

A REPORT OF THE CSIS
PROGRAM ON CRISIS, CONFLICT,
AND COOPERATION

Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Art of the Possible

CONFERENCE REPORT: JUNE 14, 2011

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Cover photo: Afghan villagers play volleyball in their ancestral lands, Baghlan province, Afghanistan; photo by Robert D. Lamb.

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Center for Strategic and International Studies
1800 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006
Tel: (202) 887-0200
Fax: (202) 775-3199
Web: www.csis.org



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Acknowledgments

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The intellectual content of a conference is shaped in large part by its speakers, and we were fortunate to have a strong lineup: Colonel Joseph Buche, Catherine Dale, Major General Frederick B. Hodges, Clare Lockhart, Shuja Nawaz, Jacob N. Shapiro, Stephen Tankel, and Scott Worden; Anthony H. Cordesman and Andrew Wilder moderated the panel discussions. Representative Michael J. Rogers, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, gave the opening keynote address, and General John M. Keane (USA, ret.), former army vice chief of staff, gave the lunchtime keynote. We thank all of them for their generosity and their insights. We are also grateful to John Hamre, Ambassador Karl F. Inderfurth, and Mark Quarterman for their remarks.

Everyone who attended the conference participated in working groups as well, and those breakout sessions would not have been nearly as productive without the sharp guidance of the facilitators: David Berteau, Ashley Chandler, Catherine Dale, Stephen Flanagan, David Gordon, Sadika Hameed, Joshua Himes, Persis Khambatta, Andrew Kuchins, Amer Latif, Adam Mausner, Haider Mullick, Rick Nussio, Thomas Patterson, Mark Quarterman, Jacob N. Shapiro, Stephen Tankel, and Jennifer Taylor. Perhaps the most challenging job was to capture the insights of the working group participants, and for their skill and efficiency in taking notes and reporting the results, we would like to thank the rapporteurs: Emily Burke, Matthew Burnard, Catherine Cai, T.J. Cipoletti, Morgan Clemens, Nikki Collins, Michael Dziuban, Zack Fellman, Andrew Gagel, Lina Khan, Samuel Lindo, Reed Livergood, David Morrow, Julia Nagel, Hijab Shah, Nida Vidutis, Varun Vira, and Amasia Zargarian. Some of the rapporteurs offered logistical support as well, as did Emily Boggs, Brandon Fite, Rebecca Gilmore, and Lauren Speigel. Most of these individuals work at CSIS, and we are extremely fortunate to have so many colleagues who would volunteer their time for an entire workday; we are grateful to all of them.

Finally, we would be remiss if we did not mention that many people provided sound advice as we prepared for this conference, and the Pakistan-Afghanistan Coordination Cell at the Pentagon was kind enough to host a brown-bag lunch where we could get feedback on the agenda from a group of more than a dozen experts. We appreciate all of their contributions and hope the results justify their time and assistance.

This entire conference, with the exception of the morning keynote address, was held on a not-for-attribution basis. While there was broad agreement on many of the issues discussed in this report, there was no universal consensus on any issue and quite a bit of disagreement on some. This report reflects nothing more than the authors' analysis of the content of the panel and working group discussions, in the context of related research, and it should not be assumed to reflect the views of any individual participant on any particular issue.

AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN, AND THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE

CONFERENCE REPORT: JUNE 14, 2011

Robert D. Lamb, Sadika Hameed, Joy Aoun, and Zeina Boustani¹

Introduction

On June 14, 2011, more than 200 policymakers and experts participated in an invitation-only, full-day working meeting at CSIS to discuss a constructive, realistic way forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The main topics were Afghan governance, the Afghan security sector, and Pakistani cooperation. Informed in part by expert presentations on these topics, participants formed 17 simultaneous working groups asking: What accomplishments are essential? What are not essential? And what lasting gains can realistically be achieved? This format was motivated by the findings of prior CSIS research² that had suggested a need to scale back expectations for what can be achieved by 2014, much less by 2012, because:

- the Afghan government is not likely to develop the capacity to fulfill all of its constitutional duties by then;
- traditional practices alone (e.g., patronage, *shuras*, militias) will not be able to guarantee stability or adequately compensate for the government's other shortcomings;
- most Afghan security forces will not have the ability to operate independently; and
- Pakistani cooperation will not improve significantly—and nor will regional cooperation.

While the conference discussions generally supported these findings (with some dissent), they also generally suggested that such high expectations are not essential to the achievement of basic objectives on security, governance, and economics. There was a general sense that it is possible to create the conditions for achieving basic objectives (such as a decline in violence, the removal of at least some important barriers to Afghan self-help, or the progressive marginalization of anti-American elements within Afghanistan, to name three). But it will not be possible if the

¹ Robert D. Lamb is a senior fellow and deputy director of the CSIS Program on Crisis, Conflict, and Cooperation. Sadika Hameed is the program's research associate, and Joy Aoun and Zeina Boustani are research interns.

² See Robert D. Lamb, "Governance and Militancy in Afghanistan and Pakistan: Project Executive Summary," CSIS, May 2011, <http://csis.org/publication/governance-and-militancy-afghanistan-and-pakistan>.

international effort remains as unfocused as it is today, with too many actors trying to accomplish too many different things at once.

What most participants felt was important is for the Obama administration to publicly identify what it believes to be the minimal essential requirements for Afghan stability and U.S. security and the minimal essential conditions on the ground that would enable those requirements to be met. (Many participants considered it essential that a broad range of Afghans be involved in defining those requirements and conditions, since they will be the ones who ultimately will judge progress.) By offering guidance on what accomplishments are essential, the administration would encourage activities on the ground to be prioritized more constructively.

As a modest contribution to that guidance, this report provides the key observations and suggestions that emerged from the conference discussions, focusing mainly on those issues on which there was broad (though never unanimous) agreement among the convened experts and policymakers.

Afghan Governance

The research motivating this conference had found that, to the degree insurgents provide any services or other benefits to Afghans, recipients accept them more out of desperation than ideology. Those findings suggested that insurgents could be marginalized from key populations through incremental but real improvements in governance and services by any non-insurgent source: the state, tribal or traditional institutions, hybrid (formal-informal) systems, civil society, or the private sector. Since most of those entities are too weak to make such improvements on their own, it will be essential that they share the burden of governing in the short term. (For the purposes of the conference, governance was assumed to include a set of public activities—making decisions and rules, providing services, building and managing institutions, and managing or manipulating networks of influence—that can be undertaken by a broad range of state and nonstate actors and institutions, from the local to the national level.)

Working group discussions were generally consistent with those findings. Most agreed it is not realistic to believe the Afghan state will have a monopoly on governance (e.g., justice, security, services) by 2014; nor is a monopoly essential for minimizing Taliban and al Qaeda influence or improving prospects for stability overall. What is essential in the short term is for those who hold de facto power in any territory or institution to behave in ways that are reasonably predictable, minimally acceptable to Afghans affected by their behavior, and suppressive toward armed insurgents and terrorists. It is also essential that the most predatory of Afghans—in and out of government—be progressively marginalized.

That does not imply it is pointless to support or reform government institutions. Rather, it suggests a need to be very selective about what reforms to advocate and what support to provide. It is necessary to have self-sustaining institutions and social practices that maintain some minimum level of security, offer some locally acceptable form of justice, and prevent disruptions to community self-help and private-sector activity.

- It is essential to reduce the amount of money going into Afghanistan in the form of military contracts, development projects, and technical assistance—but it is equally essential that this reduction in income be both gradual, to avoid triggering a recession or depression, and strategic, to avoid undermining successful or essential efforts. Part of being strategic in spending involves knowing how, and by whom, money is being spent.
- For that reason, it is essential to continue making targeted technical improvements in Afghanistan’s financial systems—banking, budgeting, taxation, customs, etc.—and building the capacity of civil servants to use them. Still, it is not realistic to fully prevent corruption, although efforts against the very worst abuses should continue.
- It is essential, as well, to develop a workable economic strategy that fosters a robust private sector, protects small businesses, and attracts foreign investment.
- It would helpful to devolve more de jure authority to provincial and district governments, but it is not essential, and reforming the constitutional system in the short term is not realistic (although the Sub-National Governance Policy can and should continue to be implemented). What is realistic—and essential—is to maintain the central government’s de jure authority while finding ways to share its de facto burdens of governing with capable subnational and nonstate entities. (Any hybrid governance arrangement, however, should be at least minimally acceptable to Afghans affected by it.)
- In general, it is essential to protect local institutions and traditional practices that function at a basic level both from local rivals and from central-government interference. Given scarce resources, however, this probably is realistic only in strategically significant areas.
- It is not essential to build physical structures such as government offices and schools, nor in many cases to provide computer equipment; what Afghanistan needs is trained civil servants and teachers, and more vocational training and secondary education, so that the government and the private sector have the human capital to function at a basic level.
- It is neither essential nor realistic to extend the national justice system to local courts throughout Afghanistan in the short term; rather, the formal system could develop guidelines through which common traditional practices are recognized as a form of alternative dispute resolution. It also is not essential (or realistic) to create a system that depends on formally trained lawyers and judges; it is realistic for relatively educated or fair-minded Afghans to receive very basic paralegal or “justice of the peace” training to adjudicate disputes or act as intermediaries between the formal and informal systems or between the local and national systems.
- The National Solidarity Program is an essential contributor to village stability; its full implementation is realistic, as would be the development of a formula through which its block grants could be made on a regular, more predictable basis. Community Development Councils are well positioned to act as de facto village councils, and they should be empowered and trained to do so.

- It is essential that the new U.S. ambassador and military commanders have a constructive relationship with Afghan president Hamid Karzai until his term in office expires in 2014. It is not clear how essential Karzai is to Afghanistan after 2014. Some participants suggested that, if he insisted on maintaining a leadership role, he should be accommodated, whereas many others insisted that he was not essential and that Afghans could find realistic alternatives to his leadership by then. In any event, it was generally agreed that it is essential to begin planning now for a post-Karzai Afghanistan and to foster future Afghan leaders by protecting civil society and supporting its inclusion in political processes (including reconciliation talks).
- It is essential that Afghan government personnel (civilian and military) continue to draw salaries at an economically competitive level to prevent an unemployment crisis or government brain drain. It is essential to avoid creating new dependencies by, for example, paying people to do things they already have reason to do.
- Finally, it is essential to the sustainability of Afghanistan's political and economic development that decisions affecting the Afghan public should be led as much as possible by Afghans and not by international donor agencies, foreign contractors, or military commanders. This implies that, all else equal, projects and institutions that can be sustained or maintained by Afghans should be given a higher priority for funding than those that cannot, and funding to improve local institutions or practices that already function at a basic level should be given higher priority than funding to create new institutions and processes from scratch.

Afghan Security

As U.S. and international forces draw down, responsibility for security will fall increasingly on Afghan forces that are not yet fully capable of independent action and on an Afghan government that is not yet fully capable of commanding them, paying them, or holding them accountable for results and abuses.

- It is essential to continue training and partnering with Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), but it is equally essential to build civilian oversight capacity and to strengthen the link between the police and the justice sectors. (As noted above, it is not essential that the justice sector have the full spectrum of modern capabilities, but it does need to function at a basic level.)
- More generally, it is essential to maintain military-to-military cooperation between the United States and Afghanistan to avoid creating a “lost generation” of officers (i.e., officers who, due to limited contact, have little understanding of American values and strategic interests, as happened in Pakistan during the 1990s).
- It is essential to engage in peace talks with Taliban leaders. But it is not realistic to expect a comprehensive settlement to be implemented before 2012, nor to expect most insurgent groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan to comply with it after 2012: there will be many spoilers. It is essential for Afghanistan's peaceful opposition—not just the “usual suspects” on the High

Peace Council but other civil society, local, and younger leaders as well—to be included in those talks from the beginning: peaceful Afghans should not be asked to endorse a fait accompli at the end of the process.

- It is not realistic to eradicate all or most poppy cultivation or opium production.

Pakistani Cooperation

There was broad agreement that U.S.-Pakistan relations are tense but not hopeless, although it was not clear what, precisely, that implied beyond the following:

- The level and type of cooperation Pakistan offers is not likely to get any better than it is today or, at best, than it was before May 2.
- It is not clear that placing more conditions on U.S. aid to Pakistan can realistically improve Pakistani cooperation.
- A strategic partnership with Pakistan is not realistic. A stable transactional relationship is, however, essential in the short term and also all that is realistic to expect; that can be an honest basis on which to build relationships over time. An ongoing relationship, even if only transactional in nature, is essential. Delinking counterterrorism cooperation from other aspects of the relationship probably would be helpful to that end. (A small minority disagreed: some thought a strategic partnership essential, even if not realistic; others thought tighter conditions could somehow create leverage to improve cooperation.)
- It is not realistic to believe Pakistan-India relations will improve any time soon.

Appendix A: Conference Agenda

Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Art of the Possible

June 14, 2011

CSIS, 1800 K Street NW, Washington, D.C.

U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan are at a turning point. Budget pressures at home, Osama bin Laden's death in Pakistan, the impending arrival of a new U.S. ambassador and new military chain of command in Afghanistan, the beginning of the drawdown of U.S. troops, and a new mood in Congress all are converging in a way that raises fundamental questions about the future of U.S. engagement in the region. Primary responsibility for stabilization must shift from internationals (mainly Americans) to Afghans over the next two to four years. *What minimum accomplishments are needed in Afghanistan and Pakistan during that time? What lasting gains in governance and security can realistically be achieved?*

NOTE: All discussions are not-for-attribution, except the opening keynote address.

8:30–9:00 a.m. Registration

Opening Session and Keynote

9:00–9:05 a.m. Welcome: *Dr. John J. Hamre, President and CEO, CSIS*

9:05–9:45 a.m. Opening Keynote: *Rep. Michael J. Rogers, Chairman, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence*

9:45–10:00 a.m. Introduction: *Dr. Robert D. Lamb, Deputy Director, C3, CSIS*

Morning Session—Governance: Finding an Afghan Path to Stability

10:00–11:00 a.m. Presentations: moderated by *Dr. Andrew Wilder, U.S. Institute of Peace*
Dr. Jake Shapiro, Princeton University
Dr. Catherine Dale, Congressional Research Service
Ms. Clare Lockhart, Institute for State Effectiveness
Mr. Scott Worden, U.S. Institute of Peace

11:00–12:00 pm Working Groups: all participants remain at tables
Group A (tables 1–6): What accomplishments are essential?
Group B (tables 7–12): What accomplishments are not essential?
Group C (tables 13–17): What accomplishments are realistic?

Lunch Session and Keynote

12:00 p.m. Lunch

12:15 p.m.	Reconvening: <i>Mr. Mark Quarterman, Director, C3, CSIS</i>
12:15 p.m.	Speaker Introduction: <i>Ambassador Karl F. Inderfurth, CSIS</i>
12:20–1:00 p.m.	Lunchtime Keynote: <i>General (Ret.) John M. Keane, SCP Partners and former Vice Chief of Staff, U.S. Army</i>
1:00–1:15 p.m.	Coffee Break

Afternoon Session—Security: Working with Uncertain Partners

1:15–2:15 p.m.	Presentations: moderated by <i>Dr. Anthony Cordesman, CSIS</i> <i>Major General Frederick B. Hodges, Pakistan-Afghanistan Coordination Cell</i> <i>Colonel Joe Buche, DARPA, formerly NTM-A/CSTC-A</i> <i>Mr. Shuja Nawaz, The Atlantic Council</i> <i>Mr. Stephen Tankel, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace</i>
2:15–3:15 p.m.	Working Groups: all participants remain at tables Group A (tables 1–6): What accomplishments are essential? Group B (tables 7–12): What accomplishments are not essential? Group C (tables 13–17): What accomplishments are realistic?

Closing Session

3:15–4:00 p.m.	Plenary Discussion: <i>Dr. Robert D. Lamb, CSIS</i>
4:00–5:00 p.m.	Conference Reception
5:00–6:00 p.m.	The U.S. Army's 236th Birthday Celebration

Appendix B: List of Participants

Harry Allen Military Professional Resources, Inc.	Melissa Burn Marine Corps Intelligence Activity
Warner Anderson U.S. Department of Defense	Richard Burt Kissinger Associates
Mark Ashley	Vicki Butler Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
Tessa Baker National Security Institute	Leigh Caraher Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
Sierra Bardot Ramsey Decision Theoretics & Civic Participation	Tara Chapman Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
Richard Barnes International Space Consulting	Aisha Chowdhry American University
Nancy Bearg Project on National Security Reform	Rabia Chowdhry
Fatma Benammar Army Directed Studies Office	Larry Closter U.S. Army
John Blackton Strategic Advisory Services	Richard Colvin Embassy of Canada
Christopher Blanchard Congressional Research Service	Anthony H. Cordesman CSIS
Karl-Wilhelm Bollow Embassy of Germany	Glenn Cowan Democracy International
Jenifer Breaux U.S. Army	Catherine Dale Congressional Research Service
Steve Brignoli U.S. Army	Michael Delaney Office of the U.S. Trade Representative
Pete Brown Fluor	François Delmas CSIS
Terry Brown Army Directed Studies Office	Megan DuLaney U.S. Department of Defense
Joseph Buche Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency	

Barbora Esnerova	Kristian Harpviken
Embassy of the Czech Republic	Peace Research Institute Oslo
Joe Evans	Janice Helwig
SAAB	U.S. Helsinki Commission
Mehreen Farooq	Robert Hershey
World Organization for Resource Development & Education	Engineering & Management Consulting
Benjamin Fernandes	Frederick "Ben" Hodges
National Counterterrorism Center	Pakistan-Afghanistan Coordination Cell, U.S. Department of Defense
Anna Fifield	Lisa Hopkins
<i>Financial Times</i>	U.S. Army
David Fishman	Ahmed Humayun
School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University	Georgetown University
Anne Galer	Heather Hurlburt
Sajit Gandhi	National Security Network
House Committee on Foreign Affairs	Minha Husaini
Kaitlyn Garman	Save the Children
BAE Systems, Inc.	Hans-Olaf Jessen
John Glenn	Embassy of Germany
U.S. Global Leadership Coalition	Anne Johnson
Benjamin Goldberg	U.S. Department of State
U.S. Department of State	Michael Johnson
Raghbir Goyal	Council on Foreign Relations
<i>India Globe & Asia Today</i>	Robert Jutson
Thomas Greenwood	Griffin Capital Partners
U.S. Department of Defense	Becky Katz
Robert Grenier	Maxwell Kelly
Madeleine Gruen	Center for Complex Operations, National Defense University
U.S. Department of Homeland Security	Edward Kenney
Daniel Hall	Center for International Policy
International Center for Religion & Diplomacy	Ayub Khawreen
Thomas Hammes	Voice of America
National Defense University	Francine Kiefer
Aziz Haniffa	<i>Christian Science Monitor</i>
India Abroad News Service	Peter Kiss
	CSIS

Frank Kistler U.S. Air Force	Michelle Menchin IBM Global Business Services
James Kitfield <i>National Journal</i>	Brian Merrell U.S. Department of Defense
Hanseok Ko CSIS	Leah Middlemass Australian Department of Defense
Stanley Kober	Cameron Middleton
Peter Kunkel LMI	Bill Mikhail The George Washington University
Erik Kurzweil Embassy of Germany	Linda Millis Office of the Director of National Intelligence
Brian Lamson U.S. Department of Defense	Hedieh Mirahmadi World Organization for Resource Development & Education
Adriane Lapointe CSIS	Dipali Mukhopadhyay Princeton University
Jessica Lehman Development Alternatives, Inc.	Haider Mullick U.S. Joint Special Operations University
Debbie Lincoln Science Applications International Corporation	Marshall Nannes CSIS
Howie Lind Fluor	Shuja Nawaz Atlantic Council
James Littleton	Aram Nerguizian CSIS
Clare Lockhart Institute for State Effectiveness	George Nicholson StratCorp
Andrew Lluberes U.S. Department of Homeland Security	Hamish Nixon U.S. Institute of Peace
Naveen Malik U.S. Department of Defense	Yasuo Noda ITOCHU International, Inc.
John Manza U.S. Department of Defense	Lawrence O'Connell International Maritime Security Corporation
Daniel Martinez U.S. Department of State	Meryn Oswald CSIS
Ken McCoy EOD Technology, Inc.	Roger Pajak Raytheon Corp.
Cherwin Meeker IBM Global Business Services	

Dheeresh Patel IBM Global Business Services	Allegra Skurka International Center for Religion & Diplomacy
Douglas Perkins Naval War College	Harry Soyster U.S. Army (Ret.)
Michael Pevzner Senate Select Committee on Intelligence	Alex Starr Berico Technologies
Kate Phillips U.S. Department of Defense	Rachel Strohm School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University
Junaid Qureshi Pakistan-Afghanistan Coordination Cell, U.S. Department of Defense	Karolyn Stuver Fluor
Sneha Raghavan CSIS	Sarah Sullivan Strategic Intelligence Group
Rachel Reid Human Rights Watch	Anara Tabyshalieva Marshall University
Monica Riedt U.S. Army	Stephen Tankel Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Linda Robinson	Arzan Tarapore Embassy of Australia
Ronald Robinson U.S. Agency for International Development	William Taylor CSIS
Michael Salzmann Embassy of Germany	Tara Thielhelm Army Directed Studies Office
Mark Schneider International Crisis Group	Alexs Thompson Army Directed Studies Office
Mary Hope Schwoebel U.S. Institute of Peace	Manohar Thyagaraj Paragon International
Steven Seigel Development Alternatives, Inc.	Harlan Ullman Killowen Group
Jacob N. Shapiro Princeton University	Lynn Von Koch
Kunaal Sharma Council on Foreign Relations	Nina Wagner U.S. Department of Defense
Robert Sherretta International Investors	Zack Warren Georgetown University
Paraag Shukla Institute for the Study of War	Shaun Waterman <i>Washington Times</i>

Mitzi Wertheim

Naval Postgraduate School

Guy Wetzel

U.S. Army

Michael White

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan
Reconstruction

Andrew Wilder

U.S. Institute of Peace

Michael Williams

National Defense University

Richard Williams

National Security Institute

Joseph Windrem

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan
Reconstruction

John Wood

Near East & South Asia Council for Strategic
Studies

Scott Worden

U.S. Institute of Peace

Ayesha Yousuf

International Center for Religion & Diplomacy

Dov Zakheim

CSIS

Steven Zyck

International Development Innovations,
NATO Civil-Military Fusion Center



1800 K Street, NW | Washington, DC 20006

Tel: (202) 887-0200 | Fax: (202) 775-3199

E-mail: books@csis.org | Web: www.csis.org

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