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Irregular Warfare: Learning the Lessons of “Worst Case” Wars

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Can Only Try to Predict the Future

- “Irregular warfare” is the best way to fight the US, state actors, and their allies...
- But, “Irregular warfare” can be an empirical oxymoron, e.g. PRC. There is no clear limit to escalation, interaction with unconventional or conventional war.
- Illusions like “globalism” ignore the fact the world faces massive and enduring tensions: Demographics, global competition, population shifts, etc.
- Most of the world is at a some level of risk over the next 10-20 years.
- Historically, it has been difficult to predict further out than even 5 years with much accuracy or reliability.
- “Worst cases” in Iraq and Afghanistan are real, and the intensity of -- and future priority for -- somewhat similar cases is uncertain.
- Global networks of partners, bases and facilities, IS&R systems, combatant commands, and hard and soft power projection is critical.
- The war this President wants, like the use of soft power, may not be possible given realities on the ground.

Why Would Anyone Fight Any Other Way?

- Only an idiot would fight a purely conventional war or use WMD simply to deter or destroy.
- Politics, civil dimension, use of outside states and movements, and strategic communications will always be the extension of all forms of war by other means.
- New media, cyber warfare, weapons of mass effectiveness, proxies and non-state actors, are now the rule, not the exception.
- There is no limit to the level of escalation in using irregular means of warfare.
- “Doctrine” tends to assume that the enemy, allies, and neutrals will not think, innovate, adapt, surprise, and respond unpredictably.
- Key to deterrence, intimidation, ideology, regime overthrow, political struggles – not just warfare.

First Key Lesson: Strategic Triage

- **Grand strategic values must dominate at all times.**
 - Must be ruthless, objective and ongoing.
 - Never embrace or fall in love with the mission.
 - Never let the moment dominate longer term interests.
- **All wars that do not involve truly vital, if not existential, US strategic interest are optional and can be lost, avoided, or terminated on less than favorable terms.**
- **Cost-benefit and risk analysis must be ongoing.**
- The rationale for, and progress of, the war effort must be public and transparent or the US government will start lying to itself at every level.
- **Never bet on the come.**
- **Never “sell” or “spin” progress at the tactical, civil, strategic, or grand strategic level.**
- **Where possible, make US commitments explicitly conditional.**

The World is Filled with Different, Complex, and Uncertain Cases: One “Region’s” Worth of Problems in Strategic Triage

Major areas of concern:

- Islamic extremism and terrorism
- Iranian nuclear, conventional, and asymmetric threats.
- Syrian civil war, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan
- Yemen and AQAP
- Egypt and Arab states caught up in political turmoil.
- Iran and Arab Gulf states
- Arab-Israeli?



Second Key Lesson: All Irregular Wars Will Involve Five Interactive Threats,

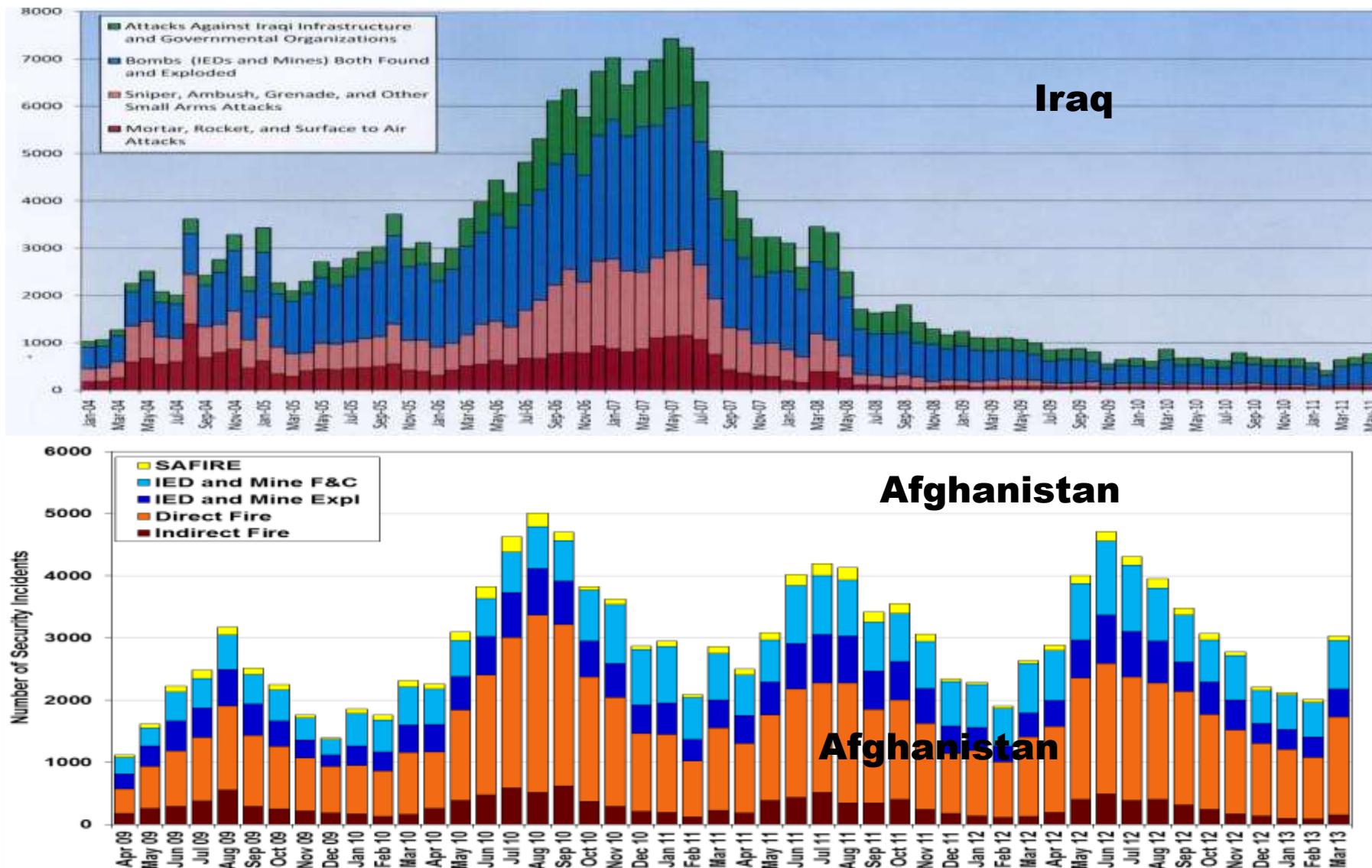
Four of Which Tend to Result in US Denial, Lack of Objective Analysis, and/or Deliberate Indifference

- 1. The enemy.**
- 2. Our allies and particularly the host country government and internal divisions.**
- 3. US illusions, mistakes, and lack of core competence.**
- 4. Time**
- 5. Cost**

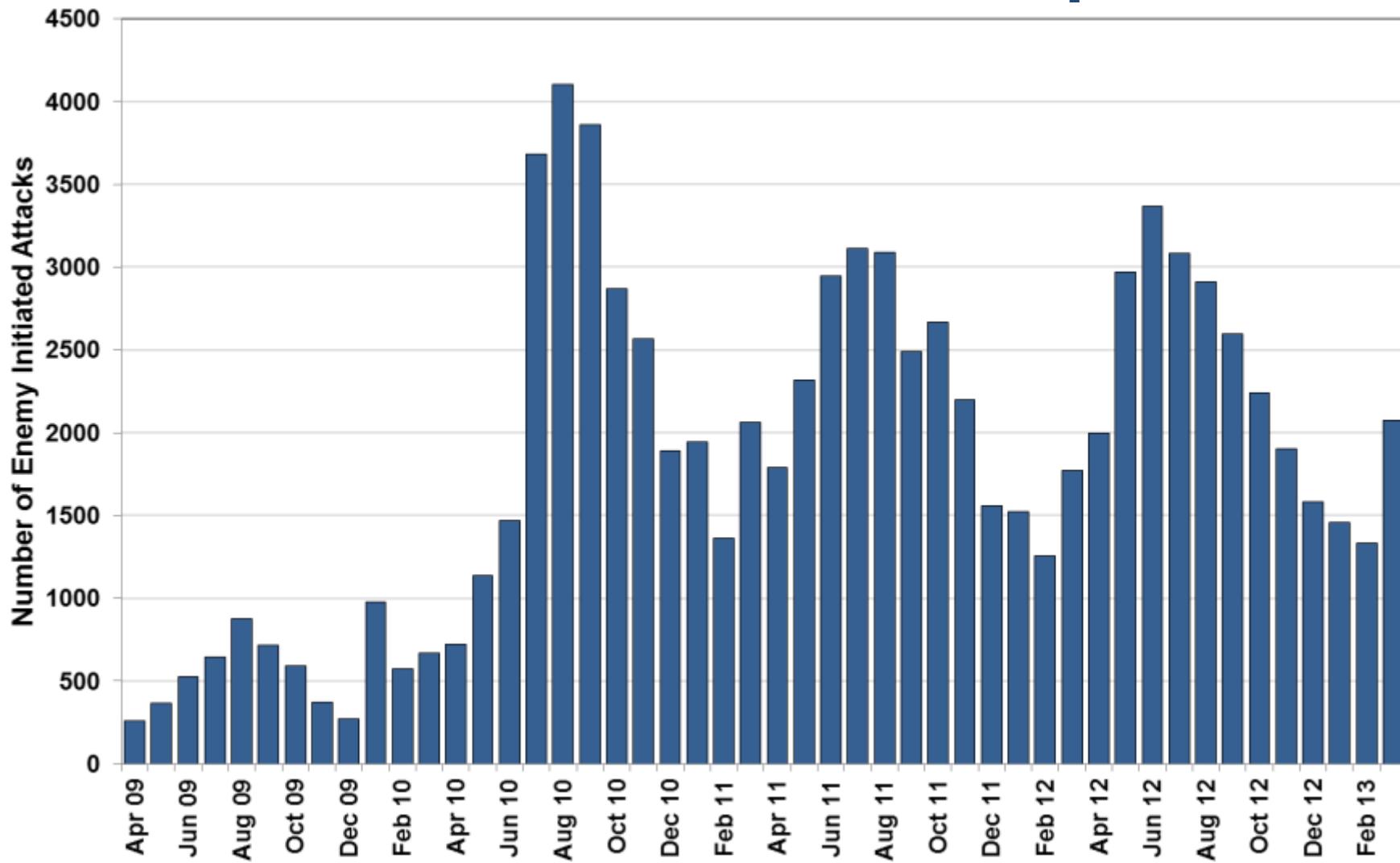
Threat #1: The Enemy

- Most will be the result of failed political, governance, economic, and security systems.
- Will almost always fight on civil, political, ideological, ethnic, and sectarian level.
- May change radically once US is committed: Iraq Shift to Sunni extremism insurgency and Afghan shift from al Qaeda to Taliban et al.
- Goals will generally not be primarily military or tactical, regardless of what announce.
- Bad or “serious” cases cannot be defeated at the tactical level.

Failed Surge in Afghanistan vs. Pre 2-102 Surge in Iraq



Focusing on a Largely Meaningless Tactical Metric: Enemy-Initiated Attacks Before ISAF Ceased to Report



Shift from Tactical Clashes to High Profile Attacks in 2012-2014

April 1 – September 15, 2012 vs. April 1 – Sept 15, 2013.

Metric	EIAs	HPA	Direct Fire	IED Events	IED/Mine Explosions	Complex/Coordinated Attack	IDF
% YoY Change	-6%	1%	-1%	-22%	-5%	5%	-18%

October 1, 2012 – March 13, 2013 vs. October 1, 2013 – March 13, 2014.

Metric	EIA	HPA	Direct Fire	IED Events	IED/Mine Explosions	Complex/Coordinated Attack	IDF
% YoY Change	-2%	43%	5%	-24%	-11%	-8%	-15%

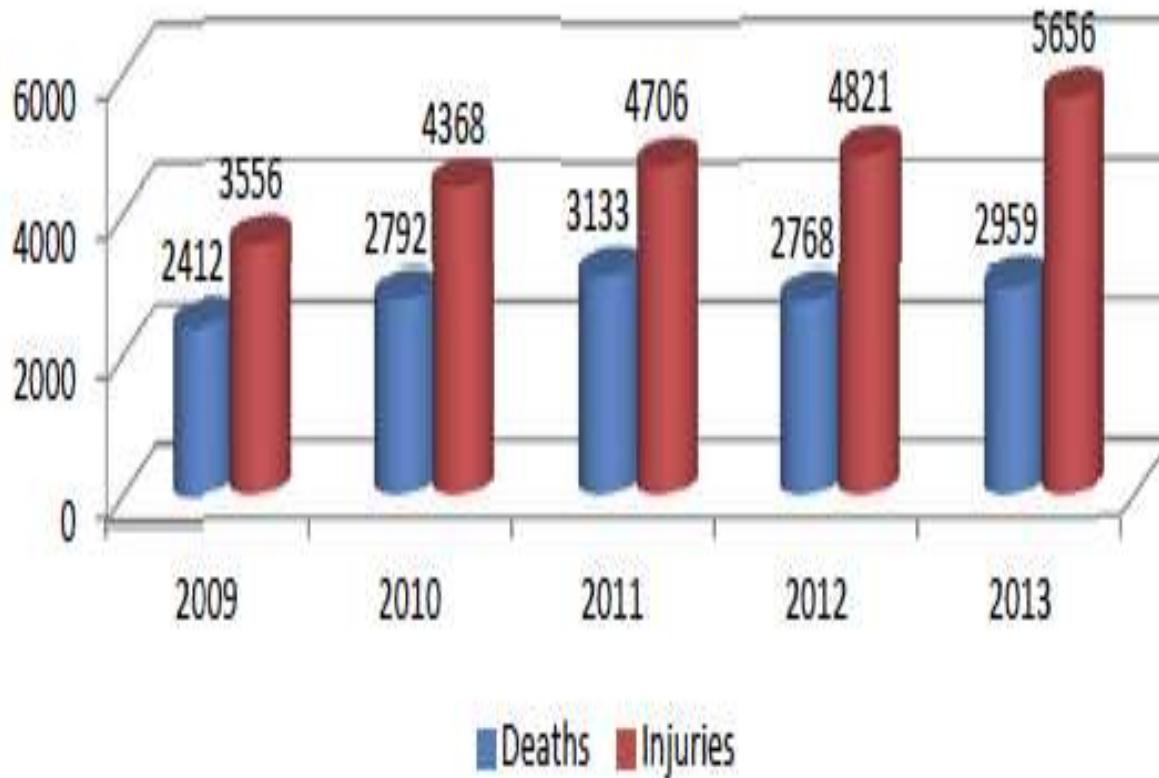
Source: Department of Defense, Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, October 2013, p. 17.

http://www.defense.gov/pubs/October_1230_Report_Master_Nov7.pdf, and in April 2014 rep

ert, p.11

“Surge” Did Not Affect Steady Rise in Civilian Killed and Wounded Through End 2013

**UN Estimate of Civilian deaths and Injuries:
January to December 2009-2013**



UNAMA documented 8,615 civilian casualties (2,959 civilian deaths and 5,656 injured) in 2013, marking a seven per cent increase in deaths and a 17 per cent increase in injuries compared to 2012.

The rise in civilians killed and injured in Afghanistan’s armed conflict in 2013 reverses the decline reported in 2012 and is similar to record high numbers of civilian casualties documented in 2011. Since 2009, the armed conflict has claimed the lives of 14, 064 Afghan civilians and injured thousands more.

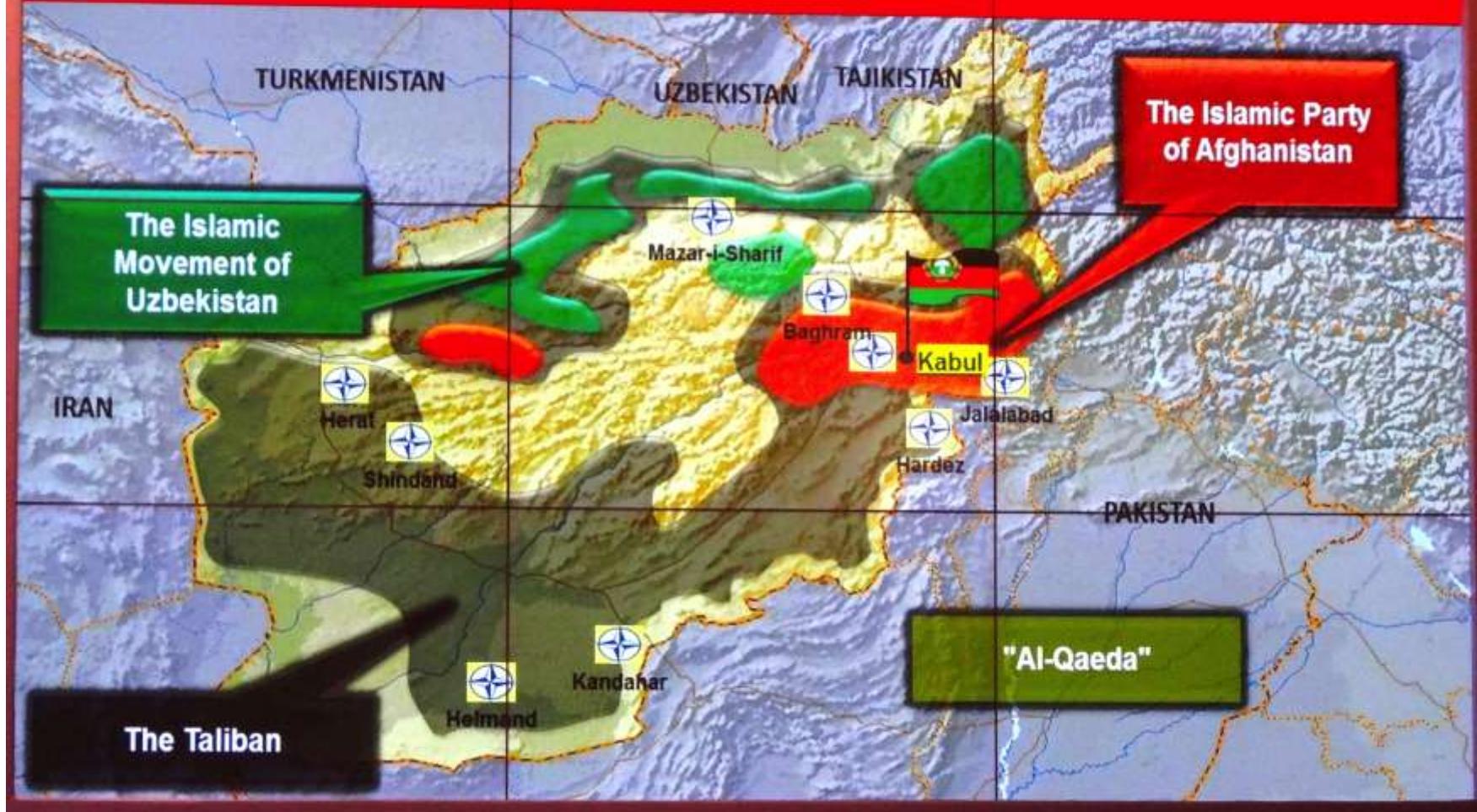
...while improvised explosive devices used by Anti-Government Elements¹ remained the biggest killer of civilians in 2013, increased ground engagements between Pro-Government Forces and Anti-Government Elements emerged as the number-two cause of civilian casualties with rising numbers of Afghan civilians killed and injured in cross-fire. Both factors drove the escalation of civilian casualties in 2013.

Source: UNAMA, CIVILIAN CASUALTIES IN AFGHAN CONFLICT RISE BY 14 PER CENT IN 2013,

http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-PR-ENG-final.pdf, February 8, 2014, pp. 1-2, 7

Russian Focus on areas of Insurgent Political-Military Influence

Preserving the status quo in limited foreign military presence

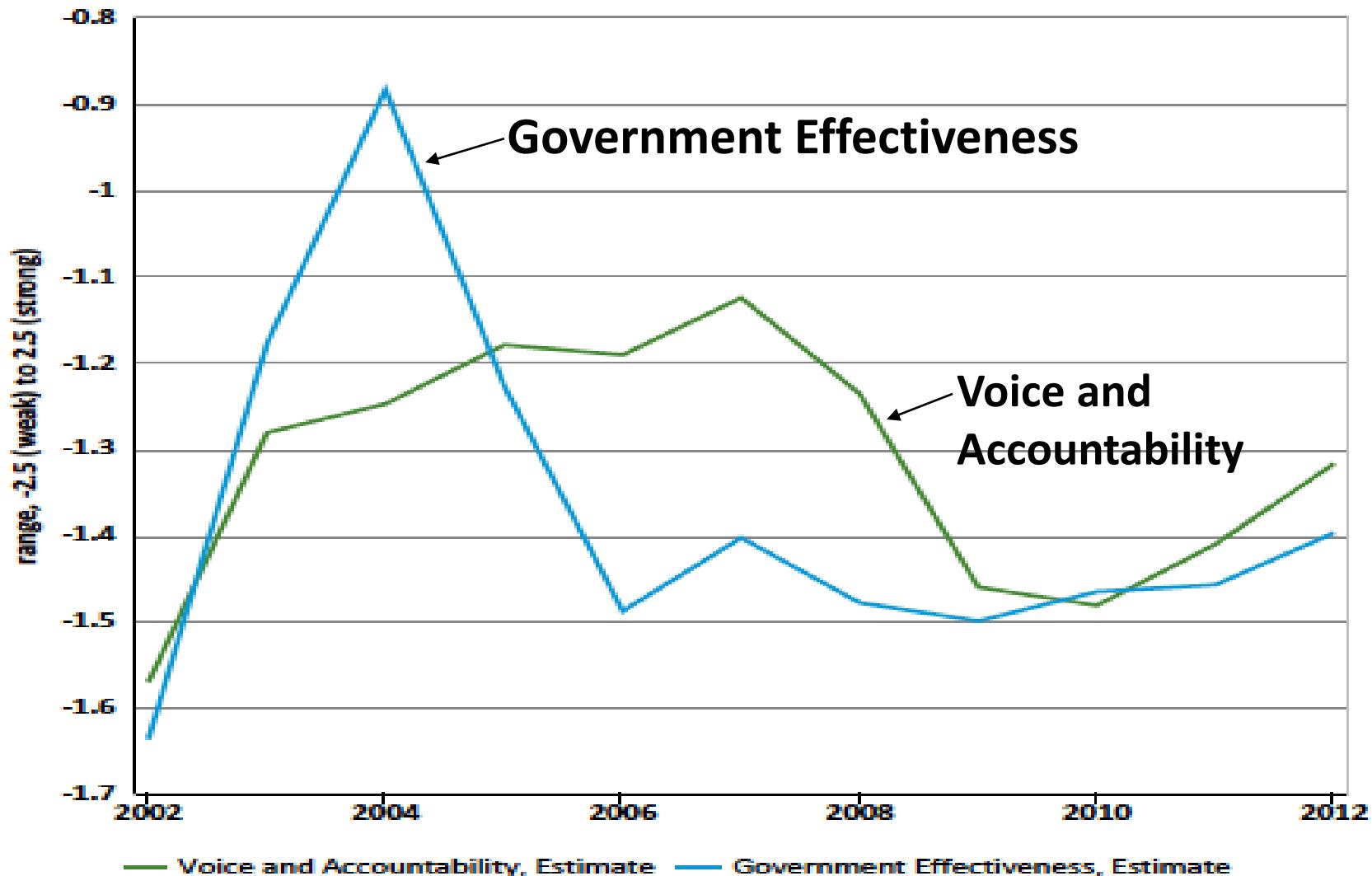


Threat #2: Our Allies and Particularly the Host Country Government and Internal Divisions.

- Threat exists because of internal failures in politics, governance, economics, and security.
- Far too often irregular warfare is really armed nation building.
- Security forces are ineffective, poorly led, corrupt, abusive, internally divided, forced conscripts and/or only motivated by pay.
- Governance is corrupt, abusive, divided, ineffective, not present, tied to crime, and key source of public support to the enemy.
- Economy has critical problems, particularly dealing with young and alienated factions.
- Local power has different goals, provide support to threat.
- Allies have serious limitations and caveats.

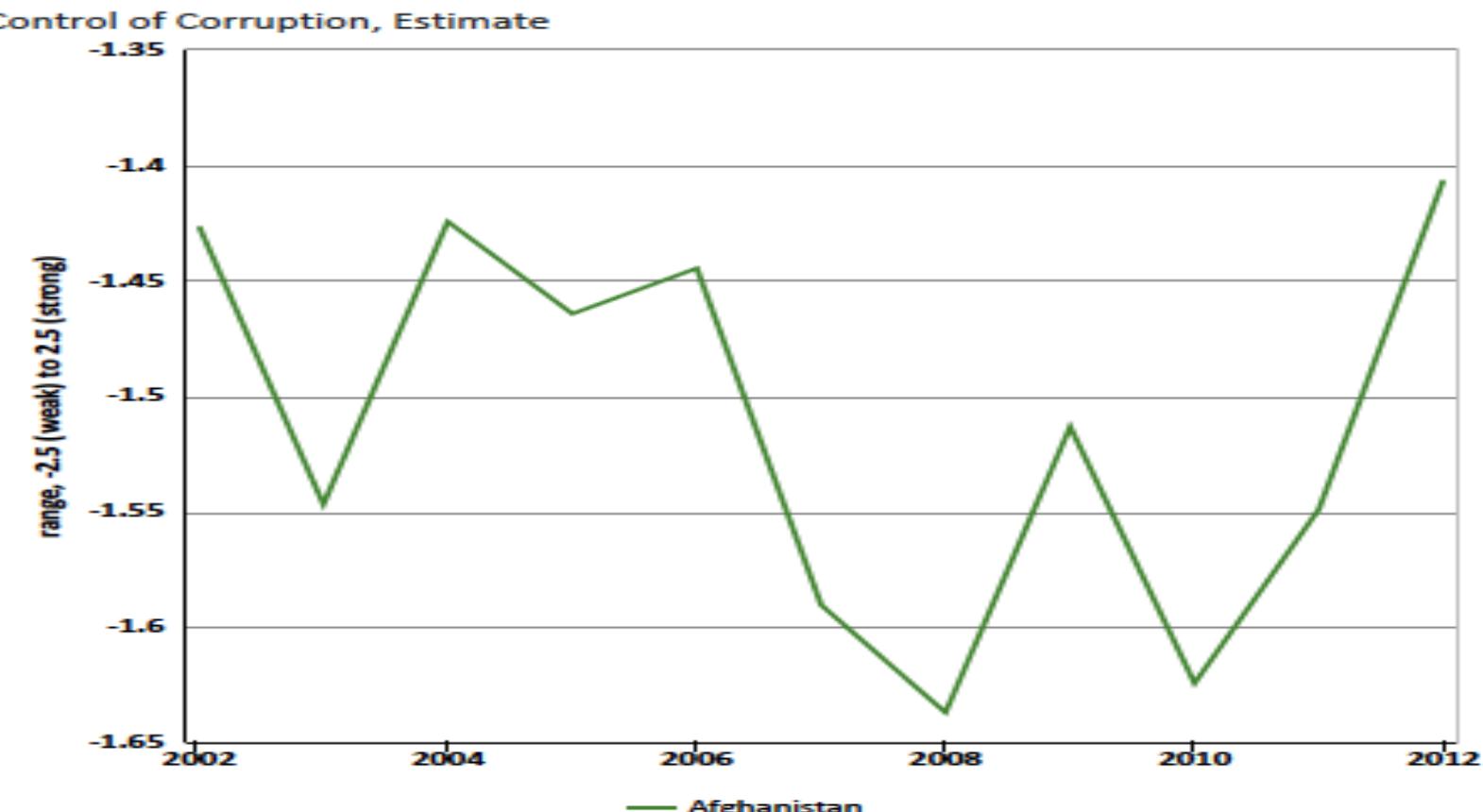
World Bank Rankings of Afghan Governance Show Very Uncertain Trends

Afghanistan

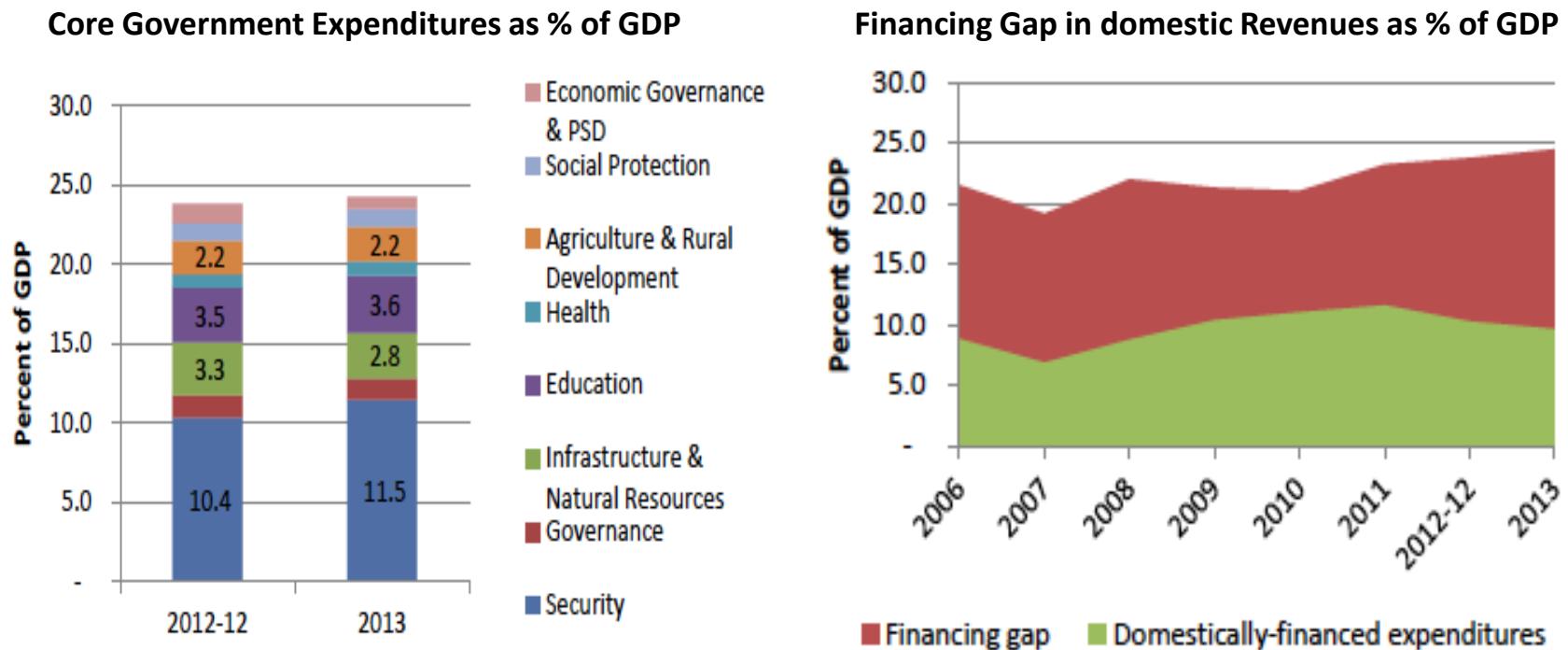


The Challenge of Afghan Corruption

- 175th most corrupt country out of 177 countries ranked by Transparency International. Budget openness is minimal.
- Bad rating on World Bank's "Control of corruption index" bad. Improvement is driven by aid donors.



World Bank Estimate of Growing Afghan Financing Gap



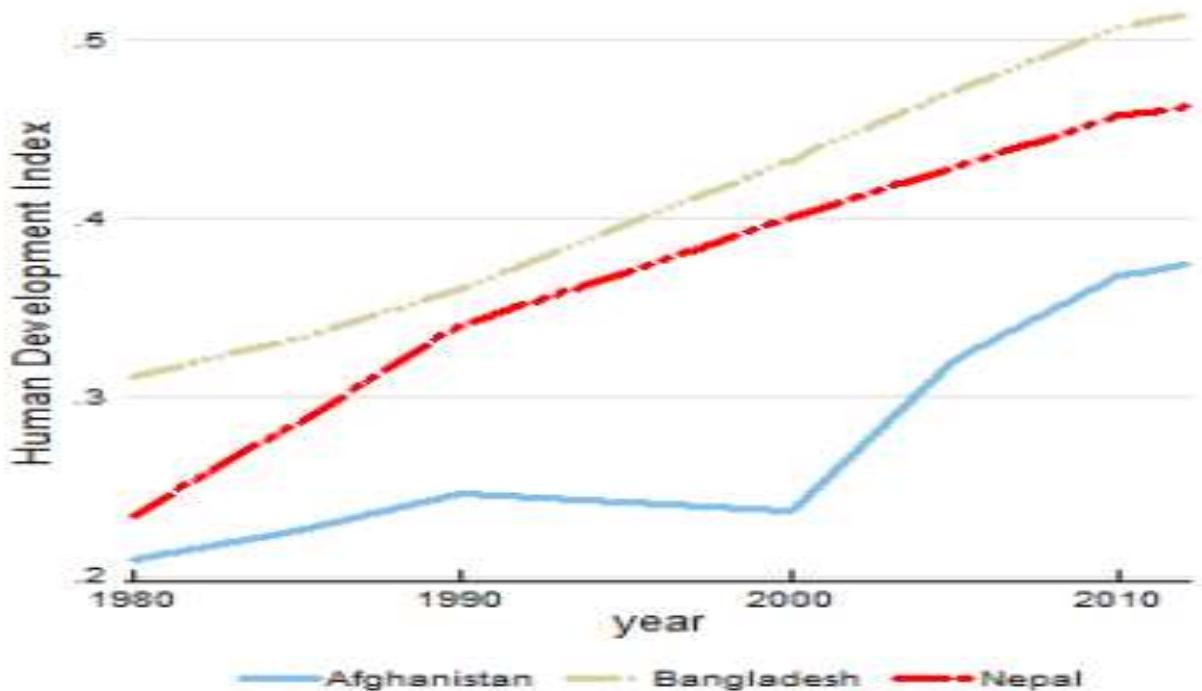
Transition Financing Critically Dependent on No Increase in Security Costs

	2013Bgt*	2013Act	2014Bgt
Recurrent budget	3,775	3,575	5,008
Discretionary development	874	342	895
Non-discretionary development	2,159	1,107	1,746
Total core budget	6,809	5,025	7,649
Domestic revenues	2,488	1,974	2,489
Foreign grants	4,022	3,307	4,738
External loans/credits	54	25	49
Total financing	6,565	5,307	7,277

* 2013Bgt figures are initial budgeted figures.

UN Human Development Progress in Afghanistan Lags by Comparison With Other Poor States: 1980-2012

(175th out of 187 Rated Countries)



	HDI value	HDI rank	Life expectancy at birth	Expected years of schooling	Mean years of schooling	GNI per capita (PPP US\$)
Afghanistan	0.374	175	49.1	8.1	3.1	1,000
Nepal	0.463	157	69.1	8.9	3.2	1,137
Pakistan	0.515	146	65.7	7.3	4.9	2,566
South Asia	0.558	—	66.2	10.2	4.7	3,343
Low HDI	0.466	—	59.1	8.5	4.2	1,633

Threat #3” US Illusions, Mistakes, and Lack of Core Competence - I

- Failure to perform objective strategic triage, risk assessment, and cost-benefit analysis.
- Fall in love with mission; sell or spin the conflict.
- Missionary instinct; turn conflict into a vital interest or morality play.
- Focus on tactical dimension, not full nature of threat or insurgency.
- Failure to do it their way, set unrealistic goals, escalate to transformational state building.
- Decouple military civil efforts at the strategic and funding levels.
- No core competence in ability to analyze, plan, and execute planned changes to political system and economy.

Threat #3: US Illusions, Mistakes, and Lack of Core Competence - II

- Revert to project aid unrelated to conflict or national needs, or CERP focus on bribery to achieve short-term local objectives.
- Decouple role of law and policing efforts, seek impossible changes and reforms.
- Flooded in money. Grossly distorted economy, costs, corruption in military and governance.
- Do not create effective contracting cost control, auditing, and effectiveness measures.
- Create metrics and narratives to sell, not analyze.
- Constant rotations, failure to properly train for civil-military structure.
- Erratic planning, funding, execution of training/creation, assessment of local forces.
- Fail in Transition phase. Leave before plans are properly executed.

Threat #4: Time

- **Tactical:** must meet warfighting terms and deal with problem of rotations and tours of duty.
- **Strategy:** Splits with allies. One year real-world US time horizon with conflicting civil-military goals. “Every year is the First year.”
- **Civil, political, governance, ideology, and economics:** Operate on different clocks.
- **Grand strategy:** The value of the war often changes sharply with time. A sunk cost is a sunk cost. Other priorities matter.
- **Global and regional:** perceptions and actions of allies, other states, non-state actors, strategic communications have different clocks.
- **Domestic US:** Public opinion. Congress, media, partisan politics will see any give case differently and all really matter.

Time: Loss of US Public Support

Negative Views of U.S. Efforts in Iraq, Afghanistan

In achieving its goals in Iraq/Afghanistan, U.S. has ...

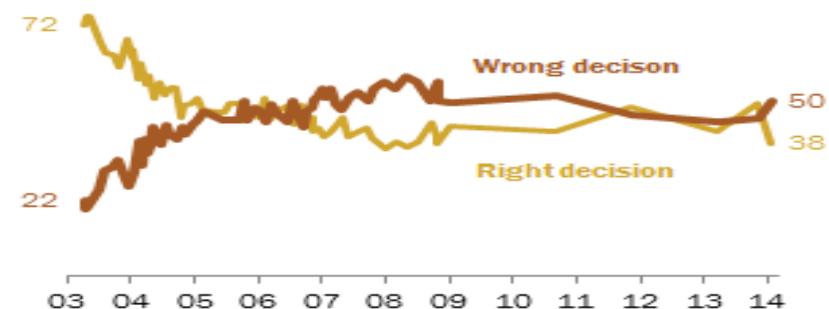
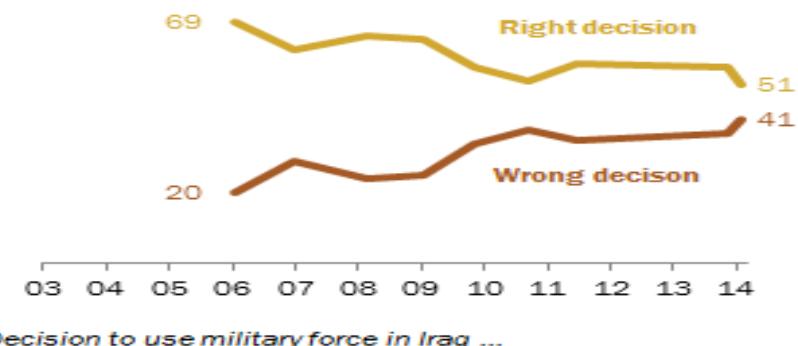


Survey conducted Jan. 15-19, 2014.
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Views of Decisions to Use Military Force in Afghanistan, Iraq

Decision to use military force in Afghanistan ...

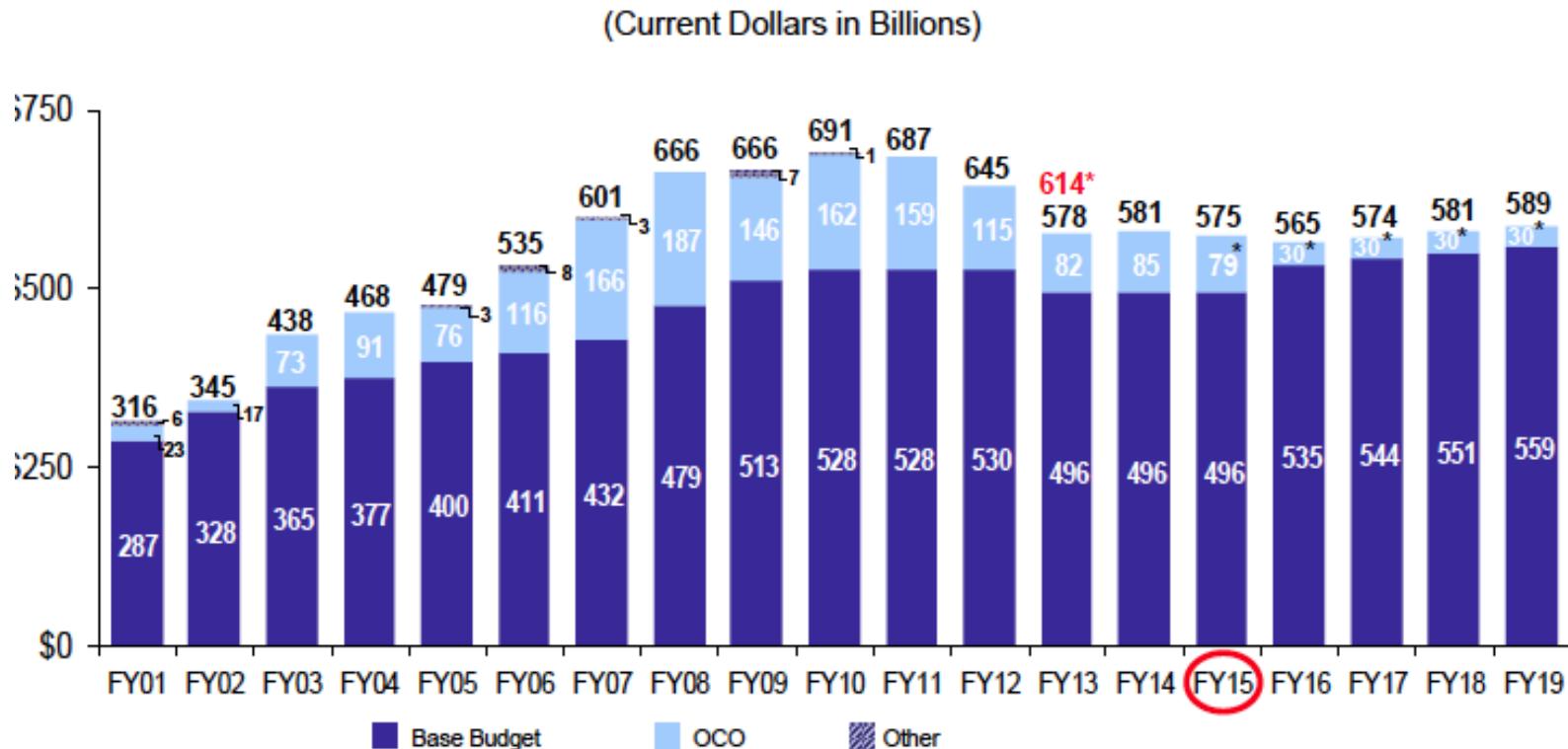


Survey conducted Jan. 15-19, 2014.
PEW RESEARCH CENTER/USA TODAY

Threat #5: Cost

- **Failure to estimate cost in our blood and allies:** *US alone* was 4,489 dead in Iraq + 32,239 WIA. Afghanistan is 2,320 dead and 19,784 WIA (30.5.14) Ignores strain on forces.
- **Dollars:** CRS estimates \$1.414.8 trillion including \$823.2 billion for Iraq; \$557.1 billion for Afghanistan as of FY 2011. OCO has added \$254 billion since = \$1,660.8 (*\$800 billion+ for Afghan War through FY2015).
- **US credibility, influence, trust?**
- **Ability to win allied support?**
- **Deterrent capability?**
- **Future US ability to use force?**
- **Funding of US military forces, civil role overseas?**
- **Image of US decline**

The Opportunity Cost– Less Forces, Waste and Corruption and Defense Spending Cuts



* Reflects FY13 Enacted level excluding Sequestration

* Placeholders only

***Focus Only On Base Budget For Remainder Of Briefing
No FY 2015 OCO Budget Yet***