

Testimony of Ryan C. Crocker
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Hearing on Afghanistan
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Mr. Chairman, Senator Lugar, members of the Committee, thank you for the honor of appearing before you today. I had the privilege of testifying before this Committee last fall, when the Administration was reviewing its policy toward Afghanistan. At that time, I said that we faced a determined strategic enemy in al-Qa'ida and its Taliban supporters, an enemy who seeks to outlast us and regain the operational space they used to plan the 9/11 attacks. The Administration wisely decided to step forward in Afghanistan and deny our enemies a fresh opportunity to shift the war from their territory back to ours. We have said that our core goal in Afghanistan and Pakistan is to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qa'ida. I agree. In my view, this requires denying them a secure operating environment, and that means a successful counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan and Pakistan. We will not prevail over our adversaries any other way. And that requires time and patience, commodities generally in short supply among Americans. General Petraeus and I used to talk about the difference between the Washington clock and the Baghdad clock. Now it's between the Washington clock and the tribal areas in Pakistan and Afghanistan where there are no clocks.

We have a history in that region. In the 1980s, we were deeply engaged in Afghanistan and Pakistan, fighting the Soviet occupation. We were successful. Once the Soviets withdrew, we also disengaged even though we could foresee the violence that would wrack Afghanistan as the various factions of the Mujahiddin, united only by the Soviet enemy, tore the country apart. We also withdrew from Pakistan which went from being the most allied of America's allies to the most sanctioned of adversaries in the space of a year. Our lack of strategic patience at the beginning of the 1990s paved the way to 9/11 a decade later. Both our allies and our adversaries in the region remember that history. Our friends are unsure of our commitment and hedge their bets; our enemies think they can outlast us. We need to make it clear to both that our determination is equal to theirs.

It is a long war, Mr. Chairman, fought on multiple fronts; there are no shortcuts or easy fixes. In Iraq, more than seven years on, it's still the beginning of the story where regional adversaries and enemies inside Iraq hope to outlast us. In Lebanon, our ill-considered engagement and swift disengagement more than a quarter of a century ago left a legacy we struggle with today in the form of Hizballah. I am a veteran of both those campaigns, as well as service in Pakistan and Afghanistan. I offer a few thoughts on our current challenges based on those experiences.

SUPPORT YOUR ALLIES: When I arrived in Kabul in January 2002 to reopen the U.S. Embassy, Hamid Karzai had been chairman of the Afghan Interim Authority for about ten days. In those early months I worked with him as he wrestled with issues from the design of the Afghan flag to preparations for the first post-liberation Loya Jirga. Eight and a half years later, he is still doing what may be the roughest job in the world. We need to work with him, not against him. Only our common enemies can benefit from public controversy, and I am pleased to see that the tenor of our partnership is much

improved. This does not mean we will agree on everything – far from it. Nor did we with Prime Minister al-Maliki in Iraq. But it does mean remembering that we are on the same side in a tough fight. It also doesn't mean backing only the central authority in Afghanistan, at the expense of local governance initiatives. We can and must do both, as we did in Iraq. Our goal, in coordination with our national and local partners, is not a shining city on a hill, but what Afghanistan scholar Clare Lockhart calls "good enough governance"- a government that can meet the basic needs of its citizens and over time insure their security.

REINTEGRATION AND RECONCILIATION: Commenting on Iraq, General Petraeus and I both said repeatedly that you can't kill your way out of an insurgency. The internationally resourced reintegration program is an important initiative, as was President Karzai's Consultative Peace Jirga. At the same time, our experience in Iraq demonstrated that in order to take apart an insurgency, you need to change your enemy's calculations. Reconciliation and reintegration become possible on a large scale when insurgents no longer feel they are winning. That was one of the critical results of the surge in Iraq, as it must be in Afghanistan. You don't get cracks and fissures in a rock until you bring a hammer down on it. Another lesson I learned in Iraq is the importance of being prepared to talk to anyone who is ready to talk to us without limiting ourselves through an elaborate set of preconditions. We talked to a host of extremely unpleasant people in Iraq. Some switched sides. Some simply dropped out of the fight. Others could be used to create dissension within the insurgency. In the end, there will be a certain number of the enemy who will have to be killed or captured. Our goal has to be to make that number as small as possible.

STRUCTURING THE FUTURE: I am pleased that the Administration is committed to negotiating a Strategic Partnership with Afghanistan. I hope this will be a process similar to the Strategic Framework Agreement that we negotiated with Iraq – a comprehensive understanding on all aspects of a bilateral relationship with a long term ally. The agreement with Iraq covers cooperation in diplomacy, trade, economics, education, science and technology. Both nations have a sense of where the relationship is going and what the value is of going forward. In Iraq, we are moving from a predominantly security based relationship to a long term, multifaceted strategic partnership. We are some ways away from that in Afghanistan, but I believe that it is time now for the Afghan people to see that the U.S. commitment is long term with strong incentives for a return to normalcy.

THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION: The Kabul Conference has just concluded an historic gathering of foreign ministers from around the world. The international dimension is a key element in Afghanistan's long term stability and development, and it is important to continue to institutionalize and consolidate this support. Other mechanisms such as the Six Plus Two and the Geneva Group should be explored, not least because of the presence of both the U.S. and Iran in both of these forums.

The role of the United Nations is extremely important. The Special Representative of the Secretary General in Afghanistan, Steffan de Mistura, is doing excellent work on behalf of the international community. He also can be highly effective in an expanded regional

role, working with Iraq's neighbors, including Iran, to formulate and implement understandings that support stability in Afghanistan.

UNITY OF EFFORT: Our system does not provide for unity of command among military and civilians, but we must have unity of effort. General Petraeus and I worked very hard to achieve this in Iraq. It is equally critical in Afghanistan. Simply put, we cannot win the big war if we are fighting small ones among ourselves. It is already clear to me that Ambassador Eikenberry and General Petraeus are working to forge that unity of effort between themselves and their staffs.

PAKISTAN: Mr. Chairman, we cannot bring Afghanistan to a better place without a long term, strategic relationship with Pakistan. There are about as many Pashtuns in Pakistan as there are Afghans of all ethnicities in Afghanistan. The Tribal Areas of Pakistan have never been under central authority – not that of Alexander the Great, the Moghuls, the British Raj or of Pakistan since 1948. The need for sustained and systematic development in those areas and throughout Pakistan is critical. The Pakistani state and the Pakistani people need to see that the United States is a reliable ally in the country's long term economic and social development as well as in the war on terror. That is why the legislation you sponsored, Mr. Chairman, in coordination with Senator Lugar and Chairman Berman, is so important. Our \$7.5 billion commitment to Pakistan over five years is a powerful signal that after the turbulence of the past, the U.S. is a reliable and committed partner. At the same time, we have to be careful not to over-condition our assistance. Congress and the American people have the right to demand accountability, but too much conditionality evokes memories of the Pressler Amendment in Pakistan and can be counterproductive to our efforts to develop a sense of strategic partnership.

Our policy of engagement with Pakistan is not new. It began after 9/11 based on a calculation of our vital national security interests that remains valid today. The Bush Administration restarted significant economic and security assistance, suspended for more than a decade because of sanctions. During my tenure as ambassador from 2004 to 2007, we established what was then the largest government financed Fulbright program in the world - funded by both the U.S. and Pakistani governments. In the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), the U.S. began constructing schools in 2002, the first many children in the area had ever seen. And the massive, U.S. led earthquake relief effort in 2005-2006 was the largest and longest airborne humanitarian mission since the Berlin Airlift.

In 2006, we began a substantial, multi-year commitment to comprehensive development in the FATA. You have built considerably on these initiatives, Mr. Chairman. And yet there is much unfinished business. Over five years ago as ambassador to Pakistan, I put forward a proposal for the establishment of Reconstruction Opportunity Zones (ROZs) in the Northwest Frontier and Baluchistan from which manufactured goods would have preferential entry into U.S. markets. Implementing legislation still has not been passed by Congress. We need to act now in defense of our own strategic interest in the economic development of these regions, and we need to include textiles.

Partnership, of course, is a two-way street, and we have the right to expect cooperation from Pakistan. They need to do more against a common enemy. And we need to understand that the best way to achieve that is through quiet dialog and not public remonstrations. Ultimately, this comes down to a judgment as to whether the United States and Pakistan share the same basic goals. Based on my experience in Pakistan, I believe we do, although we differ on tactics and timelines. I know many of Pakistan's civilian and military leaders, and I believe we share a common vision. The extension of General Kiyani as Chief of Army Staff for an additional three years is a positive development in view of the strong working relationship Admiral Mullen and General Petraeus have forged with him.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, there is the critical relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Just as the U.S. must find common strategic ground with our partners in both countries, they must find it with each other. This is something we worked very hard on during my time as ambassador. There is a dialog between Kabul and Islamabad, and the signing of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement was an historic step forward. I hope we will continue to help both of our allies build on this achievement and overcome a legacy of mistrust and suspicion that dates back to the founding of the Pakistani state more than 60 years ago.

Mr. Chairman, none of this will be quick or easy. The problems we confront in both Pakistan and Afghanistan have been decades in the making, and some of the responsibility for those problems is ours because of our inconsistency and lack of strategic patience in the past. Since 9/11, I believe we have followed a consistent policy of engagement in Pakistan and Afghanistan. But impatience is on the rise again in this country. Before we give way to it, we owe ourselves and our people a serious consideration of the alternatives. The road to 9/11 shows us what happens when we decide disengagement is better than engagement. That is what our adversaries are counting on now, and what our allies fear. There are other alternatives being advanced, in search of the quick, cheap fix. There isn't one. A successful counter-terror strategy can only rest on a successful counterinsurgency, and this will be a long, hard fight. But consequences of abandoning that fight could be far more costly, and we have to be honest with ourselves about the grim consequences for Afghans, especially women, if we once again leave the field to Islamic militants. The human rights abuses would be appalling, and we would be responsible for those consequences.

Mr. Chairman, we have our best people forward in this fight – Ambassador Eikenberry and General Petraeus in Afghanistan and Ambassador Patterson in Pakistan. Before contemplating dramatically different courses of action, I hope this committee will ask to hear the views of the men and women in the field, as it did of General Petraeus and me on Iraq a few years ago.

Thank you.