



VIEWER VOICES

COMMENTS AND ANSWERS TO FAREED'S QUESTION OF THE WEEK

(to remove your name or entire comment please [email](#) webmaster)

Last week we asked: If you were in the White House Situation Room, advising President Obama as he wrestles with the Afghanistan problem, what would you tell him? Send more troops? Stay the course? Begin a pullout?

Most of you said -- Get out now. In fact, approximately fifty percent of you said we should pull out. Twenty-one percent of

you were undecided and approximately twenty-nine percent of you believe the U.S. should either increase troops or stay the course. Most also argue for increasing economic development there or shifting the focus to Pakistan.

Many viewers pointed out that this war was supposed to be about Al Qaeda, but they say we now know the group isn't even in Afghanistan -- it's in Pakistan.

[Here are many more of your responses:](#)

Plan for a couple of decades... or give up and leave Afghanistan to its fate whatever be the consequences. USA (or anyone else) dose not have that Midas' touch to transform a country like Afghanistan, into a western style democracy in a matter of few years - if ever.

Prakash Alkutkar

Pune, India

I would advise President Obama to query his advisers as to why policy analysts aren't considering re-implementing or encouraging the use of the Afghan's loya jirga to solve current security and power-sharing problems. Writings on the practice seem to suggest that it might be a great addition to a "smart power" strategy.

It gets very little public consideration, however. On your segment, neither Dr. Haas nor Dr. Biddle mentioned the article that appeared in the NY Times on Sept. 10, 2009, written by Ansar Rahel, an adviser to King Mohammad Zahir Shah, [here](#):

I foresee a terribly difficult time for American standing in the region and the world if a troop increase is to work in tandem with a government largely considered to have stolen the most recent election. A new loya jirga could work to legitimize and oversee the government's policies, thereby associating American and Coalition forces with at least one popularly recognized, legitimate institution. Without a credible partner in the country, America and other Western States' continued presence does not serve the Afghan people and likely embitters them to the government's policies

Corey E. Walker

The President has the following options -

Option 1 - Stay the course: That will show that we are not applying lessons from in Iraq and Afghanistan. In Iraq, we shifted from CT to COIN that country is now on an improvement course. In Afghanistan, CT is still being practiced, but not working.

Option 2 - increase troops: Increase of troops is just one component of COIN. My advice to President is implement COIN asap.

Option 3 - pull out: This will only reconfirm that you have chosen decline for America course, as already abuzz in political circles, media, blog communities etc.

[Subhasis Paul](#)
[India](#)

The first thing I would want to know is what "winning" looks like. Senator McCain and others including General McChrystal believe that if the US doesn't put 40,000 more troops in Afghanistan we cannot win, but end state has not been clearly defined. We should devise a strategy that defeats the Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, which was the President's original goal.

The "war of necessity" I believe is against AQ, not against the Taliban, so whatever strategy we devise should aim squarely at that end state.

As nasty a group as the Taliban is, they do not threaten our national interests. If they assume control of Afghanistan at some point it would be sad for the Afghanis, and create another despotic regime, but I don't think they will pose a threat to us. We are concerned that the Taliban will destabilize Pakistan, that should be a concern of Pakistan's military, and we should help them deal with the problem, but not with troops. Pakistan's stability is more in our national interest, after all we would not want the Taliban controlling nuclear weapons. I disagree with 40,000 more troops. The amount we maintain in Afghanistan should be commensurate to the number necessary to defeat AQ. That is what the President said was our goal and we should stick with it. Maybe that's what winning looks like.

Carlos Perez

- Increase the troops, quickly;
- establish humanitarian aid at the same time and at the same level of spending
- win the hearts and minds of the people as quickly as we push the Taliban out.

Paul in Hong Kong

Wonderful – Al-Qaeda isn't in Afghanistan - it's in Pakistan and therefore we should leave. Didn't we learn anything by leaving last time?? As Nina Totenberg said on Inside Washington - for a woman, there is no difference b/w the Taliban and Al-Qaida!!!!

Lillian Filegar

Denver

I would tell President Obama to increase the troops. I'm a fairly liberal Democrat and I don't usually see military build-up as the solution, but in this case I think it is the right thing to do.

I have a "just get it done, finally" position, not to mention as a woman I have a secondary motive to keep the Taliban OUT! I am sick of hearing the media & politicians speaking about the vile & violent repression by the Taliban of women in particular but in the next breath dismissing that as basically a trivial issue as not being our concern. Our first concern, of course, should be US security. I think putting more of our troops into Afghanistan will help reduce the horrible death rate of US troops & will achieve a 2ndary goal of providing security for the Afghan population. Also, should help accelerate the ramping up of Afghan forces & getting us out faster.

[Kelly Day](#)
[Addison, TX](#)

I have just discovered your program and I enjoy it and your perspective very much.

To your question:

I do think we need to increase troop strength, even though I do not like that. We have to discover a realistic way to help the Afghan people to create a healthy, stable government. our country made the choice to invade Iraq, which fundamentally changed the possible operations in Afghanistan. Now we have the responsibility to the people of both Afghanistan and the United States. We put our feet into this mess, now we have to clean it up to the best degree possible. [Michael](#)

I think that the US should start a controlled pull-out process. History shows that building a government in Afghanistan is an impossibility.

[Anonymous](#)

Enough is enough. It's a galactic waste of taxpayers' money. Foreign powers have been unsuccessful there since the time of Alexander the Great.

[Holly Holder of Merritt Island Florida](#)

We should do whatever is necessary to win to a woman, there is no difference between the Taliban and Al Qaeda."

[Lillian Filegar of Denver](#)

I think Obama should be very careful not to repeat the mistakes of Viet Nam: sending more and more American troops to be killed and maimed in a senseless and unwinnable war, just so that America not lose face. I think that in his campaign, Obama pushed for adding troops in Afghanistan in order not to seem like an anti-war candidate, just an anti-Iraq war candidate. He's surrounded himself with economic advisors who helped create the country's near-economic collapse, and has not yet made ANY reforms. I am now concerned about who he is listening to on this subject.

[Merle Kaufman](#)

We should not go with additional troops to Afghanistan. The president should select a special force - fighters who go in and take out the terrorists only. Not an army. Maybe Special Forces selected like the Mafia.

[Genevieve Karakashian](#)
[California](#)

We need to get out of there and let those Taliban run the country. We don't have any business there and can't even relate to their culture. Our presence and destructive efforts will only obliterate their infrastructure as well as their culture?

[Patricia \(Michigan\)](#)

We went into Afghanistan to get Osama. We should have gone in full force did the job and gotten out instead of getting involved in Iraq the time has passed we are now supporting a questionable government for no good reason. Get out now before more lives are lost.

[Wayne Bowling](#)
[Arizona](#)

Dear Mr. Zakaria,

First of all, I appreciated your remarks to the young graduating class at Brown, where I was for my 50th reunion. On Afghanistan, my short answer is to stay the course, but not forever, with the same approximate number of current troop levels. We must, however, shift our emphasis to demand a less corrupt Afghan government. For example, I have read that often only 10% of our aid manages to get through to benefit the local population. We ought also to concentrate on improving the training and efficacy of Afghan police and army

units, as it is their country which must assume those protective and law enforcing roles, and our occupation is essentially a fundamental negative long term. We also must improve our cooperation with the Pakistani government as the problems we face in the two countries are linked. If the Pakistani army does carry out its planned offensive against the Taliban in South Waristan, perhaps our troops could aid that effort by deploying in force to block any Taliban attempt to retreat into safer areas across the border in Afghanistan. The problem is complex and just throwing more American troops, which really are not readily available, is not the solution. By the way, it is obvious that John McCain does not represent my thinking. Sincerely, [Robert Parson, Tucson, Arizona](#)

It is the combination of 2 options.

- 1) Stay the course for a short period of time (6 months or less to) give the Afghanistan government time to clean up their own corrupt situation - even if the government has to be changed - including Karzai and
- 2) Begin a pull-out process by training Afghans in the police and army activity. It is basically the Afghanistan resolve that will determine what type of government they want and deserve -certainly not our job to dictate to them.

3) Our resolve should be to reduce or eliminate the threat of terrorism and to support those countries who are willing to help us. I am thinking of Pakistan - to give them aid for their efforts.

Fred Brunswick
Boynton Beach, Fl

We are in favor of a gradual troop reduction in Afghanistan. Our grandson sat on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border for a year, placing his life in danger, and he doesn't feel that his risk was justified and we don't either.

Roy and Madelyn Jarvis
Phoenix, AZ

Pull out NOW. Do not exchange another American soldier for a country funded by drugs.....pictures of the poppy fields and the puny interception of trade with them is preposterous. Instead of searching for the leader of the Taliban, as was the initial inception of "war", we are trying to 'build a democratic country'.

Apparently we will not kill or capture our way to victory, and we will never be able to accomplish ANYTHING there under present circumstances. So the question that should be answered is: whose lives are most important to US - theirs or ours (our soldiers)?

Anonymous

Al Qaeda is not only threat to USA but every nation from Manila to Madrid. US and Pakistan alone (with reluctant NATO) will not be able to defeat Taliban unless international community is willing to help us fight this enemy. President Obama has shown good will towards other nations and it's time for other nations to reciprocate. Otherwise time to win in Afghanistan is come and gone when we invaded Iraq. If international community is not willing to help us, we withdraw until other nations, including Europe realize that Al Qaeda is threat to all

[Anonymous](#)

START THE PULL-OUT PROCESS ASAP.

Why is it always the USA who is expected to keep peace and stability in the world? What's wrong with the rest of the "super powers" that they can't send troops and resources to the unstable regions?

They all seem to benefit from the USA efforts in one way or another while protecting their own troops and economies.

The U.N. is useless and has no effect on any turmoil in the world. They seem to line their own pockets (what a surprise) in the name of being a watchdog, guardian, and so-called mediator of the world.

[Anonymous](#)

My vote on Afghanistan is no increase in combat troops. I am going with Carl Levin's assessment. I do not think we should abandon completely...but shift focus to helping the Afghanistan people help themselves.

Katy

My advice would be to begin a pull-out process for several reasons:

1. We will get bogged down like Viet Nam.
2. We are wasting money that our country needs here at home

Anonymous

I believe we should take our troops out of Afghanistan. History proved that there is no victory for any country that try to occupy Afghanistan.

Let them deal with the problems by themselves. That is the only way Afghan people and the rest of the nations will resolve their differences (by letting them to make their own decisions, even if they are making mistakes).

I love your program.

Regards,

Mike from Scottsdale

We should pull out the sooner the better.

#1. We cannot afford this war.

#2. September 11 terrorists were most from Saudi Arabia.

#3 Women situation in Saudi Arabia is the same or worst than in Afghanistan.

[Anonymous](#)

Great show!

Re: Question of the week.

Start to pull out. Staying the course is not an option without a winning plan. And that begs the question of what winning is in this war. Adding more troops just adds to the problem. A contained war is never victory.

[Sean McAuley](#)

[Ontario](#)

The U.S. must withdraw from Afghanistan. But we won't.

We've spent a trillion \$ in the two (current) wars, but can't find much less to provide health care for the average citizen for 10 years?

We need out of ALL our military "presence" positions. Only corporations benefit from our perpetual wars. They have institutionalized war by "buying" our Congress, both parties.

[Joan Winsor, MD \(I\)](#)

[Winthrop, WA](#)

Most definitely, YES! However, start replacing US troops with a massive UN peacekeeping mission led by the US & its allies to build infrastructure and economic development while negotiating a stable political climate. Use the UN political prowess and the strength of individuals such as the late Sergio Vieira de Mello.

Stephanie Sanford
Emerald Hills, CA

Either withdraw ALL of the troops completely OR send in the required amount to win -- 40,000 to 100,000 troops. Protect our soldiers.

Sincerely,

Debbie Grossberg

PROUD PARENT OF A U.S. SOLDIER

Firstly, I would advise our President that we do need a surge in Afghanistan - but a surge in Peace Corpsmen/women. To permanently improve the situation there, we need to build a lot of schools, for the young boys and girls, to compete with the madrassas. These schools need to be well built, with community input and well supplied. We should establish regional schools for education beyond the elementary schools and give scholarships to enable qualified students, male and female, to attend. We are competing with the extremists for the hearts and minds of the young generation and we can give them hope and a future.

Secondly, we should send over modern farm equipment and agricultural advisers (perhaps community service from our aggie universities) to teach and enable the farmers to grow productive crops other than opium poppies.

The Afghan people are not our enemies, but we can have them become our friends.

Carol L. Weiss

Sunnyvale, CA

Wars would come to an abrupt halt if soldiers were to be enlisted at age 35 and if Obama appointed some Old Order Mennonites and Amish to his cabinet.

Or is a simple solution too good to be true?

Sincerely,

Dr. Jack Thiessen,

Prof. Emeritus from the Canadian Prairie

Pull out. It is a no win situation which will drag us into an unending war we can't win - whatever winning means.

Robert Gutowski

We should start immediately to pull our troops out of both Afghanistan and Iraq. The illegal and ill advised attack on Iraq was vindictive on the part of the Bush administration. They achieved their goal - take out Saddam - and they should have declared victory and brought our troops home. Afghanistan, where Ben Laden was at the time residing, is by no means his home - nor do the thousands of Afgan's who have died - share his policy. If we do remain it should only be with the help of other nations who have also suffered attacks of terror. This is not happening.

We are feeding our youth - when they have just reached their prime - to the sharks. As a Grandmother to one these young men who has served in both Afghanistan and Iraq, I want them all back home. We need to keep America strong for much bigger problems that I see facing us - not only in the future but now. We cannot continue to chase this evasive enemy as they disappear into their caves or into another Country.

Thank You

Pat Roth

Former Military wife, USAF

I would advise President Obama to send more troops. Wasted resources in Iraq can't be undone. We're in Afghanistan. Give the commanders what they want. Even if it doesn't work, it was the right thing to do. This is from a McGovern Democrat. Don't let the worthless, posturing of our pathetic Congressional leadership, sway you. They can't see beyond the midterm election. They are more spineless than the GOP. That's their single accomplishment.

Lynn Norris

Menlo Park, CA

The US needs to establish an aggressive program of helping the Afghan women.

Anonymous

My advice would be to greatly increase the number of civilian advisers while we gradually, but hastily, withdraw our military combat troops. We need to strengthen Hamid Karzai's government, or whatever government we (and the Afghans) can trust. We must remember that we are not interested in colonizing and ruling Afghanistan. We will probably have to forget about trying to turn Afghanistan into a modern democracy. That won't work with its present population and economy. We are wasting our effort, time, money, reputation, and the lives of our young men and women by insisting on remaining in Afghanistan until it turns into our dreaan of a stable, American-type capitalist state. History should have made it obvious that waiting until we have trained Afghans to be responsible for their own security is an endless, if not a lost cause.

L. John Martin

Get Out!!! Get Out!!! Get Out!!! There is no good reason to be there, we cannot win, we will not win, we don't need to win there.

Tom Fay

Augusta GA

If I were in the room, I would tell the powers that be to LISTEN to YOU!!! You are calm, clear, insightful and completely credible. You make more sense than anybody else out there.

I so very much enjoy the first part of the show where you just talk to us and tell us what you think. It is the best part of your program. Thank you.

Merry Cox

Dripping Springs, TEXAS

We should begin a gradual withdrawal. Terrorism will be with us forever. Middle East/Muslim terrorism is just the predominant type now. We need a sustained policy of containment, like we used against communism, putting out fires that come up but using our resources wisely: not on grandiose schemes. Active sustained military involvement in Afghanistan will poison the well rather than sustain it. [Lisa Gantner MD](#)

Afghanistan has never been a stable organized state with an effective central government. It has never been successfully conquered -- by the British, the Russians, or anyone.

The best policy for the US is to aim for stability for the whole region: use intelligence and law enforcement to track Al Qaeda wherever it is, and try to better human rights, especially for women and children.

We need to begin withdrawing our military forces.

[Gert Desjardin](#)

If I were to advise President Obama concerning Afghanistan, I would ask him to properly assess the situation and look at the plethora of military and political choices available and on the basis of long term impact, deploy the relevant comprehensive strategy inclusive of the military options attached

to it.

The US populace is bound to complain, whatever happens so he might as well ensure that he does the job well and not dance to the whims and caprices of the citizenry who are not privy to pertinent information and expertise.

[Tunde Arogunmati](#)

[Lagos, Nigeria](#)

I would tell the President to begin a pullout process after negotiating with the Taliban to keep Afghanistan free of Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden; in return for this America would recall its troops and assist in developing its economy. We cannot kill off an entire religious sect because they do not share our views. America needs to show tolerance and respect Afghanistan's sovereignty - the Bush era is finished.

[Dony](#)

I think the US should pull out of Afghanistan as it fuels hatred and conflicts never-ending. I still do not understand the real cause why the US is in Afghanistan. To bring democracy to a country that is totally different to western democracies or to fight terrorism? I think the threat of terrorism is a global phenomenon and can not be fought regionally nor globally. It's a reality in a globalized world every nation has to deal within its territory.

[Anton V.](#)

Hillary Clinton and Robert Gates are WRONG about staying there and doing

"nation building". It is alluded that our troops will feel "let down" if we pull out gradually. They are already demoralized. Their spirits will go up when there is good leadership from the President. America cannot afford a war of "choice".

Eks

I would advise him to begin the pull-out process, it's about time that the US realizes that this is more than a military war. The Taliban and Al-Qaeda are first an ideology and then a terrorist organization. The US should focus more on the underlying issues that breed terrorism, such as poverty, education and anti-American sentiment. Sending in more troops will only raise that anti-American sentiment. From a military perspective the emphasis should be on training the Afghani security forces and using special forces to eliminate the top leaders. And considering that most of top hierarchy lives on the other side of the border, the US should not only get the Pakistanis involved in such discussions but also equip them with the latest gadgets and share intelligence information.

Usman Ashraf

Pakistan

As a Viet Nam vet and a professor of ethics, I'd tell the president we've had enough of interventions in civil wars.

Whatever we do or don't do, the Afghan people will have to determine their own fate. We can't prop up the fraudulent regime in Pakistan and we don't want to drive Al Qaida there any more than we already have.

We should concentrate on stabilizing the region through India's influence. Their economic and political power continues to grow and will be the dominate force in South Asia for the foreseeable future.

Start pulling out now. Stop the killing--our killing--and the other costs. As we go, let's help the Afghanis rebuild as much as we can.

[Anonymous](#)

Aloha Fareed,

I want us out of Afghanistan. I do not think there is a war to win in a country who cannot manage itself. We do not have the leadership there to support. We need to come back to our own soil and work with others on this cause. We cannot be the world policemen with out the support of those who we are going to help. We do not have direction. We went there to fight our enemy after 9/11 and now are taking on much more than our initial failed attempt.

That is my opinion.

[Aimee Love](#)

[Big Island of Hawaii](#)

The United States of America should leave NOW meaning today, not next week, next month or next year. We have never been provided a true and meaningful explanation from Bush or Obama about our goals, timetable, or anything about our presence in the country. We all know the end result....so why not fail now rather than spend life and treasure only to pull out in two years?

Jerry Whaley
Lone Tree, CO

In response to the question you posed, "What should President Obama do regarding strategy and the number of troops for Afghanistan? I would have him do the following:

1) Send just enough additional US troops to accelerate the training of Afghani military and police.

2) Explore the possibility, politically, of making a deal with Pakistan (as we did with the Sunni militias in Iraq) to hire a sufficient number of their military, perhaps even temporarily putting them under NATO command, and using them to route Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups operating in Pakistan and Afghanistan. It might be a way of circumventing or at least mitigating to some degree the problem of US and NATO forces intruding into Pakistan's sovereign territory.

Thank you for your thoughtful treatment of world events.

James Coleman

I am a retired Army Colonel (1992) who worked in the Middle East training foreign military for 13 years after retirement. If I were to advise the president on the Afghan issue I would tell him to allow the increase in troops with a equal draw down in Iraq. However, I believe that training the Afghan Police Force, Army and the Afghan government is the only way to solve this problem. I also know that constantly looking over your shoulder in a hostel environment creates a hard environment to train soldiers. Therefore, the increased troop strength needs to focus on providing security for the civilian state department civilians and the military and police trainers to complete projects and do meaningful training. Key to any success under this scheme is defining what are the US objectives in Afghanistan how we are going to achieve those objectives. Iraq was run in a series of jerky starts and stops as we staggered through our ever changing objectives. We cannot do this in Afghanistan.

James B. Byrnes
Colonel (Ret)
US Army, Infantry

Given a. the exodus of Al Qaeda from Afghanistan (to Pakistan); b. the fact that we are fighting the Taliban; c. consensus is that we are in the business of nation-building; and d. general disdain by the Afghan people to foreign fighters on their soil; the U.S. hopefully will opt to begin pull-out/phase-out of the Afghan war effort. Doesn't mean we be gone immediately, but we need to make it clear that we came to pursue/kill those that attacked us. When that mission is complete, we dis-engage.

DM

Why don't we ask Russia what they went through, nine years of fighting and they finally fled, just like the Greeks and the Brits, and just like the U.S. did in Vietnam! We don't need to send 40,000 more troops over there, lets get out now!

The U.S. has spent over one trillion dollars fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan for what, just think what that money could do to give universal health care to all Americans!

Remember that it was Saudi Arabian born citizens that trained in Afghanistan that attacked us on 911. They could have been trained anywhere, are we going to continue to go to other countries to fight Al Qaeda?

Why is it that the U.S. has over 500,000 troops in other countries? Why is it that it is always the U.S. that gets involved in these unnecessary wars? You never see Canada, France, Germany, or the UK rush out to start unnecessary wars!

Bill

Arizona

Take the advice of the program participants and support Pakistan in its effort to control their dissidents. We are foolish if we follow the advice of our military as war is their livelihood so they quite naturally have a limited approach which will build their ranks. With great concern! Susannah

My family doesn't like this idea, but . . .

Take all the US. Military out of the country (Iraq as well) and every time a flare-up-Al Qaeda/Taliban-occurs send in a contingent to quell it I think it would be cheaper than what we're doing now. Since Alexander the Great couldn't conquer it-nor England-nor Russia-what in heaven's name makes us think we can straighten it out?

I would:

- a. send over some troops so there would be no misunderstanding about our continued objective to root out terrorists
- b. Hire Israel's Mossad to find and eliminate Osama bin Laden -- they are good at that sort of thing, we are not.
- c. pull our troops out of Afghanistan, as fast as possible. Let the Afghani's and Pakistani's fight each other off.
- d. turn our attention to dealing with some of the world's other crackpot havens like Iran and North Korea

Yes, I'm sure I am missing all kinds of ramifications which could result from my plan and I'm hoping you can explain them to me -- but I have enjoyed sharing my thoughts and thank you for the opportunity.

Shelly Ruth Beck
Spring Lake MI

I would tell him to take the controversial step of utilizing Afghan's warlords again. Men like Dostum and Atta Mohammed Noor and Gul Agha Sherzai and Ismail Khan may be dangerous, corrupt and violent, but they know what side they are on. We should in effect make use of these domesticated dogs to hunt down and kill the mad dog that the Taliban has become.

[Anonymous](#)

Ask him to ask himself if he would send his own children to fight this war. I think if a president can answer yes to that question then he is justified in waging war. But if he answers no, it is not something he truly believes is the right thing to do in his heart.

[Kate Hyde Bartel](#)

I would advise the President to revise the aim to that of stability in Afghanistan, the metrics being that of handing over security and governance situation to a large extent over 70 percent to the Afghan people. This will obviously take time but till then you have to Stay the Course and to carry out the task if there is a need to increase the troop strength so be it, you cannot under resource a military mission which is of vital national interest.

[Rahul K Bhonsle](#)

My advice to Pres. Obama--don't do it.

I listened to the two gentleman debate a "war of necessity" versus a "war of choice." I heard the comments about the "morale of the military": ask the spouses of our troops going out on their fourth or fifth deployment about their morale. How can we ask our brave men to risk their lives in order to prop up a corrupt government that is waist deep in the opium trade--inexpensive opium that is killing our young people back here?

The parallels with Vietnam are striking: a populace that does not care about our presence that just wants peace in their lives, an insurgency fueled from across a national border, a fraudulently elected corrupt government, no Afghan standing army. Your friend was very factual, he should read up on McGeorge Bundy.

Our invasion of Afghanistan was botched by the incompetents in Washington from the get go. When McCain and others talk about "winning" I have no idea what they mean, and neither do they. That area has never had a strong central government and never will. Al Qaeda is gone, and so we should leave to.

PERIOD.

Thanks,

BAM

In response to your question of the week, I believe that the best possible solution may be to decentralize the Afghan's government. Let's just break the country up into smaller

"fiefdom" states, instead of continuing the current policy of promoting Karzi's central government. By all accounts, Karzai is completely untrustworthy and corrupt -- he looks and acts more like a mobster than a statesman. Every cent we give him will find its way to him and his family and none to the development of that nation for the benefit of its people. No wonder the people of Afghanistan feel that they might be better off with Taliban.

So long as that remains the case, it seems that no matter what POTUS decides to do now, since the US/International occupation of Afghanistan cannot go on forever, whenever we leave, there will be an opportunity for Taliban and/or others (who we may not like) to fill the void.

[Marina.](#)

Surely part of the solution must be to invest in the Afghani people. They have no economy, no jobs, no opportunities. Hire them. Hire them to serve in the military, to be police officers, private security, and national defense in general. Train them, and pay them well (by Afghani standards). We heard last week that it costs over \$250,000 to keep one U.S. soldier in the field for one year. But it was reported that an Afghani soldier costs about \$2,000 per year. Create an industry, create opportunities. It will cost more a first, but it will be cheaper in the long run, and more beneficial, and politically palatable, than a huge increase in U.S. troops. One can imagine the tangential benefits which would arise from this approach. It is the only long term solution. Also, the Afghani government is not seen as legitimate, even by us. This must also be addressed and corrected, by any and all means necessary. [Tim Hall](#) [Painesville, Ohio](#)

I would tell him to pull out troops or leave them at the same level but, more importantly, refocus our efforts on education in the country at all levels. I don't think there's anything that would increase our favorability with the people more than in helping to educate their children. And I believe education will also naturally lead more Afghans to embrace the democracy we are trying to promote. I believe it's a more long-sighted strategy that will pay off in the end.

Janis

The simple, quick solution with less/no American fatalities is to remove the nuclear assets of Pakistan which will eliminate all the Pakistan sponsorship of terrorism and that will bring an end to the chaos in the Afghanistan and in that region. The state sponsorship of terrorism by Pakistan is the root cause of all the terrorist problems in that region.

DS

I believe there definitely needs to be an additional troop surge of 20,000 plus a large amount of military security trainers to build the Afghan army. Also, there needs to be increased drone coverage along with Special Forces increased to *completely *take out *al-Qaida *and convince the Taliban their tactics will no longer be tolerated, but give them enough power to avoid further conflict to end the fighting and begin to fully rebuild the infrastructure and a self-sustainable society for the Afghan people.

[Michael Blanos](#) San Francisco, CA

We should understand that just as Viet Nam did not spell a Victory for Communism, the Taliban does not constitute a direct threat to the United States.

Listening to the Sunday talk shows, it all sounded vaguely like the arguments for Viet Nam all over again. What can we win in Afghanistan? We will be unable to create a Jeffersonian Democracy in a country that does not wish to have one.

Let us stop repeating the mistakes of the past in our present military engagements , Declare Victory and come home. If not, another Richard Nixon is probably waiting in the wings...

[Charles Milhaus](#) Silver Spring, MD

Answer: None of the above. We need first to decide what The United State's interest is in Afghanistan. From that, we should rank this interest against other global interests. Then we should develop the best strategy for protecting this interest. Then we should fully resource the strategy we choose to support. [Gary](#)

Too many people are too delusional and proud to acknowledge that we lost the war in Afghanistan in less than 3 months. We could've had everyone home by Christmas in 2001, with only 4 Americans dead. We're now merely postponing (and aggravating) the inevitable. Just as no congressman should ever use the word elitist; The U.S. has forfeited the right to label anyone a militant.

[Steve the Carpenter](#)

What I would like to see happen is for us to switch to the 'Dutch' or NATO method of protecting communities that would impact the most number of people with the least amount of casualties. Earn trust, work with the Afghan people and hopefully attract Taliban members to return home to their safer villages and cities. Also attract NGOs to build schools and help the economy. As the area stabilizes, expand the territory. Meanwhile, some special forces can be used to pursue key Taliban militants. But no bombing!!!. Dropping bombs on people is evil.

[Linda Foss](#)

The road of solution to Afghan war passes through Pakistan and also the stability of Pakistan is directly related to the situation in Afghanistan.

The USA must start dialogues with all parties to the conflict i.e. Pakistan, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia

[Muhammad Kaleem](#)

(1) PULLING OUT NOW/NEAR FUTURE: No. It will be a tremendous morale booster to the Taliban, AQ combine. Elements within Afg who helped the NATO efforts will be left to fend for themselves. Pakistan will be only too happy to somehow push undesirable elements into Afg. and allow that country to become a problem entity. South Asian stereotypes as regards the US will be further reinforced (unreliable, opportunistic, morbid of protracted engagements)

(2) STAYING THE COURSE: No. The current troop levels are not paying dividends. The only way to make the most of the current level of troops is to strike deals with elements of the Taliban and focus US efforts to specific areas/issues. But striking deals under such circumstances might be seen as a tacit acknowledgement of US helplessness.

(3) ADDITIONAL TROOPS: Yes. Get them in but don't get them involved in direct combat. Reach out to elements of the Taliban and reduce mandate of mission. That way: (a) You appear to be negotiating from a position of strength (you have just added troops and are not scared of committing resources), (b) You don't actually use a bulk of the additional troops due to the deals.

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