

Lesson Plan on Afghanistan

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Shirley H. Engle wrote in this publication in 1960 that “quality decision making should be the central concern of social studies instruction.”¹ In a classroom that focuses on decision making, Engle pointed out, teachers need to introduce more facts and use more varied sources than in a textbook-driven class. Students experience a fundamental change because the purpose of reading and thinking is not memorization but the selection and use of relevant information for decision making.

Ninth grade students at the Beacon School, a public high school in Manhattan, began this year faced with decision making about Afghanistan and Pakistan. This curricular choice was made for several reasons. First, our teachers place a high value on students reading the newspaper and understanding current events, and President Obama’s ongoing discussion with his advisors about policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan was on the front page every day in September. Second, our teachers emphasize the importance of connecting the past to the present. Here, Afghanistan offers rich possibilities to teach about the continued impact of the history of Islam, British

colonialism, the Soviet invasion, the United States funding of the Mujahideen, the September 11 attack, and the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001.

A further reason is that the role of religion in holding societies together or creating conflicts is the theme of the first semester of global studies at our school. Students explore issues and problems in the rise of religions in ancient river valley societies, the spread of Christianity under the Roman Empire, the origins of Islam and the creation of Dar al Islam, the Crusades, and the Protestant Reformation. The semester ends with a Model UN-like simulation in which students play countries and actors in

the current Middle East and attempt to solve many complex problems. The unit on Afghanistan offers an opportunity to introduce students to the role that concepts like religion, ethnicity and nationality play in complex political problems, and to teach the historical thinking and decision making skills that will be used throughout the year.

This unit on Afghanistan takes nine hour-long class periods to complete and culminates in a debate and in-class persuasive essay writing. Both the debate and the essay ask students to make arguments about the best policy for the United States and NATO to adopt in Afghanistan and Pakistan, using evidence from a variety of primary and secondary sources.

Focus questions for unit

Does radical Islam cause the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan?

Does the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan cause radical Islam?

Basic Facts About Afghanistan

- Capital: Kabul
- Area: 251,825 square miles (slightly smaller than Texas)
- Population: 28,400,000 (July 2009 estimate) 80% Sunni Muslim, 19% Shia Muslim
- Main ethnic groups: Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek
- GDP per capita: purchasing power parity - \$839 (2009 estimate)
- Over 80% of labor force is employed in agriculture (farming, sheep, goats)
- The country is covered by an estimated 5-7 million land-mines
- Afghanistan is a leading illicit opium producer, which in 2005 supplied 89% of the opium produced in the world. One third of the GDP comes from opium trade.
- Afghanistan is a landlocked country, making the export of goods difficult and expensive.
- It has rugged mountains and plains and is prone to natural disasters such as earthquakes and drought.
- Temperatures are extreme, as hot as 120° F in the summer and as cold as -15° F in the winter.
- There are limited natural fresh water sources, and most of the land has been overgrazed and deforested, causing desertification and soil degradation, and making farming difficult.

Goals

1. We will look at how ethnicity, nationality, and religion shape identity (how we see ourselves) and perspective (how we see others).
2. We will look at history as a powerful tool for understanding present conflicts.
3. Students will be asked to carry out historical decision-making. They will be asked to make a historical argument and support it with the best evidence available.

Sub-questions/themes

1. Present a brief history of Afghanistan, including the arrival of Islam, the “Great Game” of imperial rivalries, the Soviet Union and the Mujahideen, and the formation of the Taliban (reviewing the madrassas and Pakistan’s role). What role did the Cold War and U.S. support of the Mujahideen play in creating Al Qaeda and the Taliban?
2. Survey the ethnic groups in Afghanistan and describe the Sunni/Shia differences. To what extent is the current civil war in Afghanistan an ethnic and religious war between Afghans? How do the recent elections reflect the ethnic divides?
3. Present a brief history of the U.S. invasion in 2001, the occupation since then, U.S. support for Pakistan, and the current war under Obama. To what extent does the U.S. presence in Afghanistan and support for the government in Pakistan fuel Islamic radicalism?
4. Conduct a discussion: Is the U.S. better served by increasing its military presence in Afghanistan/Pakistan, withdrawing its troops, or creating some international force to monitor the situation?

Required technology

Computer with Internet connection and a projector.

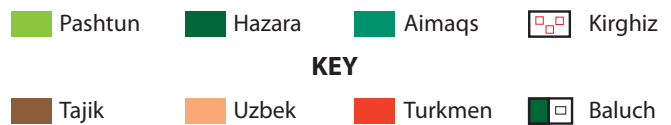
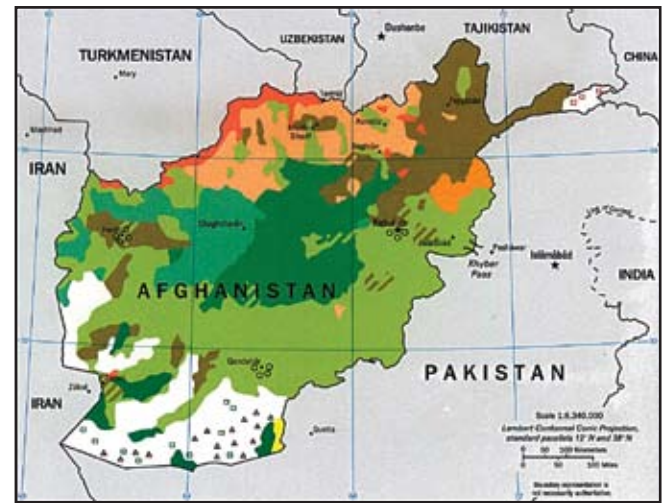
Day 1

Aim question: *How and why has the Taliban grown in Pakistan (and Afghanistan) in recent years?*

Procedures:

1. Hook: In 2001, after the 9-11 attacks, U.S. troops defeated the Taliban and largely drove them from Afghanistan. Ask students to use knowledge obtained from news reports to explain why President Obama sent more U.S. troops to Afghanistan over the summer, and why he is considering sending even more.
2. To portray the growth of the Taliban, I play the PBS Frontline online film *Children of the Taliban* (Streamed Video, 2009) (36:30). It is accessible at www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/pakistan802/video/video_index.html.

Ethnic Groups in Afghanistan



Credit: the map is from the University of Texas Libraries collection at www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/afghanistan_ethnoling_97.jpg

Afghan Ethnic Groups

Pashtun: The largest ethnic group, mostly farmers and Sunni Muslims.

Tajik: The second largest ethnic group, mostly Sunni Muslims, live mostly in the northeast.

Hazara: Live in the Hindu Kush Mountains, primarily Shiite Muslims.

Uzbek: Live mostly along the northern border, mostly Sunni Muslims.

Aimaqs: A farming and herding tribe in the west, mostly Sunni Muslims.

Turkmen and Kirghiz: Nomadic herders and craftsmen, mostly Sunni Muslims.

Baluch: Nomadic tribe living in the southern deserts, Sunni Muslims.

3. Have students take notes on the following questions as they watch the film.
 - a. Why do children join the Taliban? Cite specific examples from the film.
 - b. How has the war in Pakistan (between the Taliban, the Pakistani Army and U.S. drones) impacted children?
 - c. Has the military offensive by the Pakistani Army and the U.S. drones against the Taliban been effective? Cite at least three specific examples.
 - d. How and why does the Taliban continue to grow?
4. Read an account of the laws implemented by the Taliban. A good source is “Taliban Rules, Decrees, Laws and Prohibitions: Original List of Prohibitions and Decrees,



Afghan children watch a soldier from the French Foreign Legion, serving with the NATO force in Afghanistan, as he patrols in the Deh Sabz district of Kabul province, October 3, 2009.

Afghanistan, 1996,” which is available at middleeast.about.com/od/afghanista1/a/me080907c.htm

Discuss why these laws might be attractive for some Muslims.

5. Conclusion: Draw together evidence that answers the aim question about why the Taliban has grown.

Homework: Students should consider the question: Could

Afghanistan Become Obama’s Vietnam?

As a resource, I recommend an article by Peter Baker on this subject, accessible at www.nytimes.com/2009/08/23/weekinreview/23baker.html?ref=todayspaper

Questions:

1. *What does it mean that Afghanistan might become another “Vietnam?”*
2. *Cite two examples from the articles in which the war in Afghanistan is like Vietnam and two examples in which it is different.*
3. *How has President Obama changed U.S. foreign policy toward Afghanistan since he came into office?*
4. *In the American press, Afghanistan has sometimes been called the “good war” because the Taliban and Al Qaeda were seen as authentic enemies of the United States who were connected to the September 11 attacks on the U.S., as opposed to the “bad war” in Iraq against Saddam Hussein, who was not connected to September 11. I would like you to interview three adults. Ask each of them whether the U.S. should be fighting a war in Afghanistan now (and whether President Obama should expand the war or end the war).*

Resources: Computer and projector.

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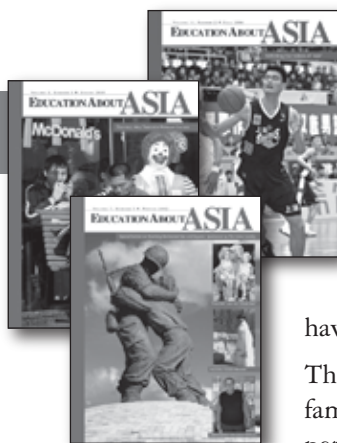
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RELIGION

- Islam is the world's second largest religion, with 21% of all people practicing this faith.
- Islam teaches that one can only find peace in life by submitting to Allah (Almighty God) in heart, soul, and deed.
- The Quran is the holy guide to Islam.
- Major aspects of the Islamic religion (the five pillars) include testimony of faith, prayer, fasting, almsgiving and pilgrimage.
- "Covering" is a religious duty. Women can only have their faces and hands showing in public. Men must not expose anything from navel to knee.
- Sunni and Shia are the two most common forms of Islam, which divided in the seventh century over the issue of the rightful succession to the Prophet Muhammad. Shias believe that the rightful leadership of Islam belonged to imams directly descended from Muhammad, while the Sunnis believe that the caliphs who succeeded Muhammad were the legitimate leaders of the Muslim community even if they were not descended from Muhammad

Day 2

Aim question: *How has the history of Afghanistan shaped the current war?* Ask students to look at the war in Afghanistan through a number of lenses: (1) Is the Taliban an anti-colonial force (fighting against foreigners)? (2) Is the Taliban fighting an ethnic war of Pashtuns against other ethnic groups in Afghanistan? (3) Is the Taliban fighting an anti-globalization war (fighting against the powerful influences of capitalism and modern consumer culture)?

1. Discuss the homework reading from last night. (10 minutes)
2. Provide background information on Afghan society and politics, as well as some recent history. One useful resource is a website that can be projected to the class: "Hell of a Nation: Power Shifts in Afghanistan's History." It is accessible at www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/episodes/hell-of-a-nation/power-shifts-in-afghanistans-history/1284/ A more detailed history is provided by "A Historical Timeline of Afghanistan," available at www.pbs.org/newshour/indepth_coverage/asia/afghanistan/timeline/index.html

AFGHANISTAN TIMELINE

1761	Ahmad Shah Durrani defeated the Hindu Mahrattas and created the first Afghan state. The Durrani clan ruled Afghanistan for the next 200 years, until 1973.	1996	The Taliban, promising a return to traditional, Islamic values came to power, imposing strict Islamic law, including the revocation of many women's rights.
1832–1921	In the British-Afghan Wars, the British made three attempts to conquer Afghanistan (1838–42, 1878–80, 1919–21), though not successfully.	1996–2001	The Taliban gradually overcame opposition from other factions to control all but a small part of Afghan territory by 2001.
1893	Pashtun lands were formally partitioned between British India and Afghanistan, known as the Durand Line.	2001	In March, the Taliban destroyed 1,500 year-old Buddha statues in the Bamiyan Valley.
1947	The independent nations of Pakistan (bordering Afghanistan) and India were created by the British out of British India.	2001	After the attacks of September 11 by Al Qaeda, an ally of the Taliban, American troops invaded Afghanistan and provided military support to Afghan groups opposed to the Taliban, forcing the Taliban out of power. Hamid Karzai (a Pashtun) was sworn in as the head of an interim administration.
1956–1978	The Soviet Union gave \$1.26 billion in economic aid and \$1.25 billion in military aid to Afghanistan in order to create a sphere of influence.	2002	In January NATO troops arrived in Kabul as the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).
1973	King Zahir Shah was deposed by his cousin and Afghanistan was declared a republic.	2002	In July, a <i>Loya Jirga</i> (a traditional assembly of Afghan notables) appointed Karzai Interim President.
1978	Marxist sympathizers in Afghanistan's army staged a successful coup.	2004	Interim President Karzai signed the country's new constitution and, later that year, became the elected Afghan president.
1979	Afghanistan was invaded by the Soviet Union to bolster the weak communist government.	2009	In May, Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal was appointed by President Obama to lead the U.S. troops in Afghanistan.
1980	The U.S. began to organize and finance the Mujahideen rebels against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan. As part of the Mujahideen effort, Osama bin Laden created Al Qaeda in Afghanistan in 1988.	2009	In July, Pakistan's military recaptured the Swat Valley from the Taliban.
1989	Afghanistan and the Soviet Union signed a peace agreement, under which the Soviet Union agreed to withdraw its forces. Afghan President Najibullah, a communist, remained in place and continued to confront the Mujahideen.	2009	On August 20, 2009, Afghanistan held presidential elections. In disputed results, Hamid Karzai defeated Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani. Both Karzai and Ghani are Pashtun. Abdullah is part Tajik and part Pashtun, but the Tajik community is his main political base.
1992	Kabul and Afghanistan fell to the Mujahideen and President Najibullah sought shelter in the UN compound. A civil war ensued between different factions of the Mujahideen.		

Questions for student worksheets include:

- a. *What are the four largest ethnic groups in Afghanistan? What does it mean that the Hazara are "Shia Muslim?"*
- b. *When was Afghanistan united as a "nation?"*
- c. *What countries tried to invade Afghanistan in the 20th century?*
- d. *The "Mujahideen" included Islamic fighters from around the world, including Osama Bin Laden. The U.S. started funding the "Mujahideen" in the 1980's. Did this process of bringing fervent Muslims together from throughout the world create the radical Islamic movement?*
- e. *Why did the United States invade Afghanistan in 2001?*
- f. *What did the political structure of Afghanistan look like in 2002?*

Distribute information on Afghanistan (the sidebar titled "Basic Facts," on page 350 will help). Have students take notes on the Afghan population and timeline.

3. Organize a class discussion on the topic: How has the history of Afghanistan shaped the current war? Some important points are: Afghanistan has a long history of expelling foreign invaders (the British and the Soviet Union); there has been ethnic conflict in Afghanistan; the Taliban are fighting against the U.S., against Sunni Muslims who are less fundamentalist, and against Shia Muslims in general.

Homework: Students should read about the relationship between Pakistan and the Taliban. I recommend a summary provided by the National Security Archive* of declassified documents about the relationship between Pakistan and the Taliban, "Pakistan: The Taliban's Godfather?," accessible at www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB227/index.htm. Students should read the first 8 paragraphs, click on documents 17, 34 and 8, and write a brief summary about what they have learned.

Resources needed: Computer and projector; laptops.

*The National Security Archive is an independent, non-governmental institute at George Washington University that collects and publishes declassified documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act.

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Day 3

Aim question: *What is the relationship between Pakistan and the Taliban?*

1. Discuss the previous day's homework.
2. Review the revival of the Taliban following its ouster from Afghanistan by the U.S. invasion in 2001. One useful resource is the streaming video of the PBS Frontline program, *Return of the Taliban* (2006), accessible at www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/taliban/. The class should watch the following chapters: 1 (7:01), 2 (4:16), 3 (7:57), and 7 (8:50). Post questions on the board to be answered in students' notebooks:
 - a. What is the relationship between the Pakistani government and security agency (ISI) and the Taliban?
 - b. Why has the Pakistani government had difficulty in stopping the Taliban?
 - c. In your opinion, should the U.S. continue to provide financial and military aid to Pakistan? (The U.S. and Japan each promised \$1 billion to Pakistan in 2009).
 - d. Discussion.
3. Examine the challenge posed by the revival of the Taliban for U.S. forces. A helpful resource is "The War Briefing" (PBS Frontline, 2008) accessible at www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/warbriefing/. Have the students answer in their notebook: What factors have allowed the Taliban

to regroup and grow since its defeat in 2001?

4. Discuss: What is the relationship between Pakistan and the Taliban? How should the U.S. deal with Pakistan?

Homework: Read about the complex relationship between Pakistan and the Taliban. An article on the topic is "Jihadistan," by Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, which is available on the Foreign Policy website www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/07/03/jihadistan. Read the first 11 paragraphs in particular. Students should answer:

- a. Why might some foreign policy experts call the area "Afpak"?
- b. Why are many leaders in the West even more scared about the Taliban in Pakistan than in Afghanistan?
- c. Evaluate Obama's use of drone attacks. Is this a violation of the sovereignty of Pakistan?

Resources: Computer and projector.

Day 4

Aim question: *What should U.S. and NATO policy be toward Afghanistan and Pakistan?*

1. Discuss the homework from the night before. What policy option does this information suggest?
2. Examine the difficult problems and policy options facing President Obama in Afghanistan and Pakistan. A helpful resource is "Obama's War" (PBS Frontline 2009).

PAKISTAN'S CONNECTION

Pakistan's Intelligence agency (the ISI) has been supporting the Taliban with money, intelligence and arms since 1996, according to de-classified CIA documents (see "The Taliban's Godfather" at the National Security Archives, www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB227/index.htm).

The ISI has also supported Lashkar-e-Taiba (who carried out the Mumbai bombing in November 2008) and other extremist Islamist groups since the 1980's, as protection against India. (See Ahmed Rashid, "The Afghanistan Impasse" in *New York Review of Books*, October 2009, www.nybooks.com/

articles/23113)

"The U.S. aid figure to Pakistan since 2001 now stands at around \$11.8 billion, of which, it appears, about 80% went directly to the military. There is also a large sum that went directly to the ISI, and another in the form of reward money for catching Al Qaeda elements, but that sum remains secret." Ahmed Rashid, quoted in "Inside the Pakistan-Taliban Relationship: Six Questions for Ahmed Rashid, Author of *Descent Into Chaos*," by Scott Horton, *Harpers*, July 2009, www.harpers.org/archive/2008/07/hbc-90003347

THE PASHTUNS

The Pashtuns are an ethnic group that is mainly Pashto-speaking and Sunni Muslim. They are organized mainly around tribal lines in agricultural communities. The Afghan Pashtuns have traditionally provided the rulers of Afghanistan.

The Pashtuns represent 42% of Afghanistan's population, or 13 million people, and 15% of Pakistan's population or 27 million people. Pashtun lands were divided between Afghanistan and then-British India in 1893. The Taliban has drawn most of its recruits from the Pashtuns. Pashtuns regard a strong commitment to Islam as part of the Pashtun way of life. The Taliban has been supported in Pakistan by fellow Pashtuns living in the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA). "FATA is now almost entirely controlled by the Pakistani Taliban militias who in turn provide cover, protection, and sanctuary to the Afghan Taliban and to Al Qaeda. FATA consists of seven tribal agencies, is about the size of Belgium, and has a

population of about 3.5 million people, mostly Pashtun tribesmen." (Ahmed Rashid, quoted in "Inside the Pakistan-Taliban Relationship: Six Questions for Ahmed Rashid, Author of *Descent Into Chaos*," by Scott Horton, *Harpers*, July 2009, www.harpers.org/archive/2008/07/hbc-90003347)

Because the state borders separating the Afghan and Pakistani Pashtun communities result from lines drawn during the period of the British Empire, the Pashtuns have always regarded these lines as artificial. Recent attempts by the Pakistani army to get the FATA region under control have resulted in tensions within Pakistan between the Pashtuns and the other ethnic groups who constitute the majority of the Pakistani population. One of the possible risks of the current situation is that it might stimulate a Pashtun nationalist movement that would mobilize both the Afghan and the Pakistani Pashtuns against their respective governments.

Accessible at www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/obamaswar/view/. Have students take notes on the problems facing the Obama administration in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

3. Conclusion: Discuss what U.S. and NATO policy should be toward Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Homework: Read about General McChrystal's report on strategy in Afghanistan. I recommend "McChrystal: More Forces or 'Mission Failure': Top U.S. Commander For Afghan War Calls Next 12 Months Decisive" by Bob Woodward, accessible at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/20/AR2009092002920.html. Students should answer:

- a. What are the elements in McChrystal's counterinsurgency plan?
- b. According to McChrystal, what are the goals of the counterinsurgency plan?
- c. Given what you have read and seen so far in this unit, what do you think of McChrystal's plan?

Resources: Computer and projector.

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Day 5

Aim question: *What should U.S. and NATO policy be toward Afghanistan and Pakistan?*

1. Discuss the homework from the night before.
2. Give out a copy of a handout listing different options (see pp. 358–359). Read selected paragraphs of President Obama's speech of August 17, 2009 (see excerpts on this page). The full speech is available at www.cfr.org/publication/20038/. Have students write in notebooks: Why does President Obama call the war in Afghanistan a war of "necessity"?
3. Foreign Policy Options: Using the student handout, have students make a chart in their notebooks. The chart should have three columns: one for the overall position; another for arguments that support the position; and evidence that supports the arguments. Have students read position #1 in the handout, and then discuss it.
4. Conclusion: What are the advantages and potential problems of policy option #1?

Homework: Students read more about the Taliban's supporters and havens in Pakistan. I recommend a review by Ahmed Rashid of books about Pakistan in the *New York Review of Books*, titled "The Afghanistan Impasse," and available at www.nybooks.com/articles/23113

I edited the article for my students because of its length. Ask students to underline important passages and make margin comments throughout.

1. Explain the statement made by Ahmed Rashid (on page 1 of his review): "The key question is whether the Pakistani Army and the ISI... can make a strategic shift."
2. Look for signs that the Pakistani Army is willing to take

on the Taliban, and identify one. Look for signs that it is not ready to take on the Taliban, and write one down.

3. Evaluate whether the Taliban's influence has increased.
4. Evaluate the problems posed by the recent disputed Afghan presidential election for the Obama administration?

Resources: Student Handout (pp. 358–359).

President Obama's speech of August 17, 2009 (Excerpt)

But as we move forward, the Iraqi people must know that the United States will keep its commitments. And the American people must know that we will move forward with our strategy. We will begin removing our combat brigades from Iraq later this year. We will remove all our combat brigades by the end of next August. And we will remove all our troops from Iraq by the end of 2011. And for America, the Iraq war will end.

By moving forward in Iraq, we're able to refocus on the war against Al Qaeda and its extremist allies in Afghanistan and Pakistan. That's why I announced a new, comprehensive strategy in March—a strategy that recognizes that Al Qaeda and its allies had moved their base from the remote, tribal areas—to the remote, tribal areas of Pakistan. This strategy acknowledges that military power alone will not win this war—that we also need diplomacy and development and good governance. And our new strategy has a clear mission and defined goals: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaeda and its extremist allies.

In the months since, we have begun to put this comprehensive strategy into action. And in recent weeks, we've seen our troops do their part. They've gone into new areas—taking the fight to the Taliban in villages and towns where residents have been terrorized for years. They're adapting new tactics, knowing that it's not enough to kill extremists and terrorists; we also need to protect the Afghan people and improve their daily lives. And today, our troops are helping to secure polling places for this week's election so that Afghans can choose the future that they want.

Now, these new efforts have not been without a price. The fighting has been fierce. More Americans have given their lives. And as always, the thoughts and prayers of every American are with those who make the ultimate sacrifice in our defense.

As I said when I announced this strategy, there will be more difficult days ahead. The insurgency in Afghanistan didn't just happen overnight and we won't defeat it overnight. This will not be quick, nor easy. But we must never forget: This is not a war of choice. This is a war of necessity. Those who attacked America on 9/11 are plotting to do so again. If left unchecked, the Taliban insurgency will mean an even larger safe haven from which Al Qaeda would plot to kill more Americans. So this is not only a war worth fighting. This is a—this is fundamental to the defense of our people.

And going forward, we will constantly adapt to new tactics to stay ahead of the enemy and give our troops the tools and equipment they need to succeed. And at every step of the way, we will assess our efforts to defeat Al Qaeda and its extremist allies, and to help the Afghan and Pakistani people build the future that they seek.

Handout: FOUR POSITIONS ON AFGHANISTAN

Position 1: Send more U.S. and NATO troops to Afghanistan for a counterinsurgency strategy.

The U.S. cannot allow Afghanistan to become another Taliban-run sanctuary for al-Qaeda, which could lead to another 9/11. The U.S. must defeat the Taliban, even if this means increasing the number of U.S. troops.

The source used to support this position is an article by Trudy Rubin, who presents the views of Australian counterinsurgency expert David Kilcullen. The full text is available at www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2009/02/a_calculated_strategy_for_afgh.html

Summary: After being defeated by U.S. forces in 2001, the Taliban were able to make a comeback in Afghanistan while the U.S. focused on the war in Iraq. Many parts of Afghanistan have become off limits to Afghan security forces, while both the Taliban and Al Qaeda have established a haven in Pakistan. NATO troops in Afghanistan have been too few to stop the Taliban's expansion.

David Kilcullen, a former Australian army officer who served as an advisor on counterinsurgency to Gen. David Petraeus in Iraq, has suggested a plan for defeating the Taliban in Afghanistan. Kilcullen believes that the U.S. must remain in Afghanistan, and prevent more of the country from falling under Taliban control, even though Americans are concerned about the loss of life and financial costs that would result from this policy. The U.S. must also address the problem of Pakistan's tribal areas, which are giving shelter to the Taliban and Al Qaeda and threatening the Pakistani government. U.S. diplomacy should aim at strengthening Pakistan against this internal terrorist threat to its survival.

Additional U.S. troops are needed, and a sound counterinsurgency strategy must be developed. Kilcullen's approach is to "focus on protecting the Afghan people from Taliban intimidation, while helping them develop their own security forces and improve their living standards...We need to figure out where the bulk of the population lives and how to secure the major population centers, not just towns, but major villages."

"U.S. forces should be out in the community, working alongside (and training more) Afghan army and police to support local officials and secure delivery of services." In areas where this cannot be done, the U.S. should "put special forces in partnership with local neighborhood watch groups." The aim should be to make the Afghan population "self-defending."

Kilcullen agrees that there is no purely military solution to Afghanistan. Afghans need a better standard of living, which the corrupt central government is not providing. The U.S. needs to take initiatives for the reconstruction of Afghanistan that can have an impact on the different Afghan localities. The U.S. has focused too much on building national institutions in Kabul, while the Taliban has focused on establishing control at the local level. The correct strategy is one of "Prevent [a Taliban take-over], Protect, Build, and ultimately Hand-off to the Afghans."

Position 2: Shift the military effort to Pakistan instead of Afghanistan

The real havens of the Taliban and Al Qaeda are in Pakistan, not Afghanistan. Instead of increasing the number of troops in Afghanistan, the U.S. should focus its efforts on Pakistan.

The source used to support this position is an article in *Foreign Policy* (July 2009) by Michael A. Cohen and Parag Khanna, titled "Where the Real Fight Is." It is available at www.paragkhanna.com/2009/07/where_the_real_fight_is.html

Summary: The authors maintain that "The real fight is in Pakistan, not Afghanistan...The U.S. ability to rout the Taliban and Al Qaeda leadership in Pakistan is increasingly showing results while the counterinsurgency mission in Afghanistan is wracked with uncertainty and dubious prospects for success."

Cohen and Khanna argue that the Taliban is too unpopular in Afghanistan to have a chance of taking back the country and it is unlikely that Al Qaeda can ever rebuild an effective infrastructure in Afghanistan, where it has had no effective base since 2002.

"In effect, the United States is undertaking a \$65-billion-a-year campaign in Afghanistan to defeat an enemy that is, for the most part, located across the border." The U.S. has assumed the difficult burden of enforcing the rule of a corrupt Afghan government whose own police and army are not able to counter the Taliban.

"The even better course of action is to shift the weight of U.S. political and military efforts to Pakistan. There, the United States should continue its policy of waging drone attacks against Al Qaeda and Taliban leaders. With better intelligence from the Pakistani side—as demonstrated recently—the U.S. Army can improve the accuracy of its strikes. And though drone strikes are controversial, targeting Al Qaeda's leadership is the best military strategy—and the best way to protect Americans, Afghans, and Pakistanis from terrorism. And that fight is in Pakistan, not Afghanistan." In Afghanistan, the best U.S. strategy is to work with local Afghan leaders to target insurgents and to entice Taliban commanders to "flip" and to "give up Al Qaeda figures if they come over the border from Pakistan."

Instead of focusing on nation building in Afghanistan, the U.S. should strengthen support for Pakistan's government and armed forces. "Pakistan's military, including its Frontier Corps and police, needs U.S. assistance to build its capability to 'clear, hold, and build' in the country's tribal areas...And U.S. military assistance should go hand in hand with greater U.S. coordination between both Afghanistan and Pakistan to prevent the movement of Al Qaeda and Taliban operatives back and forth across the border." The U.S. should also support provincial economic development and reconstruction in the Pakistani tribal areas. For its part, the Pakistani government needs to commit more resources to establishing control over these areas.

Position 3: Focus on regional negotiations instead of a military solution.

Afghans have always resisted foreign occupation, so the United States cannot be a stabilizing force in Afghanistan and should withdraw in favor of a peace initiative by countries of the region.

The source used to support this position is an article by Tariq Ali, “Mirage of the Good War” (*New Left Review*, March 2008). It is available at www.newleftreview.org/?view=2713

Summary: Ali believes that, although Afghanistan has sometimes been called the “good war,” in contrast to the war in Iraq, the U.S. has lost much of the international support it had after September 11, 2001 for its invasion. Afghanistan suffers from acute poverty, high mortality levels and corruption. Large numbers of Afghan civilians have been killed in air strikes, and the occupation of the country by NATO forces has resulted in the Taliban being able to recruit growing numbers of Afghans who see it as a symbol of national opposition to imperialism.

“As the British and Russians discovered to their cost in the preceding two centuries, Afghans do not like being occupied. If a second-generation Taliban is now growing and creating new alliances it is not because its sectarian religious practices have become popular, but because it is the only available umbrella for national liberation.”

Ali attributes the rise of the Taliban to popular discontent with the actions of the U.S. and NATO armed forces, as well as hostility to the corrupt Afghan government. “The largest pool for new Taliban recruits, according to a well-informed recent estimate, has been ‘communities antagonized by the local authorities and security forces.’ In Kandahar, Helmand and Uruzgan, Karzai’s cronies—district and provincial governors, security bosses, police chiefs—are quite prepared to tip off U.S. troops against their local rivals, as well as subjecting the latter to harassment and extortion. In these circumstances, the Taliban are the only available defence.” Ali also states that the Taliban has won support by relaxing its “religious strictures, for males at least—no longer demanding beards or banning music.”

Ali states that “the solution is political, not military. And it lies in the region, not in Washington or Brussels.” He advocates “a withdrawal of all U.S. forces, either preceded or followed by a regional pact to guarantee Afghan stability for the next ten years. Pakistan, Iran, India, Russia and, possibly, China could guarantee and support a functioning national government, pledged to preserve the ethnic and religious diversity of Afghanistan and create a space in which all its citizens can breathe, think and eat every day.” He urges “a serious social and economic plan to rebuild the country and provide the basic necessities for its people.” The people of Afghanistan, “physically, politically and morally exhausted by decades of war and two occupations,” would support a peace agreement of this kind.

Position 4: Withdraw U.S. and NATO troops from Afghanistan

The U.S. objectives in Afghanistan are unattainable. Its forces should be significantly reduced and its future military strategy in the region should be based offshore.

The source used to support this position is an article for the *Washington Post* (September 1, 2009) by George Will, “Time to Get Out of Afghanistan. The full article is available at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/08/31/AR2009083102912.html

Summary: In Afghanistan, Will writes, the U.S. strategy of protecting the population is increasingly troop-intensive. “The war already is nearly 50 percent longer than the combined U.S. involvements in two world wars, and NATO assistance is reluctant and often risible.”

In Will’s opinion, “The U.S. strategy is ‘clear, hold and build.’ Clear? Taliban forces can evaporate and then return, confident that U.S. forces will forever be too few to hold gains.” The area of the country under Afghan government control may be as little as one third. “Counterinsurgency theory concerning the time and the ratio of forces required to protect the population indicates that, nationwide, Afghanistan would need hundreds of thousands of coalition troops, perhaps for a decade or more. That is inconceivable.”

As for building the country, the chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, “speaks of combating Afghanistan’s ‘culture of poverty.’ But that took decades in just a few square miles of the South Bronx. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, the U.S. commander in Afghanistan, thinks jobs programs and local government services might entice many ‘accidental guerrillas’ to leave the Taliban. But before launching New Deal 2.0 in Afghanistan, the Obama administration should ask itself: If U.S. forces are there to prevent reestablishment of Al Qaeda bases—evidently there are none now—must there be nation-building invasions of Somalia, Yemen and other sovereignty vacuums?”

Will observes that Afghanistan has never had an effective central government. The current government is corrupt and inefficient, and some of its top officials are engaged in the opium trade. In Helmand province, which accounts for three quarters of Afghanistan’s poppy production for opium, the *New York Times* reports a Helmand official saying he has only “police officers who steal and a small group of Afghan soldiers who say they are here for ‘vacation.’” Only 4,000 U.S. Marines are challenging the Taliban for control of the province, which is about the size of West Virginia. If the U.S. aims to provide development in Helmand to attract the population away from the Taliban, it is not clear what it can substitute for the lucrative production of opium.

Will concludes that forces in Afghanistan “should be substantially reduced to serve a comprehensively revised policy: America should do only what can be done from offshore, using intelligence, drones, cruise missiles, air strikes and small, potent Special Forces units, concentrating on the porous 1,500-mile border with Pakistan, a nation that actually matters.”

Day 6

Aim question: What is the best position for the U.S. and NATO to take in Afghanistan and Pakistan?

Procedures

1. Students should sit in groups of three to review their homework. Based on their reading, discuss the questions:
 - a. How should Obama try to influence Pakistan?
 - b. How should Obama deal with the failed elections?
2. Students should review an article, "Where the Real Fight Is," written by Michael A. Cohen and Parag Khanna for *Foreign Policy* (July 2009). This is summarized on page 358 of the handout and available at www.paragkhanna.com/2009/07/where_the_real_fight_is.html
It represents the second of the four positions that students are reviewing.
3. Conclusion: What are the advantages and potential problems of policy option #2?

Homework: For homework, students should read a viewpoint representing the third position, such as selected excerpts "Mirage of the Good War," by Tariq Ali (*New Left Review*,

March 2008), which is summarized on page 359 and available at www.newleftreview.org/?view=2713 Students should expand the chart they constructed the previous day, identifying their position and the arguments and evidence that support it.

Resources: Student Handout

Day 7

Aim question: *What is the best position for the U.S. and NATO to take in Afghanistan and Pakistan?*

1. Discuss homework. What are the advantages of a negotiated settlement over a military focus either in Afghanistan or Pakistan? What are potential problems?
2. Examine the arguments in Bob Greenway's *Rethinking Afghanistan*, accessible at rethinkafghanistan.com/videos.php. Students should view three clips: Part 3 (The Cost of War) 1:58; Part 4 (Civilian Casualties) 3:08; Part 6 (Security) 11:14. Students should take notes on:
 - a. What are the economic costs of expanding the war effort in Afghanistan as McChrystal suggests?
 - b. What are the human costs of expanding the war effort in Afghanistan as McChrystal suggests?
 - c. Why, according to the speakers in Part 6, is an expanded war in Afghanistan a faulty policy?



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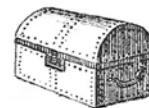
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- Students should read an article by George F. Will in the *Washington Post* (September 1, 2009), "Time to Get Out of Afghanistan." This represents the fourth of the four positions to be reviewed and is available at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/08/31/AR2009083102912.html

Students should expand the chart they constructed the previous day, identifying their position and the arguments and evidence that support it.

- Conclusion: What are the advantages and potential problems of policy options #3 and #4?

Homework: For homework, read "Afghanistan by the Numbers" accessible at www.motherjones.com/politics/2009/09/afghanistan-numbers. Students should read carefully and be able to use the statistics as part of a debate the next day.

Day 8

Aim question: *What is the best position for the U.S. and NATO to take in Afghanistan and Pakistan?*

- Write the chart of all four positions on the board.
- Stage a debate in class. Assign each student in class to one of the four positions. In groups, students should develop three or four arguments to support their assigned position and find evidence to support those arguments. Each group should select one or two students to present the initial arguments for the group. After each group presents its initial arguments, students can raise their hands to support their assigned position or counter another position.
- Debrief: Students should write a short paragraph in their notebooks: Which of the four positions is best? Why? Discuss.

Homework: Students should be told that, in the next class, they will write a two-page essay answering the question, What is the best position for the U.S. and NATO to take in Afghanistan and Pakistan? For the essay, they should use a one-page outline (which will be checked by the teacher to make sure that they have done it thoroughly). In the outline, students should include their argument, and evidence from the position papers and from readings and films from earlier in the unit. They should offer at least six pieces of evidence from all sources. They will have 45 minutes to write the essay.

Resources: Student Handout

Day 9

Students write short essays outlining their strategies. 🌐

Note

- Shirley H. Engle, "Decision Making: The Heart of Social Studies Instruction," *Social Education* 24, no. 7 (November 1960): 306.

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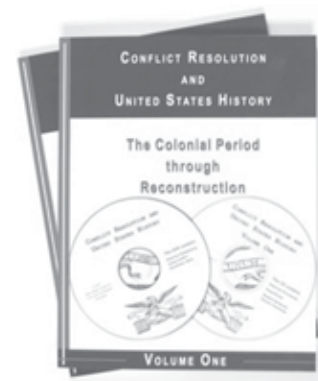
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