An Analysis of Obama’s AfPak Goal and First Objective: Setting the Baseline and Prospects for Success

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An Analysis of Obama’s AfPak Goal and First Objective: Setting the Baseline and Prospects for Success

Steve Breyman1 & Aneel Salman2

“We’ll know it when we see it.”


I. Introduction

During his campaign for the presidency in 2008, Senator Barak Obama repeatedly referred to the war in Iraq as a “war of choice.” He distinguished Iraq from the US role in Afghanistan (and Pakistan by extension), which he described as a “war of necessity.” This was smart electoral politics, as the American public had long ago turned against the US occupation of Iraq, but still believed it wise to battle al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan (AfPak).

Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen testified before Congress about US policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan in late January 2009, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff produced a secret report for the new president that recommended paring US goals in the region, and focusing on counter-terrorism.3 In his testimony, Gates claimed the US could not both root out al-Qaeda and prop up the Hamid Karzai regime: “Afghanistan is the fourth or fifth poorest country in the world, and if we set ourselves the objective of creating some sort of Central Asian Valhalla over there, we will lose.”4

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3 The views expressed in this paper are entirely those of Steve Breyman & Aneel Salman and should not be construed as reflecting the views of the PSRU, Department of Peace Studies, or the University of Bradford.

4 Ibid.
On February 17, 2009, President Obama nevertheless announced his decision to send 17,000 additional US combat troops to Afghanistan—requested by US commander Lt. Gen. David McKiernan—to be followed in the spring by 4,000 additional troops to train Afghan security forces—on an ambitious and complex mission that combined counterinsurgency with counter-terrorism, and state-building with nation-building. Opinion polling after the announcement found some two-thirds of respondents favored the decision. Some 13,000 rearguard personnel—necessary to support the additional combat troops and trainers—would also deploy to Afghanistan. Five weeks later, in his speech of March 27, the president declared “going forward, we will not blindly stay the course. Instead, we will set clear metrics to measure progress and hold ourselves accountable.” The White House produced an interagency White Paper with some initial objectives for its AfPak strategy.

On May 11, 2009, Admiral Mullen abruptly appointed General Stanley McChrystal to replace General McKiernan as US and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) commander in Afghanistan. McKiernan, a career armour officer, was considered “too conventional” to remain in charge of a rapidly evolving and deteriorating situation. McChrystal had run the hunt for “high value” al-Qaeda targets in Iraq where his units were credited with capturing Saddam Hussein, and killing al-Qaeda chief Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

General McChrystal issued a new “tactical directive” in June that limited the use of air strikes by coalition units to force protection. July 2009 was the deadliest month for Western troops since the war began, with 71 killed. A July poll showed majority American opposition to the war in Afghanistan for the first time since the US began bombing the Taliban nearly eight years earlier. An unclassified version of General McChrystal’s sixty six-page assessment of the war effort was leaked to the Washington Post in July. The implications of the General’s take were sobering: without some tens of

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13 Associated Press, “Poll Details: Majority in US Oppose Both Wars,” July 23, 2009, [http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/AlLeqM5iEurPdCgm_t5kD1mnU3rYmtSwQsAD99K7VL01](http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/AlLeqM5iEurPdCgm_t5kD1mnU3rYmtSwQsAD99K7VL01)
thousands of additional troops, the US risked “mission failure.”\textsuperscript{14} In his talk to the Veterans of Foreign Wars convention in August, the president referred to Afghanistan as “not only a war worth fighting” but as “fundamental to the defense of our people.”\textsuperscript{15} Before summer’s end, influential congressional Democrats began to publicly question US aims in AfPak, and to cast doubt on their willingness to approve yet further US escalation in the region.\textsuperscript{16} August set a new record in coalition combat deaths: 73.\textsuperscript{17} Conservative columnist George Will came out against the war in his column on September 1, 2009.\textsuperscript{18} Sixty-five coalition troops were killed in September (the third highest monthly toll).\textsuperscript{19} October 2009 became the deadliest month ever for US troops even before the month was out.\textsuperscript{20}

The combination of widespread fraud in the August 2009 Afghan presidential election, McChrystal’s assessment, eroding public support for the war, growing dissent in Congress, and increased casualties had the Obama administration systematically rethinking its strategy by September.\textsuperscript{21} Following a painstaking if incomplete review process, the President announced his decision on December 1, 2009, to send 30,000 additional troops on an accelerated schedule.\textsuperscript{22} And while the President announced that some troops could return home as soon as eighteen months later (July 2011), Secretary Gates and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton quickly quashed any hopes that the initial withdrawal would be anything more than slow and incremental.\textsuperscript{23}

An unclassified list of possible objectives and metrics for advancing and evaluating the AfPak wars and political reform efforts also appeared in September 2009, nearly six months after the president called for them.\textsuperscript{24} Achievement of the overarching objective - defeating al-Qaeda - is connected to seven supporting objectives. Three concern Afghanistan, three concern Pakistan, and one concerns both countries. The list has yet to be officially endorsed by President Obama, although National Security Advisor James Jones was reported to have approved them on July 17, 2009; Jones said that “another
month or two is still needed to flesh out the details.”" The Office of the Director of National Intelligence performed an assessment of the region using the metrics in order to set a baseline from which to measure progress. It chose July 17, 2009 as the baseline date. This initial assessment remains classified. March 30, 2010 was the proposed deadline for the first metrics-based progress report to be conducted by “the interagency.” Future assessments are to be performed at “regular intervals thereafter.” Some revised version of these assessments is likely to be made public given growing concern over the region. The objectives and metrics authors built a check into the evaluation system: a “Red Team” led by the National Intelligence Council will perform an independent analysis using the same metrics.

It’s just such an independent analysis that this paper seeks to provide, on the basis of publicly available sources, of Obama’s AfPak objectives and metrics. This report is the first in a planned series, and has three primary aims. First, we introduce the primary US AfPak goal (in Section II) plus the first of the seven objectives (in Section III). Second, we set an April 2010 baseline for both the goal (in Section II) and the first objective (in Section III). Third, we conclude in Section IV with an analysis of the prospects for future success with the primary goal and first objective by the governments and security forces of Afghanistan, Pakistan and the US.

II. Obama’s Goal: Defeating al-Qaeda in AfPak

The goal of the United States is to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qa'ida in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future.

By the summer of 2009, US commanders, including General McChrystal and General David Petraeus (US Central Command chief), confirmed that al-Qaeda was no longer a significant presence in Afghanistan. In instead, it appears that what remains of the network is concentrated in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber-Paktunkwa (formerly NWFP) across the border in Pakistan. President Obama noted this understanding in his speech of March 27, 2009, announcing his new AfPak strategy:

In the nearly eight years since 9/11, al Qaeda and its extremist allies have moved across the border to the remote areas of the Pakistani frontier. This almost certainly includes al Qaeda’s leadership: Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. They have used this mountainous terrain as a safe haven to hide, to train terrorists, to communicate with followers, to plot attacks, and

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26 Mike Corder, “McChrystal: No Major al-Qaeda Signs in Afghanistan,” Associated Press, September 11, 2009, http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5gOXo7Wv7S3U5zC88Rc6DGBSr9bwD9AL5UVG0
to send fighters to support the insurgency in Afghanistan.\footnote{28}

It was fair, however, by spring 2010 (if not earlier) to describe al-Qaeda in AfPak as “disrupted.” It was also fair to claim that al-Qaeda in AfPak had been “dismantled” to the extent that its networks were unable to mass forces or train and operate in the open.\footnote{29} And it was fair to claim the network’s influence on the wane given its difficulty raising funds.\footnote{30} “Al Qaeda is on the ropes,” according to the Bush administration’s last terrorism chief, Juan Carlos Zarate. “We are at the point where we can imagine an end to Al Qaeda as we know it.”\footnote{31}

What it means to “defeat” al-Qaeda has not been spelled out by the Obama administration. Osama bin Laden and other higher-ups remain on the loose, and are still capable of issuing statements that receive global publicity.\footnote{32} A next generation of al-Qaeda leadership appears perhaps even more capable than the last.\footnote{33} Jarrett Brachman argues that “defeating” al-Qaeda is a complex matter:

\begin{quote}
Which al Qaeda are we talking about? The senior leaders operating somewhere in the tribal areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan? The al Qaeda franchises around the world, most notably in Iraq, Algeria, and Yemen? Or the global ideological following, sparked by al Qaeda, calling itself al Qaeda, but not technically affiliated with al Qaeda? If you ask about winning, you have to also ask whether winning means killing the organization or just handicapping it. Does it refer to destroying al Qaeda's military capabilities, or to mitigating al Qaeda's ability to win hearts and minds around the world?\footnote{34}
\end{quote}

For Brachman, the problem is not just one of refining the definition of “defeat,” but of recognizing that “the al Qaeda that we are fighting in 2009 is not the same al Qaeda that we went to war with in 2001.”

\begin{quote}
It has transformed from a global terrorist group into a global terrorist movement, one with its own founding fathers, well-codified doctrine, substantial and accessible corpus of literature, and deep bench of young, bright, and ambitious commanders. Attacks still matter to them, but in an era of increased counterterrorism pressure, al Qaeda is beginning to realize that it is a lot more effective at being a movement, an ideology, even a worldview. It is starting to see that terrorism is only one of many tools in its arsenal and
\end{quote}


\footnote{30} “Al-Qaeda Faces ‘Funding Crisis,’” \textit{BBC}, October 13, 2009, \url{http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8303978.stm}


\footnote{34} Ibid.
that changing minds matters more than changing policies.\textsuperscript{35}

Brachman fears that while al-Qaeda the terrorist group might be on the run, al-Qaeda the ideology is mostly unchallenged directly by US foreign policy. For our immediate purposes, however, an al-Qaeda incapable of mass casualty attacks on American or European targets is an organization headed toward irrelevance if not ultimately “defeat.”

Why should the US care - from a counterterrorism perspective - whether the Taliban returns to power? A common response to this question is that a new Taliban regime in Afghanistan would again offer a safe haven to al-Qaeda. No evidence is provided for this claim. According to Vice President Joe Biden, defeating al-Qaeda requires establishing some modicum of order in ‘Pashtunistan’ so as to deny the terrorist network a safe haven.

\textit{This is the place from which the attacks of 9/11 and all those attacks in Europe that came from al-Qaeda have flowed from that place - between Afghanistan and Pakistan. . . . It is a place that, if it doesn't get straightened out, will continue to wreak havoc on Europe and the United States.}\textsuperscript{36}

Biden later, however, came to be identified as the leading proponent within the Obama administration of a primarily counter-terrorism rather than counterinsurgency approach to the conflicts.\textsuperscript{37} This approach sees the greatest threat to US security as emanating from al-Qaeda in Pakistan not the Taliban in Afghanistan.

General McChrystal likely shares the Afghanistan-as-safe-haven view:

\textit{I don’t think there is enough focus on counter-insurgency. I am not in a position to criticize counter-terrorism. . . . But at this point in the war, in Afghanistan, it is most important to focus on almost classic counter-insurgency.}\textsuperscript{38}

Former CIA counterterrorism official Paul Pillar, however, raises a problem with this line of thinking:

\textit{How much does a haven affect the danger of terrorist attacks against U.S. interests, especially the U.S. homeland? The answer . . . is: not nearly as much as unstated assumptions underlying the current debate seem to suppose. When a group has a haven, it will use it for such purposes as basic training of recruits. But the operations most important to future terrorist attacks do not need such a home, and few recruits are required for even very deadly terrorism. Consider: The preparations most important to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks took place not in training camps in Afghanistan but, rather, in apartments in Germany, hotel rooms in Spain and flight schools in the United

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
Pillar, like Brachman, fears that the Obama administration operates with a 2001 mindset in 2010. At present, for Pillar,

*The issue is whether preventing such a haven would reduce the terrorist threat to the United States enough from what it otherwise would be to offset the required expenditure of blood and treasure and the barriers to success in Afghanistan, including an ineffective regime and sagging support from the population. Thwarting the creation of a physical haven also would have to offset any boost to anti-U.S. terrorism stemming from perceptions that the United States had become an occupier rather than a defender of Afghanistan.*

Pillar considers the safe haven assumption apparently underlying current Obama AfPak policy akin to the now discredited but then mostly unquestioned domino theory assumption of the Johnson administration in Vietnam.

It would be unwise for a new Taliban regime in Afghanistan to even covertly welcome al-Qaeda back to Afghanistan to train, plan or conduct operations given the capacity for the US to retaliate through long-range air- and cruise missile strikes, or special forces attacks. While Afghan Taliban commanders seem only too willing to loose current and former madrassa students as human bombs on their own country, they do not appear interested in committing suicide themselves.

### III. Obama’s Objective 1: Disrupt and Degrade Terrorist Networks

*Disrupt terrorist networks in Afghanistan and especially Pakistan to degrade any ability they have to plan and launch international terrorist attacks.*

There is wide agreement that terrorist networks have been “disrupted” in Afghanistan. This understanding is emphasized by the “especially Pakistan” clause in the objective. The Afghan networks’ ability to “plan and launch international terrorist attacks” has also clearly been “degraded” after nearly nine years of global counter-terrorism efforts. Indeed, National Security Advisor James Jones believes there are fewer than one hundred al-Qaeda operatives in that country with “no bases, no ability to launch attacks on either us or our allies.” At the same time, an impossibly high bar has been set with the requirement that “any” ability for international terrorist action be degraded. Two or three individuals in a cave can “plan” an attack.

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40 Ibid.


Another weakness of the safe haven argument, if used as a justification for counterinsurgency campaigns, is that it sets up the US for endless war in the (Muslim) developing world. Chased completely from Afghanistan or Pakistan, remnants of Central and South Asian-based al-Qaeda could move to Yemen, Sudan, Somalia and other countries.44 It could be that ‘knowing’ where al-Qaeda is (in country terms if not street addresses) makes the counter-terrorism objectives of disruption and degradation of the network easier.

Kabul and Islamabad are sure to protest should terrorist attacks (from whatever source) in AfPak itself be excluded from “international attacks.” These attacks continue with distressing regularity. Sensitivity over this point may be one reason why no declassified metrics accompany this objective. Al-Qaeda remains a greater if uncertain threat in Pakistan than in Afghanistan. Greater because more terrorists are said to be hiding in Pakistan, but uncertain because there is limited intelligence on the terrorists’ location and activities. The greater threat from al-Qaeda in Pakistan is not simply due to its larger numbers in FATA and Khyber-Paktunkwa. Two other factors play a role, while also adding to the uncertainty for US and Pakistani decision-makers. Over the past year or two, al-Qaeda camps for explosives and weapons training grew smaller, more mobile, and more reliant on local insurgent groups in the tribal areas due to the pressure from drone attacks.45 Analysts suggest there may be dozens of mobile camps hidden in walled compounds deep in the mountains (including in Swat and Waziristan). “All you need is a shack or a house to learn how to fabricate explosives using homemade or commercially available ingredients,” according to Bruce Hoffman, a counterterrorism expert at Georgetown University.46 The camps are difficult to target given their size and shifting locations.

Al-Qaeda’s greater freedom of operation in Pakistan is enhanced by its alliance with the Tehrik-i-Taliban and other militant groups (including Jaish-i-Mohammed and Lashkar-i-Janghvi47) in the tribal areas. While who exactly is the “Taliban” on either side of the border is unclear, there is some evidence that Afghan Taliban factions—with the possible exception of Mullah Omar’s Quetta Shura—are more nationalistic and less ideological than their Pakistani brethren.48 Yet even Mullah Omar appeared ready in April 2010 to talk peace with Hamid Karzai.49 In a television interview, Afghan Taliban commander Abdul Manan (also known as Mullah Toor) condemned the Pakistani Taliban for targeting innocent civilians as “un-Islamic and wrong.” Manan denied any al-Qaeda influence on the Afghan Taliban. Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil, the Taliban regime’s former foreign minister, also claims that the Afghan Taliban does not share al-Qaeda’s global agenda and that his Taliban is no longer a threat to the West or the

46 Ibid.
Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), commonly referred to as “drones,” have been the US’s weapons system of choice in targeting al-Qaeda and other militants in the Pakistani tribal areas. By autumn 2009, drone-fired missiles hit some forty targets in North and South Waziristan. Both the US military and the CIA - only CIA drones operate over Pakistan - rely heavily on the drones for reconnaissance and for extrajudicial killings of “high value targets.” It’s the latter mission that has made them controversial.

Drone use increased after the angry public reaction following an October 2008 US Special Forces raid into Pakistan. It increased further after the Bush administration stopped consulting with Islamabad before each drone attack on Pakistani soil. President Obama increased the number of drone attacks yet further immediately upon taking office. The pace grew to about one attack per week in Pakistan by summer 2009. The pace remained steady through spring 2010. Remote pilots control the drones--armed with infrared cameras, guided bombs, and Hellfire and Scorpion missiles--from bases in Nevada and Virginia. CIA Director Leon Panetta referred to them in May 2009 as “very precise, . . . very limited in terms of collateral damage and very frankly, . . . the only game in town in terms of confronting and trying to disrupt the al-Qaeda leadership.”

Several analysts and officials challenge Panetta’s claim. “The more there are unilateral targeted strikes in Pakistan,” said Seth Jones, a RAND counterinsurgency expert, “the higher political costs for the US, and for Pakistan, for allowing them to happen.” In testimony before Congress, McChrystal advisor David Kilcullen claimed that

> Since 2006, we've killed 14 senior Al Qaeda leaders using drone strikes; in the same time period, we've killed 700 Pakistani civilians in the same area. The drone strikes are highly unpopular. They are deeply aggravating to the population. And they've given rise to a feeling of anger that coalesces the population around the extremists and leads to spikes of extremism. ... The current path that we are on is leading us to loss of Pakistani government control over its own population.

Kilcullen also believed that from the perspective of Pashtunwali (the Pashtun code of honor) the attacks made the US look “both cowardly and weak.” Pakistan’s Information Minister Qamar Zaman Kaira agreed that “drone attacks are counterproductive; they don’t produce the desired results.” This was a view shared by Owais Ahmed Ghani, governor of Northwest Frontier Province. Only 9% of the Pakistani public approved of the drone strikes according to an August 2009 Gallup poll. This same poll found that 59% of Pakistanis considered the US the “greatest threat” to their country. “This is a fact that the hatred against the US is growing very quickly, mainly because of these

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51 Ibid.
52 McManus, “U.S. Drone Strikes in Pakistan ‘Backfiring,’ Congress Told.”
drone attacks,” said Makhdoom Babar, the editor-in-chief of Pakistan’s The Daily Mail.55

If the drones strikes are not “unilateral,” but coordinated with Pakistani officials, who may not admit their involvement in intelligence gathering and sharing for domestic reasons, then perhaps the political costs to Washington and Islamabad are not as high. The US has thus far resisted sharing advanced UAV technology (Reapers and Predators) with Pakistan. The US claims to have shared surveillance data with Pakistan; both countries deny any Pakistani role in targeting or operations, although Pakistan apparently asked for such control.56 It is not clear why the use of drones is seen as cowardly while the Taliban’s use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) is not; perhaps it’s the distance of the triggerman from the explosion that matters. Kilcullen’s claim regarding the number of civilian victims of the drone strikes is contested. “One [US] government official” said the number was “just over 20.”57 This figure contrasts sharply with “statistics compiled by Pakistani authorities”: 708 people killed by 44 drone strikes in 2009 alone. For each terrorist killed, “140 innocent Pakistanis had to die.”58

Only 10% of respondents believed terrorism to be “the most important issue facing Pakistan” in a March 2009 poll, as compared to 46% who considered inflation the most important issue.59 Seventy-four percent agreed with the statement “religious extremism is a serious problem.” Sixty-nine percent agreed that “the Taliban and al-Qaeda operating in Pakistan” is a serious problem. Only 45% supported “the Army fighting the extremists in NWFP and FATA.”60 By August 2009, however, 53% supported such an effort.61 In March, only 24% of respondents supported “U.S. making military incursions in the tribal areas.” At the same time, sixty-one percent believed “that Pakistan should cooperate with the United States on its war against terror.” Complicating that picture, 72% supported “a peace deal with the extremists.”62

IV. Conclusion: Prospects for Future Success

Pakistan remains the destination of choice for aspiring Western jihadis, including accused Afghan-American terrorism suspect Najibullah Zazi who reportedly received his training in Peshawar. Zazi is alleged to be one of 100 to 150 Westerners who traveled to the border region for terror training in 2009. Bruce Hoffman believes that in the new, smaller camps, “they’re not training insurgents, they're training terrorists for

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60 Ibid., p. 16.
deployment to the West . . . Some of them may be deployed in the insurgency, but . . . their value to these groups is not fighting on the battlefield in South Asia but in being deployed back to their home or adopted countries as sleepers."\(^{63}\) For Westerners like Zazi, the road to the training camps often begins with a religious pilgrimage of sorts, linked inside Pakistan to a charitable organization or madrassa. Some madrassas have long-lived links with militant organizations. “They can be used as a revolving door by folks from the west who want to make it to training camps,” according to Vahid Brown, a researcher at the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. People within those nonviolent organizations, he said, will say, “if you want to be violent, you have to leave us, but here's an address and a letter of introduction” for a recruiter from one of the jihadi groups.\(^{64}\)

Pakistan and the Western countries from which these terrorists-in-training come must do a better job in shutting down the conduit. This is no simple task given the freedom to travel and the certain additional threat to civil liberties posed by greater surveillance, profiling and interdiction. Pakistan placed some restrictions on madrassas and affiliated charities in recent years. Western domestic intelligence agencies monitor individuals and institutions considered sympathetic to jihad. Squeezing the supply line further without extra damage to civil liberties is a daunting task indeed.

While it appears that Islamabad and Washington have worked out a modus vivendi on the use of drones in the tribal region, important questions remain. The central questions concern the legality of remote control extrajudicial killings, and the associated civilian death toll. The Obama administration claims—in a welcome break from the silence of the Bush administration on the matter—that its UAV program proportionally targets only combatants, and is thus legal under the laws of war. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the United Nations are less certain, and requested additional information and explanation from Washington. The ACLU sent a letter to President Obama condemning extrajudicial killings outside “conflict zones” and declaring illegal the killings of non-combatants (including alleged terrorist “propagandists and financiers”) within conflict zones.\(^{65}\) It is now evident that “beheading” the TTP (it’s occurred twice thus far), while surely disruptive, does not cause the collapse of the insurgency. To minimize “collateral damage,” the CIA reportedly moved to a new smaller missile (the Scorpion), and modified the warheads of Hellfire missiles. The Washington Post reported that “Pakistani security officials say that better targeting technology, a deeper pool of spies in the tribal areas, and greater cooperation between the U.S. and Pakistani intelligence services have all led to strikes that cause fewer civilian deaths.”\(^{66}\) However, if the 140 civilians killed for every alleged terrorist killed ratio is anywhere near accurate, such results can hardly be deemed proportionate.

The overarching goal of disrupting, dismantling, and defeating al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the first objective of “disrupting terrorist networks” in the two

\(^{64}\) Ibid.
countries are likely about two-thirds complete. Al-Qaeda has ceased to play a significant role in conflict in Afghanistan, according to top US civilian and military leaders. Al-Qaeda remains a greater if uncertain threat in Pakistan. Greater because more terrorists are said to be hiding in Pakistan, but uncertain because there is limited intelligence on the location and activities of these terrorists.

The dominant threat to Pakistani stability at present, however, is not al-Qaeda but rather indigenous Taliban and allied militants. The Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) shares this view. The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is the source of the vast majority of the terrorist attacks—including suicide bombings—in Pakistan, not al-Qaeda. Ongoing offensives against TTP forces in Khyber-Paktunkwa (the former NWFP) and FATA will further disrupt and dismantle both al-Qaeda and the TTP in Pakistan. The al-Qaeda in question here is the coherent, organized, disciplined “terrorist group,” one capable of launching international terror attacks.

Al-Qaeda the social movement or al-Qaeda the religious-political ideology is another matter, as is even al-Qaeda the terrorist group or network outside Pakistan and Afghanistan. Ideas cannot be defeated through either counterinsurgency or counterterrorism, but only through education, development and public diplomacy. Recall that locations and resources in Germany, Spain, and the United States were indispensable to the al-Qaeda grouplets that carried out the September 11, 2001, and later attacks in both the US and Europe, even if “orders” emanated from Afghanistan and Pakistan. If al-Qaeda the terrorist “group” is now actually a very loosely connected network of like-minded individuals from several countries (including “sleeper cells” in the West) generating most of their own resources and picking local targets on their own, then no amount of war in Pakistan or Afghanistan will defeat these people.