

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

STRATEGIC RE-APPRAISAL OF DEMOCRATIC AFGHANISTAN

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## ABSTRACT

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Less than three years after successfully removing the Taliban Government and Al Qaeda, Afghans flocked to the polls and democratically elected a new President and with him, a new future for this war-torn country. Although the political landscape has changed, significant threats to the new government still exist from hostile Taliban, Al Qaeda and other Islamic extremists. Tribal disputes pose a unique political challenge to the government attempting to unify those of different ethnic loyalties, and growing concern over opium production and organized crime is receiving international attention. What are the prospects for democratic Afghanistan? This paper will attempt to answer those questions by providing an updated strategic appraisal of Afghanistan and recommendations for US strategy in the region.



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## STRATEGIC RE-APPRAISAL OF DEMOCRATIC AFGHANISTAN

The Afghan people are showing extraordinary courage under difficult conditions. They're fighting to defend their nation from Taliban holdouts and helping to strike against the terrorist killers. They're reviving their economy. They've adopted a constitution that protects the rights of all, while honoring their nation's most cherished traditions. More than 10 million Afghan citizens—over 4 million of them women—are now registered to vote in next month's presidential election. To any who still would question whether Muslim societies can be democratic societies, the Afghan people are giving their answer.<sup>1</sup>

- President Bush, September 21, 2004  
Three Weeks Prior to Afghanistan's Democratic Election

On October 9, 2004, over 10 million Afghan men and women seized the opportunity to change their nation's future and voted in the country's first democratic election.<sup>2</sup> This landmark event represents not only a pivotal turning point for the country, but also has a direct influence in the surrounding South Asia and the Middle East regions, as well as far-reaching global consequences for the US foreign policy and national strategy. The United States, the actions of which set conditions for this election to take place, has much at stake in ensuring that its strategy is ultimately successful. Following the country's first ever national democratic elections, one key question requires a comprehensive analysis and response from American policy makers: what is the next step for US Strategy in the new *democratic* Afghanistan?

In the three and half years following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States has achieved a number of successes in its policy toward this impoverished country that included removal of the Taliban, denial of sanctuary to Al Qaeda and other terror organizations, establishment of a new constitution by the Loya Jirga (national grand council), and, most recently and significantly, free democratic national elections in October 2004.<sup>3</sup> While these successes bode well for peace and stability in Afghanistan and South Asia, there still exists a number of underlying issues that, if left unresolved, could cause considerable difficulties in the future for the new democracy, its neighbors, and the United States. The dramatic changes in the cultural and political landscape of the country, since October 2001, demand a review of the current course of US strategy.

Following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the Bush administration unleashed a Global War on Terror (GWOT) with three specific strategic objectives in Afghanistan. These included the destruction of terrorist training facilities, the capture of Al Qaeda's leadership including Osama bin Laden and his senior Lieutenants, and the removal of the Taliban from power.<sup>4</sup> Although bin Laden is not yet in its custody, the United States has arguably been largely successful in

meeting these objectives. However, new challenges are already emerging in the dynamic aftermath of OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) that could adversely affect that success, if not properly addressed. The purpose of this paper is to answer the question posed above: what is the next step for US strategy in the new democratic Afghanistan? Answering this question requires an updated strategic appraisal of Afghanistan's significance to the broader security strategy of the United States, particularly in light of the recent elections and the ongoing war on terror to include combat operations in Iraq. From this assessment, challenges emerge that the US government must address if it is to accomplish its goals. This paper will outline those challenges as well as recommend national objectives for a future US strategy in Afghanistan.

The strategic appraisal process must begin with a review of the President's "National Security Strategy" and the "Strategy for the Global War on Terror". A review of the broader national objectives of the United States, contained in those two documents, coupled with an analysis of Afghanistan's internal and external environment, should yield a clear vision of US interests and potential objectives for the region. The origins of US strategy contained in these documents, and expanded upon since their publication, lies in the fateful events of 9/11.<sup>5</sup>

### **REDEFINING US NATIONAL STRATEGY IN THE POST-9/11 WORLD**

The attacks of September 11, 2001 were among the most dramatic in history to occur on American soil. Previously, only three major incursions occurred within the United States, two during the War of 1812 in Washington and New Orleans, and the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941. Although each of these attacks had a tremendous impact on the national psyche, none produced the civilian casualties or national terror of the attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and Flight 93. Like the attack on 7 December 1941 that drew the US into World War II, the attacks of 11 September dramatically changed the course of US policy and national security strategy.

President George W. Bush signaled the dramatic and aggressive changes in US strategy in numerous statements and press releases in the weeks that followed. On 19 September, 2001, while meeting with President Megawati of Indonesia at the White House, President Bush conducted a press conference in which he gave the first indications of his administration's emerging new strategy. When questioned by a reporter about who he felt may be responsible, the President stated:

I would strongly urge any nation in the world to reject terrorism, expel terrorists. I would strongly urge the Taliban to turn over the al Qaeda organizers who hide in their country. We're on the case. We're gathering as much evidence as we

possibly can to be able to make our case to the world about all countries and their willingness to harbor or not harbor terrorists.<sup>6</sup>

He then expanded his response to include a warning to all nations that a coalition was building for a “worldwide campaign against terror.”<sup>7</sup> The President continued to condemn the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, and expand his emerging goals to indicate that US counter-terror objectives would require a global effort to locate and destroy terrorists “*and those who support them*.”<sup>8</sup> Clearly, his implication was that the way to accomplish these objectives was through the use of force, and his repeated reference to the latter was a foreshadowing of his emerging controversial strategy of preemption.

#### TOWARDS A STRATEGY OF PREEMPTION AND DEMOCRATIZATION

Post-9/11 strategy for Afghanistan was further solidified on 7 October 2001, less than four weeks after the terrorist attacks. That evening, the president addressed the nation to announce that its military had begun striking installations and terrorist training camps in Afghanistan. The United States had given the Taliban two weeks notice to comply with three specific demands. Nevertheless, it failed to take action. Those demands were to “close terrorist training camps; hand over leaders of the al Qaeda network; and return all foreign nationals . . . unjustly detained.”<sup>9</sup> It would soon be clear that the Taliban would pay a high price for its noncompliance, and that the United States was willing to use unilateral preemption to accomplish its objectives. How far beyond Afghanistan Bush would pursue such foreign policy was not yet known, but his actions were representative of an emerging national strategy.

At this time, the president had not defined his long term objectives, other than to state that those nations who condoned terrorist organizations were murderers themselves, and the United States would bring them to justice. In addition, he reiterated what had become an early theme in the evolving strategy: America’s anger would not focus on Islam or the citizens of Afghanistan, but on terrorists and those who supported them.<sup>10</sup> The message was clear, however, that US objectives would include more than just destroying Al Qaeda and removing the Taliban regime. It would also involve establishing a free and democratic government for the Afghan people. The latter objective certainly was the logical outcome of the first two; however, the president had yet to define the strategy for establishing democracy in Afghanistan.

#### NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY, SEPTEMBER 2002

President Bush further expanded on his evolving strategy during his State of the Union Speech on 29 January 2002, with a clear statement of two principal US strategic goals.

Our nation will continue to be steadfast and patient and persistent in the pursuit of two great objectives. First, we will shut down terrorist camps, disrupt terrorist plans, and bring terrorists to justice. And, second, we must prevent the terrorists and regimes who seek chemical, biological or nuclear weapons from threatening the United States and the world.<sup>11</sup>

The President's second objective expanded the scope for the global war on terror strategy beyond Afghanistan and seemed clearly intended to warn Iraq's Saddam Hussein, who had consistently defied the United Nations for over a decade and who, potentially, was in possession of weapons of mass destruction within his country. If there were any doubt about this implied warning, the president erased it when, later in his speech, he named Iraq, along with Iran and North Korea, as part of an "axis of evil."<sup>12</sup> This revised strategy would eventually find its way into the president's National Security Strategy. The revised National Security Strategy appeared in September 2002 and stressed the US role in championing human rights, defeating terrorism, and "expanding the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of democracy."<sup>13</sup>

#### NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR COMBATING TERRORISM, FEBRUARY 2003

In February, 2003, nearly eighteen months after 9/11 and more than a year after the fall of the Taliban, the administration published its anti-terrorism strategy, appropriately titled, "National Strategy for Combating Terrorism". This document represented an addendum to the National Security Strategy discussed above, and was to serve as the blueprint for the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere to defeat terrorism. The thirty page document included the nature of today's terrorist threat, America's strategic intent for the war on terror, and US goals and objectives which are outlined below.<sup>14</sup>

GOAL 1: Defeat Terrorists and Their Organizations

GOAL 2: Deny Sponsorship, Support, and Sanctuary to Terrorists

GOAL 3: Diminish the Underlying Conditions that Terrorists Seek to Exploit

GOAL 4: Defend US Citizens and Interests at Home and Abroad

Although this strategy aggressively addresses terrorism and states that sponsor it, it falls short of providing the ways and means for achieving the post-conflict objectives, or ends, which routinely follow any military action. The strategic concept of building an infrastructure of democracy was not addressed within either policy document, yet it would increasingly become the focus of US strategy over the following two years.

Early in 2005, the opening days of his second term, President Bush demonstrated resolve in meeting his aggressive strategic objectives of defeating terrorism and expanding democracy

in several speeches and foreign policy statements. Despite divisive rhetoric by his domestic anti-war opponents, and objections from European allies, the president remained outspoken in his resolve to pursue terrorists, deny them sanctuary, and encourage democracy to grow in regions where existing domestic conditions contribute to recruitment of potential terrorists. In a 21 February 2005 meeting with European Leaders at the European Union Summit in Brussels, Belgium, President Bush declared America's commitment to the growth of democracy in Afghanistan.

Our commitment to democratic progress is being honored in Afghanistan. That country is building a democracy that reflects Afghan traditions and history, and shows the way for other nations in the region. The elected president is working to disarm and demobilize militias in preparation for the National Assembly elections to be held this spring. And the Afghan people know the world is with them.<sup>15</sup>

It is evident that President Bush will continue the American strategy of defeating terrorists and democratizing countries that are susceptible to allying themselves with such organizations.

#### **EXAMINING THE REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT OF AFGHANISTAN AND SOUTH ASIA**

The US intervention in Afghanistan yielded numerous secondary effects in the entire South Asia region, some intended and expected, some not so. While the American strategy successfully destroyed terrorist training camps and removed the Taliban, the political, informational, military, and economic landscape of Afghanistan and its neighboring countries was altered significantly. The rapid pace of these changes and uncertain future of the transitional government caused American strategy to remain principally reactionary. Democratic national elections in October 2004, however, represented a landmark event in beginning a new era for Afghanistan, the region, and future US strategy in the war on terror. In light of this development, an updated and revised strategic assessment is essential to developing a new strategy.



FIGURE 1. US STATE DEPARTMENT MAP OF AFGHANISTAN AND THE SOUTH ASIAN REGION.<sup>16</sup>

#### US NATIONAL INTERESTS

Removing the Taliban regime and destroying terrorist training camps, while sound short-term objectives for Afghanistan, did not address the long-term challenges of the Global War on Terror, particularly the roots of radical Islamic hostility toward America and western culture. In addition to quelling terrorism at its roots, the US has several stated national interests at stake in the region that are consistent with marginalizing the influence of terrorism. These include: improving respect for human dignity, encouraging regional cooperation to defuse conflict and fight terrorism, enhance global economic growth and cooperation, and expand the ideals of democracy. Each of these objectives are integral components of the President Bush's 2002 National Security Strategy and have particular relevance, as well as challenges, in Afghanistan today.<sup>17</sup> An examination of the four elements of power within the now democratic Afghanistan and its interaction with the South Asia region yields numerous challenges to US long-term strategy.

## POLITICAL ASPECTS AND CHALLENGES

US intervention in Afghanistan was the first demonstration of President Bush's preemption and democratization strategy. The modus operandi of this strategy required the forcible removal of a belligerent regime by force, followed by intensive stability operations to ensure the peaceful election of a democratic, representative government. In the three years following 9/11, the concepts applied in pursuit of this strategy rapidly evolved in response to environmental changes, but Afghanistan's democratic national election in October 2004 represented a strategic landmark event that gives cause for a deliberate review of US strategy for the future in Iraq and elsewhere. The political aspects of the current post-election environment still offer numerous challenges for a successful democracy, but equally provide insight to a dimension of the Afghan culture that can enhance US strategy for the entire region. Of the four aspects of strategy discussed herein: political, informational, military and economic; politics, more than any other, provides the foundation for successful accomplishment of long term goals. To appreciate the political challenges US strategy must overcome in this emerging environment requires a firm grasp of the geography, history and culture of the Afghan people.

Afghanistan is a rugged landlocked country positioned between the regions of the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia. Because of its poverty, underdevelopment and remote location, the country is not generally viewed as particularly significant to any of these regions, though it sits astride the historical land routes between the Middle East and Asia.<sup>18</sup> Because of this central location, Afghanistan has seen many invaders enter its borders in an effort to conquer the land, however, few have succeeded. The rugged terrain coupled with fierce resistance to occupation by a conglomeration of tribes and ethnic groups united primarily for the purpose of repelling invaders, has made conquest and retention of the nation particularly difficult.<sup>19</sup>

The culture of Afghanistan's population is probably the most elusive aspect to the foreign analyst who often underestimates its complexity. Afghans are uniquely dissimilar, and are divided into multiple tribes and ethnic groups found throughout the country whose loyalties to local issues, customs and authority generally outweigh their desire for a national identity. This form of localism is unique because these same independent disunited tribes, have historically rallied together to remove foreign invaders, and most recently with US assistance, to overthrow the Taliban. What these different tribes and cultures share is a common passion for independence and freedom in the face of adversity.

The political challenges facing Afghanistan have always been shaped by its geography, history and cultural aspects. Of these factors, localism plays a central theme and will remain a

definitive part of Afghanistan culture. Therein lays, the greatest challenge to political stability in democratic Afghanistan: how to demonstrate to this localized culture, the important value of their newly elected national government. For democracy to succeed it must be viewed as beneficial to its people, and loyalties, provided previously to principally tribal leaders, must be subordinated to national interests and the country's first representative government.

#### INFORMATIONAL AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES

The newly elected democratic government faces several informational obstacles in establishing legitimacy and winning the confidence of its people. These challenges include overcoming the tradition and loyalties of localism, education of religious and social leaders on the dangers of extreme religious fundamentalist, and communicating these messages and others of legitimacy over the country's limited media outlets. Although USAID has assisted in improving media outlets in support of the national election, more must be done to overcome the influence of belligerent influences.<sup>20</sup>

The battle over hearts and minds pits the newly elected government against the hostile Taliban, Al Qaeda, and other extremists, that gain their legitimacy through their religious rhetoric. By leveraging extreme fundamentalist Islamic views, they gain a foothold in Madrassas and Mosques and spread their messages of deceit recruiting from a pool of candidates living in impoverished social and economic conditions.

Only by educating tribal, religious, and educational leaders through an aggressive information campaign, can the government overcome the influence of rogue factions on a populous susceptible to such influence.

Critical to the education of these leaders, and the population as a whole, is the need to substantially improve the limited media infrastructure to distribute informational themes to citizens and legitimize the new government. The United States and other coalition partners have sent extensive media into Afghanistan to provide news to the outside world, however, there is limited ability to provide information within the country to millions of uneducated and illiterate citizens. The US military has made efforts to ensure dissemination of information, however, the current conditions demand greater capabilities be committed to this effort.

#### MILITARY AND SECURITY CHALLENGES

Despite the coalition victory over the Taliban and Al Qaeda, numerous security challenges still exist and pose a sustained threat to Afghanistan's citizens, the newly elected government, coalition allies, and international aid workers. To counter this threat, coalition forces have established and trained over 20,000 Soldiers for service in the first Afghan National Army (ANA)

and another 25,000 for police service.<sup>21</sup> This effort only begins to address the continuing struggle for stability and security facing the nation, as several challenges still exist.

The first challenge lies in overcoming delays fielding the ANA and National Police Force to regions of the country outside of Kabul. Currently, there are 5,500 NATO peacekeepers working under a limited mandate to assist Afghan security forces in Kabul, and another 14,000 Soldiers in the US-led coalition training the Afghan Army and conducting combat operations throughout the country.<sup>22</sup> The small numbers of coalition forces are spread thin throughout the country, and are inadequate to be solely responsible for ensuring peace, security and order. The need for Afghan Soldiers and police forces would seem appropriate for meeting this challenge, yet challenges exist here with overcoming tendencies toward localism and loyalty to tribal militias.

Tribal militias represent another great challenge to security and stability throughout the country. Because of tribal loyalties, many citizens continue to support and rely upon militias for security. Compounding this problem is the increasing criminal activity by many tribal leaders and warlords who see the national government as a threat to their power base and livelihood. Their reliance on poppy growth and sales has provided an economic boost to many faction leaders and tribes, and runs contrary to an emerging security focus of the national police and Army. Only through a strong security presence by a nationally recognized Afghan military force, can native inhabitants expect to stability to become the norm.

#### ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

Closely related to the security challenges of Afghanistan are the difficulties of economic progress. Two major issues adversely affect the country's economy: the lack of transportation infrastructure and geographic constraints of agricultural potential. By improving roads and common utilities; and providing Afghanistan's farmers improved agricultural alternatives, the economy of Afghanistan will begin to improve.

Without railroads, the only modern method of overland transport in the nation is existing road networks that are in major disrepair after neglect during more than twenty-five years of war. The lack of roads significantly hampers the government in its ability to provide fundamental economic support to remote regions. As a result, the population's loyalty is again more susceptible to influence by the local warlords and thugs who can provide some sense of security and economic wellbeing. Despite these drawbacks, some progress is being made. USAID has assisted in rehabilitating 2,500 miles of road, reconstructed 31 bridges and has opened up three additional mountain passes over the Hindu Kish that were previously

impassible for decades.<sup>23</sup> This is a good start, however, there are thousands of miles of road yet to be restored, infrastructure to be delivered to the majority of rural Afghan villages.

A second economic challenge is the need to provide agriculture technology enhancements to rural farmers and alternatives to opium poppy cultivation. The problem of drug cultivation, production, and trafficking in Afghanistan poses a serious security risk for the new government because in many cases the drug growth is controlled by regional warlords who rely on the drugs to provide income to support their tribes' interests. Any action taken to eradicate the drugs by the national government is likely to be construed as an attack on the local leader and intended to take away livelihood for the beneficiaries of the income. Additionally, this is an unreliable source of income for a legitimate democracy and exports of drugs to other countries will further isolate Afghanistan as a legitimate member of the international community.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Afghanistan became the highest drug producing country in the world in 2004 with growth of opium poppy plants more than doubled from the previous year.<sup>24</sup> The heroine producing plant became the sole crop produced on more than 131,000 hectares of land and quickly gained in popularity around the country.<sup>25</sup> To his credit, newly elected President Hamid Karzai recognizes the clear danger of the increasing opium poppy cultivation in his country. During his inauguration speech, he stated, "Our principal promises concern the strengthening of the security sector and ensuring lasting stability throughout the country, the elimination of poppy cultivation and fight against the processing and trafficking of drugs." The cultivation of drugs provides sources of income that a democracy can and should not be reliant upon; however reversing this momentum will not be easy.

#### **RECOMMENDED STRATEGY**

US Strategic success in Afghanistan and the South Asian region is critical to successful prosecution of the war on terror and our national security strategy. The focused application of available resources is the best way to achieve desired objectives. In simplest terms, a recommended strategy must not only address ends, or objectives, but should also recommend the means, or resources, and ways, or methodology, to accomplish those ends. For the United States to ensure its ability to successfully accomplish its desired objectives in Afghanistan, it must prioritize its application of ways and means to pursue three major tasks that support the overall objectives for democratic Afghanistan. These objectives include sustaining high levels of

security, improving economic conditions, and enhancing Afghanistan's credibility in the region and throughout the world.

#### SUSTAINING SECURITY

The primary objective in ensuring democracy takes root and has the opportunity to flourish in Afghanistan is to ensure, at whatever cost, the existence of a secure and stable environment. This objective is essential to success of US strategy for three reasons. First, security of the democratic government is essential to ensure continued rule. Any reversion back to Taliban rule, or its equivalent can only be considered failure as it is imperative that we not allow rogue elements to overthrow this government. Secondly, the Afghan people have lived through many invasions. They are very skeptical of US long term commitment and the best way for the US to demonstrate its resolve is to ensure security exists for the Afghan people. Finally, and equally important, is the need for a secure and stable environment that encourages international organizations, nongovernmental organizations and private organizations to provide aid to, and invest in, this new democracy. Without a US presence that ensures and enforces this stable and secure environment, US strategy cannot be realized.

#### IMPROVING ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The US, as the world's economic power, must resolve itself to the long-term economic investment of Afghanistan to demonstrate to that country and the world its commitment to the country's future. The value of immediate and projected long-term US commitment signals a confidence to the international community that will encourage other nations to follow our lead. To be sure, such commitment does not occur without significant cost and risk, but the consequences of a failed policy in Afghanistan outweigh the alternative. Economic strategy must pursue two vital pillars that can bring Afghanistan improved conditions: improved infrastructure and agricultural alternatives to opium production and marketing.

The first pillar has not been ignored, but much more work must be done to ensure an adequate economic future. Without roads, communications, and quality of life infrastructure, the citizens of Afghanistan will continue to live in poverty and remain isolated from their national government. By leveraging more international assistance, the US can bring Afghanistan into the 21<sup>st</sup> century in terms of communications and transportation infrastructure. As the government provides these services for its people, it gains their confidence and commitment to support of democratic ideals.

The second area requiring attention is in the area of agricultural development. Without alternatives, it is no surprise that farmers in Afghanistan would turn to opium poppy agriculture

as a source of economic income. The subsequent transport and sales of this drug further hinders Afghanistan's reputation in the international community and empowers the local warlords whose interests are often inconsistent with those of the national government. Advancements in agricultural alternatives, through use of chemical stimulants and fertilizers, will enhance the capability of the nation's farmers. Additionally, US technology in irrigation and machinery can offer much to the remote regions that will improve these options.

#### INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

Afghanistan cannot be forgotten and is a crucial ally of the US, particularly when demonstrating unity in the face of terror and the ability to establish democracy in Islamic countries. Afghanistan must be viewed as a positive example, but not a US puppet government.

One organization that is well-suited to raise Afghanistan's regional importance, give it more international visibility, and demonstrate its potential for economic and social change is the South Asian Agreement for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). This organization was created in 1985 and consists of seven countries of the South Asia Region including: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The mission of SAARC is to accelerate the process of economic and social development of member states by working together in a spirit of friendship, trust and understanding.<sup>26</sup> Afghanistan, along with Myanmar, was not considered for membership of SAARC because of their difficult political situation at the time the regional organization formed. Given its location, emerging prominence and inevitable future economic potential given the engagement by the US and international community, Afghanistan should be readily accepted into SAARC.

At a SAARC Summit held in Islamabad in January, 2004, the need for interaction between citizens of Afghanistan and its neighbors was recognized as vital to increasing regional cooperation and improving the atrocious human rights record established by the Taliban.<sup>27</sup> The conference also addressed other magnanimous political issues, including the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA), and the suppression of Terrorism. The active dialogue between these nations bodes well for the region and specifically lends support to the US national security policy goals of the US, specifically, "strengthen (regional) alliances to defeat global terrorism...defuse regional conflicts...and champion aspirations for human dignity."<sup>28</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

To date, the United States has achieved remarkable success in its post-9/11 strategy in Afghanistan. In only a few short weeks following 9/11, America organized and led a coalition of

tribal factions and allies to overthrow the Taliban and root out Al Qaeda and other terrorists. Since that time, an international coalition of more than thirty countries has conducted security and stability operations that set conditions for free democratic elections that took place in October 2004.<sup>29</sup> Now that the initial national election is complete, the United States must revise its strategy in the new environment of a democratic Afghanistan.

Clearly, there is much work to be done in Afghanistan on many fronts. A review of American strategy found in the "National Security Strategy", "National Strategy for Combating Terrorism", and recent national security speeches provide focus for identifying the most critical objective of US strategy in Afghanistan, which is to ensure the success of the newly elected democratic government. Numerous challenges are identified when assessing the political, informational, military, and economic aspects of the country and its surrounding region. From these challenges, several critical objectives emerge that consistently cut across all aspects of our strategy. Of these, three stand out. These include the need to improve security, provide economic assistance, and enhance Afghanistan's legitimacy in the region and on the international stage. By supporting all three objectives, the United States can realize success in pursuing its goal of protecting democracy in Afghanistan and enhance stability in South Asia and the world.

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## ENDNOTES

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<sup>15</sup> George W. Bush, "Remarks at Meeting of the European Union", 21 February 2005.

<sup>16</sup> United States Department of State, "South Asian Regional Map"; available from <<http://www.state.gov/p/sa>>; Internet; accessed 15 March 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Bush, *National Security Strategy*.

<sup>18</sup> To be sure, even US governmental agencies who bureaucratically subdivide the world into regions treat Afghanistan differently. The Department of Defense, for example, includes Afghanistan as part of the US Central Command Areas of Responsibility which includes

predominantly the Middle East, while the US Department of State includes it in South Asia along with Pakistan, India and others. Also, see State Dept Website and how it defines regions.

<sup>19</sup> Jeffrey Roberts, *The Origins of Conflict in Afghanistan* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 2003), pp, XI-XV.

<sup>20</sup> Agency for Internal Development, "Restoring Media", available from <[http://www.usaid.gov/locations/asia\\_near\\_east/afghanistan/media.html](http://www.usaid.gov/locations/asia_near_east/afghanistan/media.html)>; Internet; accessed 15 March 2005.

<sup>21</sup> Department of State, Testimony of Robert Charles, Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs to the House International Relations Committee, "Afghanistan: Counter-narcotics and Rule of Law Programs", Available at <<http://www.state.gov/g/inl/rls/rm/36500.htm>>, 23 September 2004; Internet; accessed 15 March 2005.

<sup>22</sup> Center for Strategic and International Studies, "South Asia Monitor", No. 69, 2 April 2004.

<sup>23</sup> Agency for Internal Development, "Restoring Infrastructure", available from <[http://www.usaid.gov/locations/asia\\_near\\_east/afghanistan/infrastructure.html](http://www.usaid.gov/locations/asia_near_east/afghanistan/infrastructure.html)>; Internet; accessed 15 March 2005.

<sup>24</sup> UN Press Release, "United Nations Drugs Officer Reports Major Increase in Opium Cultivation in Afghanistan", Press Release AFG/269 SOC/NAR/917; available at <<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/afg269.doc.htm>>, 18 November 2004; Internet; accessed 15 March 2005.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> South Asia Agreement for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Website; available at <<http://www.saarc-sec.org/main.php>>; Internet; accessed 15 March 2005.

<sup>27</sup> South Asian Agreement for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), "Human Rights and SAARC Nations", by Ashwani Kumar Chrungoo, 19 Mar 2004, Internet; available at <[www.southasianmedia.net/index\\_opinion4.cfm?id=24821](http://www.southasianmedia.net/index_opinion4.cfm?id=24821)>.

<sup>28</sup> Bush, *National Security Strategy*, 1.

<sup>29</sup> George W. Bush, "State of the Union Address", Washington DC, 29 Jan 2002.

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