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WILLIAM MALEY

Afghanistan in 2011

Positioning for an Uncertain Future

ABSTRACT

Afghanistan confronted further turbulence in 2011, involving the assassinations of prominent figures, tense regional relations, and uncertainty about where the draw down of foreign forces in Afghanistan might lead. Popular confidence in Afghanistan's future direction remains weak, and President Hamid Karzai has had little success in boosting his government's standing.

KEYWORDS: Afghanistan, governance, security, assassinations, Taliban

INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan in 2011 was dominated in both the political and military spheres by actors seeking to position themselves for the future in light of the anticipated winding down of international involvement by 2014, euphemistically termed "the transition." The U.S. and its NATO (and non-NATO) allies sought to capitalize on a certain amount of military momentum in the south of Afghanistan, resulting from U.S. President Barack Obama's December 2009 decision to increase the number of American troops in the country. In response, the key anti-Afghan government elements headquartered in Pakistan—the Taliban's "Quetta Shura" (Quetta Council), the radical "Haqqani network," and the Hezb-e Islami (Party of Islam) of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar—intensified their attacks on targets in the north and east of Afghanistan. They also made greater use of targeted assassinations of prominent Afghan figures, as well as mounting a number of spectacular assaults in Kabul. Afghan President Hamid Karzai, meanwhile, filled his time by engaging in a dispute with legislators over the outcome of the 2010 election for the Wolesi Jirga

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(People's House, the lower house of the Afghan Parliament), and in pursuing reconciliation with the Taliban, whom he described as "angry brothers."¹

Internationally, the most important development for Afghanistan came with the location and killing of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan on May 1, 2011, and the subsequent description of the Haqqani network as a "veritable arm" of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) by the outgoing chair of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael G. Mullen.² Yet, as the year drew to a close, it remained unclear whether this presaged a tough new approach toward Pakistan from the Obama administration or whether, if the past was repeated, Pakistan would be able to continue meddling in its neighbor's affairs despite mounting evidence that it was undermining any prospects for stability in Afghanistan.

POLITICAL TENSIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

For much of the year, Afghan elite politics was dominated by the confrontation between President Karzai and some of his supporters on the one hand, and the bulk of the members of the Wolesi Jirga elected in September 2010, on the other. This election had produced a result that was troubling for Karzai. A number of defeated candidates aligned with Karzai were vociferous in denouncing the outcome and impugning the integrity of the Independent Election Commission. Furthermore, the perverse effects of the single non-transferable-vote electoral system saw Karzai's Pushtun co-ethnics underrepresented in some key provinces in the south, notably Ghazni.

Karzai initially declined to inaugurate the new Parliament, but finally did so under international pressure on January 26, 2011. However, he stood by his December 2010 declaration to create a "special court" to review the outcome of the election. The legality of this move was highly questionable, and it served only to infuriate the newly elected legislators, who viewed it as an attempt to intimidate them with the threat of exclusion. Karzai finally backed down in August, dissolving the "special court" and remitting the issue to the Election Commission. The Commission, in turn, excluded nine deputies—a far cry from the 62 whom the "special court" had targeted for removal.

1. Aissa J. Rubin, "Thousands of Afghans Rally in Kabul to Reject Any Peace with Taliban," *New York Times* May 5, 2011.

2. Elisabeth Bumiller and Jane Perlez, "Pakistan's Spy Agency Is Tied to Attack on U.S. Embassy," *ibid.*, September 22, 2011.

Nonetheless, this entire episode was more than a storm in a teacup: it left Karzai weakened, and even led to calls for his impeachment.³

Karzai, nonetheless, benefited from continued fragmentation within the forces opposed to him and his policies. There was no shortage of critical figures, but their capacity to operate concertedly was limited. Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, the former foreign minister who had mounted a serious challenge to Karzai in the 2009 presidential poll, remained an active and articulate critic of the government, as did former intelligence chief Amrullah Saleh. Former Interior Minister Hanif Atmar also adopted a critical position, and became a notable member of the new *Hezb-e Haq wa Edalat* (Right and Justice Party) established in November 2011. But each pursued his own course, doubtless with an eye to the presidential election due in 2014, which the 2004 Constitution prevents Karzai from contesting. As 2011 drew to a close, Afghans increasingly confronted a political environment in which Karzai's ability to manipulate the political system was limited by both his lack of personal authority and his inability to offer patronage for the long run. Nonetheless, the identity of his likely successor was far from clear.

Beyond the hothouse of Kabul, a wide range of actors continued to pursue their own political objectives at the provincial and district levels. Some of these actors enjoyed the support of key figures in Kabul, especially the president, but others, such as Atta Mohammad in the north, enjoyed their own bases of support (although taking care not to confront Kabul directly). Kandahar Province in particular was the focus of complex tensions and rivalries. On July 12, Ahmad Wali Karzai, chair of the Kandahar Provincial Council and half-brother of the president, was murdered by one of his associates. This, together with the slaying of the mayor of Kandahar City, Ghulam Haidar Hamidi, on July 27, led to fears that the city would slide into disorder and tribal rivalries of the kind that had gripped it before the Taliban took it over in 1994. This did not prove to be the case, but the situation in Kandahar remained unsettled, with a major bombing on October 31 striking the offices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

More broadly, 2011 saw little progress toward the improvement of governance in areas beyond the capital. Corruption remained a serious problem, and the president's own patrimonial style militated against serious efforts

3. Alissa J. Rubin, "Clouds around Karzai Darken the Road Ahead," *ibid.*, July 13, 2011.

to confront the challenge that corruption posed. This particularly affected relations between Kabul and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the aftermath of the 2010 Kabul Bank crisis.⁴ Only in late September 2011 did the IMF finally reach an agreement with the Afghan government on a structural reform agenda that could open the way for the IMF executive board to consider a request for a new program of assistance. This accord owed much to the endeavors of Afghanistan's respected finance minister, Dr. Omar Zakhilwal, and little to the politicians intent on protecting their associates involved in the Kabul Bank's collapse.

THE MILITARY SITUATION AND "TRANSITION"

Throughout 2011, the conflict between anti-government elements and the Karzai government and its supporters continued unabated. The Obama administration's December 2009 decision to increase troop numbers in 2010 saw the size of the U.S. contingent rise significantly. It reached just under 100,000 troops by late 2011, but the impact on the ongoing war was far from uniform, with security improving in some areas and deteriorating in others. The longer-term impact is debatable, given Washington's intention to withdraw all 33,000 "surge" troops by September 2012. It was a war not of large set-piece battles, but rather one of multiple attacks, skirmishes, and assaults.

Inevitably this led to conflicting versions of whether the government and its allies were making progress. In its October 2011 report to the U.S. Congress, the Department of Defense stated that "the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and its Afghan partners have made important security gains, reversing violence trends in much of the country (except along the border with Pakistan), and beginning transition to [an] Afghan security lead in seven areas."⁵ As evidence, it cited a decrease in enemy-initiated attacks, compared with 2010, for each month from May 2011 onward. By contrast, the U.N. secretary-general reported, "As at the end of August, the average monthly number of incidents for 2011 was 2,108, up 39% compared with the

4. In September 2010, a run on the Kabul Bank exposed the inadequacy of financial sector regulation in Afghanistan. The Afghan government was obliged to pay \$825 million to bail out the bank, and the bank's recoverable assets covered only a small fraction of this amount.

5. "Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan," Department of Defense, (Washington, D.C.), October 2011.

same period in 2010.⁶ Independent researchers moved beyond aggregate data to highlight increasing problems in the north and east of the country.⁷

The availability of sanctuaries in Pakistan for the anti-government forces and their leaderships remained the Achilles' heel of the international mission. The Pakistan factor complicated the military mission in many ways. The leadership of the insurgency existed largely beyond the reach of NATO forces and their Afghan partners. At the same time, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were one of the main causes of mortality and injury among coalition forces, with ammonium nitrate originating from Pakistan being the main explosive used.⁸ Casualties remained high for both military personnel and civilians during 2011. In the first half of the year, the U.N. documented 1,462 civilian deaths, an increase of 15% over the same period in 2010, with 80% of the deaths attributable to anti-government elements.⁹ In the first nine months of the year, 343 American soldiers were killed and 4,224 wounded.¹⁰

If there was a dominant idea haunting the security environment in Afghanistan during 2011, it was *inteqal* (transition). The former finance minister and 2009 presidential candidate, Dr. Ashraf Ghani, served as chairman of the Transition Coordination Committee and of a joint Afghanistan-NATO Inteqal Board. Essentially, transition involved a phased handover of security responsibility to Afghan security forces, with the objective of completing the process by the end of 2014. In March 2011, President Karzai identified seven areas for the initial handover beginning in July: most of Kabul Province, Panjsher Province, Bamiyan Province, Mazar-e Sharif city, Herat city, and the towns of Lashkar Gah and Mehtar Lam. An obvious danger of a process introduced with such fanfare was that the Taliban would be attracted to areas that had thitherto been relatively quiet. Mazar-e Sharif, Panjsher, and Herat

6. "The Situation in Afghanistan and Its Implications for International Peace and Security: Report of the Secretary-General," United Nations (New York), *A/66/369-S/2011/590*, September 21, 2011, para. 3.

7. On the north, see Antonio Giustozzi and Christoph Reuter, "The Insurgents of the Afghan North," Afghanistan Analysis Network (AAN) (Kabul), AAN Thematic Report 04/2011, May 5, 2011. On the east, see Gilles Dornesoro, *Afghanistan: eImpossibleTransition* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 2011).

8. Ben Farmer, "Taliban Use of IEDs Reaches Record High in Afghanistan," *eTelegraph* (London), August 8, 2011.

9. "Afghanistan Mid-year Report 2011: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict," United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (Kabul), July 2011, pp. 1–2.

10. See Susan G. Chesser, *Afghanistan Casualties: Military Forces and Civilians* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, September 30, 2011), p. 1.

all witnessed destructive attacks. Nonetheless, the Afghan government and its international backers remained firm in their commitments to stay the course to "transition."

To at least some Afghans, "transition" was little more than a soothing label for an exit by Western powers whose publics had grown tired of a seemingly endless commitment in an unpromising environment. The success of "transition" critically depended, therefore, on the Afghan security forces (the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police) being in a position to assume not just local but also national security leadership by 2014. Transition success also hinged on efforts to rein in Pakistani support for the insurgency. For many Afghans, neither outcome appeared especially likely. Thus, discussions of the country's prospects were increasingly dominated by fear of the return of the Taliban to power with support from Pakistan's ISI after 2014, and by a sense that groups opposed to the Taliban were seeking to reacquire arms in order to prevent such an eventuality from occurring. Hedging against this worst-case scenario is likely to continue for the foreseeable future, and the risk of civil war is increasingly being canvassed.

ASSASSINATIONS AND URBAN ATTACKS

More than in any previous year, the Taliban and the Haqqani network resorted to spectacular urban attacks and assassinations of prominent figures as a way of putting their capacities on display, and conversely demonstrating the weaknesses of the central government. This tactical shift was sometimes cited by Western military figures as evidence of the opposition's battlefield weakness, but it may simply have reflected a recognition that scenes of mayhem in Afghanistan augmented a pre-existing disposition among Western audiences to abandon that theater of operations.

Kabul was the most important venue for such attacks. On January 28, 2011, an attack on a supermarket claimed nine lives, including that of a commissioner of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, Hamida Barmaki. The Intercontinental Hotel experienced a sustained assault on June 28. On August 19, there was an attack on the British Consulate, and on September 13, terrorists occupied a half-built multi-story building near the U.S. Embassy compound, using it to fire into a range of neighboring targets including the embassy itself. At the end of October, in the worst single strike against American personnel in Kabul since the U.S. invasion in 2001,

a bomb attack on a bus near Darulaman claimed 17 lives, including those of 13 Americans, four of whom were military personnel and the remainder contractors.¹¹ Intelligence sources pointed to the Haqqani network as the principal perpetrator. Beyond Kabul, serious attacks occurred in the cities of Kandahar, Herat, and Kunduz, and many other smaller towns. These assaults claimed far fewer civilian lives than the IEDs used by the Taliban in rural Afghanistan, but their psychological impact may have been more pronounced.

Even more dramatic was the impact of assassinations. While the death of Ahmad Wali Karzai in Kandahar appeared to be the result of a personal dispute with his killer, the same could not be said of the death of the Kandahar mayor. Other major assassinations occurred in the north and in Kabul itself. On May 28, 2011, a suicide bombing at the Takhar Province governor's office in Taloqan City killed the chief of police for northern Afghanistan, General Mohammad Daoud Daoud, and the police chief of Takhar Province, Shah Jehan Nuri, as well as two German soldiers. It severely injured Major General Markus Kneip, senior commander of all German troops in Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. The head of the Bamiyan Provincial Council, Jawad Zahak, was abducted and decapitated in early June. On July 18, a close Karzai associate and former governor of Uruzgan Province, Jan Mohammad Khan, was killed in an attack in Kabul.

However, the killing with by far the greatest impact was the September 20 assassination of former President of Afghanistan and then-Chairman of the High Peace Council Burhanuddin Rabbani by a killer posing as a Taliban envoy whom Karzai had asked Rabbani to meet. The assassin had concealed 150 grams of plastic explosive packed with ball bearings in his headgear, and succeeded not only in slaying Rabbani but in severely injuring the head of the High Peace Council Secretariat, former Minister Masoom Stanekzai. Rabbani was the first leader of one of the main Afghan *mujahideen* (resistance) groups of the 1980s to meet this type of violent death by insurgents. Many Afghans were stunned by the perfidious abuse of the norms of negotiation that the assassination entailed. The killing of Rabbani evoked memories of the assassination on September 9, 2001, of the anti-Taliban *mujahideen* commander Ahmed Shah Massoud, who had been associated with Rabbani's party, the Jamiat-e Islami (Islamic Society). Those who were already wary

11. Rod Nordland and Sharifullah Sahak, "13 Americans Said to Be among Killed in Kabul Attack," *New York Times*, October 29, 2011.

about reconciliation with the Taliban had even more reason to be skeptical after this attack.

EFFORTS AT "RECONCILIATION"

The immediate impact of Rabbani's assassination, and of the injury to Stanekzai, was to put an end to attempts to engage the Taliban openly in negotiations. Experienced observers had long warned that there was no quick-fix solution to be obtained through attempts by Karzai to engage the Taliban from his narrow political base.¹² The Rabbani assassination, together with opposition from Afghanistan's two vice presidents, Mohammad Qasim Fahim and Karim Khalili, led Karzai publicly to abandon the idea of seeking direct reconciliation with the Taliban. Instead, he argued that the more appropriate move was to deal directly with Pakistan. Such a reorientation made obvious sense in the wake of Admiral Mullen's public linking of the Haqqani network to the ISI but, as 2011 drew to a close, the prospects for any resumption of negotiations appeared poor. With Karzai increasingly a lame-duck president, it was doubtful whether he had the ability to sell any such move to crucial elements of the Afghan public. Other key constituencies also regarded any negotiation with the Taliban with grave apprehension. For example, a number of women's groups, recalling the grim experience of women under the Taliban between 1994 and 2001, voiced fear that their interests would be sacrificed for the sake of a deal struck by male politicians. In addition, members of Afghanistan's Shiite minority recalled the discrimination on sectarian grounds they had encountered under Taliban rule.

If "reconciliation" approaches seemed to have reached a dead end by late 2011, moves for the reintegration of low-level Taliban combatants (as opposed to reengagement with legitimately disaffected tribal elements, which nobody considered contentious) hardly fared much better. Critics of reintegration pointed to a chaotic series of events in Mazar-e-Sharif on April 1 to justify their wariness. Reports that Terry Jones, an eccentric Florida-based Christian pastor, had burned copies of the holy Koran triggered demonstrations in the

12. Thomas Ruttig, *The Battle for Afghanistan and Negotiations with the Taliban: History and Prospects for the Future*, National Security Studies Program Policy Paper, New America Foundation (Washington, D.C.), May 2011.

city, which turned violent.¹³ Marchers heading toward a U.N. office were infiltrated by allegedly “reintegrated” Taliban. When the dust settled, six Nepalese guards at the U.N. office had been killed, along with U.N. employees from Romania, Sweden, and Norway. The role of the “ex-Taliban” in this episode confirmed the fears of critics that reintegration programs simply smoothed the path for a proverbial Trojan Horse, providing the Taliban with opportunities to infiltrate areas in which they could stir up trouble if given easy access. After these events, proponents of reconciliation and reintegration were hard-pressed to identify a single concrete achievement for which the measures could be given any credit.

PUBLIC ATTITUDES IN AFGHANISTAN

The Afghan public remained divided in its assessment of a wide range of developments in the country. From July 2 to August 1, 2011, the Asia Foundation again conducted a major survey of public opinion (its seventh since 2004), although security problems prevented it from conducting interviews in some parts of the country.¹⁴ Of those interviewed, only 46% felt that things in Afghanistan were going in the right direction, while 35% did not—the highest negative response since the survey was first conducted. This did not, however, imply support for anti-government armed opposition groups. On the contrary, 64% of respondents stated that they had no sympathy for them at all. Not surprisingly, this hostility was strongest among ethnic Hazaras (75%) and urban dwellers (74%), arguably the two constituencies with the most to lose from a Taliban resurgence. Yet, it was also strong among ethnic Pushtuns (58%) and rural dwellers (61%).

The survey highlighted a number of major concerns about governance. Corruption was seen as a major problem by 76% of interviewees, and 55% felt that it had increased in the year prior to the survey. The state court system also ranked poorly when compared to alternative dispute resolution mechanisms such as local *jirgas* or councils. Only 58% of respondents saw the state courts as effective at delivering justice, and 59% saw them as fair and trusted, compared to figures of 73% and 79%, respectively, for the more traditional

13. Enayat Najafzade and Rod Nordland, “Afghans Avenge Florida Koran Burning, Killing 12,” *New York Times*, April 1, 2011.

14. All figures in this section are taken from Asia Foundation, *Afghanistan in 2011: A Survey of the Afghan People* (San Francisco: Asia Foundation, 2011).

mechanisms. Nonetheless, 69% said that they were satisfied with the way democracy works in Afghanistan, and 90% endorsed the view that leaders should be chosen through regular, open, and honest elections. Furthermore, 60% rejected the idea that there should be no constitutional limit on how long the president could serve.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Afghan economy continued to grow throughout 2011, with a real GDP growth rate of 8.4%.¹⁵ but high import prices saw inflation rise and the World Bank estimated that 36% of the population was unable to meet minimum basic needs.¹⁶ Growth was uneven, with cultivation of opium boosting income for a significant number of households in some but not all parts of the country, and the flow of funds for international actors creating artificial bubbles of prosperity that some observers fear could rapidly collapse as "transition" progresses.¹⁷ Afghan leaders looked to the exploitation of the country's mineral resources as one way of generating an alternative revenue stream, and a major contract to exploit the 1.8 billion ton iron ore deposit at Hajigak in Bamiyan Province was awarded to an Indian consortium in November. It will be some years, however, before substantial revenues are obtained.

2011 also witnessed some unsettling developments in social relations. The most alarming was a suicide bombing on December 6 at a religious festival in Kabul, which killed over 50 members of Afghanistan's Shiite minority. Another bombing occurred on the same day in Mazar-e Sharif, although with fewer casualties.¹⁸ While Shiite Hazaras had been targeted by extremists before, this was the most dramatic attack directed against them since 2001. Another vulnerable group, Afghan women, had different concerns. In particular, they were worried that a push to negotiate with the Taliban could see their hard-won gains of recent years sacrificed by male politicians for the sake of "reconciliation." They looked to human rights institutions to defend their interests. While the stalwart Dr. Sima Samar pressed on determinedly as

15. *Afghanistan Economic Update* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, October 2011), p. 17.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

17. See Mark Magnier, "Afghans Fear for Economy after U.S. Leaves," *Los Angeles Times*, August 19, 2011; Alissa J. Rubin, "World Bank Issues Alert on Afghanistan Economy," *New York Times*, November 22, 2011.

18. Hashmat Bakhtash and Alex Rodrigues, "Two Afghanistan Bombings Aimed at Shiites Kill at Least 59 People," *Los Angeles Times*, December 7, 2011.

chair of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, three of the most highly regarded commissioners—Fahim Hakim, Nader Nadery, and Mawlawi Ghulam Mohammad Gharib—were dumped by President Karzai when their terms expired in December 2011.¹⁹

INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

The year 2011 saw few major developments in Afghanistan's relations with its neighbors. Despite the discovery of Osama bin Laden on Pakistani soil, the U.S. seemed unable to decide whether to treat Pakistan as a problem or a necessary ally. Nonetheless, Washington reportedly moved to reduce its dependence on transit through Pakistan for materiel being dispatched to U.S. forces in Afghanistan, by delivering more supplies through routes to Afghanistan's northern border.²⁰ Iran, India, and Russia all watched developments in Afghanistan closely, but any progress in forging a common approach to the situation was limited. This was particularly clear at a conference held in Istanbul on November 2. Any U.S. hopes that the meeting might promote a regional framework for cooperation comparable to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and thereby lay the foundations for a "New Silk Road" foundered as a result of continuing hostilities and distrust among the regional actors, especially India and Pakistan. The result was that delegates agreed on only an anodyne final declaration, notably weak on detail. This cast a shadow over the other main international event of the year, a high-level conference in Bonn, organized by the German government to mark the tenth anniversary of the December 2001 Bonn Agreement that set the path for Afghanistan's transition over the following decade.

The main focus of the political relationship between Afghanistan and the U.S. was negotiation of a long-term strategic partnership. This could potentially see some U.S. troops based in Afghanistan beyond 2014, although Washington was careful to affirm that it was not seeking permanent American military bases in the country. Yet, no formal text regarding this long-term strategic partnership had been finalized by the end of the year. The idea of an extended American presence would not be welcomed by states such as

19. Patricia Gossman, "Kabul's Stealth Attack on Human Rights," *New York Times*, December 27, 2011.

20. Craig Whitlock, "U.S. Turns to Other Routes to Supply Afghan War as Relations with Pakistan Fray," *Washington Post*, July 3, 2011.

Iran, Russia, India, and China, not to mention the Taliban, for whom the withdrawal of all foreign forces remains a core demand. The notion of a strategic partnership prompted Karzai to summon an informal, consultative Loya Jirga (Great Assembly) to consider the proposal, but it had problems of its own. Some felt that the appropriate body to consider the issue was either the Parliament or a Loya Jirga of the kind for which the 2004 Constitution provided, rather than the gathering of handpicked participants that was ultimately held. Any such agreement would involve contentious issues of sovereignty, especially relating to the application of Afghan law to foreign forces stationed in the country.

Informal relations between the Karzai government and the Obama administration remained difficult for most of the year. At the same time that he was making new enemies in the Parliament, Karzai also tested the patience of his U.S. backers by criticizing them in speeches directed at Afghan audiences. In June 2011, outgoing U.S. Ambassador Karl W. Eikenberry gave a speech at Herat University in which he signaled that Karzai was going too far. He warned that, faced with such criticisms, "my people, in turn, are filled with confusion and grow weary of our effort here."²¹

None of this had much effect on Karzai, and on October 22, in a television interview, he even reportedly remarked, "If there is ever a war between Pakistan and America, then we will side with Pakistan."²² Nonetheless, the Obama administration remained alert to Karzai's sensibilities. For example, on November 4, Major General Peter Fuller was removed as deputy commander for programs (NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan) after asserting that Afghan leaders were "isolated from reality."²³ These exchanges pointed to a lack of personal chemistry, but they also highlighted that the stated commitment of the Obama administration—and of its allies—to relinquish core security tasks by the end of 2014 has created incentives for Afghan and non-Afghan actors alike to try to ensure that if things go badly at that point, they are not left with the blame.

21. Ray Rivera and Ginger Thompson, "U.S. Ambassador Responds to Karzai's Criticisms," *New York Times*, June 19, 2011.

22. Ray Rivera and Sangar Rahimi, "Afghan President Says His Country Would Back Pakistan in a Clash with the U.S.," *ibid.*, October 23, 2011.

23. David Alexander, "U.S. General Relieved of Duty over Karzai Remarks," *The Independent*, London, November 5, 2011.