

## **Tough Love For Washington And Kabul**

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**Summary:** Currently articulated US policy goals in Afghanistan focus only on the visible and symptomatic manifestations of their deeper, underlying causes.

The four primary underlying causes of the current Afghan tragedy are:

- A total lack of redress for millions of Afghans who have been brutalized and opportunistically exploited during more than 30 years of conflict;
- Afghan citizens' perceptions of illegitimacy and lack of accountability of their government;
- Illegal power brokers usurping legitimate traditional leadership functions; and
- The lack of viable alternative livelihoods for opium poppy growers.

America's tough love for the Afghan government requires that we push hard to demonstrate determined, impartial and continuous resolve in addressing the claims of aggrieved Afghan citizens against those who have committed, and continue to commit, crimes against humanity in Afghanistan. This can be accomplished by reconstituting and empowering the Afghan Truth and Reconciliation Court (or another internationalized chamber within the Afghan court system); revoking 2007 legislation forgiving war crimes and affording immunity to offenders; establishing and implementing an Afghan War Crimes Tribunal at the International Criminal Court and/or a UN ad hoc tribunal to address crimes committed prior to February, 2003 (the date Afghanistan became a party to the Rome statute). President Hamid Karzai, or his successor, will have no credibility with the Afghan people until he demonstrates his own and his administration's commitment to serving the Afghan nation, rather than his personal constituencies, by prosecuting war criminals and illegal power brokers. This action will stimulate an Afghan national concept and identity which are still critically missing factors in the equation of national unity. US policy-driven measures must transparently address Afghan concerns of legitimacy and authority in government. Additionally, we must work with Afghans and the international community to develop vertically integrated and realistic alternative livelihoods for Afghan poppy farmers, while simultaneously and relentlessly prosecuting post-harvest, down-stream drug racketeers. There are many laudable and appropriate international development assistance programs being implemented by the international community in concert with legitimate Afghan decision makers, which should not be discounted, but which are compromised because of a lack of focused efforts addressing government legitimacy, enforcing the basic foundations of the rule of law, war crimes restitution, and realistic alternative livelihoods. Addressing these four core issues will do more to stabilize the Afghan government, destabilize the Taliban movement, improve internal security, and provide a basis for Afghans to personally participate in their own social, economic, and political future than any other foreign military intervention or assistance efforts. Afghan tough love for America requires that Afghanistan demand

America's enduring commitment over the long term to protect Afghanistan's territorial, economic, and political integrity against the illegal internal power brokers and regional manipulators who seek to use Afghanistan as a tool to further their own geo-political and economic goals. It also requires that America demonstrate confidence in legitimate Afghan leaders to work through accepted and traditionally understood decision making processes to develop what must necessarily be uniquely Afghan solutions to their own problems. It is not reasonable to expect to achieve US security goals in Afghanistan under an imposed political and economic model which is, in many ways, anathema to traditional Afghan governance and social patterns and processes. America and the West has to accept that these Afghan solutions might not immediately replicate our own vision of appropriate social or political models fully incorporating our own increasingly progressive definitions of electoral democracy and human rights.

### **American Policy In Afghanistan**

In a July 26 interview in which he addressed his goals for Afghanistan, Presidential Candidate Barack Obama said:

“.....We should want to get out of there as quickly as we can and help the Afghans govern themselves and provide for their own security. Our critical goal should be to make sure that the Taliban and al Qaida are routed and that they cannot project threats against us from that region.”

I assume that this is still a reasonable summary of the new administration's goals in Afghanistan. Rather than take President Obama's pledge of more than 30,000 additional American troops for the Afghan theater (roughly doubling our current troop strength) as an apparent turn-around from the stated desire to “get out of there quickly”, I regard it as a stop-gap measure to demonstrate President Obama's recognition of the critical nature of the Afghan “problem”. It will allow more breathing room to train and upgrade Afghan police and military capacity, and also strengthen the coalition's military position to negotiate with Afghan and other interests over the next phase of our engagement there. In spite of the potentially limited benefits of such a massive investment of American military resources, and the equally apparent down-side risks, I am all for it if they are deployed within a more insightful policy framework.

President Obama and his advisors are only now beginning to formulate and implement what will hopefully be a new and well planned direction. However, at this time, the stated goals only address surface manifestations of deeper social, political, and economic woes that plague Afghanistan - problems that continue to severely limit the effectiveness of conventional US bilateral assistance and military support programs, and defy the US doctrine that defines them.

### **Differing Perceptions Of The Issues, And The Need For Perceptive Action**

In spite of the high costs in American human and financial capital to date, and whether we like it or not, Afghans generally feel that these goals belie a relatively short-term, self-

servicing US national security interest written (in some isolation) in Washington. This is in contrast to what they would consider to be goals reflecting a long-term and shared interest in Afghan national integrity which would truly free the Afghan people to take control of their own destiny on their own terms. This skepticism has historical roots in the Afghan people's perception of Americans as "users", supported by their collective memory of US "abandonment" of Afghanistan immediately after the Soviets left Afghanistan in 1989. This departure created a vacuum that plunged the country into civil war. It is also based in their view that we currently address only our own self-serving tactical security goals at the expense of true reform, such as our so far futile search for Osama bin Laden and our imbalanced concentration of resources on al-Qaida, neither of which are prominent on Afghans' radar screens. President Bush's initial pledge to provide a "New Marshall Plan for Afghanistan", is viewed as rhetoric, since America substantially reduced its commitment to Afghanistan in favor of Iraq in 2003. Most Afghans fear that it is too late to recover from this lapse in the face of rampant government corruption, the rise of drug mafias and other criminal gangs, and the resurgence of the Taliban (an often misused term). We are roundly blamed by many Afghans for this current state of affairs because we are seen as having imposed illegitimate leadership on the country; as having failed to consult accepted Afghan channels to design, finance, and implement the redevelopment effort; and for our failure to require accountability of Afghan officials and foreign contractors, which created a ripe environment for rampant embezzlement and graft.

Within this context, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Secretary General of NATO, in his January 18 editorial in the Washington Post, correctly asserts:

"The basic problem in Afghanistan is not too much Taliban; it's too little good governance. Afghans need a government that deserves their loyalty and trust; when they have it, the oxygen will be sucked away from the insurgency.", and that "...we are obliged to keep ramping up the military operation partly because of insufficient resources and coordination on the civilian side."

It is critical that US policy makers, and the American public at large, clearly understand these fundamental truths as we move forward in the "war on terror" and in pursuit of achievable goals in Afghanistan. How do we reconcile goals of Afghan self-governance and security within the context of a corrupt Afghan government, insufficient civilian resources, and a resurgent Taliban? How do we reconcile a US public (and electorate), tired and skeptical after 7 years of apparently inconclusive and certainly costly conflict, with the reality of the consequences of "failure" in Afghanistan? What are the consequences of this possible failure?

Before proposing any answers or solutions, let me first suggest a simple, comprehensive, highly idealistic but achievable goal statement which would best serve both Afghan and American long-term interests:

“To facilitate, support, and ultimately enable the Afghan people to actively participate in their own social, economic, and political future, free of exploitation by their own opportunistic power brokers, and free of the manipulation of their neighbors”.

If we accept this goal statement, anyone with a deep understanding of the Afghan situation can confirm that it is relatively easy to move on to the real issues, the most prominent of which are both cause and effect in a mutually reinforcing, vicious circle:

- security,
- Afghan government legitimacy and credibility, and
- drugs.

I am not going to address military tactical or strategic issues here, other than by allusion, because I am not qualified to do so. Our troops on the ground in Afghanistan continue to exhibit the highest commitment, courage, dedication, and sacrifice in fulfilling their goals, which tend to be understated and often misunderstood here at home. Furthermore, just because no clear strategy for the planned troop surge has been articulated for public consumption does not mean that a strategy does not exist.

Obviously, all three issues of security, legitimacy, and drugs are related and interdependent, and it is pointless to debate which must be addressed before the other. It is clearly a process, and a journey, with many roads being traveled at once. Military and security goal achievement generally can be articulated in a statistical format well understood by analysts, politicians, and the public, and it is a largely subjective process dominated by body counts, hectares of territory taken and held, numbers of Afghan troops and police trained, quantitative levels of armed conflict, etc. Achievement of corruption and drug-related goals is much more complex by definition and requires a much more complex matrix of criteria to quantify. More importantly, it requires a far more radical and, in the case of any US policy makers with an evangelical enthusiasm for electoral democracy and human rights in Afghanistan, an often counter- intuitive strategy to achieve long term goals. It also requires an in-depth understanding of and willingness to engage traditional Afghan patterns and processes (using anthropological definitions of these terms) which may be anathema to western defined socio-political causes over the short term.

### **Where Corruption In Afghanistan Comes From**

Afghanistan has emerged from 30 years of war dominated by a small number of internal Afghan power brokers, most of whom are viewed by the public at large as illegitimate in their positions of power. Many of these “players” are known war criminals who have perpetrated unimaginable crimes against their own countrymen, or are common criminals, i.e., drug mafia, weapons smugglers, etc. In the absence of any underlying Afghan legal, legislative, or executive government infrastructure which would support even the rudiments of a civil society like that which we Americans often take for granted, these thugs continue to opportunistically appropriate the water, land, livestock, and other property of their weaker constituents. They order fearful and brutal retaliation against

critics and political opponents who dare to publicly challenge them, and openly and blatantly exploit (by systematic beatings, murder, rape, torture, kidnapping, and other forms of extreme intimidation), anyone who does not have the power to resist. While we in the West tend to incorrectly categorize these gun holders, drug dealers, weapons merchants, criminal gangs, and militia commanders generically as “warlords”, this is a simplistic generalization which can be self defeating when it comes to understanding who they really are; what kind of relationship we should have with them; and how we should ultimately deal with them. These illegal actors have nearly totally displaced (often with our support) and subverted the legitimate community, tribal, provincial, and national power structures which are understood and traditionally respected by the Afghan people. Many of them are actually our surrogates, and are therefore now identified (by association) with the USA in maintaining security in broad swaths of the country where we are otherwise unable to maintain security ourselves because our forces are grossly under-resourced for the task at hand.

This illegitimate power structure extends to the highest positions of government, including the President’s immediate family, and to his “tribe” (another widely misused and misunderstood term in the Afghan context). In a complex system of patronage, this illegitimate power structure also extends pervasively to the lowest echelons of the army, the police and the government bureaucracy. Above all else, Afghans expect legitimacy in their leadership. It may sound quaint, but it needs to be taken absolutely seriously. If Afghan leadership in *shuras* (or councils), government, the police, or other positions of authority is not appointed by well known and well understood traditional processes, then that leadership is seen as illegitimate. If leadership is illegitimate, then it has no legal authority. Without authority, it has no legitimate power to make binding decisions, mediate or resolve conflicts, or make and enforce rules- in short, there is no recognized authority or legitimate power to perform the required and expected functions of government. In the ultimate fulfillment of the maxim that “likes beget likes”, illegal leaders, police, military, and council members appoint illegal underlings who create illegal obligations and dependencies, and demand payments to perform the routine daily tasks of government- enforcing the law, providing protection from criminals, licensing business functions, clearing customs, taxation, etc. These underlings then appoint sub-underlings, who appoint sub-sub underlings, and the process continues down to the traffic policemen who “control” every street intersection, all of whom are engaged in graft. This level of pervasive illegitimacy results in chaos, and, in Afghanistan, this ultimately leads to the opportunistic exploitation of the weak (the great majority of the population) by the strong (the few). Through a perverse pyramid effect, even the weak participate- by exploiting the weaker, continually down the line until there is nobody weaker to exploit, ending finally with the poorest of the poor, who pay proportionately the highest price.

It should be noted that the foreign community in general, international development assistance organizations specifically, the US military, NATO and their contractors, all play a huge role in the opacity and corresponding ease of illegal diversions of funds, and the overall dilution and corruption of post-9/11 foreign cash flows to Afghanistan. We have created many of the opportunities for Afghan embezzlers to act with impunity, and

our own nationals and our third-country contractors also need to be exposed and brought to justice. It is not just an “Afghan” problem.

“Corruption” in Afghanistan, therefore, is just another word for “a total lack of accountability”, and, when the abusers are the very officials who are supposed to protect the people, and are generally defined as “government”, then the people have no hope. In an atmosphere of total cynicism, chaos ensues, and it becomes rapidly obvious that the maintenance of chaos, rather than the creation of stability, is in the best interests of the few who hold illegitimate power. Chaos in Afghanistan is also arguably in the perceived best interests of many of its neighbors. This adds to the complexity of the model, has historically been a source of befuddlement for the American policy establishment, and has bedeviled American policy implementation in the region for decades.

### **What to Do About Corruption In Afghanistan**

Because corruption starts at the top, this is the best place to immediately address it. While the legitimacy of the election of President Hamid Karzai, and the incredible, subsequent squandering of the popular support of the majority of his countrymen are matters of growing public disgust, he can overcome these deficits by taking radical measures to show that he is truly a public servant, rather than the slave of the illegal power brokers and his tainted personal constituents. He can do this only with tremendous personal sacrifice. It may be too late, for him personally, but the desired results can be achieved by him, or his successor, if the following proposed actions are executed with decisive and relentless resolve:

Activate Afghanistan’s “Truth and Reconciliation Court” (TRC). You will be hard pressed to find any reference to this Court on any Afghan government web site or forum. A viable alternative would be an internationalized chamber elsewhere within the Afghan criminal justice system. President Karzai has stated that the country is not ready to confront it’s past, and in 2007, the USA and the international community stood by, largely silent, as the Afghan Parliament, many members of which have been implicated by credible witnesses as war criminals, passed two amnesty bills forgiving crimes committed during the civil war. The Court needs to be reconvened, reconstituted, and re-empowered to pursue the interests of the aggrieved, which represents millions (yes, millions) of the Afghan people, and represents the full demographic spectrum of the Afghan population.

There are two groups of “power brokers” that President Karzai needs to expose and bring to public and transparent hearings, and, thereby, to justice. They are broadly defined as war criminals, or those committing mass crimes against humanity, and drug racketeers. The two are interrelated. Unfortunately, this late in the game, corruption at the highest levels of government can be eliminated only at a huge personal cost to President Karzai, a Poppalzai Pashtun from Kandahar. This is because the problem, as represented by the “drug racketeer” group, is known to start within his own family, clan, tribe, and province. These are the sources of President Karzai’s power and support, and are the constituents that he is obliged to enrich and protect by tradition and custom. They, their comrades and

competing drug mafias, are the source of much of the opium revenue generated in Kandahar and Helmand provinces, comprising something on the order of 90% of the world's illegal opium production, and reportedly as much as 70% of the Afghan economy. Their power and connections at local, regional, national, and even international levels effectively provide immunity from prosecution. Because of the sheer magnitude of their crimes, they should be thoroughly investigated, and, if there is a reasonable probability of guilt, apprehended by motivated and specially trained Afghan army or police units supported by international coalition forces. For cases beyond the capabilities of the TRC or other internationalized chamber, they can be charged and brought to trial at an Afghan War Crimes Tribunal at the International Criminal Court in The Hague, or a special UN court (per the Bosnia model) empowered by the UN Security Council to hear charges against Afghan war criminals and drug king pins.

One prime candidate for narcotics charges investigation and exposure is President Karzai's younger brother, Ahmad Wali Karzai. In 2006, the US Embassy announced an investigation of Ahmad Wali Karzai, and then let the case evaporate, pointing to a lack of local Afghan resources and political will to prosecute such a suspect as justification for our inaction. This is seen by the population at large as positive proof of our collusion with the Karzai regime to underwrite and perpetuate the ethical bankruptcy of the Karzai government, principally for simple expediency and financial profit. It is seen by non-Pashtun Afghans as clear evidence of Pashtun manipulation of the national political process and the government. Anyone who is knowledgeable and even aware of the situation sees the lack of investigation of the President's brother as confirmation of the truly magnificent and twisted ease with which our enemies are able to use illegal but officially sanctioned drug profits to finance their acts of terror and foment chaos to discredit the Afghan government, the international community, and the rule of law.

The other criminal group of interest comprises those who traditionally have been grouped together under the label of "war criminals", and which includes not only those who tortured, murdered, raped, and otherwise brutalized segments of the Afghan population during their nearly 35 years of armed conflict, but also those who continue to do so now. Many are shielded by their high level positions in the Afghan government, their "special relationships" with other illegal Afghan power brokers, or with units of foreign intelligence agencies who value them or their role in the provincial security apparatuses which have been sanctioned and even actively supported by the US and other foreign governments.

A prime candidate for war crimes charges, and more recent charges of murder, torture, rackets, and other crimes, is General Abdul Raschid Dostum, the Uzbek militia commander (and so much more), until recently operating out of Maimana in northern Afghanistan. General Dostum was recently "exiled" to Turkey as a result of his reportedly ordering the second multiple gang-rape of an Afghan government official who had dared to criticize him in public. During the Afghan civil war, Dostum reportedly murdered thousands (yes, thousands) of Taliban Pashtun prisoners of war by loading them into sealed ocean containers, shooting, and purposefully suffocating them. Mass graves have been found by international coalition forces; there are credible eye-witness

testimonials (reportedly by US SOF personnel, among others); and there are many more charges. In 2001, even knowing who Dostum really was, as one of our “key allies in the war on terror”, we awarded him the responsibility of maintaining security and stability for much of the northern 25% of the country, where he continued brutalizing his charges until his “exile” late in 2008. Exiling Gen. Dostum to Turkey (where he has been welcomed previously with open arms as the protector of Turkic- language speakers in Afghanistan) is a form of early retirement, is a total abandonment of his victims, and is a blatant insult to the survivors of his systematic abuse.

Hamid Karzai would open a new era in public confidence in his regime if he were to use all the tools at his disposal- like US and NATO forces acting in concert with properly trained and managed Afghan security forces- to support a meaningful reconstitution of the Truth and Reconciliation Court or establishment of an internationalized chamber, and to bring perpetrators to justice at an Afghan Tribunal at the International Criminal Court or UN Tribunal. He should do this not only to prosecute the criminals that have been imposed upon him, and which he has allowed himself to be surrounded by, but, more importantly, to provide a national forum for the grievances of the Afghan people to be heard. There are many models for national commissions which have been a vehicle for national reconciliation, for aggrieved citizens to confront their tormentors, for compensation to be paid, apologies to be given, justice served, and the healing to begin. But, arguably at this juncture, the most important benefit would be for Hamid Karzai to stand up and to show his people that he stands for them as a nation, even at the expense of his cronies. Pashtuns would see their Uzbek tormentors, Hazaras would see their Pashtun tormentors, Kabulis would see their Tajik tormentors, all brought to accountability, without the accusers suffering a personal fear of retribution. Seeing the end of favoritism as a basis for the dispensation of justice would be a huge step toward a nationalist concept which is largely absent, and lend hope to millions that there is a future assured for them in a Constitution, rather than denied, or assured, because of their individual socio-economic origin.

### **Why Is There So Much Opium Poppy In Afghanistan Right Now?**

When I was in Afghanistan in 1972-5, the country was the second largest national net exporter of dried fruit, specifically raisins, in the world, and was nearly self sufficient in food production. There were massive agricultural/ integrated rural development projects, like the Helmand river valley irrigation and hydropower scheme (a USAID project), and these resources were further developed by the Soviets during their occupation 1978-1989, especially in Nangarhar Province. Afghanistan has a long and successful agricultural and horticultural history. Opium and hashish have always been a part of it, albeit less than now.

Even if a farmer is blessed with good weather, has the required know-how, and access to other inputs like fertilizer and pesticide, water, etc., being successful requires more than just an ability to produce nice fruit and vegetables. It also requires access to markets (roads and a practical and inexpensive means of transportation), and a network of other agro-industrial resources like processing, packaging, storage, and distribution facilities.

Without these inputs and resources, produce must be consumed or traded locally, and, in Afghanistan, most “local” markets are small, poor, and widely dispersed. This relegates remote, rural producers to a barter economy, and it is difficult to sell crops for cash. You trade your eggplant for my wheat. I trade the wheat for potatoes, etc. What if I need antibiotics, or fuel, or clothing?

The lion’s share of opium in Afghanistan is grown away from major roads and transportation, and in non-irrigated, dry-land farming areas far from markets, where farmers are dirt poor. Many do not have irrigation wells, and, even if they did, could not afford the pump or the fuel to run it to get the water to irrigate their crops. They cannot afford fertilizer and pesticides to grow marketable produce. They cannot afford it because they have no cash, and they have no cash because they have no practical access to markets. Their produce would spoil or be battered to pulp, before they could be taken the necessary distance by donkey cart or trader’s truck to a market to be sold for cash.

Opium, on the other hand, is easy and inexpensive to grow. A dealer comes to a farmer’s home, pays him a substantial down payment, and gives him poppy seeds. The farmer basically throws these seeds on the un-irrigated ground, and, a few months later, when the plants are mature, he scrapes the raw opium off the scored flower pods and puts it in a bag for the dealer, who pays the remaining cash balance, and leaves. The farmer doesn’t have to make any investment, the raw opium can travel for weeks without degrading, there are no marketing or food processing problems, and the farmer supports his family throughout the cycle with cash rather than barter.

The Afghan farmer has no conscious desire to participate in a criminal enterprise, no religious or political motivation to poison American youth with heroin, or to do anything other than feed his family. Afghanistan is an agricultural economy. It is a nation of farmers.

### **What To Do About The Opium Poppy (Drug) Problem In Afghanistan:**

1. Do not interfere with the Afghan farmer in his honest effort to feed his family. In the absence of viable alternative livelihoods, poppy is the only sustainable choice for many Afghan farmers.
2. Do not attempt to eradicate poppy crops without providing viable alternative livelihoods to Afghan farmers. No eradication program (Turkey, India, Thailand, etc.) has ever been successful without first providing market access and profitable alternative crops to farmers. With viable crop, financial, and market alternatives, farmers can be given other incentives and pushed to switch over. If you remove the farmer’s only livelihood, he will resist; he will be desperate and therefore easily indoctrinated and manipulated; and he will support the opposition - in this case, the Taliban and the drug gangs.
3. While we should not persecute the farmer, who basically has little choice, we should be ruthless, persistent, and determined in eliminating all other players in the post-harvest, raw opium-to-heroin value chain. Find them and use motivated

Afghan police and military units to incarcerate or kill them. Show no mercy. Destroy them.

4. Eliminating the opium-to-heroin value chain removes the market for the farmers' raw product. Therefore, at the same time, continue to make massive investments in rural development projects to provide credit, improved road access, water and electrical power to villages. Experience from other countries which have been successful in largely eliminating poppy production (Turkey, Thailand) shows that when markets are accessible, and farmers can afford inputs for other, even more profitable legitimate crops, they can be given incentives, or forced, to change over. Short term, innovative programs will be necessary to assist the farmers to transition from poppy to legitimate crops.
5. Empower local councils to protect the assets created by these massive investments. The ultimate solutions to Afghan local security problems are Afghan solutions, including the local control of security resources. Legitimate, local councils are in the best position to assess the feasibility of mounting local tribal militias, or welcoming and employing government police or army units.

Incredulous, many will point out that Afghan farmers have grown wealthy from easy money from growing poppy, and that no other "even more profitable crops" exist. Both sentiments are patently false. Without investment in irrigation and other infrastructure which can extend growing seasons, rural, remote, unprotected Afghan "dollar-a-day" farmers are still "dollar-a-day" farmers, no matter what crop they grow. In the case of poppy growers, they do not directly benefit from the exorbitant profits reaped in the down-stream value chain or markets for their crop. While they have some security in their relationship with their seed suppliers, if their crop fails after receiving the initial performance deposit, the consequences can be dire, and they have no recourse. They are, in fact, weak in their position, and have no access to alternative markets for their crop.

There are several alternative crops, mostly horticultural, which compete very favorably against poppy as a revenue source for Afghan farmers, even in the current markets, given a certain quality of presentation and access to those markets. Even as unprocessed produce, apricots, almonds, sour oranges, and pomegranates are all attractive on a per-hectare basis. Additionally, Afghan produce enjoys an excellent reputation, and is in high demand, in other regional markets in India, Russia, the UAE, and elsewhere. With the introduction of world-class processing and distribution support, there is no reason why Afghan produce cannot compete on a global standard. By making investments in value-added agro processing for export markets, Afghanistan has the capacity to mount a very credible export revenue generator. This is immediately demonstrated by the fact that Afghan produce is currently available in many of these markets, courtesy of Pakistani food processors. As an aside, many assert that Pakistan, which operates fleets of trucks to purchase and bring Afghan fruit to Pakistan for processing (and often for sale back into Afghan markets) has made a concerted, multi-faceted effort to stunt Afghan agro industry to protect its own position in this lucrative value chain.

The keys to success in reducing the pernicious corruption and wide spread drug production in Afghanistan rest in these and other concerted actions. In working with

respected and publicly acknowledged Afghan leaders to identify tactics and strategies that work, the real results will come from consistently, honestly, and doggedly following up on these measures from the top down, when it comes to apprehension of criminals of all kinds, from all “tribes”, over the long term. Past practice has been for the government to submit to some public outrage and to arrest a protected offender with great fanfare, and then to release him quietly later when nobody is paying attention. The effort needs to be real, systematic, permanent and fair. Drug cultivation will decrease when there are practical, and more attractive opportunities for farmers. Poppy cultivation is a business which allows farmers to feed their families. We have allowed poppy farming to become politicized by our inattention to this ultimate reality, by our propensity to define solutions to the drug issue in moralistic terms, and to sometimes opportunistically use the drug sub-economy to our own short-term advantage militarily or politically.

## **Conclusions**

Modern Afghan culture has been driven to a large extent by foreign manipulation and indoctrination (especially of the extremist kind), and has emerged after 35 years of conflict as an opportunistic culture, with a “zero-sum” mentality. But the visible manifestations of greed, violence, exploitation, and criminality mask an underlying and traditional culture of values which we Americans will recognize as our own- honor, integrity, courage, duty, service and loyalty. No rational person who has been to Afghanistan in the last 30 years sees an opportunity to establish “some sort of Central Asian Valhalla” in Afghanistan, as DOD Secretary Gates rather condescendingly remarked in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on January 27. We Americans (and others in the international community) only need to make a long term commitment to provide enough breathing room to legitimate Afghan leaders and to the greater, victimized masses of the Afghan population to rediscover those values from their traditions, to plot a direction that makes sense to them and is sustainable within their cultural context, and to become more adaptive to a globalized 21<sup>st</sup> century reality. If we do not, they will simply continue to be manipulated and exploited by the worst elements that their own society and the region can offer.

It is critical that we recognize that western notions and definitions of modernization, progress and performance- even time and space- are inextricably entwined in the Afghan psyche with imperialism, foreign interference, and occupation. Many of the manipulators and exploiters are adept at exploiting these preconceptions. Predictably, the most conservative elements of the tribal and religious establishments will respond to any perceived threats to their doctrines with regressive, rather than progressive fundamentalist initiatives. A sound plan and response to these initiatives would recognize that the foreign radical doctrines (Wahabi, al-Qaida/ Quetta shura, etc.) which have been foisted off on the Afghan people over the last 30+ years are anathema to traditional Afghan Islamic practice and are alien and unwelcome to the vast majority of the Afghan people. Again, Afghan solutions proposed and implemented without fear of recrimination, rather than foreign imposed solutions, will be the key to our success. America and the West has to accept that these Afghan solutions might not immediately replicate our own vision of appropriate social or political models fully incorporating our

own increasingly progressive definitions of electoral democracy and human rights. Yes, “Valhalla” is a long way off. But we can achieve a much higher return on our investment in Afghanistan if we calibrate our expectations around efforts addressing government legitimacy, enforcing the basic foundations of the rule of law, war crimes restitution, and realistic alternative livelihoods for poppy growers while relentlessly prosecuting drug racketeers.

Many hopeful westerners point to revolutionary, historical modernizers in Muslim countries whom we would like to see emulated in Afghanistan- “Where in Afghanistan”, you might ask, “is your Kemal Ataturk (Founder of the Turkish Republic), Shah Pahlevi (Shah of Iran until 1978), or your Sheikh Mohammad (Ruler of Dubai)?” Aghast, most Afghans will point out that they are all apostates who secularized their nations and betrayed their own people to the will of the West. Our solutions hold no credence. The challenge is to find ways to show Afghans that it is in their best interests to adopt more adaptive patterns and processes which will enable them, and show them that it is possible, to be successful as a nation and a people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

What are the consequences of failure? As we all know, history has a way of repeating itself. We created a vacuum by abruptly withdrawing support from Afghanistan in 1989 when the Soviet Red Army retreated. The result was years of civil war, displacement of millions to camps in Pakistan and Iran, the radicalization of a previously moderate and modernizing society, the rise of the Taliban, the creation of training camps from where al-Qaida sent teams to bomb our embassies, blow up our ships, hijack our aircraft.....

Achievement of the ultimate goal that the Taliban and al Qaida will be routed and unable to attack us again will never occur as a milestone event. It can only be continuously achieved as an ongoing, long term process requiring constant vigilance. To question whether we have the time, the patience and the money to pursue such a comprehensive goal (as Mr. Gates did in his January 27 testimony) is to admit both a lack of understanding of the region, and a lack of understanding of what is at stake. Any vacuum created by our inaction or less than full commitment, or by our less than continuous focus in the foreseeable future will be filled by local and regional opportunists who are, by our default, more serious and driven than we are, and who will continue to exploit these Muslim, uneducated, largely agrarian, and cynical but somehow still hopeful people.

We Americans, and others, are doing much in Afghanistan which is right. Education, training, and employment; physical infrastructure and development; military, police, and other security force and institution building; integrated rural development and agricultural schemes- and many other efforts- all have a role in supporting Afghanistan’s emergence into a regional geo-political reality, and in helping Afghans to find a successful niche in a globalized world economy. But they will all be to no avail if there is no underlying rule of law and no civil society as underpinnings to their sustainability. This can only occur in an atmosphere presided over by legitimate Afghan leadership, where there is truly blind justice, and where the Afghan people can pursue life, liberty, prosperity and happiness in a reasonably secure environment.