the Taliban in Afghanistan brought Russia into a closer relationship with the United States and set Russia more firmly on the path of security, political, and economic integration with the West. Not only Putin's decision to support US policy (with acceptance of US forces and then bases in Central Asia, offer of overflight rights and support for search-and-rescue missions, sharing substantial intelligence, and endorsement of US military trainers in Georgia), but his silencing of official dissent, concrete policy concessions (ABM, offensive arms talks, and NATO enlargement), and priorities (WTO, trade deals, and investment) are evidence that there is more to Russian orientation toward the US than feel-good politics and personal relationships. Putin clearly understands that for Russia to have any

opportunity to fulfill his economic development agenda, there must be stability and an increased sense of security on Russia's borders and periphery. US presence in Afghanistan, Central Asia, and Georgia will go a long way toward ensuring this stability.

Russia's relative distancing from a strategic partnership with China, quiet development of trade and business ties with India, and discreet distancing from Iraq indicate a more general geostrategic realignment associated with the war in Afghanistan. In some respects these are derived from the US relationship, but they are more fundamentally related to Russia's shifting priorities and revised perceptions of a promising future relationship and regional powers. With China, a close relationship ironically promises a more junior relationship because the economic aspects leave Russia essentially as a raw material supplier with little prospect of integration or development, in contrast to the array of business ties with India. With Iraq, the leadership has made clear its stake is repayment of debt, and future contracts, not the geopolitics of the political relationship.

The bottom line is that the US counter-terrorist campaign in Afghanistan created a huge opportunity for Putin's Russia, which Putin has mostly successfully seized. The war shifted the focus of US security policy and threat perception to extremist Islamic terrorism in Eurasia, based not only in Afghanistan but also in the Caucasus. Although experts can make reliable distinctions between Russia's war in Chechnya and US operations in Afghanistan, it is extremely difficult to make those distinctions in a convincing way in public diplomacy, the result of which is an easing of the already weak international pressure on

Russia in that conflict. The US has taken over the problem of the Taliban and its destructive role in Central Asian security, a problem which increasingly dominated Russian security concerns in the 1990s. This problem has now given an impetus to thinking in US foreign policy circles that other areas of the US relationship needed to show progress, particularly in the economic and business sphere that was Putin's priority.

The acceptance of US troops in Central Asia and Georgia marks a humbling concession by Russia that it is incapable of policing its own borders and periphery. If the United States can "do the dirty work for Russia," dislodge the Taliban regime in a month and a half, and dampen at least some of the fundamentalist sentiment and general disaffection that spawned that regime, then it is a net gain for Russia despite the humiliation of having US troops stationed in the former Soviet Union.

Two questions will determine whether the positive opportunity to advance Putin's agenda is sustained. The first is whether the United States succeeds in defeating terrorist networks in Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. If the US presence and operations do not bring stability and security throughout the region—and especially if they exacerbate the problems by fueling extremism and terrorist attacks—then the fundamental advantage of an improvement in relations with the United States and advancing the economic agenda will be negated by an immediate increase in Russian insecurity. It is one thing for Putin to manage and silence discontent created by an American presence in Central Asia if he can point to a better security outlook to a Russian public that still sharply remembers the 1999 apartment bombings and incursions outside Chechnya. It would be quite another to defend his welcome of the United States if the result is greater instability, terror, and insecurity for Russians.

The second question is whether the apparent common interest in defeating Eurasian terrorism is sustainable. How the threat is defined will affect how the conflict is conducted over the medium term. We have already seen how disagreements about Iran's role in global terrorism create serious problems in US-Russian relations, even in the midst of the overall positive context. If conditions deteriorate in Uzbekistan or Georgia, and especially if that deterioration is related to cross-border conflict in the Russian Federation, the United States and Russia could quickly find themselves disagreeing about the extent and methods of fighting terrorism in the region. If instability spreads to Pakistan, Russia may see its investment in a promising relationship with India at risk and may become impatient with a United States that does not prevent the spread of a conflict.

Most importantly, Putin's core priority for economic development underpins his acceptance of US priorities and initiatives across a range of security issues. If that economic opportunity is erased by conflict and instability throughout Eurasia, his fundamental calculation is virtually certain to change. Russia right now is discounting near-term weakness and subordination for longer-term benefit. Without that long-term prospect, other short-term strategies, especially competitive and obstructionist ones, may look more promising for a Russian leadership that wants to maintain a Russian Federation with a great power role. Afghanistan is not intrinsically important to Russia's Eurasian security and economic policies and ambitions, but it is unavoidably located precisely in the middle of many of the threats to and opportunities for Russian objectives.

The View from Iran

Geoffrey Kemp

The Nixon Center

Iran appears to be of two minds about how best to view and deal with US operations in Afghanistan and the changing geopolitical dynamics in the region and throughout Eurasia. Prior to 11 September, Iran was already extremely concerned over the political situation in Afghanistan and drug smuggling from Afghanistan into Iran. Considerable tension also emanated from the fundamental differences between the fundamentalist Sunni Muslim Taliban and the hardline Shiia Muslim leaders of Iran. Sporadic but consistent fighting along the border throughout the 1990s cost Iran over 3,000 soldiers and police. There was speculation throughout the international community that these border skirmishes would turn into a general war between the two states after the assassination of several Iranian politicians in 1998. Iran also had worries about the potential for the “Talibanization” of Pakistan, given the close ties between Pakistan and the Taliban and the porous border separating those two states.

Many of Iran’s deep concerns about Afghanistan have been eased by the fall of the Taliban, and Iran is pleased that the United States was able to do Iran’s “dirty work” for them. However, Iran also has a longstanding antipathy toward the United States and is fearful of being encircled by US forces and influence. Thus, 11 September offers Iran a dilemma similar to that presented in 1991 when a US-led coalition reduced rival Iraq’s power to a fraction of what it had been.

Throughout the fall of 2001, Iran showed signs of a willingness to cooperate with US efforts in Afghanistan. There were some Iranian objections, but once it became clear that Russia was standing with rather than

against the United States, Iran muted its concerns, lowered its rhetoric, and actually offered to share intelligence and to assist in the retrieval or rescue of American pilots downed in western Afghanistan. The speed with which Kabul fell to the US-backed Northern Alliance took everyone, including the Iranians, by surprise. Conventional wisdom in Iran and throughout the world had held that US military operations would be slow going. These were, after all, many of the same fighters that had caused so much trouble for the Soviets throughout the late 1970s and the whole of the 1980s.

Most believed that the United States would be constrained by three factors that could simply not be overcome by technological superiority, no matter how extreme: the Afghan winter, Ramadan, and the Muslim “street.” Of course, none of these factors hindered the United States or their Northern Alliance allies, and the United States ousted the Taliban in such a convincing manner that it was impossible for the United States not to have an important say in the post-Taliban Afghanistan. Iran recognized this inevitability and actually played an important role in the success of the Bonn Conference in December 2001, particularly by persuading Rabbani to step down.

Despite the cooperative tone at Bonn, there were signs that Iran did not intend to make things easy for the interim government. Reports—potentially exaggerated—emerged that Iran was engaging in some limited influence-peddling in western Afghanistan, particularly in and around Herat. According to these reports, Iran was supplying weapons, equipment, and even police to the Tajik regional governor Ismail Khan. Reports also surfaced detailing how Iranian border guards aided the escape of al-Qa’ida fighters from Afghanistan into Iran. This dichotomous behavior—cooperating with the United States

and then actively working to undermine an Afghan central government—reflected the intense and bitter debate within Iran over how to deal with a post-Taliban Afghanistan. At the heart of this debate was the issue of how much Iran should cooperate with the United States and how easy the Iranians should make it for the establishment of a friendly government in Kabul.

The direction of this debate took a dramatic turn when the United States included Iran as a member of the tripartite “Axis of Evil” on 29 January 2002. After this announcement, Iran found itself squarely in the cross-hairs of American antagonism. Hardliners within Iran believe that the United States is attempting to encircle Iran and, eventually, force a dramatic regime change in Tehran. These hardliners are made profoundly uneasy by Iran’s membership among the axis of international pariahs, as well as by heightened US rhetoric regarding Iraq and the ease with which the United States dispatched the Taliban.

If this group desires to remain in power, then it also has an interest in delaying as long as possible an assault on Iraq that could ultimately produce a US-friendly regime on Iran’s western border. Two potential strategies could delay this assault.

- The first strategy is to sow limited strife in Afghanistan to keep the United States engaged there. As long as regional governors and warlords have the desire and means to thwart the establishment of stability outside Kabul, the United States will have to commit resources and attention that might otherwise be used to plan and execute an Iraqi assault.
- The second strategy is to “keep the pot boiling” in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. As part of this second strategy, it would be in Iran’s interest to undermine

the Middle East Peace Process to the point where issues regarding Israel and Palestine become dominant in American foreign policy and, potentially, domestic politics, eventually compromising President Bush’s support both at home and abroad.

In short, there is an intense debate in Iran between hardliners fearful of US power and encirclement and moderates questioning the overall policy of opposing the United States.

The View from Turkey

Ian Lesser

The Pacific Council on International Policy

Turkey has historic and ethnic ties to the region and was quick to support US actions after 11 September, but Turkey’s Afghan agenda is limited. For the moment, this agenda includes:

- Negotiating least-cost, least-commitment arrangements for participation in coalition peacekeeping efforts.
- Promoting the political fortunes of elements of the Northern Alliance that have had ties to Turkey since the 1980s.
- Keeping the United States and other NATO allies engaged in a region relevant to Turkey.
- Limiting the role of Russia.
- Regulating the use of Incirlik as a logistical hub for US airlift to theater.

The role of Afghanistan in overall Turkish foreign policy is likely to be modest. Quite apart from Turkey’s ongoing financial crisis, Ankara has weightier issues on its foreign and security policy agenda. The future of relations with the EU; bilateral relations with the United

States; Greek-Turkish détente; Iraq, Iran, and Syria; the Arab-Israeli crisis; and, not least, relations with Russia, will loom far larger than developments anywhere in Central Asia. Indeed, Afghanistan and adjacent regions will be seen through the lens of these broader concerns.

- The “global war on terrorism” is a more important element for Turkey, linked to the country’s own experience and continuing concerns regarding the PKK and leftist and Islamist movements. Turks are at best ambivalent regarding prospective intervention in Iraq as part of this rubric, however.

Turkey has a strong stake in possible new geopolitical dynamics after 11 September. The sense in Turkey, as elsewhere, is that the events of 11 September have “given history a shove.” Elements of this discussion in Turkey include:

- A genuine desire to portray the post-11 September environment as reinforcing Turkey’s strategic importance—for power projection, regional security management, and as a civilizational “bridge”—although others may see the Turks as a “barrier” against Eurasian and Middle Eastern turmoil.
- Sensitivity to the war on terrorism and developments in and around Afghanistan as a test of the future character of Russian-Western relations—a key longer-term security issue for Ankara.
- 11 September as a stimulus to the evolution of both American and European policies and transatlantic relations. Ankara has a stake in multilateralism but worries about a changing balance of transatlantic roles outside Europe, especially if Turkey is marginalized.

- More attention to China as a regional actor, particularly in light of the Uighur issue.

The post-11 September environment has done little to change Turkish strategic thinking or priorities. Engagement in Central Asia, including Afghanistan, is still seen by the foreign and security policy establishment as a way of strengthening Turkey’s role in the West rather than as an alternative strategic orientation. Ankara has sought to turn the new environment to its advantage, seeking US and European support for its own “counter-terrorism” aims, IMF requirements, and role as a strategic ally. Not much has changed, however, and recent events have done little to alter the Turkish position as seen from Ankara—or Washington.

The View from India

Juli MacDonald

Booz Allen Hamilton

Six issues shape Indian thinking about its interests and strategies in the post-11 September environment in Central Asia.

- **US military presence** as a double-edged sword—empowering and limiting.
- Uncertainty about **China’s response** to the US military presence.
- Reversed assessment of **energy options**—with Central Asia becoming increasingly attractive.
- Concern about the negative consequences of **US policy toward Iran**.
- Fear of a **Russian response** to the US military presence creating new strategic problems.

- Increased activism in India’s “extended strategic neighborhood” to **contain Pakistan**.

Prior to 11 September, Central Asia influenced Indian thinking in four ways. First, Indians viewed Central Asia as a critical arena in larger geopolitical competitions and realignments. India considered Central Asia to be an extension of its regional competition with Pakistan and a flank where India could break China’s “encirclement.” Second, Central Asia and Afghanistan threatened India as a source of destabilizing Islamic extremism supported by Pakistan. To counter this threat, India supported the Northern Alliance in its struggle against the Taliban, and it pursued relations with Uzbekistan and Iran as critical strategic partners. Third, Indians sought to deepen economic ties in Central Asia, positioning themselves near the heart of the nascent east-west economic corridor. Finally, India’s energy strategy featured Central Asia as hoped-for relief from dependence on the Persian Gulf.

Indians believe that their concerns about terrorism in Central Asia have been vindicated by the events of 11 September and their aftermath. They argue that they understood the terrorist threat from Pakistan, Islamic extremism in Afghanistan, and the transnational nature of al-Qa’ida. They believe that they took these threats seriously when no one else would. For Indians, the post-11 September environment constantly reinforces the certainty of this view. At the same time, they are uncertain about the impact of the extraordinary military activities in Central Asia on their larger strategic interests, particularly on the following issues.

The US Role. The rapid and powerful US military response to the terrorist attacks creates the conditions for a closer military and strategic relationship between India and the

United States. At the same time, India faces a US military presence uncomfortably close to its borders. Hence, Indians view the US military presence in Central Asia as both empowering and limiting. They seek to leverage the US presence as much as possible, using the United States to force Pakistan to stop its cross-border terrorist activities in Kashmir, but they fear that the United States will attempt to define strategic issues for them. The Indians also fear that the US position could complicate New Delhi’s relationships with Tehran and Moscow. India shares US interests in countering terrorism, combating Islamic fundamentalism, impeding WMD proliferation, and stabilizing the region generally. They worry, however, that the United States will not remain committed long enough to create enduring solutions, and they are wary that US policy missteps could create long-term problems that India will be left to solve.

China’s Response. The Indians do not know how the Chinese view the shape of the new game. The Indians fear that the Chinese response to the US presence in Central Asia will pose challenges to India’s interests in other areas. They ask: Will China accelerate its pre-11 September activities in Central Asia, or will China respond to the US presence there indirectly, for example, in Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Iran?

Energy. New Delhi’s assessment of the challenges to its energy options is reversed: Central Asia is more attractive to India precisely because of the US presence, which could stabilize a potentially fractious region by securing borders, encouraging foreign investment, and facilitating the construction of pipelines. At the same time, the Persian Gulf is becoming more fractious and hostile because of US actions in the war on terrorism. The Indians worry that an American attack on Iraq will hasten Gulf instability. They wonder

what will happen if the United States stumbles or tires of Arab antagonism and withdraws from the Gulf. This uncertainty has refocused their interests in Central Asia and the Caspian. Indian investment in Central Asia probably will grow and India will attempt to strengthen relationships with key partners—Iran, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—to support their energy interests.

Concern over Iran... For India, Iran remains the gateway to Central Asia, and the Indians are bewildered by the US inclusion of Iran in the “axis of evil.” Indians argue that Iran could have been a great stabilizing influence in Afghanistan but now it will be less cooperative and even disruptive. The Indians believe that US actions undermine the public sentiment and admiration for the United States in Iran that exists in no other state in the Middle East. Because of their own historic and deep relationship with Iran, Indians worry that US actions of this kind could drive a wedge between New Delhi and Washington despite shared interests in other areas. Moreover, they worry that US actions could push Iran closer to China. We may see the Indians further strengthening their relationship with Iran to pursue their energy interests and to counter the negative consequences of US policy.

...and Russia. Moscow’s response to the US presence in Central Asia concerns Indians on several levels. They ask two questions: How will the US presence in Central Asia affect India’s bilateral relationship with Russia over the medium- and long-term, particularly when the Russians become uncomfortable with the US presence in their sphere of influence? Will the Russians respond to the US presence in Central Asia by supporting anti-American states on the margins of the region, for example, by selling advanced technology to China or helping Iran go nuclear? Russian responses of this kind, though aimed at the

United States, would ultimately pose new and powerful challenges to Indian interests in Central Asia and elsewhere.

Indian Regional Activism. India seeks to play a larger role in Afghanistan and Central Asia, which New Delhi sees as its extended strategic neighborhood. Central Asia thus is part of a strategy to bound Pakistan to impede it from infecting Central Asia with its Islamic extremism, while at the same time diminishing China’s ability to use Pakistan as a strategic foil against India.

We should expect India to become more active in Afghanistan, with or without US support. India will leverage its historical and cultural roots, strengthen its existing political relationships, and deepen its economic ties in Afghanistan to help create a stable state and to increase its influence in Central Asia.

In sum, India links its interests and activities in Afghanistan to its larger strategic interests in Central Asia. Although the Indians see a great deal of uncertainty and are not entirely clear on their own strategies in the region, Indians are clearly winners in the post-11 September environment. India’s strategic interests have been clarified. Its ability to act on its strategic interests has been improved. Finally, its ability to organize and align itself to pursue its interests in Central Asia has been enhanced because of its historic relationship with Iran and Afghanistan, its traditional relationship with Russia, and its emerging relationship with the United States.

The View from Europe

Roy Allison

*Royal Institute of International Affairs and
Oxford University*

There is a uniform European commitment to remain at the forefront of the broad global counter-terrorist coalition. This is expressed in numerous European Union (EU) documents and in practical areas of cooperation. The EU has found it more complicated to spell out its strategic view of recent events in Afghanistan, except in terms of quite broad principles, at least in approved EU documents. Despite this, one can piece together a European perspective that has a common shape.

The European, particularly EU, countries in common place a considerable emphasis not just on the military but also on the humanitarian, developmental, and social impacts of unfolding events in Afghanistan. They also stress the need to develop an effective post-Taliban political process according to the roadmap set out by the Bonn agreement. A broader, related theme has been the need to address the phenomenon of failed states as a long-term strategy. This has been a theme of speeches and statements of British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw and Prime Minister Tony Blair. Efforts to counteract the danger of Afghanistan's neighbors in Central Asia and Pakistan "failing" are perceived as necessary as part of an integrated policy to the events in and around Afghanistan. This is also viewed as essential for the campaign against terrorism and the subsidiary, but important, campaign against drug production and trafficking.

The European states also are intent on avoiding a resumption of interference in Afghanistan by regional states backing their favored ethnic or other client groupings.

However, concern about the Iranian role in northwest Afghanistan is tempered by an understanding that Iran has border security interests and an assumption that results may still be achieved from the European critical dialogue with Iran. European leaders are concerned about the problem of Pakistan as a potential Taliban "hinterland." But, like their US counterparts, they have been keenly aware of the need to prevent operations in Afghanistan from further destabilizing Pakistan or from threatening a dangerous confrontation between Pakistan and India over Kashmir.

The EU Commission has agreed to double its funding to the countries of Central Asia but stresses its belief that lasting stability and security in these countries can only be achieved through continuing reform. In December 2001 the EU Council declared the great importance it attached to "tackling the root causes of terrorism and conflict in the region by supporting efforts to improve governance and to reduce poverty." But it also agreed to consider action in the region "on border control and border management, including arms smuggling and non-proliferation." Despite this nuanced position, there remains concern in the nongovernmental organization (NGO) community and among others in Europe about the risk that authoritarian regimes in Central Asia may become entrenched and through repressive policies may foster the growth of anti-state Islamist groups.

- Overall, the Spanish presidency of the EU will involve a possible review and tightening of the EU's links with Afghanistan's neighbors.

Officials in European countries view military security in Afghanistan, not only in Kabul but in the provinces, as essential for the developmental agenda, as well as to curtail the

continued risk of warlordism and to implement the timetable for political transition agreed at the Bonn conference. There is debate about the appropriate size of the UN-sponsored International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which many critics view as too small and restricted by its vulnerability outside Kabul. This could mean more troops being sent to the provinces. There is also unease in some European states about the possible effects of ongoing operations against the Taliban and al-Qa'ida on regional politics within Afghanistan. One concern is the need to avoid alienating or creating new local warlords among the Pashtuns, while working to integrate the Pashtun community more effectively into some form of representative governance. British policy, however, is quite focused on the need to succeed in these military operations and refutes the claims of domestic critics that there may be a contradiction between the simultaneous British ISAF military peacekeeping role and its combat role alongside US forces. Yet the Pashtun issue remains worrying, and before the *loya jirga* convened in June 2002, the EU declared that the resulting Afghan government should include more Pashtuns.

European Union policy on Afghanistan is generally expressed in the form of “lowest common denominator” principles, as part of the emerging EU Common Foreign and Security Policy. During October-December 2001 the EU described its goal in Afghanistan as a “legitimate, broad-based, multi-ethnic government, committed to establishing human rights” and strongly emphasized the urgency of humanitarian aid to the country. EU pledges at the Tokyo donor conference make it by far the biggest donor—200 million Euros from the Commission and 400 million Euros from Member States, equivalent in total to \$546 million—but this is conditional on the full implementation of the Bonn agreement, which will not be easy to do. EU

foreign ministers also warned the Afghan government in April that it can expect little in the way of support unless the government starts establishing a transparent fiscal and monetary system.

The EU External Affairs Commissioner has highlighted the need to deliver the reconstruction process outside Kabul and resist warlordism and the “need for local leaders to accept leadership from Kabul and buy into the process.” To assist the central leadership, the EU will continue to contribute to the financial sustainability of the Interim Government and will play a part in re-establishing regular Afghan national armed and security forces. Although the United States may lead the effort to found a new Afghan army, Germany has promised to assume the particular task of helping rebuild a national Afghan police force. Overall, the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign Security Policy (CFSP) has emphasized that European assistance to Afghanistan is an investment in European security, since the resultant stabilization of the country is vital to curb “the flow of drugs, illegal migrants, and related criminal elements originating from Afghanistan.” Success in Afghanistan also is ultimately perceived as crucial and as “the best guarantee to avoid a return to chaos and the recreation of a breeding ground for global terrorism.”

Highlights from the Discussion

Afghanistan and Regional Geopolitical Balance: Uncertain Future

Several participants emphasized that the situation in Afghanistan is still fluid; that much can change, including the nature and duration of the US presence; and that it may be premature to establish new, long-term strategic priorities. Participants argued that American involvement in Afghanistan and Central Asia has already influenced the way

political forces in Iran, Russia, China, Turkey, India and the EU view the strategic competition in this region, and, in some cases, they have begun to debate new strategies to take the US military presence into account.

A general consensus also emerged that Afghanistan is less important in its own right than as a pivot for relations among regional powers. The new US security posture is giving additional impetus for a redefinition by these regional powers of their strategic interests vis-à-vis each other and naturally with the United States.

Ambivalence Toward US Role

Participants agreed that the leaders of these regional states generally assess that the United States is the only state with sufficient power and influence to engineer a new stability in Afghanistan. Many states have an interest in a stable Afghanistan, and all will seek to pursue objectives there, but none has the economic capacity or military capability to create and sustain stability in a rebuilt Afghanistan. Each regional power is constrained in some way from acting.

- Turkey is burdened by severe fiscal restraints.
- Europe practices “strategy by checkbook” and lowest common denominator policies.
- Russia has proven unable to maintain stability in Central Asia for the past decade and appears to be deferring to US strategic objectives in the region.
- China is trying to understand the implications of US presence on its western borders and the dramatically altered strategic landscape that this presence symbolizes.

- India is preoccupied by its conflict with Pakistan.
- Iran is deterred by open and vocal opposition from the United States, which has designated it as part of the “axis of evil.”

Despite this recognition of a key US role in combating regional terrorism and their own constraints, however, Russia, China, Iran, and India are in many ways deeply ambivalent regarding the US presence in Central Asia. In these states, policymakers appear undecided about how best to understand and react to the new American presence in Central Asia. This is a tenuous process, and all appear to be “feeling their way” across unfamiliar strategic terrain. Their strategic decisions will likely be influenced heavily by how long the United States maintains a military presence in the region, how other regional competitors interpret and respond to US objectives, the scale and scope of the war, and whether they perceive the United States to be succeeding or failing.

Iran. Some Iranian moderates see the US presence as possibly the best instrument for achieving one of Iran’s key policy objectives in the region: disrupting Afghanistan’s drug trade, of which Iran has become a principal target and conduit to other markets.

In contrast, Iranian hardliners fear being “encircled” by the United States, and they argue that any support Iran gives to the United States in Afghanistan will accelerate the establishment of hostile US influence on Iran’s eastern borders. They note that Iran’s “soft” and helpful offers to facilitate US actions in Afghanistan were rebuffed by the Bush Administration and that Iran ended up as part of the “axis of evil.”

Participants agreed that the “axis of evil” speech sent contradictory signals about the kinds of behaviors the United States would reward and punish. The most notable contradiction, several observed, was the treatment of Iran and Pakistan. Prior to 11 September, Iran had played a vital role in combating Taliban control of Afghanistan by providing considerable materiel support to the Northern Alliance. After the attacks of 11 September, Iran offered to work with the United States to achieve some goals in Afghanistan. Tehran lowered its rhetoric toward the United States and even contributed to the success of the Bonn Conference in December, 2001. Pakistan, on the other hand, had provided extensive material and ideological support to the Taliban and al-Qa’ida in the years before 2001. It is only after 11 September that this official support ceased as Pakistan aligned itself with the United States against its former clients in Afghanistan and was rewarded by being described as an important US ally. Iranians recall that Pakistan also had tested nuclear weapons in defiance of the United States. They were thus doubly puzzled by the rapidity of this shift in US policy, particularly when Iran, notwithstanding its consistent opposition to the Taliban, was labeled as one the three “evil” pariah nations.

Hardline Iranians fear that the United States would like to replace the regime in Iran with something resembling the new government in Afghanistan. As one participant noted, “Iran has a young Shah of its own in exile.”

China. China, too, has a range of views about how best to approach the US presence in Afghanistan. Many influential people in Beijing, like their counterparts in Tehran, fear American encirclement. They look at the new strategic environment and see:

- US troops in Japan, Korea and, at least temporarily, the Philippines.
- Strong continuing US support for Taiwan.
- A rapidly improving Indo-US strategic relationship.
- The “double” loss of Pakistan, first as a Chinese ally and strategic counter to India in Central Asia, then as a revitalized ally of the United States.
- Russia’s embrace of US efforts in Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the Caucasus.
- US forces on China’s western borders.

At the same time, some reports suggest that others in China believe Chinese energy and economic interests in Central Asia would be best served by a strong and effective US presence.

Russia. In Russia, fear of US “encirclement” would seem to have considerable support in popular perceptions. NATO has enlarged to three former Warsaw Pact states and is pressing to bring in the Baltic states; US troops are deployed in Georgia; a US military base now exists in Uzbekistan; and, of course, US troops are on the ground in Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan. Yet participants argued that in Russia this is “a dog that doesn’t bark.” Moreover, those that espouse encirclement arguments most vehemently and, therefore, stand against Russian alignment with the United States offer no alternative options for Russian foreign policy, making it easier for Putin to dismiss their complaints.

A number of participants argued that Russia is far more concerned with advancing an economic development agenda and gaining increased integration into the world economy

than it is about encirclement by the United States. As long as the United States and the West continue to provide an economic reward for Putin's support on security issues, Russia will accept the humiliating concession of its weakness relative to the United States. This reward need not be overly substantive. Participants believed that, at least at first, Russia would be satisfied with such symbolic moves as a sustained effort by the United States to push Russia's WTO membership application forward or some other indication that Russia is not held to higher standards than China.

India. Prior to 11 September, India was fond of using its burgeoning political, economic and military relations with the United States to make China more sensitive to Indian security concerns in South Asia, particularly concerns regarding the effect of Chinese influence in Pakistan and Myanmar. US involvement in Central Asia has made this political card an even more effective play for India in its strategic competition with China, which fears a strong and durable Indian-American alliance.

- At the same time, some participants noted that New Delhi may be concerned that a long-term US presence in the region could act as a restraint on India's freedom of maneuver against Pakistan.

Different Definitions of US Success

Broadly speaking, participants suggested that the regional powers would define success for the United States as orchestrating sustained peaceful conditions in Afghanistan and disrupting worldwide terrorist operations that originate in Afghanistan. They rejected the notion that the United States must effectively implement "democracy building" and "human rights" positions to be successful. Although these may be desirable goals, the primary measure of success for US

policymakers will be the disruption of terrorist activity.

Moreover, participants generally agreed that the duration of the US military presence in Afghanistan is not an accurate indicator of success or failure of US operations. Indeed, if a prolonged US military presence results in eliminating al-Qa'ida and Taliban fighters and in training regional military forces to resist future terrorist activities on their own, then the US mission should be rated as highly successful. Conversely, a protracted US presence, combined with significant casualties from combating al-Qa'ida or regional warlords, would be seen by regional actors as an American failure, as would a prolonged stay in which wide-scale disruption of the post-war social, political or economic development of Afghanistan occurs. Several participants argued that success in Afghanistan might resemble what is currently being considered success in Bosnia: a long-term deployment in which American soldiers help keep an uneasy peace.

Participants also noted that the world media have heightened expectations for success in Afghanistan beyond the disruption or liquidation of al-Qa'ida in Afghanistan. Consequently, US policymakers could face a shifting popular opinion whose expectations of "success" are always greater than the on-the-ground realities.

Looking closely at the perceptions of individual countries provides a sense of differing attitudes toward success and failure for US operations in Afghanistan.

Iran. Tehran is ambivalent regarding a US success. Iranians are aware that US success in Afghanistan could push forward the timetable for America to take decisive military action against Iraq. Military success against Iraq would virtually complete Iran's

“encirclement” by the United States if it resulted in a stable, pro-Western government that promoted economic and political reform. Such an Iraq could threaten the regime in Iran. In this sense, many in Iran would welcome the United States becoming bogged down in Afghanistan if this resulted in a delay or cancellation of an attack on Iraq. If either a US success or failure led to the Americans packing up and leaving Afghanistan, Tehran would see an opportunity to move in and fill the vacuum—a clear success from Iran’s point of view.

China. Officials in Beijing probably would hold a similarly dichotomous view of US success or failure. Forces in China that believe the United States is a power in decline would like to see a US failure in Afghanistan, perhaps forcing the United States to recognize the limits of its power—to include its ability to oppose Chinese strategy toward Taiwan.

- Those in China focused on regional economic development seek stability and would define US success by the ability to bring stability to the region regardless of the length of the US presence.

Russia. Russians watched in awe as the United States endured an embarrassing and divisive national election and a recession, followed by a dramatic terrorist attack. Yet only six months after the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, the US economy is resurgent, and the US military has led a highly successful military campaign in Afghanistan that featured unprecedented power projection.

Russians are concerned about a possible US failure in Afghanistan, however. Several participants suggested that for Russia, the issue is not so much *if* the United States fails but *how* it fails. If the United States grows tired of a difficult, guerrilla-style war in

Afghanistan and leaves after inflicting significant damage to terrorist networks there, then arguably Russia’s strategic position would be improved. The Taliban would be gone, al-Qa’ida would be badly degraded, and the United States would no longer be in the region. Instability would still plague Afghanistan, but the larger forces of Islamic extremism and terrorism would have been greatly reduced, and Russia would have an opportunity to reestablish a strategic presence in the region.

However, if major instability in Afghanistan causes the United States to increase its commitment of forces significantly, Russians probably would see this equation as increasingly undesirable. Putin would face domestic pressure to reconsider his support for the US war on terror and his concessions on NATO enlargement and missile defense. His opponents would be able to claim that Russia received nothing in return for its concessions to the Americans. Moreover, opposition forces would have a potent political slogan in the increasingly obvious “encirclement” of Russia by American forces and interests. This scenario could lead to the intensification of latent nativist and nationalist domestic political forces in Russia.

India. Indians cannot easily separate the US effort against terrorism in Afghanistan from their own fight against terrorism in Kashmir directed from Pakistan. Therefore, they are unlikely to acknowledge any US success in Afghanistan unless it has direct and immediate benefits for their own struggle against Islamic extremism. That said, an American failure could affect India in two ways, each of which would have a positive and negative consequence. First, if the United States left the region or was solely preoccupied with the war in Afghanistan, India might believe it had a freer hand to take military action against Pakistan, but this

situation also might reduce restraint on both sides and increase the chances for strategic, including nuclear, miscalculation. Second, if the United States departs from Central Asia, Indian opportunities to pursue historic strategic interests in that region on its own could be improved. At the same time, however, opportunities for stabilizing the region through politics and trade, perhaps involving Russia in new and creative ways, might be lost.

Turkey. Ankara worries about Afghanistan becoming a kind of “Balkans,” where no state can establish and keep the peace effectively under such difficult circumstances. From Turkey’s standpoint, the United States will have failed if it leaves Afghanistan without having disrupted or eliminated local al-Qa’ida forces, disbanded and disarmed the Taliban, and stemmed the forces of Islamic extremism in the region.

Turkey’s main post-11 September security concerns center on Russia. Now that the United States has provided a measure of stability in Afghanistan and Central Asia, Turkey is concerned that Russia will have a freer hand to exert itself in the one area where Turkish and Russian interests most often clash: the Caucasus. This concern is mitigated to a degree by Ankara’s recognition that Turkish and Russian security agendas are currently converging to a much greater extent than they are diverging, for example a shared functional view of terrorism. Turkey also may look to the United States to take the lead in keeping Russia in line in the region.

EU. A failure by the United States in Afghanistan would be disastrous for the European Union. EU development strategy is predicated on the US removal of the terrorist threat and the establishment of the foundations of political and social stability. Several participants noted that the EU has no

“Plan B.” If the United States fails to subdue the forces of extremism and regionalism in Afghanistan, the EU will be forced either to commit to a larger than expected military presence in order to establish stability or to abandon its development plans for Afghanistan and the region more broadly. The price of either undesirable outcome may be too high for Europe. Thus, despite all the rhetoric about encroaching US hegemony and the reluctance of the Americans to consult their European allies, European interests are served only by a decisive US victory in Afghanistan.

Impact on Domestic Politics

In some regional actors, the debate about the war in Afghanistan and the growing American presence in Central Asia also are leading to a debate between political forces with different views about the future configuration of their own state. Participants generally agreed that US actions and events in Afghanistan could thus play an important role in shaping political dynamics in Iran and Pakistan (see Workshop II for more discussion on Pakistan). In contrast, developments in Afghanistan can affect the internal balance of power in Russia and China but will not have a decisive impact on the direction of either state. Nonetheless, although the US ability to influence internal dynamics in Russia and China is more limited than in Iran, US actions will have an enormous impact.

Iran. Afghanistan is an important case for Iran; it must be viewed from the perspective of regime survival. Iranian moderates generally view the strategy of making trouble in Afghanistan as unnecessary at best and counterproductive at worst. They argue that by playing a constructive role in a post-Taliban Afghanistan, Iran will accrue greater influence in the unfolding politics of the region. Even if the United States moves against Iraq, getting rid of Saddam Hussein is

not necessarily a negative result for Iran. Participants argued that one might conceive of a “Bonn Conference for Iraq” in which Iran would have an opportunity to significantly affect the future shape and disposition of a post-Saddam Iraq—an outcome that would be more likely if Iran were helpful to the United States in Afghanistan.

In contrast, more hardline elements in Iran continue to focus on the idea of US encirclement. Iranians across the political spectrum are very disturbed by the return of the king to Afghanistan and the possibility of a similar future scenario in Iran. These elements in Iran could seek to delay or cancel any US action against Iraq by working to ensure a continued US presence in Afghanistan to manage instability there. This delaying tactic could push Iran’s decisionmakers to support elements in Afghanistan—for example, Gulbaddin Hekmatyar, displaced Taliban, or regional warlords—whose opposition could force the United States to remain deeply involved in Afghanistan for a longer period. Iranian meddling will be a delicate balancing act. Too much intriguing and interfering in Afghanistan could set the stage for US action against Iran, even before the Americans move against Iraq. Several participants noted that this same Iranian stratagem—keeping the United States occupied in Afghanistan to delay it from moving on Iraq—probably applies to the Palestine-Israel situation, which Iran has proven it can manipulate effectively.

How the United States plays to these different elements and interests in Iran—and how US actions play in Iran—could have a significant impact on the shape and policies of future Iranian governments.

Russia. Putin’s ability to silence dissent to his pro-Western policies among the Russian elites and public has been aided by the

psychological impact of 11 September on Russia and the unmistakable evidence of American vitality. US steps that are perceived by the Russian foreign and security policy elites as efforts to reduce Moscow’s influence in the region or insufficient US efforts to reward Russia for its support could strengthen these elements in Russia, making it more difficult for Putin to hew to his pro-Western line.

Workshop II

Central Asia and Pakistan: The Impact of 11 September on Internal Stability and Regional Dynamics

The second workshop was designed to examine how the five Central Asian states and Pakistan perceive developments in Afghanistan; to assess the impact of 11 September on the internal dynamics of these states; and to determine the agendas of these states in Afghanistan and what new strategies, important relationships, and potential new alliances might be emerging.

Rajan Menon

Lehigh University

The Background. The question of whether the United States had vital interests in Central Asia (defined as ones for which we would spend much blood and treasure and undertake long-term obligations) was debatable, and debated, until recently, and my assessment was that we did not. We had, after all, deep and longstanding strategic commitments in other regions (Europe, Northeast Asia, the Persian Gulf); the opportunity costs of assuming additional ones were high and the chance of raising the resources to do so slim, not least in a part of the world about which Americans knew little and cared less.

That debate is now irrelevant in one sense: for good or ill, the United States is in Central Asia—and in force. By perpetrating the 11 September massacre, al-Qa’ida and its hosts, the Taliban, unwittingly engineered this strategic reorientation. And the evidence—basing agreements, implied (or explicit) security obligations to local regimes, military construction underway and planned, and statements by American leaders—leaves little doubt that “strategic” is the apposite term.

But could our present engagement in Central Asia turn out to be flash in the pan? Some suggest that it could. The American military, their argument goes, has a deep-rooted fear after Vietnam; the Bush Administration abhors nation-building; the Taliban is history; al-Qa’ida is on the run.

This view is flawed logically and dubious empirically. The faulty reasoning stems from conflating intentions with outcomes: were they one and the same, the world would be a different place. States often do not get what they want, what happens is other than they expect, and unanticipated events lead them in unexpected directions. Now to the evidence. Our military presence in Central Asia, the infrastructure being built to house it, and our agreements with Central Asian leaders point to something other than a fleeting visit. More importantly, conditions in Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, to which I now turn, will almost certainly deny us the luxury of an early departure.

Central Asia’s Abiding Strategic Salience.

Our current strategic engagement and military deployments in Central Asia are rooted in three circumstances. First, the region was the best perch from which to supply and train the Northern Alliance (whose base was chiefly in the Tajik and Uzbek areas of Afghanistan and the Hazara zones to their south) and to gather intelligence on the ground and from the air. The Alliance’s victory is hardly sealed. The new administration in Kabul faces many problems, ranging from internecine squabbles, coup and assassination attempts, disorder in much of the country, and reign of regional strongmen (Ismail Khan, Abdul Rashid Dostum, and Gul Agha Shirzai, to name but a few) who pay it scant heed. Renewed civil war in Afghanistan, while not inevitable, is

certainly not a prospect sensible policymakers in the United States can fail to anticipate and prepare for.

Given Pakistan's shaky state (its leader, Pervez Musharraf, having alienated both the radical Islamists and the democratic opposition, albeit for entirely different reasons), it will be disinclined to become the principal point from which the United States applies power in any effort to stabilize Afghanistan. For Islamabad, the internal risks of serving as a platform for American missions in Afghanistan are high, and the payoffs have proven meager. The corollary is that, for the United States, Central Asia remains a critical point of access to Afghanistan.

The second circumstance involves al-Qa'ida. Although it is on the run in Afghanistan and in tatters, it is not finished, not least because this is not a one-country organization; it is, rather, akin to a multinational corporation: headquarters in Afghanistan, affiliates in many countries in the Muslim world. The headquarters will be reestablished, and geography makes Central Asia a prime alternative location. So does the region's amalgamation of despotism (albeit to varying degrees), poverty, high birth rates (lots of unemployed, but educated, young men, the classic raw material for radical movements), disputed boundaries, and polities run by soon-to-be-gone authoritarian, ex-communist leaders. These problems combine with another: the vacuum in values and institutions owing to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the failure of a democratic alternative to take root. These conditions are structural in nature (that is, they cannot be made to attenuate, let alone disappear, rapidly). And their synergy bodes ill for the stability of Central Asia. In theory, the United States could wash its hands of the region and avoid entrapment. In practice, having acquired a strategic stake in

Central Asia, it cannot depart when the going gets rough—unless it wants al-Qa'ida to reconstitute its central apparatus of command in this proximate, porous setting, to plan acts of terror from there, and to use it to subvert the Kabul government. And Washington manifestly does not want any of these things.

The third circumstance is created by the atrophy of Russian power. Russian nationalists may be incensed that America had ensconced itself in the only region in which Russia could claim hegemony, but the truth is that Russia is in no position to handle the responsibilities of a Central Asia in upheaval. Hence the option of waging the war on terrorism while subcontracting Central Asian security to the Russians is not viable for the United States. Nor would most Central Asian states welcome such an arrangement for fear that Moscow would use the opportunity to restore hegemony from the ruins of empire. By contrast, in Central Asian minds, America is geographically and historically distant and has far more to offer economically. There is, therefore, no comparable animus toward the United States (although that could change if we become enmeshed in the affairs of the region). Russia can be an adjunct to American strategy but cannot supplant it. This is a reality with which Putin, a man who detests fighting the inevitable and is adept at turning necessity into acts of statesmanship, has come to terms, even if all his countrymen have not.

On Tails Wagging Dogs and Quagmires.

Thus far I have argued that the ripple effects of 11 September pushed us into Central Asia in ways that no one imagined (though many will doubtless claim now to have foreseen). Yet there is another dynamic that will shape US policy in the region. Call it the pull factor. Central Asian regimes have compelling reasons to draw us in deeper, to pump up their value as comrades in arms against terrorism,

and to try and ensure that we do not simply use them and depart, leaving them to contend with the aftermath.

Uzbekistan had long pedaled the idea of itself as the natural strategic partner of the United States—partly to counter Russian influence, partly to acquire the legitimacy and resources needed to further the Uzbek self-image of being Central Asia’s natural leader. Karimov made little headway for many reasons. But that has now changed. And the irony is that radical Islam, which Karimov has used to justify his slow but steady strangulation of civil society and democracy (both had weak roots in any event), has, in the form of al-Qa’ida, raised Uzbekistan’s strategic value to the United States. When asked what the United States can gain by joining forces with him, Karimov now has a compelling answer.

Yet Islamist movements are likely to be even more prominent parts of the political landscape in Central Asia (Recall the earlier observation about the pernicious synergy among poverty, the vacuum in value, the lack of opportunities for political participation, and demographic trends). That helps Karimov’s goal of strengthening strategic ties with the United States. But Uzbeks do not want to become the lightning rod, to be condemned by local Islamists for consorting with the gendarme of Dar al-Harb, or to be left defenseless and in a more vulnerable state because the United States conducts the military equivalent of a stopover in Central Asia. The same calculation applies to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which have also put their bases at America’s disposal.

The rivalry within Central Asia also will induce local regimes to draw the United States into a long-term commitment. The idea that Uzbekistan could be the principal beneficiary in Central Asia of 11 September is unpalatable to Kazakhstan but downright frightening to

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, both of which have experienced Uzbekistan’s budding hegemony in the form of unauthorized military exercises on their soil, suspensions of gas supplies, and various forms of interference in their internal affairs. For these weaker states, the best way to counter Uzbekistan’s aspirations is to sign on to the US war on terrorism and to leverage their strategic value to obtain US commitments and resources. The point is not that the Central Asian states are not fearful about the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami, and al-Qa’ida. They are—and for good reasons—but that by no means precludes their pulling the United States in for other reasons that have little to do with Islamic radicalism. These reasons flow from regional rivalries and the nature of the relationship between state and society in these countries.

The dangers that the pull factor poses for the United States should be clear by now. In the next ten years, the actuarial process (if nothing else) will bring about political successions in each Central Asian state. There is no guarantee that they will be peaceful and a good chance that they will not. This not only makes the strategic ground on which we stand shaky; it also poses the risk of being sucked into internal political struggles—not because we want to, but because we will have acquired a stake that needs to be defended. This pattern will hardly be unfamiliar to those who have considered the history of American involvement in other regions.

The economic and social conditions mentioned earlier and the mismatch between national and state borders make it quite likely that radical Islamist movements (incidentally, only one of the many forms in which Islam and politics mix in Central Asia) and separatist and irredentist struggles will clash. We are not well equipped to walk through the minefield. We have had no sustained

experience with Central Asia for historical reasons. Our knowledge of it is slim: there are few American experts who have spent considerable time in the region (I mean doing fieldwork rather than consorting with regional elites), who know the local languages, or who are not *arrivistes*, having descended on the region seeking new pastures after the collapse of the USSR. A generation of younger, well-qualified experts is emerging, but their emergence will take time. Moreover, access to policymakers will continue to favor better-connected senior experts, knowledge and influence being separate attributes. None of this means that the United States should disengage from Central Asia; it does mean that our leaders need a clear picture of the hazards that accompany our deepening involvement—indeed, one that is clearer than they now have.

Pakistan at the Edge. Pervez Musharraf, a coup-maker and someone deeply involved in sustaining the Taliban, has now had a strategic and political makeover. He has become our ally against terror, a man of principle and courage. Forgotten are the coup, Pakistan's nuclear explosions of 1998, and the fact that Islamist organizations now banned in Pakistan and tagged as terrorist groups by the United States were roaming freely in Pakistan under his watch.

The age of the Internet is said to have made geography less relevant, but it was geography—as the Indians learned much to their dismay when their own offer of facilities to support the war against al-Qa'ida was turned down by the Bush administration, thus slowing the emerging US-Indian strategic convergence—that enabled Pakistan to change its status overnight from pariah to partner. It had something India, despite its great power pretensions, could not offer—a border with Afghanistan and an intimate history with the Taliban. Yet this country,

which the United States seems fated to embrace intermittently, is awash in serious trouble.

Pakistan's economy is faltering, and US gratitude did not extend to the single biggest piece of help Washington could have provided and that Musharraf desperately sought: a reduction in tariffs on the mainstay of Pakistan's exports to the United States, textiles. Nor, in the wake of increased defense spending, the post-11 September claims in the budget, and the likely imbalance between revenues and expenditures in the US budget, is Pakistan likely to find that its latest alignment with the United States proves bountiful. In any event, the sources of Pakistan's economic troubles are too deep and numerous for the United States to solve.

Matters are, if anything, more alarming on the political front. Most Pakistanis seem to support Musharraf's offensive against the radical Islamist parties and paramilitary forces, but these groups do not rely on the ballot box alone, or even principally, to make their political influence known (And Pakistan's history makes one thing clear: the polling booth has not been the driving force behind politics). The support for Musharraf could erode if he comes to be seen by Pakistanis as an instrument of US policy and is unable to show that his gambit will bring them tangible gains. The Islamists' efforts to depict his about-face as a combination of apostasy and national betrayal will prove more successful. We are not at that point yet, but there is a danger that our strategic engagement in Pakistan is vulnerable because it hinges on one man, who could, after all, be felled by a bullet. Inherent in the imbalance between the Pakistani leader's popularity inside the Washington beltway and his standing at home is the Sadat syndrome.

Pakistan is vulnerable on other counts as well. Al-Qa'ida had infiltrated the country in large numbers—*pace* the Pakistani government's bravado about having sealed its border with Afghanistan, a claim that reporters puncture almost daily by talking to recent infiltrators—and it has a very big score to settle with Musharraf's government. It will not lack for sympathizers, even collaborators, among Pakistani Islamist organizations and even with the Inter-Service Intelligence Directorate (ISID). Musharraf's standing in the polls offers him no protection whatever against the kinds of operations al-Qa'ida and its Pakistani acolytes will mount. Another problem is that Islamabad's assistance to the US-led military campaign (most recently at Shah-e-Kot) against the largely Pashtun Taliban has gone over badly in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), the Pashtun province that Pakistan's government controls poorly in the best of times. The NWFP will prove hospitable ground for al-Qa'ida remnants.

Moreover, Pakistan will be unable to avoid the fallout if Afghanistan remains, as it now is, a rickety balance of power system rather than a state, and if the current lull is but a prelude to renewed civil war. History, demography, and geography tie it to Afghanistan in too many ways. Consider, in addition, other problems (schisms between Shi'a and Sunnis, mohajirs and native-born, the turbulence of Sind), and the danger is apparent: Pakistan could come apart. If it does, the trajectory of US policy after 11 September will make it even harder for us to stay away from the fray. Other, bigger dangers will accompany Pakistan's fragmentation, among them, nuclear weapons that go missing or an Indian campaign that aims to capitalize on Pakistan's implosion but begets nuclear war precisely because it succeeds and leaves Pakistani leaders with their backs to the wall (Note that Pakistan's declared policy is that it will use nuclear weapons to prevent a conventional rout).

Policy Implications.

- Our intentions notwithstanding, we are in for a long stay in Central Asia.
- The commitments we have undertaken in Central Asia could increase on account of the pull factor.
- The risk of fragmentation of both Pakistan and Afghanistan remains great.
- Our strategic reorientation following 11 September increases dramatically the chances of our being drawn into the maelstroms of their collapse.
- Few of the regimes in Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan have much legitimacy or capacity and, left alone, could fail the hard tests that await them.
- They understand this and will do their utmost to draw us in as an asset.
- Our preferred military repertoire (deterrence and war-fighting, the latter as much as possible from the air) may prove infeasible in this part of the world; deeper involvement, peacekeeping, and nation-building beckon.
- Asymmetric threats (*inter alia*, the kidnapping of American civilians and soldiers, the use of weapons of mass destruction against the homeland, attacks against US commercial and cultural targets) will be the preferred strategy of foes that refuse to fight in the way we would prefer: force-on-force.
- Our deepening involvement in the countries mentioned in this analysis will not provide a commensurate ability to induce leaders to change those practices that account for instabilities; to the

contrary, we are likely to be co-opted by their priorities and perspectives precisely because of our increasing involvement and desire not to rock boats.

Highlights from the Discussion

Central Asia as a New Locale for al-Qa'ida Elements

Al-Qa'ida was able to use the sanctuary of Afghanistan to develop its strength because it shared a symbiotic ideology with the Taliban regime that controlled 90 percent of Afghan territory. Most participants judged that this unique relationship is unlikely to be duplicated in the Central Asian states.

Remnants of al-Qa'ida probably will seek to operate from Central Asia, however, particularly in those states marked by weak governments that do not control all their territory—Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

- Participants focused on the situation in Tajikistan, where President Rahmanov has not integrated the opposition fighters of Tajikistan's long and brutal civil war into the national army. Rahmanov is unwilling to root out all the extremist elements in the country, however, because they provide useful leverage against Uzbekistan.
- Some areas of Tajikistan, particularly in the Gorno-Badakhshan region that borders Afghanistan, still are not fully under the control of the central Tajik government and are populated by individuals that oppose the regime in Dushanbe. It is in these areas that al-Qa'ida could find safehaven for regrouping.

Participants believed that it is highly unlikely that al-Qa'ida would be able to reconstitute itself to the same levels of strength, numbers,

and organization that it possessed before US operations in Afghanistan. The new al-Qa'ida would have to be a more decentralized version of the old. This type of al-Qa'ida still presents a problem for both the United States and the states of Central Asia. Moreover, al-Qa'ida is not the only radical Islamic group operating in the region. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) continues to threaten Central Asian stability, though it has been limited by Uzbekistani President Islam Karimov's aggressive attempts to curtail its activities and by the fall of the Taliban.

Uzbekistan Versus the Rest of Central Asia

The political and military imbalance between Uzbekistan and the rest of Central Asia, particularly Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, will affect US interests in Central Asia.

Uzbekistan already sees itself as the logical regional leader, and Karimov commands the strongest military in Central Asia. As one participant noted, "It is difficult to manage a group of partners when one of the partners draws the concern of the others." This would be especially true if the Central Asian states engage in a bidding war to attract an American military or political presence. Participants believed that the Tajiks, Kyrgyz, and even the Kazakhs would be at a noticeable disadvantage in a bidding war and would all be competing against the Uzbeks. The results would be heavily influenced by the adroitness of the individual leaders of each of the states as well as by the success or failure of US operations in Afghanistan.

Uzbekistan objects to the poor quality of Kyrgyz and Tajik security. It has allowed fighters to transit these states, leading Uzbekistan to tighten the borders. In addition, a water shortage in the Fergana Valley has created tensions between the three states. These persistent inter-state issues could complicate the Afghanistan agenda for the United States. Once engaged in this region,

the United States cannot avoid either the divisions between the states or the significant differences in state capabilities.

Kazakhstan also is concerned about Uzbek power in Central Asia. President Nazerbayev seeks to support the US agenda in Afghanistan to ensure that Uzbekistan does not reap all the benefits of the American presence. A strong and exclusive Uzbek-US alliance would leave Kazakhstan dealing only with Russia to counter Uzbekistan's improved strategic leverage and strength in Central Asia. Participants believed, however, that Kazakhstan was limited in its ability to participate in the bidding for American support and presence both by its distance from Afghanistan and its demographics (Kazakhstan is divided almost evenly between Kazakhs and Russians).

Turkmenistan: Neutrality and Instability

Turkmenistan's avowed policy of positive neutrality and the difficulties faced by anyone dealing with the Niyazov regime led participants to devote considerably less time to the role of Turkmenistan in the emerging geopolitical dynamics of Central Asia. Some participants felt that the neutrality policy should not be taken as a given. These participants argued that President Niyazov is alienating more and more of the Turkmen elite, leaving his regime more susceptible to a coup than any other Central Asian state. One participant estimated a 50 percent chance of Niyazov's loss of power within one year. If Niyazov is removed from power, many participants believed that Turkmenistan's policy of positive neutrality probably would not survive. One participant disagreed with the tenuous nature of positive neutrality, instead asserting that positive neutrality has been a policy of the Turkmen "for 400 years" and is not likely to change with a change of regime.

Slow Improvement in Tajikistan

Participants generally considered Tajikistan "a cancer for the region" because of the residue of civil unrest and extremism from the civil war that followed independence. Participants expressed concern that the lack of central governmental control over portions of the country, the inability of the state to police its borders with other Central Asian states and Afghanistan, and Tajikistan's role as a key staging point in the Central Asian drug trade are all sources of considerable instability for Tajikistan and for the region as a whole. In spite of the forces of instability and extremism emanating from Tajikistan, participants agreed that prospects for the struggling Central Asian state are improving. Rahmanov's government has proven itself deft at balancing the many internal and external pressures it faces and has made considerable efforts to remove the most corrupt government officials. Recent developments, moreover, have revealed a steady improvement—from a very low base—in the state's ability to deal with and remedy border insecurity. Participants felt that Tajik weakness and border insecurity, despite progress, would continue to create problems for the region more generally and, therefore, also for US policy in the region.

Changing Central Asian Relations with Russia

The establishment of an extended United States presence in Central Asia will have an effect on how each of the new states of Central Asia relates to Moscow.

On a strategic level, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan view US presence in the region as an opportunity for a determined shift away from Russia. Participants viewed Tajikistan, in particular, as seizing upon US operations in the region to distance itself from Russia. Since gaining independence from Russia, Tajikistan has been a very weak state. The central government endured a brutal and

protracted civil war and still remains relatively weak. Recognizing the threat this Tajik power vacuum presents to stability in the region, Russia maintains troops in Tajikistan along the Tajik-Afghan border. In many ways, however, these Russian troops have contributed to instability and disorder through their inability to effectively monitor and intercept the movement of weapons, drugs, and extremists across the Tajik-Afghan border. In fact, Russian troops often have played an integral role in such illicit activities. Tajikistan recognizes that while the Russians talked about eliminating the Taliban for four years, the US was able to engineer the fall of the Taliban in less than six weeks.

Participants believed it was overwhelmingly in Tajikistan's interest to seek to reduce the Russian military presence and attempt to encourage an increased American presence. At the same time, a Tajik effort to develop a more effective and inclusive national military structure is vital. The Tajiks appear to be moving in this direction and are even considering the provocative policy of charging the Russians rent for their bases in Tajikistan.

Despite Uzbek President Karimov's distrust of Moscow and frequently strained relations with Russia, he has sought to maintain dialogue and looked to Russia for military equipment. Karimov's long-held strategic preference for dealing with Afghanistan has been a steady, strong strategic relationship with the United States and the West. The new US interest and presence in Central Asia provides Uzbekistan an outstanding opportunity to pursue this strategic relationship.

The outlook and situation are different in Kazakhstan. President Nazerbayev is considered the most Russified of the leaders of the five Central Asian states and traditionally has had good relations with his large northern neighbor. Kazakhstan also has

a large and active Russian population that still feels an allegiance to its old homeland. Thus, while Nazerbayev wants to support the US counter-terrorism campaign in Afghanistan, participants felt that Kazakhstan can only drift so far away from Russian influence without risking domestic political turmoil.

Russia, too, has had to adjust to the new US presence in the region. Russia is clearly not as capable as it once was to influence the geopolitical dynamics of the region. As this capability has decreased, so, too, has the Russian desire to force its will on the former Soviet states.

In spite of downward trends in Russia's ability to influence events in the region, Russia will have a continuing presence of some sort in Central Asia. This presence will invariably come in contact with the new and growing US presence. It is important, then, that Russia and the United States develop a basis for regional cooperation and division of labor. Currently, this basis is the broad justification of the war on terrorism. This is insufficient in the long term because it encourages the governments of Central Asia to label all opposition, legitimate or otherwise, as Wahabbi Islamic extremists and, therefore, as legitimate targets for repressive measures. Such repression of all forms of opposition ultimately creates an environment in which more extremists are bred.

Central Asian Equities in the Afghan *Loya Jirga*

Owing to close ethnic ties with the Uzbeks and Tajiks in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan both have an interest in the results of the Afghan *loya jirga*. The Uzbeks of Afghanistan are a geographically and politically cohesive group living in the north of Afghanistan and represented by General Rashid Dostum's National Islamic Movement. The central government of

Uzbekistan has shown considerable support for the Uzbeks of Afghanistan and would like to see a strong federal system in Afghanistan that would allow the Uzbeks a fair amount of autonomy in northern Afghanistan.

For his part, Tajik leader Rahmanov has not endorsed one particular sort of system for the future Afghan government nor has he thrown his weight behind any one Tajik group within Afghanistan in the same way that Karimov has shown support for Dostum. Rahmanov would prefer to see ethnic Tajiks in positions of authority but has been reluctant to champion one faction—for instance, the Panjshiri Tajiks—over another.

Tajikistan's dilemma over how to approach the *loya jirga* is complicated by the fact that there is a sizable ethnic Uzbek population in Tajikistan. These Uzbek citizens of Tajikistan are more likely to support a system that allows considerable influence and autonomy for Rashid Dostum in Afghanistan's northern provinces.

Central Asia as a Strategic Backwater

Participants expressed some concern that if the war in Afghanistan goes well and the US presence in the region decreases dramatically, Central Asia will once again be viewed internationally as a strategic backwater. Most believed that the US presence in the region will not be transitory, however, even if US operations are extremely successful. Central Asia's endemic problems and instabilities could lead to an extended US stay in the region well beyond settling the situation in Afghanistan.

Others argued that Central Asia could easily become a strategic backwater again even if the United States remained in the region for an extended period of time. These participants noted that the United States is in Central Asia for very specific reasons: to rid the region of

the Taliban and al-Qa'ida and to check the tide of the extremism that spawned these groups rather than to engage in democracy building and economic development in Central Asia.

Although participants disagreed on the future strategic relevance of Central Asia, a consensus emerged that Central Asia will only maintain its importance to the United States and other extra-regional powers if "it is a mess." Such chaos invites anxious neighbors—especially nuclear-armed neighbors such as Russia, China, Pakistan, and India—to intervene to ensure their own security.

Prospects for Regional Cooperation

The events following 11 September and the resulting attention given to Central Asia have created a range of opportunities for the states of Central Asia to improve their political, social, military, and economic situations. One participant forcefully argued that the states in the region have an opportunity to transform the region into a unified economic zone by establishing economic and transportation routes. The only way for the states individually to reap the economic harvest of these routes is to cooperate with one another and to behave "normally" and develop "normal" institutions. The US role in this cooperative strategy would not be financial. Rather, the United States would provide the conceptual guidance for the project. The United States would engage each of the states and "start the motor of cooperation." The geographic distance of the United States from Central Asia would allow it to exercise a certain perspective that would be welcome in each of the five capitals. Clearly, such extensive cooperation would not solve all of Central Asia's problems, but it would address many issues that currently are undermining regional stability. One participant noted that

some elements of this trade and economic cooperation already have emerged.

- Such a cooperative arrangement would not only benefit the five former Soviet Central Asian states; participants also believed that an important community in Beijing would be drawn to a globalized, economic cooperative in Central Asia. Even a “low-ping” US military presence could be sold in China in the name of intense economic development of western China and the inclusion of western China in a more international economic network.

Other participants, however, were not certain that economic cooperation and integration in Central Asia could be easily achieved or accommodated. Although all the countries, including western China, that choose to cooperate undoubtedly would reap economic, social, and political benefits, participants expressed considerable skepticism over the practicality of such an arrangement for various reasons.

- First, some participants disagreed with the general premise underlying the suggestion of Central Asian economic cooperation: that economics are the primary driver of state action. National honor and other less rational factors are more likely to drive state action, or, at the very least, influence it in ways that are not easily predicted by strictly economic models.
- In addition, the five states of Central Asia have a range of state capabilities and are at various points along the economic development spectrum. Tajikistan is constrained in ways that Kazakhstan is not, and Kazakhstan is constrained in ways that Uzbekistan is not. Minimizing these differences in economic development and state capacity and integrating the states of Central Asia into

one cooperative economic organization would prove very difficult.

- Moreover, partly owing to these discrepancies in state capability and partly owing to the political tensions produced by weak governments and loose borders, the forces of dis-aggregation are stronger than the forces of cooperation in Central Asia, making potential extensive economic cooperation an exception rather than the rule.
- Finally, while cooperation may be the right way to think about Central Asia it would likely end up being the wrong way to act. Giving reality to such a cooperative agreement would engender different views on exactly what this cooperation should look like. China’s view on economic partnerships in Central Asia could be very different from Russia’s. The potential for friction arises between states with, generally speaking, the same interest—economic cooperation.

The Threshold for an Indo-Pakistan Conflict

Pakistan has the distinction of being a country that can conduct a wide range of paramilitary and military operations across the spectrum of conflict. Pakistan can sponsor terrorist, conventional, and nuclear attacks against India. The threshold at which one form of warfare turns into another is low. Participants argued that in South Asia, the “nuclear threshold” is actually at a much lower level than the traditional threshold between nuclear and conventional warfare. For India and Pakistan the nuclear threshold is at the sub-conventional/conventional level.

Currently, the conflict between India and Pakistan exists primarily at a sub-conventional level. Pakistani-backed Kashmiri fighters use terrorism and sub-conventional tactics to prick

and prod the Indian forces along the Line of Control. If the tensions between the two states escalate to a fully conventional war—an Indian invasion, force-on-force pitched battles—participants judged it more likely that this conflict will “go nuclear” due to the dramatic imbalance between the robust Indian conventional capability and the less-developed Pakistani capability. Pakistan would have an incentive to use its nuclear arsenal to avoid a conventional military rout and to do so early in the conflict before India can destroy its nuclear capabilities.

The China Factor. Some participants felt that the price India would force China to pay in order to slow down US-Indian relations would be to “cut loose” Pakistan as a strategic ally of China. Once severed from Chinese aid and political support, Pakistan would be increasingly vulnerable to Indian political coercion and conventional military pressure.

Many participants felt that China could not accept this result, because without Pakistan as a strategic distraction to India Chinese security would rest primarily on Indian good will rather than on a balance of power. Other participants noted that China probably has alternatives to giving up on Pakistan, but participants disagreed over whether India would accept any concessions.

Musharraf and the Pakistani State

Divergent opinions emerged among participants regarding the stability of President’s Musharraf’s regime and the viability of the Pakistani state. Although Musharraf’s hold on power in Pakistan remains somewhat tenuous, internal divisions within the country may suppress a strong, organized political opposition. Pakistan’s elite supports Musharraf’s recent policies toward the United States, but the Islamic extremist forces in Pakistan are clearly dissatisfied. Further complicating matters, the allegiance of

the Army and the Inter-Service Intelligence Directorate is weak and cannot be taken for granted. Even if Musharraf has had a change of strategic heart since 11 September, the sentiments and strategies that supported the Taliban are not far from the surface in Pakistan.

President Musharraf remains the best ally of the United States in the region and its best hope for ensuring that Pakistan maintains its integrity as a state. The domestic situation will have a strong influence on the scale and scope of support for the US war on terror. In fact, some participants questioned if in fact Musharraf had taken any actions that hardline pro-Taliban and al-Qa’ida elements within Pakistan would find objectionable. Many of the extremists Pakistanis rounded up in the days after 11 September were released shortly thereafter, and Pakistani troops either are not sealing or cannot seal the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

Other participants disagreed with this notion of Pakistani political behavior and described it as “bullying from weakness.” That is, the Pakistani leadership has long been deft at playing up weakness in order to induce either increased international support or timely intervention in an Indo-Pakistani conflict. Musharraf is in a difficult situation in regard to the extremists but has shown himself more than capable of standing up to Islamic radicals in his country. In the weeks immediately after Musharraf’s decision to support US efforts in Afghanistan, tens of thousands of protestors regularly assembled in cities throughout the country. Musharraf confronted these protestors, and the rallies against the President became steadily smaller until they finally faded away. Similarly, after the 13 December attack on the Indian parliament, Musharraf was forced to go after the Muslim extremists in Kashmir. He has made progress in this area and has reduced the ability of factions within

Pakistan to fight a sub-conventional conflict in the disputed region. These more optimistic participants believed that India should recognize these efforts and do what it must to reduce the tensions along the Line of Control. By taking on these extremist forces, Musharraf has solidified domestic support.

Regardless of the assessment of the viability of Musharraf's regime or the extent to which it has been an active partner in stemming extremism in South and Central Asia, participants believed that Pakistan was at a crucial stage in its institutional development.

Another 13 December: The Trigger for an Indo-Pak War

The 13 December attack on the Indian parliament by Pakistani-supported Muslim extremists brought India and Pakistan to the brink of a general war; tensions still have not subsided. An attack similar to that of 13 December almost certainly would cause India to “do a Sharon, only possibly with nukes,” according to some participants. The anti-Pakistani sentiment in India is so strong and uniform that which party was in power in India at the time of such an attack would not matter. Although the Bharatiya-Janata Party (BJP) is the most anti-Muslim of India's major parties, all parties were outraged by the 13 December attacks and are tiring of the violent consequences of Pakistan's support for Kashmiri militants. Some participants believed that the level of public support for striking out at Pakistan is so widespread that India could bring force to bear on Pakistan even if Pakistan shows a significant change in its behavior regarding Kashmir. Ironically, an Indian attack on Pakistan would be a more feasible possibility while the United States is engaged in the region, as US presence would serve to mute Pakistan's response and mitigate against the conflict becoming nuclear.

If a conventional war does break out between India and Pakistan, what India's goals would be is unclear: would India teach Pakistan a lesson or would it attempt to “solve the Pakistan problem once and for all?”

Participants agreed that India is not certain what its ultimate goal would be in such a campaign. The assumption was that the war would remain a conventional struggle and that India would endeavor only to inflict severe punishment on Pakistan—punishment that could easily be escalated in the future if Pakistan continued to misbehave. The Indian military believes it would be able to control escalation of this conflict—with help from the United States—to ensure that the war would not go nuclear even though the threshold between sub-conventional and conventional conflict had been crossed. An Indian attempt to reincorporate Pakistan would represent a mistake for Indian strategic decisionmakers that would create the very unrest and instability it was designed to inhibit.

Workshop III

Scenarios for a Future Afghanistan

The third workshop was designed to identify major players that have emerged in Afghanistan and their links with the various internal and external actors. In addition, this third session examined key issues for the immediate political, economic, and social future of Afghanistan. Finally, the workshop offered a range of scenarios for Afghanistan's future.

Julie Sirrs

Argus International

Afghanistan is a country that is either emerging from over two decades of warfare or simply entering a new phase of fighting. Any attempt to forecast scenarios for the country's future must take into account its violent history. Significant improvement almost certainly will entail a long, gradual process of transformation. Even in peacetime, Afghanistan faced many challenges. Its government tended to favor one ethnic group—the Pashtuns—over all others, and its rule in practice was largely decentralized, allowing for a significant degree of regional autonomy. At the height of its prosperity, Afghanistan was “modernized” primarily in the capital and a few other major cities; much of the rest of the country remained underdeveloped.

In addition to this background, it is important to consider what key trends are evident in Afghanistan's present situation and which major players have emerged. The role played by Afghanistan's neighbors in these relationships will also be extremely important.

Key Military Trends. Afghanistan has already undergone tremendous improvement from a military perspective since 11 September now that the country's government no longer harbors terrorists. Yet ongoing military operations involving US-led coalition forces as well as Afghans against remaining pockets of al-Qa'ida and Taliban fighters highlight that war in that country is far from over. Unlike the Soviet experience against the mujahideen, however, American forces are more likely to succeed even as campaigns increasingly take on the nature of guerilla warfare. The area where the Taliban and al-Qa'ida can claim some degree of popular support—primarily parts of southeastern Afghanistan—is much smaller than that encountered by the Red Army. Moreover, recent reports of the Taliban and al-Qa'ida having to intimidate Afghans even in the southeast and offer monetary rewards for the killing or capture of Westerners suggest this level of support may well be diminishing.

An important component to ensure future military stability in Afghanistan will be the establishment of a national army. A truly representative, multiethnic army will likely take at least several years to reach full competence. Even during this period, however, a nascent military force can be used to assist and conduct operations against whatever pockets of Taliban and al-Qa'ida remain. The internal factor most likely to determine the success or failure of these operations will be the degree to which largely independent militia leaders will surrender their forces to a national army. Externally, the key determinant will be the ability of US-led coalition forces to eliminate al-Qa'ida and Taliban remnants in Pakistan, where the fugitives have shown a capability to regroup

for attacks both in Afghanistan and worldwide.

Key Political Trends. Overall, the current political situation in Afghanistan is relatively stable, and the country's political leaders are so far adhering to their commitment to continue the process toward a more representative and democratic system. The murder in early 2002 of the Civil Aviation Minister, Abdul Rahman, appears to have been a fluke and one which may turn out not to have been politically motivated. Also, with the exception of certain areas of northwestern Afghanistan, respect for human rights has generally improved since the overthrow of the Taliban.

Negative factors countering this progress include the continued power of regional leaders who at best only nominally recognize the central government. Additionally, the greatest challenge to Afghanistan's political future as a moderate state may lie with the convening of the *loya jirga* in June. The extremist factional leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar recently returned to the country and may work with those—such as Burhanuddin Rabbani and Abdurrahman Rasul Sayyaf—who have been pushed aside by the relatively more pro-Western and liberal individuals who currently hold power in Kabul. The aim of such an alliance would be to make the next Afghan government more fundamentalist and less inclined to cooperate with the West. Others who are also believed to be seeking a greater role for themselves in the future are Herat governor Ismail Khan, Kandahar governor Gul Agha Sherzai, and Deputy Defense Minister Abdul Rashid Dostam. Countries that are likely involved in backing different candidates include Iran, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan.

Key Economic Trends. Afghanistan is now undergoing an economic upheaval at least as

dramatic as that occurring in its military and political sectors. There is a dire need for reconstruction of almost all infrastructure after decades of war. The international donor community—in spite of promising approximately \$4.5 billion dollars in aid over the next five years—nevertheless failed to meet the full extent of Afghanistan's estimated requirement. There is also a risk that the outside world will lose interest in Afghanistan once attention shifts and especially if the pace of progress within the country appears to slacken.

- World reaction to a legitimate Afghan government that the international community distrusts—for example one that was strictly Islamic—could also play a role. If aid did not continue because the international community did not approve of the new government, it could lead to growing disgruntlement and instability within Afghanistan.
- The international linkage between stability and aid is a matter of concern. Afghanistan probably will need a significant amount of aid before it can achieve stability. International efforts to hold off on providing aid until stability is achieved could worsen the economic and political situation.

Added to this is the new government's attempt to eradicate the cultivation of opium poppies. While the Taliban was deeply involved in manipulating poppy production—doubling the output in some years, eliminating it in others to affect the market price—the collapse of that militia sent many farmers back to sowing their fields with poppy again last fall. This crop, however, pre-dates the Taliban by centuries, and eliminating or even significantly reducing its growth would be a tremendous—and in the immediate term probably unrealistic—accomplishment for the

Kabul regime. Yet the new government is making genuine, far-reaching efforts toward this goal. It has outlawed all elements of opium production from cultivation through sale as well as banning the repayment of agricultural loans in opium, a practice which had ensured a steady supply. Given the Taliban's intimate ties with narcotics smugglers, particularly those based in Pakistan, attempts to undermine Kabul's counternarcotics efforts are likely to be well-funded and in some cases may also be combined with support for the Taliban and al-Qa'ida.

Scenarios. Future prospects for Afghanistan run the gamut from anarchy and civil war at one extreme to complete peace and stability at the other. The current situation of the country would probably place it midway on that continuum, with the potential at this point in time of drifting toward either end. As long as the international community remains engaged, Afghanistan is unlikely to fully return to the anarchy/civil war phase. However, Afghanistan is rising from a very low base, and it would be unrealistic to expect to see a truly stable situation for at least a decade despite the many improvements already visible. Pockets of lawlessness—whether represented by Taliban or al-Qa'ida forces or purely criminal elements—will remain. The key factor to analyze will be whether these areas are increasing or decreasing in number and scale.

With regard to politics, too, it would be unrealistic to expect that various interest groups—whether based on ideology, ethnicity, or regional affiliation—will cease jockeying for control. Rather, the important variable to consider will be how violent these rivalries become. If groups are able to work within the political system to attain power, that would be a significant improvement. Finally, economic development—or lack

thereof—also will have a large impact on both the political and military sectors within Afghanistan. A viable, legal civilian economy would help to speed the disarmament of many private militias as well as ensure that various interest groups are able to improve their status by some means other than warfare or smuggling. Such financial independence would also make them less reliant on support from foreign countries.

Thomas Simons
Hoover Institute

Afghanistan's future holds a combination of anarchy, civil war, and stability. Any government coming out of the *loya jirga* will be decentralized and kin-based. Afghanistan's ethnic rivalries and the decentralized nature of the state will lead to armed violence in certain parts of the country. This armed violence will look to outsiders like anarchy. But violence will continue because that is simply how it works in Afghanistan; this does not in and of itself preclude stability.

The key to the maintenance of stability and to the success of the central government is its ability to balance its need to exercise power in Afghanistan's regions with the desire of regional governors and warlords to maintain autonomy in these areas outside Kabul. This promises to be a difficult task. It will be made considerably more attainable if the center is able to maintain support from outside powers, primarily the United States, consequential enough to persuade the regional governors to bargain with rather than attempt to unseat or undermine the central government. Warlords in Afghanistan have little ambition beyond maintaining the physical integrity and political autonomy of their respective regions, towns, and villages; they seek to protect their rice bowls, not to add to their power. They are unlikely to engage in behavior that will bring retribution from the central government's

outside backers and would be more inclined to pursue strategies—bargaining with Kabul, for instance—that would allow them to receive the largesse of Western aid. If the level of aid that was agreed upon in Tokyo actually makes it to Afghanistan and the level of Western military presence agreed upon at Bonn is achieved, the conditions should be sufficient for most of Afghanistan’s warlords to negotiate with the central government.

There are two main agents capable of mobilizing large-scale disaffection—a coalition of the disgruntled, as it were—toward the new Afghan central government. The first, religion, has been largely discredited on a national scale by Afghanistan’s experience with the Taliban. The second agent, foreign meddling, is still a threat to the new government, though it is diminished by two main factors. First, US presence in the region should deter much of the meddling by outside powers. More fundamentally, unlike the situation in 1992, the interest of most outsiders is in stability as opposed to continued political and military strife in Afghanistan.

In spite of this uniform interest in the general concept of Afghan stability, each of the outside actors views US involvement in different ways. Central Asian states approve of US presence in the region and regard US operations in Afghanistan as an opportunity for material gain and political leverage. China’s perception of US presence is more layered. Although there is concern about US encirclement, China’s long-term energy strategies are not helped by instability in Central Asia. If US troops leave the region, instability could well follow. Russia has maintained a low profile regarding the US presence in Afghanistan, possibly because the US presence provides a back door guarantee for Russian presence. If the United States is in Afghanistan and Central Asia, the former

Soviet “Stans” will not be as concerned about Russian presence in the region. Iran is the “outsider” that is most uncomfortable with US presence in Afghanistan and Central Asia, and is, therefore, the one state that is most likely to meddle to reduce US influence in certain parts of Afghanistan.

Although the United States probably will keep asserting that its presence in the region is short-term and that finishing the job in Afghanistan should be left to the Afghans and the United Nations, in reality the United States probably will remain in the region for the long-term because of inertia, pride, and the need to look credible for resolving future problems. The very fact of a US presence will help stabilize Afghanistan.

Highlights from the Discussion

Expectations for the *Loya Jirga*

Participants focused the discussion on the shape and potential outcome of the June *loya jirga*. Discussion centered on two possibilities: a pro-forma *loya jirga* in which nothing critical will be won or lost, and a *loya jirga* process that signals fundamental changes in the nature and composition of the Afghan government. Most participants believed that the former of these options was the most likely outcome and the option that best served US interests in the region. History suggests that the *loya jirga* process in Afghanistan is used as a legitimizing device to ratify a status quo political, social, or tribal arrangement. One participant noted that the *loya jirga* would be a success if it defers the really tough questions by delegating decisions to smaller organizations. Another suggested that the very size of the *loya jirga* could lead to a moderate outcome.

The Ethnic Question: Differing Agendas within Afghanistan. Most participants agreed that, although perhaps unrealistic,

many Afghans would like to use the *loya jirga* to address ethnic imbalances in the makeup of the interim government. The interim government is led by the Pashtun Karzai, but the next three most important posts—Defense Minister, Foreign Minister, and Interior Minister—are all held by Panjshiri Tajiks. The majority of the rest of the ministerial posts are held either by other Northern Alliance-affiliated ethnic groups or members of the King’s Rome group. In addition, most of the general staff posts under the Ministers are held by Tajiks. This situation is a source of great political frustration for the Pashtuns and a potential source of political destabilization for the emerging government. Some participants questioned whether efforts—particularly by outside actors—to address the current ethnic imbalance in the government might be unsettling to the Tajiks that stand to lose influence. The consensus was that there would be little objection or fallout from the Tajiks, most of whom were surprised by the ease and frequency with which their ethnic kin were appointed to their positions in the first place. One participant noted, however, that the *loya jirga* is a Pashtun structure that has not in the past served non-Pashtun purposes.

Some participants commented on a division within the King’s entourage. Some members of the entourage have clearly come to the *loya jirga* in hope of paving the way for the King to return as the head of state. They are advocating this result not because they have strong feelings about the King’s ability to deliver stability and security to Afghanistan, but because they will be able to pursue their personal political agendas if the King is in power. Under such a scenario, multiple power grabs—leading to a fracturing of the new Afghan government—are easy to imagine.

- Afghanistan’s former Tajik President, Rabbani, bided his time at Bonn but now may have designs on returning to power.
- The Pashtun fundamentalist Gulbiddin Hekmatyar has returned to Afghanistan from Iran. Hekmatyar’s agenda and location in Afghanistan are unclear, but his mere presence undermines a stable central Afghan government.

The Separation of Mosque and State. One potential outcome of the *loya jirga* is a representative, conservative Islamic government in Kabul. This new government would not be fundamentalist in the mold of the Taliban but traditionalist with religion as an important element of its identity. It also would still be open to US influence and guidance. Some participants argued that in this case, the international community could have an opportunity to help institutionalize the separation of the Islamic faith and the Afghan state.

Some participants felt that support in Afghanistan for such a separation would be significant. As one participant noted, “The Hazaras would go for it tomorrow, and they’re 20 percent of the population.” Turkey is a secular state, and the states of Central Asia, though shaky, also are secular.

Expectations and Agendas of External Actors. Participants judged that the United States hoped for a *loya jirga* that was *pro forma*. All actors relevant to the process did not share that preference. The European Union is especially ambitious in its expectations. Not only does the EU expect the process to provide the Pashtuns with more representation; it also expects that the *loya jirga* will deliver a strong central government in Kabul as well as a recognition and respect for human rights and women. Participants were uniform in their opinion that this

expectation fails to accord with any realistic possibility.

Participants also felt that the *loya jirga* could be affected by interference and meddling from Iran. Iranian interests in the new Afghan government are clear. A return of the King to power would not be a positive outcome for Iran; it has an exiled king of its own. Anything that could fuel support for his return either in Iran or in the international community would not be greeted with much enthusiasm in Tehran.

- Given Iran's negative experiences with the Taliban, a notably more Islamic government in Afghanistan would make Iran nervous.
- An Afghan regime based on a balance of power between Afghanistan's ethnic groups, regional governors, and central authority would be the most amenable outcome for Iran.
- Iran has a natural and enduring strategic interest in the western region of Herat, however. This region had been part of Iran's economic sphere of influence before the Taliban, and influence there is still seen as vital to ensuring a stable Afghan-Iranian border. Iran will continue to seek the benefits of supporting Herat's governor, Ismail Khan.

If Iranian groups believe Iran is being targeted by the United States or that US forces are encircling Iran, then Iranian meddling and clientism in Afghanistan will grow more intense.

The Future of al-Qa'ida

Two potential al-Qa'ida futures were discussed. Most participants believed that the United States would stay in Afghanistan for the foreseeable future, ultimately driving

al-Qa'ida fighters out of the country. Given the difficulty of securing the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan—it is a long border across difficult terrain inhabited by individuals just as likely to be sympathetic to al-Qa'ida as they are to be sympathetic to Kabul, Islamabad, or the West—remnants of al-Qa'ida probably would escape to Pakistan's remote northwest, a region that until recently was inaccessible to the Pakistani government.

- An alternative scenario is that the government in Kabul will prove incapable of maintaining authority over the entirety of its territory. Pockets of Afghan territories could exist outside the control of Kabul and serve as training grounds for al-Qa'ida.

Although either of these alternatives would leave al-Qa'ida significantly weaker than it was under the Taliban, participants generally agreed that al-Qa'ida will continue to exist in an organized fashion in the region.

The Notion of an Afghan Identity

In response to a question about whether trying to hold Afghanistan together is worthwhile, participants discussed the viability of the Afghan state. They agreed that Afghanistan is not a failed state. The ethnic groups and political factions have jockeyed violently for power for twenty-three years, yet Afghanistan has not broken apart. Afghan ethnic groups are not attempting to break away from the state and join ethnic kin in other nations. The Afghan Tajiks do not wish to become part of Tajikistan, for example. At a minimum, these groups only wish not to be slaughtered. At a maximum, they wish to control their own part of Afghan territory and perhaps to garner some broader authority emanating from Kabul. Inter-marriage between ethnic groups takes place, and, in many cases, ethnic identity is not the most important element of an individual's *quam* or

sense of self. Despite the considerable, deep and enduring differences that have afflicted Afghanistan, participants believed that Afghans still prefer to be together as part of an Afghan state.

The Balance Between the Center and the Regions

Whatever decision is reached at the *loya jirga*, it must be accepted beyond thirty miles outside of Kabul. Participants agreed that, for this to happen the new Afghan government must develop an effective means of squaring the need for an effective central government to ensure stability across Afghanistan and the need and desire of the regions to maintain a certain level of autonomy. Most participants judged that the devolution of power from the center to the periphery is an essential element of any future government.

Complicating the central government's efforts to achieve this balance is the phenomenon of warlordism throughout Afghanistan. The history of warlords in Afghanistan is not particularly long, but the problem is an integral part of the current and emerging Afghan reality. The warlords have been at war for over two decades and do not appear willing to lay down their arms now. For this reason, participants considered warlordism a pathology incompatible with the responsible devolution of power in Afghanistan and one that must be eliminated. Some disagreement emerged about how best to do this, however. The most accepted suggestion was to engage those warlords willing to become part of a more federal, devolved system, while disarming or defeating the more obstinate warlords. Some participants were concerned, however, that subduing warlords through violence could incite a flareup in ethnic tensions.

Participants believed that whatever the level of devolution of power in Afghanistan, the

central government in Kabul will have to exercise some key responsibilities:

Tax Collection and Customs. The Kabul government will need to establish its fundamental authority over state-wide tax collection as well as over customs and proceed to effective, transparent collection procedures as soon as possible. Without such control and income, the central government probably will falter.

The Development, Training and Maintenance of a National Security Force.

A strong army is essential to a strong central government. In Afghanistan, a state that has suffered through 23 years of perpetual war and is populated by warlords and an entire generation of armed young men with military skill and no education, the need for a strong army is especially acute. The problem for Afghanistan, however, is that it must build a national army from scratch. Participants were uncertain what this Afghan national army might look like, what its primary role would be, and how or even whether to incorporate the warlords.

- In most Western states, the national army is built to deal with a country's external security. In Afghanistan, external security issues are far less important than the internal issues of ethnic tension, warlordism, extremism, and border control. The building of a strong national army in the traditional mold would be both counter-productive and provocative to Afghanistan's neighbors. Therefore, some participants believed that Afghanistan's national army should resemble a *gendarmerie* or internal security force rather than a traditional army.
- Beyond its importance in establishing and maintaining long-term internal stability,

Afghanistan needs to build a strong national army or *gendarmerie* as a means of providing employment to the young, armed, uneducated, mobilizable generation of Afghans that have known little, if anything, other than civil war. If this large segment of the Afghan population is not incorporated into new Afghan institutions, they almost certainly will be mobilized by forces of instability and extremism both in Afghanistan and outside.

Distribution of Aid. The current Western practice of funneling all aid through the regional governors and warlords encourages clientism and the uneven distribution of aid in and across the regions. The central government should be the primary authority responsible for distributing aid evenly across the state.

Infrastructure. The central government in Kabul must shoulder the responsibility for building and maintaining of physical infrastructure such as roads and bridges.

Lowering Expectations for Afghanistan
Several participants expressed concern that Western expectations regarding Afghanistan's future are too high. Most agreed that Afghanistan is not going to be as stable a place as many hope. Corruption, fluctuating loyalties, and sporadic clashes between rival warlords or between the center and periphery will continue. Some participants argued that the metric for success should not be whether democracy or human rights is adopted. It would be more realistic to envision success in Afghanistan *a la* Bosnia. If the Taliban is defeated, al-Qa'ida is disrupted, and if a measure of stability is reached in Afghanistan to ensure that the country is no longer a breeding ground for terrorism, then operations should be considered a success regardless of

whether Afghan women still wear *burqas* to market.

Although most participants agreed that expectations for US operations in Afghanistan needed to be lowered, some felt that the United States should be careful not to drop the measure of success too low. Still others noticed that Afghanistan is fundamentally different than Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, US allies that have a less than optimal regard for human rights, women and the rule of law. The United States is heavily invested in the establishment of lofty principles such as democracy and human rights. If these values do not "take" in Afghanistan, then the US mission will have been a partial failure whether US policymakers want to admit it or not.

Workshop IV

Implications of Afghan Scenarios for Regional Actors

The final workshop session was designed to illuminate and further develop the scenarios suggested by Workshop III, discuss implications of these scenarios, and identify outside events, or “wildcards,” that could affect the situation in Afghanistan.

The workshop began with brief presentations from Frederick Starr of the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University and Geoffrey Kemp of the Nixon Center. What follows is a summary and analysis of the main issues, findings, and insights from these presentations and the discussion that followed.

Highlights from the Discussion

The Continuum of Interest in Afghanistan

Participants repeatedly returned to the conclusion that most key actors of the Central and South Asian regions, including the United States and Europe, have few vital national security or geostrategic interests in Afghanistan for its own sake. Afghanistan matters because it is an active cauldron for problems such as al-Qa’ida and narcotics that can be exported elsewhere. In other words, Afghanistan is the subject of much concern but only rarely or marginally the object of a state’s vital interests. Participants developed a continuum to represent the gradations of regard shown for Afghanistan by the states discussed.

At the most involved end of this continuum are the states that have an acute interest in Afghanistan itself: Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. All share a loosely controlled border with Afghanistan and worry about a

range of destabilizing forces spilling over into their territory. Iran fears Taliban-type extremism and Afghan drugs. Pakistan’s concern is the movement of the remaining Taliban and al-Qa’ida remnants across the Durand line and the potential for these radical elements to further undermine President Musharraf’s control over the Pakistani state. Uzbekistan and Tajikistan’s interests lie, like Iran’s, in preventing religious extremists and drugs from entering into states already plagued by an excess of both.

India is further removed—toward the middle of the continuum. While India was described as “very interested” in Afghanistan, it is much less so than the four states sharing a border with Afghanistan. Just to the right of India on the continuum is China, another state that shares a border—albeit a short one—with Afghanistan. To the right of China, representing the far right end of disinterest in Afghanistan itself, are the United States, the European Union, Turkey, and Russia. These states were described as “ephemerally interested” in Afghanistan. Each was believed to have only a short-term, vital interest in the country’s future. Any longer-term concern for Afghanistan was due strictly to larger concerns for how Afghanistan would affect the regional geopolitical dynamics.

Participants noted the irony of this continuum: the level of interest is inversely proportional to the amount of resources states have available to devote to stabilizing and developing Afghanistan.

Questions of Leadership

Leadership will be a key factor in determining the future not only of Afghanistan but also Pakistan and the rest of Central Asia. Given the highly personalized nature of many

regimes in this region, participants raised concerns that prospects for stability in Afghanistan and Central Asia are based solely on the individuals in power rather than on institutions and political processes. Pakistan is particularly worrisome in this regard. How Pakistan's policy toward Afghanistan would change if Musharraf were killed or removed is uncertain, though it is almost certain that US-Pakistani relations would suffer. Even more worrying is the lack of reliable succession mechanisms across the region if a leader is killed or removed from power by other means.

An array of strong personalities commanding the loyalties of disparate groups exists within Afghanistan. The Bonn Conference presented an opportunity to put a strong leader in place, but that opportunity has passed and the *loya jirga* approaches without much certainty as to who will lead Afghanistan next. Many of these strong personalities are working to ensure the autonomy of their region or are jockeying to be the next Afghan leader. Whatever the result of this scramble for power in Afghanistan and whatever the physical and political health of the leaders of other states in the region, the identity and strength of these future decisionmakers will be a key variable in determining the future of Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Economic Recovery Key for Pakistan

The "800 pound guerilla" for US operations in Afghanistan and Central Asia is Pakistan. Beyond its role as the key American ally in the region at present, it also is a politically and socially volatile state with a large population that is, according to some participants, "hanging by a thread." The key to Pakistan's allegiance and stability is the political and physical well-being of President Musharraf, and one of the more important keys to his political and physical well-being is an economic turnaround for Pakistan. Without

an economic turnaround of some sort, Musharraf's hold on Pakistan will grow more tenuous. The scale and price of this turnaround, however, is too high for the United States and EU to pay for it exclusively. Participants believed that Pakistan must find other ways to pay for or engineer this much-needed economic turnaround.

One suggestion was for Pakistan to actively pursue the previously discussed Central Asian economic cooperation regime. Pakistan would be a natural partner for Afghanistan and the Central Asian states and could greatly profit from the opening of routes to and from the Indian Ocean and South Asia. Security is, of course, a prerequisite for such an arrangement.

A reduction in Indian political and military pressure on Pakistan, however unlikely, would increase security and allow Pakistan to focus on economic development. Indian rhetoric and the mobilization of Indian troops along the Line of Control has two pernicious effects on the stability in Pakistan. First, it radicalizes the Pakistani people. The adage is that only cricket and war can unify India, and the same holds true for a Pakistan stretched by the US war in Afghanistan. In addition, India's pressure has forced Musharraf to crack down on radicals both in Pakistan and in Kashmir, which also has further radicalized segments of the Pakistan population and alienated some within Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISID).

The option for economic recovery that some participants found most promising was US and EU engagement with Pakistan's most trusted friend, China. Beijing respects Islamabad and seeks a relatively stable Pakistan to maintain the strategic balance of power in South Asia. Furthermore, the US and Chinese agendas regarding Pakistan coincide in far more places than they differ.

China would have a natural reluctance to work with the United States in the region based on a fear of US encirclement, but the economic logic driving China's Central Asian strategy is very strong and might well be sufficient to offset this unease if the potential rewards—opening of trade routes and markets that allow the development of Western China—were sufficient.

High Stakes for India

New Delhi's interest in Afghanistan is rooted in a desire to solidify India's national security and to develop an energy pipeline that runs through Afghanistan to South Asia. The strategic stakes for India in Afghanistan are high: New Delhi wants to minimize Pakistani influence in the new Afghan government and prevent the Chinese from building roads and highways giving Beijing access to new trading routes and increasing Chinese regional influence. Many Indians believe that the best way to exert influence in Afghanistan and Central Asia is to take advantage of their new relationship with the United States to make Central Asia a region of burden-sharing between the United States and India. This Indo-US burden sharing in Afghanistan would make US involvement in Afghanistan more agreeable to an Iran that maintains close ties with India, though it certainly would not be agreeable to Pakistan. Participants believed that even if the United States were to leave Afghanistan and Central Asia, the Indian interest in the region is such that it would look for another state—Iran or Russia—to partner with to ensure regional stability.

Regime Change in Turkmenistan?

President Niyazov's regime in Turkmenistan is not strong. Some participants felt that there is a good chance that in the next twelve months he will no longer be in power. The implications of this change of leadership depend in large part on who assumes power in Turkmenistan. Whoever emerges from the

certain struggle that would follow Niyazov's ouster could make Turkmenistan a more active, engaging country, perhaps even working to increase Turkmenistan's role in Caspian oil issues. This leader would have to be a dynamic individual to push the Turkmen to abandon positive neutrality and to pull the state out of its economic doldrums.

Regardless of who assumes power, participants believe that Turkmenistan could become the center of competition between Russia and Iran.

Scenarios for Afghanistan and Central Asia

Participants expanded on several scenarios raised during the third session of the workshop series and discussed their implications for Afghanistan and for the variety of actors discussed throughout the four sessions.

Afghanistan Muddles Through: Anarchy, Civil War and Stability. Participants believed the most likely scenario for Afghanistan was a state stumbling through a mix of anarchy, civil war, and periodic stability. Central Asian states will cooperate with the United States, which is perceived as the only power that can effectively contain the elements of anarchy and civil war still simmering in Afghanistan. Consequently, Russia will become a noticeably less important player in Central Asia. As one participant stated, "Russia has played all of its cards in Afghanistan and Central Asia." Russia's only big stake in the region is energy, but Central Asia is still not the primary focus of Russian energy policy. The United States is firmly in the region, though not in such large numbers that Putin's agenda is threatened by domestic turmoil.

- Most participants judged that this is the best-case scenario for the regional actors, particularly if a modicum of stability in Afghanistan can contribute to economic

integration in Central Asia. The scenario probably is dependent on decent US relations with China, Russia, and the EU.

- A Turkey that has joined the European Union could create momentum for Middle Eastern Arab states and Iran to focus on reform rather than radical Islam, thus contributing to regional security.

This most positive scenario cannot be sustained without effective and extensive outside support, primarily from the United States. In addition, US staying power in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia is an important determinant of US credibility. Pakistan's economic turnaround will not happen without a sense of enduring US support to Islamabad. Participants continually re-emphasized the importance of sustained and reliable US power projection, both military and political, in Afghanistan and Central Asia.

An Afghan Islamic Republic. Some participants believed that the worst-case scenario for the states with an interest in the region was the establishment of a highly conservative Islamic government in Kabul. Clearly the establishment of such a government, particularly if it is established through a US-endorsed process, presents problems for all of the states discussed during the workshop series.

- Turkey's role and influence in Afghanistan would be reduced owing to the fiercely secular nature of the government in Ankara.
- Russia, China, and the Central Asian states would be nervous about the potential spread of extremism over loosely monitored borders. Iran, too, would be nervous about the potential for another Taliban to its east.

- A fundamentalist Islamic Republic in Afghanistan would pose potential domestic problems for President Musharraf's Pakistan as well.
- Western influence in this conservative Islamic Afghan regime may persist, but, over time, almost certainly would be reduced as the government's Islamist agenda and values came in conflict with those of the US and EU.

Multiple Flashpoints—The Clash of Civilizations Scenario. Participants also examined a scenario in which multiple flashpoints erupt either simultaneously or consecutively: Iraq, Israel-Palestine, Pakistan-India, and increased terror attacks against the West. Participants believed the pressures of so many conflicts involving Muslim states against the West or US allies (India) could easily lead to a "clash of civilizations," in which the US campaign in Afghanistan and US military presence in Afghanistan and Central Asia would come to be viewed as little more than part of a broader war between the West and the Islamic world. Without the United States to enforce stability and with Pakistan at war, the region would become vulnerable to radical forces and great instability.

- This scenario also presents a dilemma for Russia. Participants argued that Putin would be naturally inclined to side with the West in such a general clash of values and cultures, but if he does he might set off powerful domestic Islamic forces in Russia that he wishes to contain.

This scenario would become further complicated if no solution to the ethnic imbalance in Afghanistan's government is reached at the *loya jirga*. If the *loya jirga* passes without addressing and amending the representative imbalance within the central

government, the under-represented Afghan Pashtuns probably will become disaffected from the process. Such disaffection of the largest and traditionally most powerful of Afghanistan's ethnic groups will have immensely destabilizing implications for Afghanistan and Pakistan. The border separating Afghanistan and Pakistan is not a "real, fixed border on one side of which life is different than it is on the other." Thus, any Pashtun discontent in Afghanistan probably would spill over into the large Pashtun populations in northern Pakistan.

- Because the problem of loose borders is endemic throughout the region, participants believed that solutions to the Afghan problem must be regional and not purely national.

Wildcards

Participants concluded the workshop by developing a list of external events that could affect, perhaps radically, the situation in Afghanistan.

- ***Israel-Palestine Flareup.*** An escalation of hostilities between Israel and Palestinians would increasingly distract US policymakers and resources from Afghanistan. A flareup in the Middle East also could place the United States and the Arab states of the Middle East at odds. As a result, Iran might choose to create trouble for the United States in Afghanistan as part of a more general antagonistic and nationalistic strategy.
- ***A Second Gulf War.*** A US invasion of Iraq would shift the focus of the war on terror away from Kabul and place it squarely on orchestrating an Iraqi regime change. This war would also fundamentally alter the strategic dynamics of the Middle East and South and Central Asia.
- ***Indo-Pakistan War.*** A war between India and Pakistan would necessarily have an important effect on the US handling of the situation in Afghanistan. US operations in Afghanistan would be put in jeopardy by the further radicalization of the Pakistani population, which almost certainly would take place if India and Pakistan were at war.
- ***A Taiwan Crisis.*** If the United States and China become involved in another crisis over Taiwan, Central Asia could become a place where China might effectively exert asymmetric pressure on the United States.
- ***Renewed Terrorist Attacks.*** If an attack occurred inside the United States, American decisionmakers would rush for a "heavy-handed" military solution to defeat al-Qa'ida and its perceived sponsors. America's European allies might find this desire for a military solution unsettling, causing tensions in the Trans-Atlantic alliance. If a terrorist attack takes place outside the United States, American anti-terror efforts in Afghanistan and elsewhere might get more support from the international community.
- ***Turkey in the European Union.*** The consensus throughout the workshop series was that although Turkish membership in the EU is highly unlikely in the near term, it would set off a chain reaction of mostly positive reform in the Arab states of the Middle East. Such an event could strengthen the hands of reformers in Iran.
- ***Iran Collapses.*** Participants could envision the collapse of the Iranian regime as a result of a combination of sanctions and strong and enduring US presence in Afghanistan and Central Asia.

- ***The Nature of the US-Russian Relationship.*** The ability of officials in Washington and Moscow to maintain the current positive relationship would augur well for continued success in the US campaign against terrorism in Afghanistan. US-Russian relations could deteriorate, however, if, for example, Russia suffered a series of costly bombings in Moscow blamed on the Chechens. A US refusal to recognize the Chechens as terrorists could lead to a tense relationship, perhaps pushing Moscow closer to Tehran.

Appendix A

Conference Agenda

**Afghanistan and Regional Geopolitical Dynamics after
11 September**
18-19 April 2002

- 18 April 2002** Day One
- 8:30 AM - 9:00 AM** Arrival
Continental Breakfast Available
- 9:00 AM - 12:15 PM** *Views from the Periphery: The Impact of 11 September on Regional Actors*
- Introductory Comments:
- Celeste Wallender**, Center for Strategic and International Studies: *Russia*
Roy Allison, Royal Institute of International Affairs: *Europe*
Geoffrey Kemp, Nixon Center: *Iran*
Ian Lesser, The Pacific Council on International Policy: *Turkey*
Juli MacDonald, Booz Allen Hamilton: *India*
- 12:15 PM -1:00 PM** Lunch (provided by SAIC)
- 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM** *Central Asia and Pakistan: The Impact of 11 September on Internal Stability and Regional Dynamics*
- Introductory Comments:
- Rajan Menon**, Lehigh University
- 19 April 2002** Day Two
- 8:30 AM – 9:00 AM** Arrival
Continental Breakfast Available
- 9:00 AM – 12:15 PM** *Scenarios for a Future Afghanistan*
Introductory Comments:
- Thomas Simons**, Hoover Institute

12:15 PM – 1:00 PM **Julie Sirrs**, Argus International
Lunch (provided by SAIC)

1:00 PM – 4:00 PM *Implications of Afghan Scenarios for Regional Actors*

Introductory Comments:

Geoffrey Kemp, Nixon Center
Frederick Starr, Johns Hopkins University

Appendix B

Participants

Dr. Roy Allison, Director, Russia and Eurasia Programme, Royal Institute of International Affairs and Senior Research Fellow; Centre for International Studies, Oxford University

Ms. Beth Lizut Earle, Research Fellow, National Intelligence Council

Dr. Thomas Graham, Associate Director, Policy Planning Staff, Department of State

Dr. Geoffrey Kemp, Director of Regional Strategic Programs, The Nixon Center

Mr. Neil Kingsley, Deputy National Intelligence Officer for Russia and Eurasia, National Intelligence Council

Mr. George Kolt, National Intelligence Officer for Russia and Eurasia, National Intelligence Council

Dr. Ian Lesser, Vice President and Director of Studies, The Pacific Council on International Policy

Ms. Juli MacDonald, Associate, Booz Allen Hamilton

Dr. Rajan Menon, Monroe J. Rathbone Professor and Chairman of the Department of International Relations, Lehigh University

Mr. Tate Nurkin, Policy Analyst, Strategic Assessments Center, SAIC

Dr. Paul Pillar, National Intelligence Officer for the Near East and South Asia, National Intelligence Council

Ambassador Thomas Simons, Distinguished Visiting Fellow, Hoover Institution, Stanford University

Ms. Julie Sirrs, Argus International

Dr. S. Frederick Starr, Chairman, Central Asia Institute, John Hopkins University's Nitze School of Advanced International Studies

Dr. Celeste Wallander, Director, Russia Eurasia Program, Center for Strategic and International Studies

Mr. S. Enders Wimbush, Director of Global Assessments, Strategic Assessments Center, SAIC

The National Intelligence Council

The National Intelligence Council (NIC) manages the Intelligence Community's estimative process, incorporating the best available expertise inside and outside the government. It reports to the Director of Central Intelligence in his capacity as head of the US Intelligence Community and speaks authoritatively on substantive issues for the Community as a whole.

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At-Large	Stuart A. Cohen
Conventional Military Issues	John Landry
East Asia	Arthur Brown
Economics & Global Issues	David Gordon
Europe	Barry F. Lowenkron
Latin America	Fulton T. Armstrong
Near East and South Asia	Paul R. Pillar
Russia and Eurasia	George Kolt
Science & Technology	Lawrence Gershwin
Strategic & Nuclear Programs	Robert D Walpole
Warning	Robert Vickers

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