

# Losing the War in Afghanistan: Lessons in Dogmatic Unilateralism and Fractured Management in Government Agencies

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*When you're wounded and left on Afghanistan's plains,  
and the women come out to cut up what remains,  
jest roll to your rifle and blow out your brains  
and go to your gawd like a soldier.*  
- Rudyard Kipling

Central Asia has a long history of turbulent political climates and near-incessant warring, though few nations in the area have seen as many invaders and conquerors as Afghanistan. The beginning of modern Afghanistan is largely attributed to the rise of the Durrani Empire under Shah Durrani in 1747, though it quickly became ground zero for a series of power grabs played out by various colonial powers.<sup>1</sup> The British Foreign Office regarded Afghanistan as one of its “buffer states” in Central Asia, essential in neutralizing Russian geopolitical interests in regards to the British Raj in India.<sup>2</sup> Although Afghans resisted direct British rule in 1814 and again in 1881, the latter conflict won with only several thousand bolt-action Lee-Enfield rifles as their only means of weaponry, the nation was under indirect rule or influence of the British Empire for the better part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1893, Britain and Afghanistan settled their border disputes under the Durand agreement, immediately mitigating rising tensions in the area but sowing the seeds for civil unrest in the next century by arbitrarily drawing borders along strategic rather than ethnic lines.<sup>3</sup> These ethnic divisions are mirrored by the linguistic diversity of the newly mapped nation, where the northern, central, and western areas spoke Dari as the *lingua franca*, and the south spoke Pashto.<sup>4</sup>

Following World War I, Afghanistan tossed the yoke of the British Empire to gain full independence, until the rise of a communist regime in 1973.<sup>5</sup> In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, and the next decade pitted the Afghan Mujaheddin in a bitter guerilla war against the occupying forces, leaving the country in shambles and razing the majority of civilian infrastructure outside of the capital of Kabul. Today Afghanistan’s battered condition is a reminder of the nation’s nearly 20 years of war, which has left some 1.5 million dead and nearly 5 million displaced. The Soviet Union committed approximately \$45 billion to defeat the Mujaheddin, and eventually had to withdraw in 1989 in defeat. The United States committed some \$4-5 billion, augmented by funds from Saudi Arabia and some European countries, for a total of \$10 billion for the Mujaheddins’ cause.<sup>6</sup> The U.S. also provided logistics, munitions, resources, and training until pulling out abruptly in 1989, expressing interest only in recovering the shoulder-launched, anti-aircraft missiles known as the Stinger, used to shoot down armored Soviet helicopters.<sup>7</sup> The largely agrarian, war-torn, and ethnically diverse populace of the country was now left without any outside assistance in rebuilding their cindered nation.

The largest of Afghanistan's ethnicities, the Pashtun, based in the south and east, often claim to represent more than 60% of the country's population; although outside sources peg the figure at no more than 40%. The Pashtuns have dominated most Afghan governments dating back several centuries, and regard their dominance in governing as their birthright.<sup>8</sup> The Durrani Pashtuns who inhabit the south of the country, predominantly around the city of Kandahar, received far less aid during the Soviet war than the Ghilzai Pashtuns, who inhabit the east of the country and the areas surrounding Kabul. This aid was funneled by the West via the CIA to the Pakistani Interservices Intelligence Agency (ISI). The ISI wielded considerable power and displayed a tactically devastating lack of discretion in their distribution of arms, logistics, and auxiliary services, such as medical facilities and supplies, and tended to view the Durrani with suspicion.<sup>9</sup> This favoritism bred contentions in the divisive Pashtun power hierarchy, and paved the way for the development of more fundamentalist sects.

When resistance against the Soviet occupation began in and around Kandahar, it was a tribal jihad that was led by clan chiefs and religious scholars known as *ulema*, not an ideological jihad led by Islamicists (Muslim fundamentalists). The former, more traditional in ideology and tribal in their loyalties, was more tolerant of non-Pashtun ethnic minorities and less fundamentalist in nature. However, Islamicist factions soon began to appear, fostered by the increasing intervention of Pakistan and the ISI in the area, and a constant power struggle between the vying factions eventually resulted in Kandahar being effectively without any stable leadership by 1994.<sup>10</sup> This power vacuum set the stage for an even more conservative and aggressive faction to emerge: the Taliban.

Following the defeat of the Soviets in 1989 and the collapse of the communist regime several years later, Afghanistan as a whole was in a state of disintegration before the emergence of the Taliban. The country was under the control of roughly four separate entities: President Burhanuddin Rabbani in Kabul and immediate environs, Ismael Khan in Herat in the west, a Mujaheddin council, or *Shura*, controlled three Pashtun provinces in the east, and warlord Gulbuddin Hikmetyar controlled a region in the south centered around Kandahar. Additionally, Uzbek warlord General Rashid Dostum nominally controlled some provinces in the north, Hazara militias controlled the central province of Bamiyan, and countless other areas were the subjects of constant battles between former Mujaheddin turned warlords battling over petty fiefdoms.<sup>11</sup> However, it was Hikmetyar's notorious brutality specifically that would catalyze the development of the Taliban in the south. The nation had become so fractured as to no longer be stable or even functional.

A Ghilzai Pashtun named Mullah Omar, a Mujaheddin from Kandahar during the Soviet war, eventually diverged in ideology from the clan chiefs and *ulema* in the area to become more Islamicist. In 1994, he formed a small force of *Talib*, loyal militiamen aligned with his particular brand of Muslim fundamentalism, to confront the warlords controlling Kandahar at the time. This marked the beginning of the Taliban and its military operations. The nascent organization's closest links were with Pakistan, where many of its members had grown up and studied in *madrassas*, or Islamic schools, that were run by Maulana Fazlur Rehman and his Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam (JUI), a fundamentalist party with support amongst Pakistani Pashtuns in the areas of Baluchistan and Waziristan. He was also a political ally of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and had access

to the Pakistani government, including its intelligence agency the ISI.<sup>12</sup> This was the genesis of Pakistan's extremely controversial support of the Taliban. Dr. Abdullah Adbullah, head liaison of the anti-Taliban breakaway state known as the Northern Alliance, theorized that Pakistan's role in promoting the rise of the Taliban as a fundamentalist, radically anti-Western regime was to "create a reservoir of expertise and trained manpower from which it could draw in mounting its own campaign of bombings, assassinations, and terrorist attacks designed to break the Indian government's hold on the dispute province of Kashmir."<sup>13</sup>

By 1996, Mullah Omar and his now several-thousand strong army of Taliban fighters had captured Kabul, as well as having claimed the majority of the country in a blitzkrieg campaign of guerilla warfare. Some warlords or former Mujaheddin allied themselves with the Taliban, such as Gulbuddin Hikmetyar, while the remaining generals and Mujaheddin formed the Northern Alliance, an ethnically diverse entity of Tajiks, Uzbeks, Shia Hazaras, and some Pashtuns. The Northern Alliance was based mostly in the mountains of the north and around the city of Mazar-e-Sharif, and was under the command of the charismatic and talented general Ahmed Shah Masood.<sup>14</sup> The Northern Alliance's efforts had been enough to deny the Taliban international legitimacy, but posed no real threat to the Taliban's hold on the country.<sup>15</sup> The Taliban initially enjoyed significant popular support for dividing the fractured country, until the Taliban instilled the strictest interpretation of *Sharia*, or Islamic law, ever seen in the Muslim world.<sup>16</sup> They appropriated opium production in the areas under their control, and used the lucrative proceeds to bribe any factions or areas that continued to resist their rule amongst the war-weary Pashtun tribes.<sup>17</sup>

They received considerable financial support from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia until the return of Osama bin-Laden to Afghanistan in 1998.<sup>18</sup> He had served as a Mujaheddin in the Soviet war, and was widely lauded for his bravery, courage, and abilities as a leader and engineer. Saudi Arabia then withdrew their support, which was based more on the fundamentalist ideology the Taliban espoused that was similar to the Saudi sect of Islam known as Wahabism, after the arrival of bin-Laden.<sup>19</sup> Having lived and operated in the Sudan throughout the 1990's until 1998, bin-Laden persistently issued vitriolic rhetoric condemning Saudi Arabia's complicit co-operation with what he characterized as American imperialism in the Muslim world.<sup>20</sup> On September 9, 2001, his al-Qaeda operatives assassinated Ahmed Shah Massood, effectively destroying the Northern Alliance's chances of defeating the Taliban.<sup>21</sup> Two days later the United States, under international scrutiny and support, was forced to confront bin-Laden after al-Qaeda perpetrated their first successful attacks on American soil after a string of terrorist strikes in Africa and the Middle East throughout the 1990's.<sup>22</sup> The United States was now officially at war with the Taliban and its al-Qaeda co-conspirators, and Afghanistan was to be the battleground where the campaign would unfold.

Ambassador James F. Dobbins would lead the American effort to forge a provisional government that could transfer power from U.S. military forces, headed by General Tommy Franks from his headquarters in Tampa, Florida, to the Afghan people. Chief among these tasks was designating a leader for the transitional government, and to address the contentious division of power and minority groups, there was considerable debate surrounding the issue. Mohammed Zahir Shah, the king of Afghanistan until his escape in 1973 following the communist *coup d'etat*, was a Durrani Pashtun from the

south who had sizable contingent of supporters.<sup>23</sup> Many Afghan clan chiefs and leaders, notably of Pashtun tribal lines, viewed the Shah's reign from 1933 to 1973 as a golden age, though he ruled largely from his capital in Kabul and held little actual sway over the more rural areas. Additionally, many American policy makers felt that he could be a unifying figure, even despite his indecisive reign and the traditional pitfalls of centralizing power in Afghanistan's fractious power hierarchy.<sup>24</sup>

The leading Northern Alliance liaison and a protégé of Ahmed Shah Masood, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, communicated to Ambassador Dobbins that the next leader should be from the Pashtun south, rather than one of the Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara leaders from the north, center, and west of the country.<sup>25</sup> Masood himself was a Tajik, and the Northern Alliance was composed mostly, though not exclusively, of non-Pashtun minorities.<sup>26</sup> Ultimately, it was widely agreed that Mohammed Zahir Shah was not the most suited candidate, partly because of his status as a figurehead rather than an actual leader and partly because of his exclusive ties to the Pashtun ethnic group. Furthermore, Burhanuddin Rabbani, a Tajik conservative cleric who was inaugurated president in 1992, maintained his claim as the lawful leader of the Afghan nation, further complicating the process of developing a transitional government.<sup>27</sup>

During a diplomatic mission headed by Ambassador Dobbins, Dr. Abdullah specified that Hamid Karzai would be an acceptable choice. This endorsement was echoed by the Northern Alliance's Interior Minister Younis Qanooni and Defense Minister Mohammed Fahim.<sup>28</sup> A representative of Pakistan's ISI further suggested Hamid Karzai, and Muhammad Ibrahim Taherian, Iranian ambassador to the Northern Alliance, also gave Tehran's explicit support of Karzai as an acceptable leader. India's envoy, S.K. Lambha, and Russia's representative Zamir Kabulov, a Russified Uzbek who was a middle-ranking diplomat with extensive experience in Central Asia, both supported Karzai.<sup>29</sup> Though Karzai enjoyed a wide base of support from the various surrounding nations with vested interests in the region, he was more of a compromise than a strong leader with the inherent qualities required to rebuild a battered nation.

John Negroponte, the United States ambassador to the United Nations in 2001, accepted Ambassador Dobbins' suggestion that the UN take initiative and call a conference at which the transitional Afghan government would be formed, where all factions could be represented or face forfeiture of their ability to determine the make-up of the government. The United Nations was the only international entity that had maintained continuous presence in Afghanistan, thereby making it the only international political body that knew all the major players.<sup>30</sup> Lakdar Brahimi, a former Algerian foreign minister and longtime confidant of Kofi Annan, was the top-ranking UN official to Afghanistan, and on Nov 9, 2001 Brahimi specified to Ambassador Dobbins which delegations were to attend the conference. The two chief groups would be the mostly Tajik, Uzbek, and Shia Northern Alliance and the more ethnically homogenous royalists who remained supporters of the former king, Zahir Shah. The third and fourth delegations would be composed of émigré leaders in Pakistan and opposition figures with links to Iran, respectively.<sup>31</sup> The conference was held in December 2001 in the German town of Bonn, and it resulted in Hamid Karzai being named leader and that the United States maintain a small force of troops known as the International Assistance Security Force (ISAF) only in Kabul, explicitly disallowing any significant number of American troops to be used in nation-building or peace-keeping operations.<sup>32</sup>

Following the events of September 11, 2001, Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf immediately voiced support for the United States and specified that official Pakistani policy towards Afghanistan was to not endorse terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda or the Taliban.<sup>33</sup> Intelligence sources have actively maintained that Musharraf was either pandering to American interests without actual implementation of his stated policies or was just entirely unable to control both the ISI, largely infiltrated by operatives sympathetic to Islamicist militancy, or Pakistan's largely Pashtun western provinces.<sup>34</sup> However, under the aegis of Ambassador Dobbins and various U.S. diplomats, Pakistan maintained a very active role in the Bonn conference, continuously voicing concerns that the Northern Alliance, which would be beholden to India, was growing too powerful in their demands for increased representation. They also expressed extreme concern when Northern Alliance soldiers occupied Kabul during their southward expansion under the protective auspices of U.S. military airpower in November of 2001. The Taliban just abandoned Kabul when their defensive lines had been breached at Bagram airbase, a large military complex just north of Kabul.<sup>35</sup> Pakistan exerted diplomatic pressure that Kabul not be liberated until a Pashtun or international force could occupy it.<sup>36</sup> However, with Kabul recently abandoned, the Northern Alliance, now under the *de facto* leadership of General Fahim, was concerned that the city would descend into chaos.<sup>37</sup> By Ambassador Dobbins' account, the Northern Alliance provided ample security and order upon his first visit to the city, despite the myriad protestations of Pakistan.<sup>38</sup>

Additionally, Iran played an important role as well, as the nation had been the largest backer of the Northern Alliance for many years. Furthermore, there were several million Afghan refugees living in Iran and its borders served as the violent crossroads where opium from Afghanistan traveled to the West to be purified into heroin.<sup>39</sup> However, the hard-line stance of the United States towards Iran in diplomatic relations since the ousting of the Shah of Iran in 1979 and the rise of a Shia fundamentalist autocracy made communication and compromise difficult and strained.

Furthermore, the United States engaged in potentially destabilizing doublespeak with Iran, and Department of Defense emissaries contacted violent anti-Iranian operatives while the Bonn Conference was occurring, acting without White House or State Department sanction. This was characteristic of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's *modus operandi* at the time, using the Department of Defense as a separate entity from other operational agencies and even developing redundant tactical resources to make it less dependent on CIA paramilitary activities. The Bush administration specifically impeded progress made by other agencies in developing diplomatic relations with Iran during the Bonn conference. This was a fatal error, considering that an Iranian envoy was responsible for suggesting to Ambassador Dobbins that language about fair elections and a commitment to anti-terrorist activity be included in the Bonn agreement.<sup>40</sup> The Bush administration later turned down an Iranian offer to help train troops, and labeled the country as one of three in its "axis of evil."<sup>41</sup>

Following the Clinton administration, President Bush instilled an ideological sea-change in foreign policy. Most germane to the topic at hand were the peace-keeping operations, ranging from successful to disastrous, that had occurred during the previous presidency. These included operations in Somalia in 1993, Haiti in 1994, Bosnia in 1995, and Kosovo in 1999. They were particularly criticized, and one component of the newly

revamped foreign policy included a total change in the use of American military force abroad. Condoleezza Rice wrote in 2000 that the American military “is not a civilian police force. It is not a political referee. And it is most certainly not designed to build a civilian society.”<sup>42</sup> The Bush administration widely regarded both the Dayton Accords, which ended hostilities in Bosnia, and the Kosovo air war as “anti-models”, the former because it committed American troops to an open-ended peacekeeping mission and the latter because the United States allowed its allies to share in decision making.<sup>43</sup> The rigid adherence to the tenets of avoiding nation-building exercises and extreme unilateralism, all the while trying to export democratic laws and ideals, proved to be the undoing of the Bush administration’s handling of the Afghan war.

Furthermore, management power was fractionalized by the fact that the Bush administration had allowed a directive issued under former President Clinton as a Presidential Decision (PD) memorandum to lapse. Following the debacle in Somalia in 1993, the memorandum formalized a power hierarchy that appointed a single official at the sub-cabinet level to head all the divergent bureaus and agencies necessary for such a complex logistical task. During the diplomatic process in Afghanistan, several bureaus of the State Department, the NSC in the White House, and the Department of Defense all took part in the process, with no single official appointed as the head of operations.<sup>44</sup> The result was an inefficient management structure that often had conflicting and contradictory policy directives.

The administration’s adherence to unilateral policy making was particularly disastrous. General Wesley Clark became NATO's supreme allied commander in Europe (SACEUR) in the late 1990's, having also served as military advisor during the Dayton Accords. As SACEUR he pressed for a tougher Western response to Serbia's ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, and he achieved NATO's objectives without a single casualty. In mid-1999, senior United States air force officers wanted to attack civilian infrastructure targets in and around the Serbian capital of Belgrade, although General Clark steadfastly refused. As a result, the Bush administration immediately rebuffed NATO's offer of aid to Afghanistan.<sup>45</sup> This proved problematic as the United States was trying to sell the war as being a multilateral operation. By compromising the integrity of the mission, to hunt down Taliban and al-Qaeda soldiers, in maintaining strict unilateralism, the Bush administration sealed its fate in the eventual failure of the Afghan war.

General Clark also said that he was explicitly not allowed to initiate contact with anyone in the State Department or White House during the Kosovo crisis, but had to go through his superiors, Secretary of Defense Bill Cohen and Chairman of Joint Chiefs Hugh Shelton, both of whom strongly disagreed with his strategy of using American and European ground troops to secure contentious areas during the Kosovo campaign to protect civilians.<sup>46</sup> This aversion to ground warfare would continue amongst the cadre of high-ranking military policy makers in the Bush administration and prove disastrous in the aftermath of the Afghan war. In the early days of the Afghan war, protecting even our allies in southern Afghanistan proved to be exceedingly difficult, as even future leader Hamid Karzai had come under attack and had to be evacuated to Pakistan via helicopter. Also notable was the capture of the anti-Soviet Mujaheddin Abdul Haq when he re-entered Afghanistan with a battalion of loyal troops only to be quickly surrounded

by Taliban forces. U.S. forces fired a hellfire missile at the Taliban troops from a drone aircraft, but could not secure Haq's rescue.<sup>47</sup>

While the United States waged an exclusive air campaign and left local militias to provide most of the ground troops, Taliban and al-Qaeda soldiers escaped in large numbers over the porous border to Pakistan. Intelligence sources cite that several military engagements, including the battle of Tora Bora, could have served as nothing more than smokescreens to smuggle large numbers of Taliban fighters into Pakistan via the border town of Spin Baldak.<sup>48</sup> The borders had not even been secured, nor a sufficient perimeter established around the country, until late 2003.<sup>49</sup> The use of local warlords to wage a ground campaign on our behalf also proved to be a tremendous mistake, as in the now infamous case of General Rashid Dostum's operations in the northwestern provinces, where he would routinely butcher and terrorize the local populace - men, women, and children alike.<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, the State Department and the Department of Defense under Donald Rumsfeld engaged in a highly contentious disagreement over the possibility of expanding the ISAF's area of operations. The former insisted that more ground troops be used to reach areas outside of Kabul's limited sphere of influence and to protect civilians against local militias, whereas the latter doggedly avoided any expansion of U.S. ground troops. The result was a widespread decrease in Afghans' trust and faith in the peacekeeping forces as they were unable to even guarantee civilians' safety from rapacious warlords operating in the rural areas.<sup>51</sup> The Soviets were unable to rule the country by just occupying Kabul, nor were the British before them. By 2004, reports that the Taliban were returning to the country from their hiding places in the rural areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan began to emerge, and many intelligence sources stated that Pakistan's ISI was once more complicit in aiding the Taliban.<sup>52</sup>

With the resurgence of Taliban forces in Afghanistan, the probability of securing an effective military victory seems to be decreasing. The complex task of training the Afghan National Army (ANA) to be self-sufficient by British military forces has proven to be difficult, with one British commanding officer operating in the southern Helmand province, a current Taliban stronghold, commenting that he has given up even trying to get the Afghan troops to wear their flak jackets, helmets, or uniforms.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, British troops must remain judicious when informing ANA trainees of where their patrols will be traveling; for fear that they will contact Taliban operatives in exchange for bribes that are far larger than any salary guaranteed by the Afghan government.<sup>54</sup> The strategy of confining minimal ISAF forces to Kabul and immediate environs is largely to blame for the current ineffectiveness of forces operating outside the capital's immediate sphere of influence, as several years of violence under either the Taliban or U.S.-backed militias has terrorized the populace and effectively decreased any loyalty they may have had to outside peace-keeping forces.

The mistakes in handling the Afghan war have been numerous, but three in particular have had resounding negative repercussions. The previous administration's unilateralism, as evidenced by their rejection of NATO support and consistent antagonism of Iran, has threatened the legitimacy of the entire military campaign. This unilateralism alienated many potential allies in the region, and any successful military operation, especially in the climate of contemporary warfare, must be coupled with effective diplomacy and efficient peace-keeping and nation-building modalities. To

roundly reject the Clinton administration's qualified successes in Bosnia and Kosovo, following the failures in Somalia and Haiti, and to adhere to a policy of unilateralism and "shock and awe" warfare only leaves the civilian infrastructure further damaged, the populace largely alienated or terrorized, and the enemy more powerful than at the onset of hostilities. Diplomatic channels, as well as largely civilian agencies such as the State Department and the White House NSC, must be included in the rebuilding process. They must also have access to intelligence and expertise gathered by CIA and military operatives to keep them abreast of constantly changing circumstances in the field, and NATO forces can be integrated in to U.S. forces as long as a clear chain-of-command and full integration of military resources is implemented

Secondly, the use of an air campaign with minimal ground troops, a component of this "shock and awe" style of warfare, will not achieve the primary objectives that such a military operation must have: to capture the Taliban and al-Qaeda and render them powerless. By leaving local militias and warlords to do all the groundwork, largely a strategy formulated by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and General Tommy Franks (neither of whom were present in Afghanistan during the onset of the military campaign), a skewed war-by-proxy is waged in which the local militias will not achieve any of the primary objectives. Instead, they will a) use the ensuing power vacuum to secure power for themselves, usually by any means necessary, regardless of how brutal, b) accept bribes from the Taliban or al-Qaeda, both of whom have coffers filled with proceeds from opium production and Osama bin-Laden's personal largesse, or c) remain aligned, or at least sympathetic to, the Taliban based on either fundamentalist ideology or tribal allegiances. To ignore the complex, but navigable, web of Pashtun tribal clans is sheer ignorance, hubris, or both. This can only be mitigated by allowing ISAF forces to operate outside of Kabul and escort intelligence operatives, who have a working knowledge of local languages, customs, and allegiances, to rural areas so that they can engage in peace-keeping and nation-building modalities – a strategy that was roundly rejected by the Department of Defense during the early stages of the war.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, the dearth of ground troops created a situation where the borders and perimeter of Afghanistan were not secured, virtually guaranteeing the escape of Taliban soldiers to their faithful Pashtun brethren in western Pakistan. Only the presence of ground troops, preferably of an international entity such as NATO, can truly stabilize violent areas and both capture Taliban and al-Qaeda soldiers and control local militias and warlords vying for power in chaotic areas.

Finally, the fractured management schemata and relentless bureaucracy that guided the policy making process rendered all efforts at quick and effective decision making virtually impossible. For example, while Ambassador Dobbins used diplomatic channels to work with Iranian envoys, securing the inclusion of language that benefited both the Afghan people with free elections and the United States with anti-terrorism activities in the nascent transitional government, Department of Defense operatives worked other channels to antagonize Iranian interests. This was done without the knowledge of other agencies, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld doggedly attempted to limit the CIA's involvement in the Department of Defense, despite their expertise in paramilitary and intelligence activities. No contemporary army can wage an effective war and nation-building exercise without the benefit of extensive intelligence, of which the State Department and CIA both had in spades in regards to Afghanistan,

much of it gathered during the Soviet-Afghan war. Many of the same power players, Mujaheddin, and tribal chiefs that were instrumental in that war remained crucial to the very day that U.S. air forces waged an air campaign and the Northern Alliance began their southward march to reclaim land from the Taliban. Antagonism between various agencies, civilian or military, can not be tolerated because of the resulting gross ineffectiveness, and only a clear management hierarchy, full transparency of agency activities, and reliable access to intra-agency intelligence will be functional.

The only hope the United States has in defeating the Taliban is multilateralism, increased ground troops to participate in the previously anathema nation-building and peace-keeping operations, and a clear system of integration for the management of various agencies to ensure the most reliable intelligence is available. Otherwise the United States will undoubtedly fail, most notably for underestimating the tenacity, ingenuity, mobility, and loyalty of its enemy: just as the British and Soviets did previously. Meanwhile, the civilians in Afghanistan continue to suffer ignominy, terror, and hardship.

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