

Our aim: No more terrorist attacks on American soil originating from this area.

Our aims are NOT:

A stable nation;
An end to poverty;
An end to violence;
An end to Sunni Fundamentalism.

Means:

They don't WANT to hit us.
They are AFRAID to hit us.
They CAN'T hit us.

Failure: They CAN hit us in the US or related areas, and they WANT to hit us.

Disruption is all we need. Jihadist camps are all we care about. If we are not able to hit them, then this war was for nothing. If, however, we KEEP that capacity, we have won as well as is possible.

Flip side: if they are only able to hit Afghanis, then although that meets our aim, we risk their ultimate victory, which DOES subvert our aims.

Therefore, our primary task is Foreign Internal Defense. Primary resources: Army SF and Marines trained in this. Enabling Afghans to form a stable, peaceful nation is both pragmatic AND idealistic. This sort of idealism is an American trait which is often abused, but which we should be proud of. We are the Good Guys, more often than is good for the health of American soldiers; yet we all answer to our Creator [that is my belief, at any rate].

There is a continuum in the Islamic world from radical to "normal" to de facto apostate. There is no reason to think it will EVER swing all the way to apostate. We MUST, therefore, accept that our allies will ALWAYS be partly partial to the creed in which they were brought up. There will ALWAYS be some tension for us there.

Realities:

- 1) We can't afford to take and hold all of Afghanistan. We can't offer police services to every hill and hollow in a large nation filled with dust and thousand year old enmities. There are too many hiding places, and we have fiscal limits. We also, self evidently, have limits as far as the tolerance of Americans (and of course British, Canadians, Australians, and others) for the deaths of their sons and daughters.

- 2) Pakistan is in what amounts to a family squabble. They are Muslims, but don't want to be dictated to by the West, OR by Islamic radicals. They are currently, in my view, playing one against the other. They can USE us without LIKING us. They can be counted on to destroy the most obvious threats to their state, but not to finish any such destruction.

Iraq vs. Afghanistan.

The key difference is between community and family. Sheikhs in Iraq command large sections of the populace. If they declare Jihad, it happens. If they say "stop", it stops. What happened in Iraq is that initially we ignored the existing power structure, and they rebelled. Once sufficient foreign national Al Quedists hit the streets, they changed their mind. AQ killed too many good people, and asked too much. We became, by process of elimination, the good guys. We did not plan this, but it worked out.

For my own purposes, I use a concept of Telearchy. This derives from Telos—aim, purpose—and archy (archos, I think, in the Greek). It is a PRINCIPLE upon which a group bases itself. Iraqis have a strong faith and belief in HONOR, which is expressed through conformity with the needs and demands of their tribe, as expressed in the proclamations of their Sheikh.

Afghanis seem to lack this. The social structure seems to be oriented around, in effect, what they call in Appalachia "hollers". Afghanis appear to me to have many of the same social characteristics of hill-billies. They are xenophobic, self interested, and don't care about anything beyond the next hill.

This means that the same amount of relationship building work that paid large dividends in Iraq, will only net us a very small area in Afghanistan. And even there, the tribal leaders, who seem to amount to family fathers, will only acquiesce to what we ask if it is in their IMMEDIATE interest. If they need help fighting Taliban who are taking their stuff (sheep, water, food, whatever it is), then they will be our friends. As soon as that stops, we are again intruders. This seems to apply nationwide, except perhaps in the large cities.

Perhaps one day such people will think of the nation as a whole, but that appears MANY years in the future. Right now, it is them and theirs, and screw everyone else. Period.

Responses:

Social Change: we need to encourage moderate Muslims to play a greater role in the Madrassas that created so many "students" (Taliban). We need to be clear that Islam tends towards jihad (understood as physical war against unbelievers) as a natural consequence of the example of the Prophet himself, but also understand that most people, most of the time, just want the ability to do what they like to do, and still be able to think of themselves as decent people. Islam is not bereft of solid examples of chivalry, mercy, humanity. Saladin was considered even by many Christians to have been one of the most

chivalrous individuals during the Crusades. He showed mercy towards many people who he could have killed. And frankly one or two of the Crusaders he did execute deserved it. One in particular whose name escapes me was actively preying on Muslim pilgrims to Mecca, as a literal pirate. He was a renegade, certainly, but he did deserve to die, even within the logic of the Crusades, which were in part about resecuring the right of pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

The chivalry of Saladin might, perhaps, be something that could be invoked.

Bottom line: we can support people who truly believe in the concepts of mercy and Final Judgment. This is a slight risk, of course, but this would be much better than allowing those who believe in murdering even fellow Muslims to continue to indoctrinate future generations of radicals.

Special Forces: they can train Afghani “salespeople” who work to prevent radical infiltration. We can further do what we can, militarily, to prevent or punish Taliban atrocities, but we need to be VERY careful not to overpromise. If anything, we need to underpromise and overdeliver, as the saying goes. We can be the cowboys, but only up to a point. If we tell someone they are safe, that will in most cases be wrong, and at some point—when they are hit—counterproductive.

We need to maintain Strike Bases, so that we can hit the Taliban whenever excessive concentrations appear, and they appear sufficiently relaxed to allow “jihadi” camps. We can’t prevent the bubbles on the bottom of the pot, but we can throw cold water on it whenever it gets ready to boil over.

Final conclusions:

--We need to train, and continue to train, Afghani Foreign Internal Defense specialists.

--We need to maintain Direct Action capability

--We need to REDUCE troops, with the clear understanding that this will result in the loss of ground, and victories by our enemies. Given that we are--if this thing is managed right--in it for the long haul, this will be “advancing in another direction.” This might be a thirty year war. We need to understand that as shitty as the American people can be, that many of us value greatly what is done on our behalf. I really believe that is most of us.

--We need to institute an information campaign in support of the Afghan nation. If this involves calls for “genuine” versus radical Islam—which is in my view a valid distinction, particularly within the context of historical Islamic expressions of both tolerance and chivalry--this is a concession we can make, I think. We need to find Islamic mullahs who love their coreligionists, and can find reasons they themselves believe in to support us. Our war is NOT with Islam. Many good things came with Islam, and we should not forget that, regardless of our personal reservations. Our nation

is founded on religious tolerance. We are NOT imperialists, seeking to impose our views on others.

--We need to do what we can to support moderation in the Madrassas. We need people who are on our side who understand the Koran and Hadith like the back of their hands. The simple reality, in my view, is that Islam truly is, potentially, a very positive, life affirming religion. It really is, even if jihad played a large role historically. If you look at history, Muslims were MUCH more tolerant than their Christian contemporaries. The Jews were kicked out of the Iberian peninsula only AFTER the *Reconquista*, as it was called. The Saudi (they weren't, of course, Saudis then) tribes who embraced Islam were changed much for the better by the experience. Islam, per se, is far from the enemy. Evil is. [that's my personal view]

--Utilize, if logistically possible, Phoenix style body grabs. This would not be an assassination campaign. The people would show up, unharmed, in a civil court somewhere in the Afghan system, for charges of, at worst, being bad citizens; and at best of being "UnIslamic". This will work to keep the leadership of the Taliban from getting traction. The Communists showed, quite clearly, that if you keep charismatic people from doing their thing, control is much easier. This sounds autocratic, but the simple reality is that autocracy is the goal of the people we would be snatching. What we do with them would depend on if show trials, or actual criminal trials were utilized. My vote is to gather evidence, and do an actual criminal trial. To work to undermine a nation is and should be against the law.

--Accept that the Taliban will control some portion of the nation, but not the parts that matter. Our aid will work to win SOME hearts and minds. We need to keep Kabul and other significant urban centers safe for people who just want to live normal lives. We will fail, to some extent. This is inevitable. But our efforts, I hope, will not go unnoticed.

--Osama Bin Laden--if he is still alive, which is not proven—does not matter. He has been unable to organize any actual terror offensives since his precipitous exit from Tora Bora, and he doesn't really matter now. [May 2011: now he REALLY doesn't matter]

Hopefully this makes sense. Bottom, bottom line: if no one attacks the US, as a result of training obtained in this area, we have won. This is victory. We have little to no hope of creating a nation in Afghanistan, in the time the American electorate will allow, but we can win in our primary mission of allowing many good American people—and a not-insignificant number of silly people—to continue lives oriented around vacations, their kids sports, and, hopefully, their own personal commitment to what's good in this world. That would be a beautiful thing.