Here is the link to all the newsletters archived in the OMNI web site.

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Instead of Defense Department, War Department
Instead of War on Terror, War to Dominate World
Instead of Taliban, Pashtun/Afghan Resistance to Occupation

Nos. 15, 16, 17 at end.

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New Book: Little America
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Contents of #20 August 17, 2013 What Is the “Taliban”? 
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Persecution of Women in Afghanistan
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Ahmed, War on Terror = War on Tribal Islam
Rising and Faiez (AP), Taliban Penetrate to Center of Kabul
Chandrasekaran (WP), “Afghan War’s Whitest Elephant”
Afghanistan’s Guantanamo: Bagram
Hoh, Bring All Troops Home
Rashid, Pakistan on the Brink (of chaos)

RESISTANCE IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN
AFGHANISTAN’S HISTORY OF TENACIOUS RESISTANCE to INVASION AND OCCUPATION EXPLAINS ITS UNCONQUERABLE RESILIENCE

The name of the general who commanded the Afghan Army’s rout of the British in 1842 is Wazir Akbar Khan. Of the several thousand in the invading force, only one man returned alive. In the 1980s, the Russians ruled through their Kabul puppet government and enormous superiority of weapons, but they eventually fled the country. (Their success derived partly from the supply of arms from the US, including numerous portable anti-aircraft weapons.) And now they have fought the US to a standstill, and the US is leaving in defeat (and the country in ruins and a million dead). That’s astonishing given the firepower the US possessed. In 1842 the weapons were roughly equal, except for the British cannons. Today the Afghans have automatic rifles, but the US has planes and tanks and GPS. Yet still the Afghans resisted. What is it with those people? And is it the same as with the Vietnamese, who sustained horrendous bombings, napalm, chemical warfare, hundreds of My Lais, we now know, and two to three million killed? Let us remember who the “Taliban” are. They are Pashtun, and this is what the great “Pashtun Gandhi” said about them:

Is not the Pashtun amenable to love and reason?

He will go with you to hell if you can win his heart,

But you cannot force him even to go to heaven. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, quoted in Eknath Easwaran, Nonviolent Soldier of Islam (Nilgiri P, 1999), 95.

--Dick


“…the Khudai Khidmatgar movement [1924-1948] offered an example of radical nonviolent action, drawing from Islamic principles, and dialectically engaging with transnational debates.” --Dick

The Soviet invasion of neighbouring Afghanistan in December 1979 sparked a bloody nine-year conflict with the Mujahideen until Soviet forces withdrew in 1988-89, dooming the communist Afghanistan government to defeat by Afghan popular resistance backed by the USA and other powers. The Soviet invasion had enormous implications on the global stage; it prompted the US Senate to refuse to ratify the hard-won SALT II arms-limitation treaty, and the USA and 64 other countries boycotted the 1980 Moscow Summer Olympics. For Afghanistan, the invasion served to prolong the interminable civil war that pitted central government against the regions and faction against faction. The country remains locked in
conflict over 30 years later, with no end in sight.

For over a year before the invasion the communist Afghan government, installed following a coup and intent on forcibly modernizing the country's civil law in the face of centuries of feudal practices, had called for Soviet armed assistance in its efforts to overcome the open rebellion of the Mujahideen. Fearing the international consequences should the Afghan government be toppled, the Soviets decided to invade. From the outset, though, they failed to understand that communist principles were incompatible with traditional tribal relationships - especially in a country notorious for its poor communications and resistance to centralization.

The Soviets found that their forces, largely made up of conscripts untrained in mountain warfare and counter-insurgency - and deploying 'conventional' weapons such as tanks and helicopters - could not defeat guerrillas enjoying the support of both the local population and powerful foreign allies such as the USA, and operating in harsh mountainous and/or desert terrain that favoured the defenders. The Soviets decided to stage a phased withdrawal of their own forces and concentrated on building up the Afghan government forces, but the Mujahideen soon prevailed, ushering in a new era dominated by the Taliban, an Islamist militia group that controlled large parts of the country from the mid-1990s.

Featuring specially drawn mapping and drawing upon a wide range of sources, this succinct account explains the origins, history and consequences of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, thereby shedding new light on the more recent history - and prospects - of that troubled country.

High profile attacks on women in Afghanistan undermine rights campaign

[Nothing illustrates the destructive blowback of US anti-communist bigotry more than US arming Afghans (including Osama bin Laden) to expel the Soviet Union from Afghanistan 1979-1989. The Russians made the same effort NATO has made in Afghanistan since 2001 to liberate women and provide them with equal rights. But the utterly blind, Sovietphobic US leaders helped the Afghan tribes throw out Soviet commitment to women’s equality, returning to the old oppression of women by war]

http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/13/us-afghanistan-women-idUSBRE97C08220130813
lords and preparing for the victory of the Taliban (violent, warrior Pashtun). The new Western invader and occupier—NATO—attempted to repeat the Soviet effort the US helped to defeat, and women are facing Taliban II! --Dick]  

Related News

- Three U.S. soldiers killed in eastern Afghanistan  
Sun, Aug 11 2013

- Flash floods batter Afghanistan, at least 22 dead  
Sun, Aug 11 2013

- Three Chinese murdered in Afghan capital, one missing: embassy  
Sat, Aug 10 2013

By Jessica Donati and Mustafa Andalib

KABUL/GHAZNI, Afghanistan | Tue Aug 13, 2013 5:32am EDT

(Reuters) - Taliban fighters have kidnapped a female parliamentarian who was travelling by car through Afghanistan's central Ghazni province with her children, a local police commander said on Tuesday, the latest in a string of high-profile, violent attacks on women.

Successive, often deadly assaults on women working in state institutions are fuelling concern that hard-won women's rights promoted by the United States and its allies are eroding as international forces prepare to withdraw next year.

Fariba Ahmadi Kakar's three daughters were later released, the police commander said, but her kidnappers were demanding four Taliban prisoners in exchange for the parliamentarian.

Kakar, a member of the lower house, was the second female parliamentarian to be attacked in Ghazni in less than a week. Her husband denied the attack had taken place, saying she was travelling abroad, but the Kakar tribe's elder, Samad Khan, said attempts were under way to reach an agreement with the Taliban.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said he did not know who staged the attack. "We are
still investigating," he said.

Under the Taliban's 1996-2001 rule, women were obliged to wear the head-to-toe covering burqa, allowed only limited schooling and prevented from leaving home unaccompanied.

Restoring the right to work and education has been a cornerstone of the Western-backed government of President Hamid Karzai, but patriarchal attitudes have remained entrenched.

GOING ABROAD THE ONLY HOPE

Survivors of attacks often say their only hope is to leave Afghanistan, still one of the worst places in the world to be born female.

"I need to go outside the country for my treatment and for my security," said Muzhgan Masoomi, a former government worker stabbed 14 times last year. "I was hopeful that the media would help me. More than one year has passed and no organization or media has helped."

Masoomi still appears on the NATO-led forces website in an article headlined "Afghan woman vows to resume government career after stabbing".

Kakar's abduction follows the shooting last week of female senator Rooh Gul, police said. The senator and her husband survived, but their eight-year old daughter was killed along with the driver.

Last month, the most senior policewoman in southern Helmand province, Lieutenant Islam Bibi, was shot dead on her way to work in the provincial capital Lashkar Gah.

Bibi, touted as a rising star of the Afghan National Police, said she received death threats even from within her own family.

While the Taliban have often targeted senior female government officials, honor killings by conservative male relatives remain commonplace.

On Sunday, a woman in her twenties was shot by her husband after going to the market alone, the 11th female in northern Kunduz province killed by relatives this year, police said.

Concerns have also been raised about a rise in Taliban-style edicts in some regions not overturned by the government.

In June, clerics in a region of Baghlan province, north of Kabul, barred women from leaving home without a male chaperone and shut down beauty parlors.

In the same month, female parliamentarians discovered that conservative male members had removed a legal provision that women make up a quarter of all provincial elected officials.

(Additional reporting by Mirwais Harooni in Kabul and Folad Hamdard in Kunduz; Writing by Jessica Donati; Editing by Ron Popeski)
How Operation Enduring Freedom Mutated Into Operation Enduring Corruption

DILIP HIRO | In Western hands, Afghanistan didn't transition to a "free market" system--but a particularly venal form of crony capitalism. The Nation

Dilip Hiro, Op-Ed, NationofChange: Washington has vociferously denounced Afghan corruption as a major obstacle to the U.S. mission in Afghanistan. This has been widely reported. Only one crucial element is missing from this routine censure: a credible explanation of why American nation-building failed there. No wonder. To do so, the U.S. would have to denounce itself. Corruption in Afghanistan today is acute and permeates all sectors of society. In recent years, anecdotal evidence on the subject has been superseded by the studies of researchers, surveys by NGOs and periodic reports by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).
On March 14, Brookings hosted the launch of *The Thistle and the Drone* with a presentation by author and Brookings Nonresident Senior Fellow Akbar Ahmed, and a panel discussion with Sally Quinn, editor-in-chief of the *Washington Post*’s "On Faith," and former Pakistani minister Mowahid Shah. See video clips from the launch event»
You can watch an introductory video to the March 14 launch featuring commentary by Ambassador Anthony Quainton, Diplomat in Residence at American University, and Khalid Aziz, Former Chief Secretary North-West Frontier Province, Pakistan. You can also read coverage of the event in The Nation. Watch the video here »

For more from Akbar Ahmed on The Thistle and the Drone, read his post on Brookings Up Front Blog.

The United States declared war on terrorism in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. More than ten years later, the results are decidedly mixed. In The Thistle and the Drone, world-renowned author, diplomat, and scholar Akbar Ahmed reveals a tremendously important yet largely unrecognized adverse effect of these campaigns: they actually have exacerbated the already-broken relationship between central governments and the tribal societies on their periphery.

As this groundbreaking study demonstrates, it is the conflict between the center and the periphery and the involvement of the United States that has fueled the war on terror. No one is immune to this violence—neither school children nor congregations in their houses of worship. Battered by military or drone strikes one day and suicide bombers the next, people on the periphery say, “Every day is like 9/11 for us.”

In the third volume of his trilogy that includes Journey into Islam (2007) and Journey into America (2010), Ahmed draws on forty current case studies for this analysis. The United States, dominated by ideas of a “clash of civilizations” and “security,” has become directly or indirectly involved with these societies. Although al Qaeda has been decimated, the U.S. is drifting into a global war against tribal societies on the periphery of nations. Beginning with Waziristan in Pakistan and expanding to similar tribal societies in Central Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, and elsewhere, he offers an alternative and unprecedented paradigm for winning the war on terror.

WATCH: Professor Ahmed traces the history of tribal Pakistan »
Listen to Professor Ahmed discuss The Thistle and the Drone with Steve Inskeep on NPR »
Listen to an interview with Maureen Fielder and Professor Ahmed, on Interfaith Voices »

Praise for The Thistle and the Drone:

“In the end, I was close to tears. Lagrimas caudales or “flowing tears,” to use the apposite phrase of Blas de Otero, seems to be what the book’s conclusions lead to. Thus lagrimas for the tribes, for the soldiers, and for the United States. Professor Ahmed gives us the only way out of this dangerous dilemma, a way to coexist with the thistle without the drone.”—Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, former chief of staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell and Professor of Government and Public Policy at the College of William and Mary
"The Thistle and the Drone is a must read. It unveils what few understand and demythologizes the war on terror for what it is; a failed, overly simplified response to the highly complex role that tribalism plays in America's war on terror."—The Right Reverend John Bryson Chane D.D., The 8th Episcopal Bishop of Washington DC, Senior Advisor, Interfaith Relations, Washington National Cathedral

"Professor Ahmed combines a clear professional anthropological expertise with an equally clear, critical and humane moral perspective. This is an unusual and groundbreaking book, which should be compulsory reading for Western governments."—Dr. Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury and Master of Magdalene College, University of Cambridge, UK

“Yet another brilliantly written masterpiece—a must-read for all, particularly Muslims who have an interest in understanding the roots of the conflicts that go back in history but have become accentuated since 9/11. Only Akbar Ahmed can give us these insights into the post-modern era we live in and the conflicts that bedevil our times through this highly readable and deeply engaging narrative."—Jafer Qureshi, Co-convenor of the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs

"In this groundbreaking and startling book, Akbar Ahmed bravely uncovers an inconvenient truth, a fearful reality which endangers us all and in which we are all implicated. It should be required reading for those working in the media, policy-making and education—and, indeed, for anybody who wishes to understand our tragically polarised world."—Karen Armstrong, author of The Case for God

Read about The Thistle and the Drone at The Washington Post »
Read about The Thistle and the Drone at Time »

1. **Pakistan on the Brink: The Future of America, Pakistan, and Afghanistan** by Ahmed Rashid on Amazon.com. *FREE* super saver shipping on qualifying offers.

2. **Pakistan on the Brink** by Ahmed Rashid – review ... - The Guardian

Apr 27, 2012 – Fatima Bhutto questions a study in which power has replaced the people and western narratives elbow out the real story.
3. **Pakistan on the Brink** by Ahmed Rashid – review... - The Guardian
www.guardian.co.uk › Culture › Books › Politics

Apr 8, 2012 – This authoritative study of Pakistan and its neighbours reveals bleak but undeniable truths about a region hanging in the balance, writes Jason...

4. Book review: 'Pakistan on the Brink' by Ahmed Rashid - Washington...
articles.washingtonpost.com › Collections

Apr 6, 2012 – Five years ago, on a trip to South Asia, I asked a former Pakistani ambassador where Osama bin Laden was hiding. The ambassador replied...

5. **Pakistan on the Brink** - Books by Ahmed Rashid - Penguin Group...
www.us.penguin.com/nf/Book/.../0,,9780670023462,00.html

Find Pakistan on the Brink by Ahmed Rashid and other Secondary Category Placeholder books online from Penguin Group (USA)'s online bookstore.

6. "Pakistan on the Brink": Ahmed Rashid on Perilous Ties Between...
www.democracynow.org/.../pakistan_on_the_brink_a...

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7. **Pakistan on the Brink** with Ahmed Rashid (Conversations... - YouTube
www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyES8FZiP0

May 18, 2012 - Uploaded by UCtelevision

8. More videos for Rashid, Ahmed Pakistan on the Brink »

9. Paperback review: Pakistan on the Brink, By Ahmed Rashid...
www.independent.co.uk › Arts & Ent › Books › Reviews

Mar 22, 2013 – This serious-minded book – not as fatalistic as its title – is just as much about Afghanistan as it is about Pakistan.
10. **Ahmed Rashid: Pakistan Lurches From Crisis To Crisis**: NPR

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11. **Pakistan on the Brink by Ahmed Rashid** | The New York Review of ...

Jun 11, 2009 – **Pakistan** is close to the **brink**, perhaps not to a meltdown of the government, but to a permanent state of anarchy, as the Islamist revolutionaries ...

12. **Images for Rashid, Ahmed Pakistan on the Brink** - Report images

**DAVID RISING AND RAHIM FAIEZ (AP). “11 DIE IN STRIKE ON AFGHAN CAPITAL.”** ADG (June 26, 2013).

This circumstantial report on the penetration by Taliban soldiers almost to the doors of Karzai’s palace, the Afghan Ministry of Defense, and CIA headquarters can be interpreted in two ways. To the Taliban it was a victory (“able to reach the most secure area of Kabul”); to the Afghan government and the NATO International Security Assistance Force it was a failure, and without NATO having to assist Afghan guards. The attack’s significance has to be assessed as part of the Taliban’s ongoing insurgency, and the article offers some of that context. By also briefly reporting three other Taliban attacks on the same day as the Kabul attack: a roadside bomb in Kandahar province killing a family traveling to a wedding, a roadside bombing in Oruzgan province killing six Afghan national police, and in Ghazni province a roadside bomb destroying a NATO vehicle but with no casualties. –Dick

**THE WASHINGTON POST**

**Rajiv Chandrasekaran**

Staff Writer

Rajiv Chandrasekaran is a senior correspondent and associate editor. He was The Post’s national editor and has served as an assistant managing editor. He was bureau chief in Baghdad for the first two years of the Iraq war. He also has been a correspondent in Cairo and Southeast Asia. He the author of Imperial Life in the
Emerald City, a best-selling account of the troubled American effort to reconstruct Iraq. A graduate of Stanford University, he joined The Post in 1994 as a reporter on the metropolitan staff.

• E-mail

Latest by Rajiv Chandrasekaran

A brand-new U.S. headquarters in Afghanistan. And nobody to use it.

National Security

Denied the right to be young

A brand-new U.S. military headquarters in Afghanistan. And nobody to use it.
The U.S. military has erected a 64,000-square-foot headquarters building on the dusty moonscape of southwestern Afghanistan that comes with all the tools to wage a modern war. A vast operations center with tiered seating. A briefing theater. Spacious offices. Fancy chairs. Powerful air conditioning.

Everything, that is, except troops.
The White House is debating a complete pullout of U.S. troops from Afghanistan in 2014 even as new projects are finished there.

The windowless, two-story structure, which is larger than a football field, was completed this year at a cost of $34 million. But the military has no plans to ever use it. Commanders in the area, who insisted three years ago that they did not need the building, now are in the process of withdrawing forces and see no reason to move into the new facility.

For many senior officers, the unused headquarters has come to symbolize the staggering cost of Pentagon mismanagement: As American troops pack up to return home, U.S.-funded contractors are placing the finishing touches on projects that are no longer required or pulling the plug after
investing millions of dollars.

In Kandahar province, the U.S. military recently completed a $45 million facility to repair armored vehicles and other complex pieces of equipment. The space is now being used as a staging ground to sort through equipment that is being shipped out of the country.

In northern Afghanistan, the State Department last year abandoned plans to occupy a large building it had intended to use as a consulate. After spending more than $80 million and signing a 10-year lease, officials determined the facility was too vulnerable to attacks.

But some senior officers see the giant headquarters as the whitest elephant in a war littered with wasteful, dysfunctional and unnecessary projects funded by American taxpayers. A hulking presence at the center of Camp Leatherneck in Helmand province, it has become the butt of jokes among Marines stationed there and an object lesson for senior officers in Kabul and Washington.

The top Marine commander in Helmand sent a memo to the U.S. headquarters in Kabul three years ago stating that the new structure was unnecessary. But his assessment was ignored or disregarded by officers issuing contracts for construction projects, according to senior military officials familiar with the issue.

The building’s amenities also have prompted alarm among senior officers. A two-star Marine general who has toured the facility called it “better appointed than any Marine headquarters anywhere in the world.” A two-star Army general said the operations center is as large as those at the U.S. Central Command or the supreme allied headquarters in Europe.

“What the hell were they thinking?” the Army general said. “There was never any justification to build something this fancy.”

Both generals spoke on the condition of anonymity.

In a letter sent Monday to Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, the special inspector general for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, John F. Sopko, called it “the best constructed building I have seen in my travels to Afghanistan.”

“Unfortunately, it is unused, unoccupied, and presumably will never be used for its intended purpose,” Sopko wrote. “This is an example of what is wrong with military construction in general — once a project is started, it is very difficult to stop.”
The building was completed this year at a cost of $34 million. But as the military draws down, it will sit empty.

MORE BY CHANDRASEKARAN

Commissary plan, backlash show difficulty of cutting military budget

Rajiv Chandrasekaran JUN 1
It is a battle to confront the cost of pay raises, benefits programs and other taxpayer-subsidized services.

Small veterans group advocates for military spending cuts

Rajiv Chandrasekaran JUN 1
Concerned Veterans for America wants to help legislators make budget decisions about where to trim.

U.S. military launches probe into deadly assault in Afghanistan

Rajiv Chandrasekaran MAY 29
Investigation focuses on whether top Marines bear responsibility for lax security at base targeted by Taliban.

More by Rajiv Chandrasekaran : 2013
FW: [vvawnet] In Afghanistan, a second Guantanamo

Tue Aug 6, 2013 6:41 pm (PDT) . Posted by: "Mike Woloshin" mikewoloshin2002
Mike Woloshin, AMH-2, USN
ATKRON 86, onbd USS Coral Sea (CVA-43)
Vietnam (Yankee Station) 1969-1970
From: Horace Coleman <hcoleman4@gmail.com>
Date: Tue, Aug 6, 2013 at 11:29 AM
Subject: [vvawnet] In Afghanistan, a second Guantanamo
To: VVAV list <vvawnet@vvaw.org>
http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/in-afghanistan-a-second-guantanamo/2013/08/04/e33e8658-f53e-11e2-81fa-8e83b3864c36_story.html?hpid=z1

[Washington Post]
In Afghanistan, a second Guantanamo

By Kevin Sieff, E-mail the writer

KABUL — Of all the challenges the United States faces as it winds down
the Afghanistan war, the most difficult might be closing the prison
nicknamed “The Second Guantanamo.”

The United States holds 67 non-Afghan prisoners there, including some
described as hardened al-Qaeda operatives seized from around the world
in the months after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. More than a decade later, they’re still kept in the shadowy facility at **Bagram air base outside Kabul.**

Closing the facility presents many of the same problems the Obama administration has encountered in its attempt to close down the Guantanamo Bay detention center in Cuba. Some U.S. officials argue that Bagram’s resolution is even more complicated — and more urgent.

The U.S. government transferred the prison’s Afghan inmates to local authorities this year. But **figuring out what to do with the foreign prisoners** is proving to be an even bigger hurdle to shutting the American jail.


With the United States’ nearly 12-year fight in Afghanistan due to end next year, the State Department and the Pentagon have been unable to come up with a strategy for the trial or repatriation of men from more than a dozen countries held at Bagram. Meanwhile, the population in the prison is growing because of the apprehension of foreign fighters in joint U.S.-Afghan Special Forces operations. The newest detainee was sent to Bagram last month.

None of the prisoners have been formally tried. Many have been cleared for release by informal military review boards, but most of those were never freed.
Because the detention center is on Afghan soil, U.S. forces are technically obliged to shutter it when their combat role here formally ends in December 2014. But some U.S. officials and politicians say that would pose an enormous security risk.

The best solution, they say, is to keep the facility open under U.S. oversight, possibly for decades. It is not at all clear, though, that the Afghans will permit that.

As at Guantanamo, U.S. officials have deemed a portion of the Bagram prisoners too much of a threat to send home to countries that can’t or won’t keep them locked up. Officials worry that it might not be possible to convict the men in U.S. courts, because evidence could be classified or seen as weak.

“They’re too dangerous to let go,” said Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.), a reservist Air Force lawyer who was appointed last month by Dunford to consider solutions to the detention dilemma.

“We’re a nation without an available jail in the war on terror, and we need to fix that,” Graham said in an interview.

Keeping a U.S.-run prison in Afghanistan beyond 2014 would require the permission of Afghan President Hamid Karzai, who has staunchly resisted American-run detention facilities. The U.S. government has already hit significant stumbling blocks in negotiating a long-term bilateral security agreement with the Afghans.

The Afghan government this year quietly agreed to allow the United States to continue operating its detention center at Bagram for “third-country nationals” — mostly Pakistanis — in exchange for
handing over the Afghan prisoners, who are now held in a separate facility. But Afghan officials, including Karzai, assumed the United States would relinquish its prison by 2014.

Only a handful of the detainees have been repatriated, in part because of Pakistan’s reluctance to provide security guarantees required under U.S. legislation. U.S. law also mandates that before a prisoner’s release, the Pentagon must assess “the threat posed by the individual and the security environment of the country to which the individual is to be transferred.” Such studies can take many months.

“For the past decade, the U.S. has been able to hide Bagram behind the shield of ongoing military conflict in Afghanistan,” said Tina M. Foster, director of the International Justice Network, which represents more than 30 detainees. “What’s happening now is that the shield is disappearing and what’s left is the legacy of the second Guantanamo, which is going to last beyond the Afghan war.”

Lawyers such as Foster who represent clients at both Bagram and Guantanamo describe the situation at the Afghan prison as far more opaque. For years, there were widespread allegations of torture at Bagram, many of them later borne out in military reports that were made public. U.S. officials say the conditions have markedly improved. Although attorneys say they haven’t heard the same accusations from detainees since 2008, they also say they have a limited view into the facility.

Unlike at Guantanamo, the detainees in Afghanistan have no right to
habeas corpus, a point Foster is arguing in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

Pentagon officials say they expect most detainees to be transferred to their home countries “once those countries have provided us assurances that they will take appropriate steps to mitigate the threat these individuals pose,” said Lt. Col. Todd Breasseale, a Pentagon spokesman.

“In some cases, we may seek to have individuals prosecuted for war crimes or violations of U.S. or Afghan law,” he added.

But the process of repatriation has proved extremely slow and complicated. As for prosecutions, none of the detainees captured abroad since the Sept. 11 attacks have been tried in military commissions in the United States. And some detainees can’t be tried by the Afghans because they didn’t violate Afghan law.

Graham said it would be foolish to assume that all the detainees could be sent to their home countries or tried before the end of next year. Last year, some of the first Pakistani detainees were repatriated after a year of fraught negotiations. According to their attorneys, one was a 14-year-old boy picked up in a U.S.-led night operation and the other was an employee of an Afghan military base whose colleagues had turned him in after a personal dispute.

“If it takes a year to release those guys, whose innocence was never in dispute, what does it say about the prospect for the others?” said Sarah Belal, the lead attorney for Justice Project Pakistan, which has advocated for the repatriation of Pakistani detainees at Bagram.
Until at least 2007, the United States snatched high-level terrorism suspects in Pakistan and brought them across the Afghan border and, eventually, to Bagram.

Other detainees were kidnapped across the Middle East, Asia and Europe and taken to the Afghan facility in the early years of the past decade.

Amin al-Bakri, a Yemeni citizen, was seized by U.S. agents while he was on a business trip in Thailand. Fadi al-Maqaleh disappeared from his home in Yemen in 2004, when he was a high school student, and later turned up at Bagram.

Both Yemenis have been cleared for release by military detainee review boards on three occasions, beginning in 2010, according to Pentagon records. But the Obama administration has declined to repatriate detainees to Yemen because of concerns that country might release potential terrorists without a serious trial.

“Amin is surely not charged with anything, and there is not a single evidence that might keep him in prison all this time,” Khaled al-Bakri, Amin’s brother, said in a phone interview. The Americans “are denying him to see his children and wasting the best days of his youth in prison.”

Graham said the United States should focus on securing a guarantee from the Afghan government that the Bagram detention facility will remain open after the U.S. war effort formally ends.

“Radical jihadists are going to flow to Afghanistan after 2014,”
Graham said. “We need a system there that works.”

U.S. officials in Afghanistan were candid about how much work remains to be done — regardless of whether Bagram is closed or kept open beyond 2014.

“We clearly need a transition plan on that issue,” Dunford said.

Comments

drne
8/4/2013 10:01 PM PDT
Kidnapping people from around the world, indefinite detentions, torture, no judicial remedies so innocents can be jailed indefinitely. Such policies are the best recruiting tools for the militants and despots not for the sole democratic superpower.

EvilOverlord
8/4/2013 8:31 PM PDT
We can't try these guys, because the evidence is too weak. - That is the message America is sending about its current standards. It make me sick to think how far we've sunk. And if the hypocrisy doesn't bother you in itself, it also has a clear negative impact on our ability to promote rule of law around the world.

Wildthing1
8/5/2013 11:20 AM PDT
That's the problem with being the only world super-power, you have to be paranoid even of 3rd world people living in mud huts. A country ruled by the rational fear that all of our immoral actions around the world in favor of our strategic interest on the lives of others might come back to us despite all the king men and all the kings horses.

vvawnet mailing list
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Time to Take the U.S. Out of the Afghanistan Equation

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After a decade of fighting it is easy to forget that America is still at war. But, in Afghanistan, combat operations are scheduled to continue for another year and a half. Even after the official 'end' to the war in December 2014, a number of American soldiers may remain in Afghanistan. Recent reports suggest that an agreement to keep American troops in Afghanistan may be imminent.

U.S. soldiers have fought hard and bravely for nearly twelve years. However, now it is time for President Obama to bring them home -- all of them.

Consider the troubling events that have occurred in 2013 alone. "Insider" attacks against American forces persist, while the insurgency continues to mount suicide attacks in Afghanistan's cities. The United Nations recently reported that civilian casualties are up 38 percent compared to the same time period last year, and the Afghanistan NGO Safety Office found insurgent attacks to be up 47 percent from last year. Meanwhile, the Pentagon has stopped releasing its own data on the war, after the Associated Press found the Pentagon to be
manipulating data to falsely claim progress. It is clear that the American military strategy, embraced in 2009 by President Obama to force the Taliban to the negotiation table, has failed. Thousands of lives and hundreds of billions of dollars have been wasted.

It is time to rethink the wisdom of maintaining an American footprint. Some stubbornly insist that U.S. soldiers must remain in Afghanistan to help promote stability. In fact, the reverse is true: the presence of foreign soldiers is actually furthering instability. The Karzai government is the weakest it has been politically since its inception, the insurgency is broader and stronger than at any point since 2001, and warlords once again control fiefdoms.

The presence of U.S. troops continues to provoke resentment among the population and helps the Taliban recruit people to its cause. Furthermore, the new government that will take over Afghanistan in 2014 will lose legitimacy if it is seen as playing host to an ongoing American occupation. It is crucial to establish a popularly supported government in Afghanistan and the U.S. military must recognize that its presence is detracting from, not promoting, that goal.

Another justification for keeping troops in Afghanistan is the training of the Afghan army. Building a modern army in an impoverished, politically fractured country is no easy task. The U.S. has attempted to create an American-style army that is not well suited to confront either the insurgency in Afghanistan, or -- more importantly -- the underlying political problems that foster the insurgency. Moreover, ethnic and cultural divisions, high rates of desertion, and a deep mistrust of its American partners hinder the Afghan army. It is unlikely that several more years of training by Americans, as well intentioned as they are, will do anything to change these conditions.

The problems do not end at Afghanistan's borders. In fact, the biggest obstacles to stability may be the constant friction between the U.S. and Afghanistan’s neighbors, Pakistan and Iran. Both countries, under other circumstances, would have an interest in a peaceful, well-governed Afghanistan. However, as long as America maintains a presence on their borders, Pakistan and Iran will focus on undermining the U.S. -- by promoting instability in Afghanistan. Whether by sponsoring terrorist attacks or turning a blind eye to drug trade across the border, Pakistan and Iran are able and willing to undermine any security gains made by U.S. and Afghan forces.

The best hope for resolving this deadly stalemate is to take the United States out of the equation. It is time to admit our continued military role in Afghanistan is counter-productive and there is little reason to keep American men and women caught in the crossfire.

The U.S. government has made a number of costly mistakes in executing what has become the longest war in our history. President Obama can avoid making one final mistake. He should announce the U.S. has accomplished all it can hope to do militarily in Afghanistan and that no troops will remain there after December 31, 2014.

After almost twelve years of US war and occupation we owe it to the people of Afghanistan, and to the thousands of Americans still serving in harm's way, to get this one right.
TWO NEWS ITEMS FROM PAKISTAN --Dick

- Gunmen in Pakistan kill nine in attack at mosque on Muslim holiday
  Fri, Aug 9 2013

- Suicide bomber kills 30 at policeman's funeral in Pakistan
  Thu, Aug 8 2013

Pakistan on the Brink by Ahmed Rashid – review

Fatima Bhutto questions a study in which power has replaced the people and western narratives elbow out the real story

Fighting fire with fire … protesters in Balochistan, Pakistan, burn a US flag in response to the 2009 Swat valley military operation. Photo: Banaras Khan/AFP/Getty Images

At the start of Pakistan on the Brink, Ahmed Rashid confesses that he didn't really want to write the book and that it was "forced" out of "a very reluctant author" by editors and
publishers. To which one might uncharitably reply: we didn't want to read it either. The third book in a trilogy, following *Taliban* and *Descent into Chaos*, is a compendium of statistics, bomb counts and Wiki knowledge. If you've paid attention to the news during the past 12 years, you already know most of this.

1. **Pakistan on the Brink: The future of Pakistan, Afghanistan and the West** by Ahmed Rashid

It's also a little out of date. The killing of Burhanuddin Rabbani, the deadly attacks on Pakistan's naval and military bases over the past year, the rise of the Punjabi Taliban, and the murder of Afghan president Hamid Karzai's brother are only fleetingly described; the coming US elections are ignored and Osama bin Laden's death in Pakistan last spring is given only a cursory glance.

But the book's central fault is that Rashid's teleology is dedicatedly western. And it is precisely this sort of thinking that got us into the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq in the first place. There is no context that is not westernised for clarity (Bin Laden's retirement home of Abbottabad is like a "British country seat", a Pakistani military academy is a "West Point"). Rashid, whom his fellow Pakistani author Tariq Ali once called a "prize cock of the US defence establishment and videosphere", may have soured slightly in his views of the American government and its war in Afghanistan, but he still uses its language.

For Rashid the problem seems to be not that US and European troops are mired in a bloody, imperially designed and unwinnable war, but that there aren't enough of them to get the job done in good time. Only once is the conflict noticeably described in less than necessary terms, when Mullah Baradar of the Taliban is quoted as calling it a "game of colonisation". Rashid berates Obama for not "personalising" the war in Afghanistan and for not telling in any detail stories of Afghans and their plight. Yet he doesn't either. There's not one account of how people have suffered under *Operation Enduring Freedom*, merely statistics of doom.

Rashid made his name by bringing to light forgotten stories, but he has now become the story. The book's acknowledgments offer thanks to "all manner" of "bureaucrats, politicians and heads of state". Countless anecdotes begin with him advising the world's most powerful men on how to run their war (only for them to do the opposite). In his histories, power has replaced the people.

The chapter on the 2009 war in the Swat valley between the Pakistani army and Islamist
militants is titled "A sliver of hope", but Rashid devotes hardly any space to the awful conditions 1.4 million internal refugees were held in after they had fled from the fighting. The UN called it "one of the world's worst displacement crises" and journalists, both international and local, were deliberately denied access. For Rashid, however, Pakistan gets an A grade for the war.

Pakistan and India are depicted one-dimensionally as paranoid powers unable to consider each other outside destructive paradigms – which indeed they might be, but their populations have long wanted peace, and are currently engaged in many hopeful people-to-people initiatives.

Sotto voce, he tells us that anti-American sentiment in Pakistan is whipped up by the military and the nefarious Inter-Services Intelligence. According to Rashid, intelligence agencies manipulated the violent protests against Nato last November, following the airstrike that killed 24 Pakistani soldiers (and for which the Pentagon grudgingly expressed "deepest regret"). But the author fails to understand that after a 12-year war, diplomatic dealings that are a perpetual exercise in humiliation, and hundreds, if not thousands, of innocent civilian deaths at the hands of drones, the one thing the Pakistani army need not manipulate is anti-American sentiment. The US military, with its trigger-happy contractors and recent renegade shooters, Raymond Davis and Sgt Robert Bales, does a fine job of whipping that up all by itself.

At least, if belatedly, Rashid has cooled off in his affection for President Karzai. Gone are the days when he wrote articles entitled "How my friend outwitted the mullahs", as he did for the Daily Telegraph in 2001. Karzai, who has presided over gross corruption, factionalism and dashed hopes for Afghanistan for the past eight years, is finally described as he is: "increasingly paranoid" and "controversial". Rashid deserves credit, too, for going after Pakistan's villainous elite, often celebrated as the country's last hope.

Readers of his previous work will know that Rashid possesses a sophisticated understanding of Pakistan, Afghanistan and the US, but here he offers disappointingly bite-sized analyses of places one would expect him to delve deeper into. On the decades-long secessionist insurgency in Balochistan, he references only a Human Rights Watch director called Brad: he doesn't speak to any Baloch groups or survivors of the army's campaign of violence. Karachi, Rashid surmises in a hurry, could easily be taken over by the Taliban "when they feel the time is right". Such foggy analysis is a betrayal of centuries of the city's syncretic, tolerant history, during which it has offered space to Christians, Hindus, Jews, Parsis and Sufis. We need to know more, but no nuance is available when an author is being pressed to complete a trilogy.

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