



# Lessons Learned, Lessons Lost

## Counterinsurgency from Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan

March 4–5, 2010

Washington, D.C.

### CONFERENCE REPORT

Southeast Asia Studies Program  
The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies  
The Johns Hopkins University

The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University



The Paul H. Nitze School  
of Advanced International Studies

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), The Johns Hopkins University and The Vietnam Center and Archive (VNCA), Texas Tech University are deeply grateful for the generous support of the Lockheed Martin Corporation. It is through their gift that this conference was made possible.

Many individuals at SAIS and Texas Tech University contributed to making this conference a success. Special recognition is due to the graduate students and colleagues in the Southeast Asia Studies Program at SAIS and the VNCA for their dedication, hard work, and great humor in bringing this conference to fruition.

Stephen F. Maxner  
Director  
The Vietnam Center and Archive  
Texas Tech University  
Lubbock, Texas

William M. Wise  
Associate Director  
Southeast Asia Studies Program  
The Paul H. Nitze School  
of Advanced International Studies  
The Johns Hopkins University  
Washington, D.C.

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## AGENDA

*Thursday, March 4, 2010*

8:00-9:00 A.M.     **Registration/Continental Breakfast**

9:00-10:00 A.M.   **Welcoming Remarks and Keynote Address**

William M. Wise, associate director, Southeast Asia Studies Program; associate practitioner-in-residence, Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University  
Stephen F. Maxner, director, Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University  
Guy Bailey, president, Texas Tech University

**Keynote Address**

Michael G. Vickers, assistant secretary of defense for special operations/low-intensity conflict and interdependent capabilities, U.S. Department of Defense

10:00-12:15 P.M.   **SESSION I: DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC POLICY FOR CIVIL-MILITARY OPERATIONS (CMO) IN VIETNAM**

**Chair**

Marc Jason Gilbert, NEH Endowed Chair in World History, Hawai'i Pacific University

**Presenters**

Rufus Phillips, author  
Edward Miller, assistant professor, History Department, Dartmouth College  
Richard Hunt, Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense  
Frances J. "Bing" West, journalist

Open Forum

12:15-1:15 P.M.   **Luncheon**

1:15-3:00 P.M.    **SESSION II: FROM STRATEGY TO TACTICS: CMO OPERATIONS IN VIETNAM**

**Chair**

James Willbanks, director, Department of Military History, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College

**Presenters**

Andrew Finlayson, independent researcher  
Jeffrey Race, author  
Thomas L. Ahern, consultant, Center for the Study of Intelligence

Open Forum

3:00-5:00 P.M.    **ROUNDTABLE: ASSESSING THE VIETNAM EXPERIENCE**

**Chair**

Ron Milam, assistant professor, History Department, Texas Tech University

**Presenters**

John Prados, senior fellow and director, National Security Archive, George Washington University  
Larry Berman, professor, Department of Political Science, University of California, Davis  
Francis J. "Bing" West, journalist  
Jeffrey Race, author  
Rufus Phillips, author

Open Forum

*Friday, October 3*

8:30-9:00 A.M.    **Registration/Continental Breakfast**

9:00-11:00 P.M.    **SESSION III: COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS IN IRAQ**

**Chair**

Patrick Cronin, senior advisor and senior director, Asia-Pacific Security Program, Center for a New American Security

**Presenters**

Andrew Exum, fellow, Center for a New American Security  
Thomas Ricks, fellow, Center for a New American Security  
Linda Robinson, author and consultant

Open Forum

11:00-12:45 P.M.    **SESSION IV: COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN**

**Chair**

Colin Jackson, assistant professor, Strategy and Policy, U.S. Naval War College

**Presenters**

Gilles Dorronsoro, visiting scholar, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace  
Gerald Meyerle, research analyst, Stability and Development Program, CNA, Center for Strategic Studies  
Ronald E. Neumann, U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, 2005-2007  
John K. Wood, director, Afghanistan-Pakistan Coordination, Near East and South Asia Center for Strategic Studies

Open Forum

12:45-2:45 P.M.    **LUNCHEON ROUNDTABLE: LESSONS LEARNED, LESSONS LOST**

**Chair**

Thomas Keane, executive director, Philip Merrill Center for Strategic Studies; associate director, Strategic Studies Program; senior adjunct professor, SAIS, Johns Hopkins University

**Presenters**

Gordon Adams, professor, School of International Service, American University  
Mark Moyer, professor, National Security Affairs, U.S. Marine Corps University  
Austin Long, assistant professor, School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University

Open Forum

**Concluding Remarks**

## INTRODUCTION

On March 4–5, 2010, academics, United States and foreign government officials, representatives of nongovernmental organizations, journalists, and independent scholars gathered in Washington, D.C. to reflect on lessons that the U.S. should or could have gained from counterinsurgency in Vietnam. The basic question: to what extent these lessons were transferred, ignored, or adapted to contemporary conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

More than 125 people attended the conference, which was co-organized by the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, and the Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University.

The search for lessons gained by the United States from the past quickly became a spirited debate. Patrick Cronin, senior advisor and director, Center for a New American Security, noted that a lesson is a broad and nebulous term based on the acquisition of knowledge, facts, and judgments. Lessons serve on the operational and strategic levels, and in attempting to determine the right course of future action.

Welcoming remarks were delivered by William M. Wise, associate director, Southeast Asia Studies Program, SAIS, Stephen F. Maxner, director, the Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, and Guy Bailey, president, Texas Tech University. Mr. Bailey noted that this conference was unique because of the broad backgrounds and interests of the presenters. The program reflected the best linkage of history and major contemporary world issues.

Michael G. Vickers, U.S. assistant secretary of defense for special operations/low-intensity conflict and interdependent capabilities, delivered the keynote speech. Vickers remarked how the conference brought together a mix of scholars and practitioners, including younger scholars who have done important revisionist work, in the best sense of that term, on U.S. strategy in Vietnam. He was pleased that the contributions of the Central Intelligence Agency to counterinsurgency were being recognized here today. The CIA was a central part of the story not just in Vietnam, but in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Vickers said that the three cases chosen for the conference, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, are the core cases for examining integrated civil-military operations in U.S. counterinsurgency strategy and tactics. He discussed counterinsurgency (COIN) lessons—those learned and lost, current counterinsurgency efforts in Afghanistan, and how the U.S. Department of Defense is adapting to irregular warfare.

*More than half a century ago, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir John Slessor warned us: 'If there is one attitude more dangerous than to assume that a future war will be just like the last one, it is to imagine that it will be so utterly different that we can afford to ignore all the lessons of the last one.'*

—William M. Wise

Vickers traced the standard narrative of how the military “washed [COIN] out of the force.” While the 1960s were the great decade of COIN enthusiasm, the 1970s witnessed how the lessons of COIN were extirpated from U.S. Government consciousness. By 1975 the U.S. military was reoriented towards the USSR in more conventional theatres. While there was a brief and successful renaissance of COIN in Kuwait and El Salvador during the 1980s, this can be attributed to only a small segment of the Department of Defense. The 1990s witnessed the U.S. Government on the side of the insurgents, for instance, in Afghanistan, Angola, and Nicaragua. The U.S. experience in Somalia led to increased skepticism of direct military engagement. The post-September 11, 2001 period, particularly after the invasion of Iraq, appears like the 1960s redux, but with important differences. Vickers traced a number of lessons and observations of COIN from these historical cases.

Regarding the current U.S. counterinsurgency efforts in Afghanistan, Vickers argued that the U.S. won and lost Afghanistan several times in the past decades. It scored a decisive victory against the USSR, but basically botched the end game by severing relations with Pakistan and leaving Afghanistan to a fate that ended badly. The U.S. took its eye off the ball after winning in 2001. Vickers agreed with Secretary of Defense Robert Gates that the U.S. has a winning strategy now in Afghanistan. The key is reversing insurgent momentum. This strategy includes a surge of forces, partnering with U.S. and Afghan troops in counterinsurgency operations, securing population and production centers, protecting communication lines, improving local defense forces, and building National Afghan Security Forces (NASF) capacity. The U.S. must also eliminate the Pakistan sanctuary. Vickers emphasized the importance of achieving the proper national/sub-national balance in Afghanistan. The U.S. is witnessing a promising beginning in 2010 with its soft operations and recent captures of Taliban insurgents.

Vickers concluded that the U.S. Department of Defense is trying to ensure that lessons are not lost, and irregular warfare is institutionalized. He believes that this kind of conflict will be the most likely form of conflict through the next two decades. This is a key judgment of the most recent Defense Department strategic review. The last two reviews have shown a significant build up of U.S. capabilities, including expanding U.S. Special Forces, and making general purposes forces, or conventional forces, more capable in counterinsurgency. While still maintaining a balance, the goal focuses on current wars at the expense of future potential wars, and on irregular conflicts rather than conventional conflicts.

During the open forum, Vickers reiterated that achieving national and sub-national balance is critical in our strategy in Afghanistan. The U.S. knows that decentralized control is a long historical norm for Afghanistan. He elaborated on the imperative to understand cultural and social structures effect on tactics, such as conducting night raids, which are perceived differently in various conflicts. A tension in U.S. strategy exists between an

*We now have  
a winning strategy  
in Afghanistan.  
The key is reversing  
insurgent momentum.  
We are trying  
to do this through  
a surge of forces...  
to do partner  
counterinsurgency  
operations  
to secure population  
and production centers  
and lines of  
communication,  
to use local defense  
forces to deny  
insurgents access  
to the villages,  
and to do disruption  
and counter-network  
operations, all while  
building up the  
capacity of the  
National Afghan  
Security forces.*

—Michael G. Vickers

enthusiasm for nation building and universal principals, and adapting to local conditions in a civil-military context and restoring stability. This tension facing policymakers involves separating near term stability objectives from longer term objectives. In Afghanistan, the U.S. is focusing on capacity building and strengthening key institutions, rather than nation building and making Afghanistan what organically it will not be anytime soon. Different models must be applied for different countries. For instance, there was major concern about Saudi Arabia after 9/11 in that fifteen of the nineteen hijackers were Saudis. Saudi Arabia had a serious internal threat until 2003, when it began successfully dealing with al-Qaeda, with minimal, but important U.S. assistance, and without remaking the society.

Vickers acknowledged that educational institutions have to adapt and the U.S. is establishing programs focused on counterinsurgency. However, the foremost U.S. attribute is its numerous leaders who have direct field experience in counterinsurgency. This level of field experience in the U.S. force has not been this high since the late 1960s. Lastly, Vickers described the civilian surge as an essential part of U.S. strategy in Afghanistan. This strategy involves expanding the embassy and sending senior civilian advisors paired with senior military commanders in the regions out into the provinces and districts, and achieving the allegiance of the people. More important is improving the Afghan civilian side, as well as its military side.

*This report includes summaries of the keynote speech by Michael G. Vickers, the presentations, and open forum comments in each of the sessions and roundtable discussions, along with illustrative quotations by the speakers. The full video recording of the conference can be accessed online at:*

*[http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/events/2010\\_Conference/2010sessions.php](http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/events/2010_Conference/2010sessions.php)*

From the keynote speech by Michael G. Vickers  
U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense  
Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict and Interdependent Capabilities

*Counterinsurgency Lessons Learned*

*Be wary of lessons.* There are lots of ways to win and lose. As Clausewitz said, war is an extension of politics. This is even truer in irregular warfare than conventional warfare. If you do not get the politics right and the culture right, then all the operational tools will probably not make a difference. What we confront globally today—what the Obama administration now describes as our war with al-Qaeda—has aspects of global insurgency, but these cases differ from traditional interstate conflict and require different approaches.

*Difficulty of assessment.* Determining insurgency potential and the danger of “pallbearer” states is difficult. The U.S. saw this with the Iranian revolution. In Iraq, part of the misassessments stemmed from the U.S. experience in the Balkans. In terms of our preparation, the kind of combat vehicles required by the U.S. in Iraq was unforeseen in the 1990s. The demands for intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance were greatly underestimated. While intelligence analysts were stating that western Iraq or Anbar was lost, it was decisively shifting. In the early years of Afghanistan, the U.S. was assessing whether the conflict was won, and now realizes that it still has a substantial fight ahead.

*Importance of persistence and commitment.* This applies particularly for a great power as the United States; regional actors look carefully toward the U.S. For example, the long commitment in Columbia appears to be finally paying off. Yet the counter-side is that there are different clocks operating, whether it is intervening powers, such as the U.S., coalition partners in Europe, the locals, the government, or the insurgency itself.

*Danger of spillover.* Pakistan exemplifies the danger of spillover in that insurgent groups migrated from Afghanistan to Pakistan after the 2001 invasion, crossing the border to catalyze the insurgency.

*Importance of sanctuaries.* This vexes the U.S. in Pakistan, and plays a role in Iraq with foreign fighters coming from Syria and backing groups from Iran.

*Role of finances.* State financing of insurgencies has decreased in recent years, but the U.S. has to deal with more narco-financing. In Afghanistan, various sources finance the Taliban, such as Gulf donors and extracts from narcotics trade. In Mexico, there is not an insurgency, but the destabilizing force of a drug cartel conducting violent business. Columbia has a similar narco-insurgent nexus.

*Importance of counterterrorism operations with counterinsurgency (counter-network operations).* One of the major untold stories of the turnaround in Iraq is the success of counter-network operations, beginning in 2004, and particularly in 2006–08. Intelligence-driven operations are driving major U.S. strikes.

*Reconciliation.* Although the time has not come, reconciliation, such as the reintegration of tactical fighters, is essential.

*Local wars have to be won by locals.* Even when you have intervening forces for a sustained period of time, at the end of the day, it is their war to win.

*Insurgency remains an important tool in state arsenals.* The U.S. almost lost its capability in the decade after the Cold War, but was able to reconstitute it for the invasion of Afghanistan. The larger question is the insurgent-counterinsurgent balance, and one must be careful applying broad trends to specific cases. Analysis fluctuates on whether trends favor insurgents over time, however, when states arm insurgents, such as the U.S. did in Afghanistan in the 1980s and as Iran does with Hezbollah, insurgents become formidable. Further, al-Qaeda benefits from global technology, i.e., the internet.

## SESSION I

### DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC POLICY FOR CIVIL- MILITARY OPERATIONS (CMO) IN VIETNAM

CHAIR: MARC JASON GILBERT, HAWAI'I PACIFIC UNIVERSITY

RUFUS PHILLIPS, AUTHOR

As a second lieutenant assigned to Colonel Edward G. Lansdale in the CIA, Rufus Phillips was imbedded with the Vietnamese Army for the purpose of installing local governments to promote goodwill for the South Vietnamese government. At that time, vacuums existed at the local government level of large segments of South Vietnam that the Vietminh formerly occupied. Phillips stated that the CIA neither told the Vietnamese what to do, nor did everything itself. The goal was to take a disorganized and demoralized army [Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN)] and have it act as a friend and servant of the Vietnamese people. This approach was termed "army-civic" action. Despite Vietminh propaganda of rape and pillage, the ARVN behaved respectably and successfully. Two Vietnamese divisions covered two million people and not a single incident occurred between a soldier and civilian.

*It is our role to  
help them and  
not do it for  
them.*

—Rufus Phillips

A CIA study on the civilian side of counterinsurgency, which examined the strategic hamlet program at the provincial level, found many problems, such as the pre-audit procedure of processing expenditures. By the time a request for a purchase was processed in Saigon, which typically involved three bids, it was no longer needed or the price had changed. Phillips revised the program in order to have such decisions made at the provincial level, which gave the Vietnamese more authority yet with U.S. approval.

A newly created CIA [*Chien Ho*] program specifically addressed surrendering combatants. The program focused on the civilian side of the counterinsurgency at the local level and extending development into the hamlets. This approach was coupled with hamlet autonomy, self-government, and hamlet councils for self-defense. This decentralization allowed significant individual achievement by provincial chiefs. The war would be won or lost in the provinces. At the provincial level, advisors helped provincial chiefs. In contrast, the higher level did not understand that ARVN units should be detached to the provinces as back up to strategic hamlets. Rather than a coordinated defense mechanism, the attitude of those executing the program prevailed.

Secretary of Defense McNamara in 1961 sought to evaluate whether the U.S. was winning the war based on statistics. McNamara was "missing the X factor: the feelings of the Vietnamese people." The proper role of the U.S. was to help the local people rather than proceed unilaterally. Instead, U.S. commanders had difficulty thinking in these terms.

EDWARD MILLER, DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

Edward Miller discussed the controversy in the late 1950s over the organization and purpose of the South Vietnamese Civil Guard. This often overlooked episode in the history of counterinsurgency during the Vietnam War has been portrayed as a bureaucratic struggle between civilian academics of the Michigan State Advisory Group (MSUG) and U.S. military officers of the Military Advisory Assistance Group (MAAG). The opposition of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem to the MSUG proposals is generally treated as evidence of his alleged desire to use the Civil Guard as a counterweight to the South Vietnamese Army—and thus as evidence of his allowing political concerns to impede the fight against communist subversion.

Miller contended that American and South Vietnamese government materials were cited as evidence that counter-subversion was central to Diem's plans for the Civil Guard. At the same time, the records show that Diem rejected both the civilian policing approach favored by the MSUG and the conventional military strategy advocated by the MAAG; instead, Diem envisioned the Civil Guard as a hybrid force for both policing and paramilitary operations. By placing the Civil Guard under the direct command of the province chiefs—who were personally responsible to him—Diem made the Civil Guard (rather than the ARVN) a mobile, itinerant, front-line force against the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP). In this way, the Civil Guard was a separate force, rather than a community-based force, such as the Self Defense forces.

As a result, the Civil Guard was central to Diem's efforts against VCP elements after 1955, and it bore the brunt of the renewed insurgency launched by the VCP during 1959–1960; indeed, casualty rates for the Civil Guard exceeded those of the ARVN during the first two years of the insurgency. The Civil Guard was not simply mobilized for civil-military operations, but also for counter-intelligence operations, such as the Agrovillage Program, which was the precursor to the Strategic Hamlet Program that was launched in the Mekong Delta in 1960. Despite complaints from the Michigan State team, Diem had some initial success, but was overwhelmed by the expanding communist insurgency by 1959–60.

Contrary to some scholars' proposals, a U.S. bureaucratic struggle between the MAAG and Michigan State does not fully explain the Civil Guard controversy. Nor is it correct to characterize the controversy as a dispute against Diem's attempt to transform the Civil Guard into a second-line army in rivalry to the ARVN. Rather, Diem designed the Civil Guard as a hybrid force on a provincial basis and a major part of the strategy against communist insurgencies.

*The Civil Guard was a hybrid force, organized on a provincial basis, and despite its initial success it subsequently proved very inadequate to stem the communist uprisings in 1959 and 1960.*

—Edward Miller

RICHARD HUNT, HISTORICAL OFFICE, OFFICE OF THE  
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Richard Hunt discussed the purpose and organization of the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS). Organized in 1967 to reemphasize pacification, the program comprised an array of paramilitary policing, which provided rural security, and political, economic, and social reform. The self-sufficiency of the South Vietnamese government was the goal. The program involved paramilitary forces assigned to strengthen local security issues. People Self Defense (PSDF) militias were organized in the villages, and other groups worked on village development projects. The *Chien Hoi* program encouraged defections from the Vietcong and their reincorporation into Vietnamese society. Other programmatic aspects focused on improving lives, such as the care of refugees. Throughout this period, Americans served as advisors and financiers, while the Vietnamese were responsible for implementation.

*Pacification and counterinsurgency could not be ignored and had to be reemphasized as an essential part of U.S. strategy in Vietnam in 1965–67.*

—Richard Hunt

Organizational problems persisted, however, such as military operations that involved relocating refugees to intern camps. Although Lyndon B. Johnson aimed for a more balanced civil and military program after 1965, problems largely stemmed from agencies having their independent pacification programs and advisors. Ambassador Robert Comer was assigned in Washington to coordinate U.S. agencies supporting pacification. In May 1967, Comer organized CORDS in order to centralize command over civilians and military personnel. Civilians and military intermingled within one chain of command. A key feature was an efficiency report system: if you were a civilian, then your direct supervisor was military, and vice versa. This report system enforced loyalty and improve cohesiveness. CORDS implemented standardized reporting and organized province advisory teams. Two primary decisions made CORDS a viable organization: first, Comer was given advisory oversight of the RFPF (Regional Forces/Popular Forces), a key organization that provided rural security; and, second, the Phoenix Program was established, in part, to capture or eliminate members of the Vietcong infrastructure.

CORDS became the focal point of interaction between the Government of Vietnam and U.S. military forces at the provincial level. It provided for the American desire for strong management, access to military assets, improved coordination among civilian organizations, and greater technical assistance. Through a leverage policy, CORDS gathered information on corrupt and incompetent Vietnamese government officials for their counterparts, the U.S. province and district advisory officials, to aid in reform measures.

F. J. “BING” WEST, JOURNALIST

South Vietnam never had a national patriotic movement. Developing a strategic civil-military operation is a tautology and not a strategy, argued F. J. “Bing” West. Succeeding in war is by killing and a prototype does not exist for a successful civil-military operation. Accordingly, the notion of nation building may be a delusion. The two competing theories for South Vietnam’s defeat are: (1) a lack of societal cohesion; and (2) the stoppage of U.S. aid to the South in 1975 while the Chinese and Russians were arming 18 North Vietnamese divisions who overran the South.

The 1965–68 phase entailed ineffective search and destroy operations under General Westmoreland. At the same time, major tension existed between Westmoreland and the U.S. Marine Corp who had 118 Combined Action Platoons (CAP) in Vietnamese villages. His successor, General Abrams, believed completely in pacification and civil-military operations. His strategies were so successful that by 1971 most places in South Vietnam were safe enough to travel in by jeep. However, Abrams took his eye off the De-Militarized Zone (DMZ) and the increased infiltration of North Vietnamese. Also, while the U.S. promised \$575 million to build up South Vietnamese forces, Congress only appropriated \$300 million in part due to a shift in U.S. public opinion and falling support at higher levels of the administration.

Historians debate the great question, “did South Vietnam fall because it was a preordained failure?” Many of those opposed to the war pushed their version of history in academia, which attributed the South’s defeat to a lack of societal cohesion. West acknowledged that the U.S. did not maintain its funding side of the bargain.

On Afghanistan, while the U.S. forces know they are there to help the population, they are also there to hunt the Taliban. Without the latter, for senior officials to say that U.S. forces can win the war is unrealistic. The irony is while the U.S. makes great strides not to kill the population, the Taliban kills indiscriminately, and the population does not retaliate. Marines can take Marja and Helmand but whether the Afghans will fight with them is unclear. A shift is needed in civil-military operations so that Afghans are fully partnered with the U.S. and out in front.

Hamid Karzai is erratic and resisting U.S. civil-military operations. Although South Vietnamese Premier Thieu was extremely bitter with the U.S., he fired half his provincial leaders on U.S. advice after 1968. In contrast, Karzai has not fired anybody on U.S. suggestion. Where does that leave the U.S.? West contended that a break will occur over the next sixteen months. Although the Pashtun tribes neither betray each other nor the Taliban, the taking of the Helmand province through sheer force of arms has broken narcotic financing of the Taliban. However, given that the U.S. is perceived as an outsider to Afghans, West strongly questioned that the break will happen through U.S. strategic policy for civil-military operations.

*Whatever breaks in Afghanistan, I don't think it will be a function of civil-military relations. And I don't think that Vietnam was a failure of civil-military relations, it was a failure to stop 18 North Vietnamese divisions.*

—F.J. “Bing” West

## OPEN FORUM

- **Rufus Phillips** disputed **F. J. West**'s notion that the U.S. will win counterinsurgency in Afghanistan by killing counterinsurgents. This is contrary to the doctrine put forth by Generals McChrystal and Petraeus. Only Afghans can win this war, which is a people's war. He asked whether the government of a distressed country, such as Afghanistan, can develop the national spirit necessary to earning and sustaining the allegiance of its people. **Phillips** emphasized the importance of psychological factors, perception, and image— aspects the U.S. initially misunderstood with the Vietnamese. The perception of the U.S. running a country, such as Afghanistan, can be overcome. Both Vietnam and Iraq under the Maliki administration witnessed such a shift in perception. **West** reiterated that counterinsurgency doctrine is not the solution in Afghanistan. The fight must be local to the Afghans, rather than the U.S. as the defacto government. Yet Karzai neither selects good leaders, nor represents the center, nor articulates a national vision. The U.S. cannot avoid fighting a war. The essential problem is selecting effective Afghan leaders—yet the U.S. has little influence.
- The central question, according to **Marc Jason Gilbert**, is whether counterinsurgency is a tool for nation building. In Vietnam, the U.S. strengthened the central government from outside. The U.S. strengthened Diem at the expense of other groups rather than integrating a wider range of interests. In contrast, the U.S. is planning a counterinsurgency at the provincial level in Afghanistan. Regarding ideological arguments, **Gilbert** disputed **West**'s contention about “professors losing the war.” More money was in the pipeline when Vietnam ended. The money was spent on the interests of the government to support itself. The Taliban became popular in Afghanistan partly due to women teaching at the university in Kabul—a sign that Afghanistan was modernizing and challenging those with a stake in Afghanistan not modernizing. We must consider what localities are demanding. **Gilbert** argued that the North Vietnamese had a strategy, and the clocks ran out for the U.S. in Vietnam. The counterinsurgency was unimportant in the North Vietnamese strategy. Similarly, the U.S. needs to consider the strategy of the Taliban.
- *In 1954, did the Vietnamese promote a national theme, or were they simply anti-communist?* **Edward Miller**, generally agreeing with **Phillips**, argued that nationalist discourse was ubiquitous in South Vietnam. While acknowledging the nationalist backlash, **Miller** noted that nationalism in South Vietnam was a multi-faceted concept entailing the intersections of religious nationalism. The argument that Diem

was an American puppet in 1963 is difficult to support. Diem's Christianity, which was in conflict with the Buddhist's form of nationalism, was central to why Diem was overthrown.

- *Are there any potential leaders among the generals in Afghanistan?* **Phillips** stated that we initially sought a representative army of Tajiks and Pashtuns in order to prevent a military coup. Pashtuns commanders were needed for understanding the local language in Pashtun areas. Yet a mechanism does not exist for placing a region under military leadership and then transferring it to civilian leadership.
- *How does a society overcome a culture of corruption?* **Phillips** argued that although a joint signoff mechanism in the strategic hamlet program greatly prevented corruption in Vietnam, widespread corruption by Americans remained. In Afghanistan, Americans' arrangement of many private construction contracts with rigged bids influenced Afghans. **West** contended that the transparency of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) system operates well beyond Kabul. PRT asks village elders, "We have \$11 million to spend, how should we spend it?" In addition, every contractor has \$20,000/month to spend in accordance with local advisors.
- *To what extent did Vietnamese allies (and similarly Afghan allies) subscribe to the view that the war was a U.S. war and therefore did not fight as hard?* **Phillips** stated that the U.S. initially trained the Afghan army to defend the country against an outside invasion. However, the army has converted to an organization that provides internal security. While the U.S. trains them to fight like Americans, they are not similarly well equipped. Although some Afghan units fight well, they are not yet leading in places like Helmand. **West** stated that military leaders control 100 fighters, and a good commander will have a fairly good unit. However, the Afghan army is similarly opposed to risk in contrast to the Taliban who like to fight. The Afghan soldier wears a helmet and 35 pounds of armor. He relies on firepower most often provided by the U.S. The Afghan army costs \$4–5 billion a year and the U.S. provides an additional \$4–5 billion a year in aid. Whether the U.S. will continue giving \$10 billion annually is a serious concern.
- In closing, **Gilbert** quoted Winston Churchill, "You can always count on the Americans to do the right thing, after they have done all of the wrong things." Hopefully, the U.S. can start doing the right things.

## SESSION II

### FROM STRATEGY TO TACTICS: CMO OPERATIONS IN VIETNAM

CHAIR: JAMES WILLBANKS, U.S. ARMY COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF COLLEGE

ANDREW FINLAYSON, INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER

Based on extensive research on Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRU)—a highly classified program with little accessible and daunting documentation, Andrew Finlayson addressed how and why the PRU functioned. He surmised that the most serious impediments to the PRU were inflicted by both the governments of the United States and South Vietnam rather than its enemies.

*The two most effective counter-insurgency programs in the Vietnam War were the Combined Action Platoons (CAP) and the relatively unknown Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRU).*

—Andrew Finlayson

The PRU was a national program created, organized, equipped, financed, and controlled by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The program was created for defeating the extensive political leadership of the Vietcong (VC), known as the Vietcong Infrastructure (VCI). In 1967 the U.S. and South Vietnamese government instituted the Phoenix Program. As part of Phoenix the CIA organized the PRU, the primary action arm of the CIA in the fight against the VCI. At its peak, 4400 South Vietnamese and 80 American advisors were assigned to the PRU. By 1970 the Phoenix Program largely succeeded in defeating the VCI in South Vietnam. As a result, the North Vietnamese abandoned their strategy of the Vietcong (VC) fomenting a general uprising in the South, planning instead for a conventional military campaign.

The type of people in the Phoenix Program was key to its success. The program comprised local, experienced, and brave fighters who enjoyed a well-deserved reputation in the province. American advisors identified some weaknesses, such as poor fire discipline, the lack of supporting arms knowledge, and inadequate organic transportation assets, as problems that adversely effected unit proficiency. Among their strengths, they had a very good intelligence system, were adept at planning and conducting raids, were highly motivated, and had an almost perfect knowledge of the terrain and people in the province.

In terms of organization, each district team of 18 men was broken down into three 6-man squads and each squad had two 3-man cells. Only 92 PRU members along with a single American advisor assigned to the unit enforced an entire province. PRU members were neither easily identified by the enemy nor friendly forces since they lacked uniforms and were indistinguishable from the general population.

Phoenix was a bureaucratic endeavor to prevent duplicated efforts among agencies and to bring a systematic approach to identifying and eliminating the VCI in South Vietnamese districts and provinces. On the

American side of Phoenix was the Civil Operations and Rural Development Support Agency (CORDS), a national organization that coordinated all U.S. pacification programs. At the district level, District Intelligence and Operations Coordinating Centers (DIOCCs) served as front-line organizations.

A representative of the Rural Development Program (RD) served on each DIOCC. Because rural development personnel (akin to community organizers) worked in the villages and were intimately involved in daily life, they had insight into the security situation and valuable intelligence on the VCI. In addition, this program provided the PRU with valuable census surveys datable to the early 1960s. Based on these surveys, the RD cadre produced color-coded maps of every house in every village and hamlet in their respective provinces.

According to PRU advisors, the PRU's own intelligence system offered the most accurate and exploitable intelligence. Assets were primarily family and friends of the PRU working without pay or reward. Americans could not obtain a similar level of intimate knowledge about the enemy. The PRU had strong leaders who emerged through attrition and the crucible of war. Family ties, religious convictions, and civic and commerce affiliations in the provinces made it extremely difficult for the VCI to infiltrate the organization. Most U.S. advisors to South Vietnamese military units during the war were just that – advisors. They neither had the control nor influence that we had as commanders of the PRU teams. We neither cajoled nor influenced—we commanded, and the PRU executed.

Finlayson suggested that without this civic ethic is the risk of creating a unit that does not have the support and cooperation of the people. Such units must be well trained for tasks and equipped with appropriate weapons, uniforms, and transportation assets. They should be well paid and rewarded for superior performance, which lessens the chance of corruption or falling prey to material inducements from the enemy in exchange for information. The judicial and political oversight of PRU-like units, which are in fact police units, is important. Field interrogations should be promptly conducted to exploit perishable and tactical information, but PRU-like units should not be involved in extended interrogations, and should not hold prisoners. Rather, facilities should be specifically established for holding prisoners. Families of PRU-like units need protection, such as provisions for secure housing compounds or relocation outside the area of operations. PRU-like units deserve very strong leadership and promotions based exclusively on merit. Finally, the units should have full access to a system that provides targeting intelligence.

Most advisors recommended that PRU-like unit advisors have at least a 3/3 fluency on the Defense Language Proficiency Test. Finlayson recommended the establishment of a national school for the specific training of PRU-like units and the creation of mobile training teams so advisors can have additional training on intelligence management duties and operations.

***Most problems encountered by crew advisors were from their own making, because they were opinionated, impatient, immature, arrogant, and lacked an ability to listen and learn from their counterparts.***

***—Andrew Finlayson***

## JEFFREY RACE, AUTHOR

*The U.S. needs to apply real evidence-based, scientific knowledge to making decisions...for civil-military operations is the importance of motivating people...then you have to make effective local organizations—there is a sociological term called emerging structure.*

—Jeffrey Race

Regarding earlier presentations, there is seemingly little convergence on what happened in Vietnam, remarked Jeffrey Race. We know that the U.S. Government is ill equipped to fight these kinds of wars, which have negative effects on American society. We are unskilled, slow learners, and need a deeper knowledge of the history, language, and culture of a place. What are the methods and metrics that determine whether to go in and stay? What are better ways for the U.S. to engage with foreign societies to accord with our values? In examining the verities of successes and failures, the U.S. needs to methodically apply this knowledge derived from real evidence. In Vietnam, no one could explain why things were not going as planned. If there had been perfect knowledge, would the outcomes have differed?

Race argued that while conventional conflicts have territorial bases of support resulting in physical destruction, insurgencies require preemption of the motivation of the enemy. Motivated individuals become effective organizations, and friends with intelligence are required in order to combat such an organization. Vietnam showed that sending in divisions, promoting nationalism, and implementing goodwill activities, such as building wells and schools, are not enough.

The communists employed selective incentives based on human behavior, such as giving a family access to land if they fought for the VC. The means to motivate people involve determining what they can specifically achieve by collaborating. An organization modulates the distribution of personal incentives. People cooperate through peer pressure. The VC's strategies involved social exchanges of giving and receiving. In contrast, the U.S. land reform program, for instance, did not offer an explicit exchange at every level. Further, friends were lost when coercion was applied in the hamlet program.

A revolutionary movement offers a new distribution of power in society. Will U.S. partners do what is required? Can the U.S. stay in this game long enough, which takes 10–15 years? The U.S. needs a comparable program evaluation of motivational factors for the political aspects of conflict. Insurgent forces conducted this type of analysis. Although the U.S. military is responsible for handling this issue [in Afghanistan], it does not necessarily have the skills and competency. If the science dictates that you cannot motivate people to do as needed, then conclusions must be drawn. Yet science is only infrequently applied in this way. The U.S. needs to distinguish plausible missions from fruitless ones.

## THOMAS AHERN, CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF INTELLIGENCE

In initial remarks about the relationship between the District Intelligence and Operations Coordinating Centers (DIOCC) and the Phoenix Program, Thomas Ahern contended that although targeted killing was a major side effect of Phoenix, the program was essentially about intelligence. While Phoenix initially was more punitive than intelligence-gathering, the importance of capture for interrogation was increasingly emphasized.

In discussing basic intellectual errors by the U.S. in Vietnam, Ahern argued that an understanding of the U.S., its clients, and its adversaries were necessary in formulating sound strategy. First, the U.S. did not understand its enemy. Between 1963 and 1965, the U.S. acted on conventional wisdom that the Vietcong (VC) was an agent of world communism. Nationalism and expulsion of a western presence as their primary motivation were unknown. Rational issues could not be attributed to VC fighters. The U.S. was persuaded in believing that the Vietcong acted in a Leninist manner so that their aims would be the same as Stalin and Mao.

Second, the U.S. misunderstood its client regime. Diem was not an American stooge and his intractability toward the American ambassador was unknown to the general population. Diem's preferential treatment to Catholics reflected the endemic xenophobia in Vietnamese culture. The U.S. naively assumed that it was a universal model, and that the Vietnamese would accept the legitimacy of an anti-communist regime widely supported by the U.S.

Third, what if you know your enemy but do not know yourself? From the U.S. perspective, this was a real possibility in Vietnam. Given the overriding emotional abhorrence of communism by the U.S., the U.S. assumed those who were not VC leaders would seize any opportunity to defect. Increasing the Vietnamese material standard of living would thus attract loyalty to any regime in Saigon. The Vietcong, however, promised social justice, such as the land tenure system, rather than prosperity. Further, the U.S. did not conduct a ground-based intelligence collection in subliminal fear of its findings.

A counterinsurgency effort should aim at co-opting leaders. While the Vietcong focused on leaders, the U.S. focused on influencing the population and insulating them from the communists. The progress of a counterinsurgency must be measured in qualitative, rather than quantitative terms. The number of fingerlings distributed or the number of attacks do not inform actual political dynamics and allegiances. The program design must come from the ground up, rather than imposing a COIN doctrine. Our clients must fully accept it or the program will not work, such as in Vietnam where the U.S. did not understand the implications of upward political mobility.

*One can make  
three judgments  
about the  
American  
mindset.  
Formulating a  
sound strategy  
requires an  
understanding  
of ourselves,  
our clients, and  
our adversaries.  
In Vietnam  
we did not  
know any  
of the three.*

—Thomas Ahern

## OPEN FORUM

- *Could the census grievance program [in Vietnam] have been developed to accomplish the ideal objectives described by Race?* **Andrew Finlayson** replied affirmatively and described the CIA as incapable of expanding the census grievance program because of the small number of case officers and the need for military protection. Conducting polls at the village level were crucial in determining needs, such as a well versus a school, and identifying corrupt officials. **Jeffrey Race** explained how the way people work together shapes the structure of their society. Government is foremost in maintaining societal systems. Although ample data is typically available, budget and policy agendas are needed to analyze and implement findings.
- *Regarding a comment that “nationalism” must be distinguished from “communist totalitarianism,”* **Thomas Ahern** acknowledged that we resort to shorthand expressions when generalizing about masses of people. The Vietnamese government was arch conservative and reactionary, whereas the Vietcong exploited latent nationalistic sentiments of the general population. **Race** argued that rather than nationalism, the motivation of people must be ascertained by examining behavior. Except for those motivated by killed family members, most families are motivated by personal incentives, such as positions and titles.
- *Can we anticipate succeeding in this kind of warfare that involves the internal affairs of other countries and cultures?* **Ahern** responded that we can when we dispel our moral and political pretensions. **Race** argued in an overdetermined situation, certain objectives cannot be achieved given the realities. One of the lessons is the need to identify problems that have no solutions before one over-commits. **Finlayson** cautioned that counterinsurgency is a technique and not a strategy. A lack of a strategy causes wars to be lost. The strategy employed since 1961 in Vietnam was a lost cause, and the U.S. does not have a fundamental strategy in Afghanistan or Iraq.
- *Is it a sustainable strategy to rely on isolated disenfranchised groups for counterinsurgency, and then to integrate them into the central government?* **Ahern** argued that regarding the Anbar awakening, previous overtures were turned down by the U.S. in the belief that pandering to local dissidents serves no function in the formation of a national government. However, this changed when al-Qaeda became so dangerous.

- *What can we learn from Vietnam about the shared infrastructures of various insurgencies?* **Finlayson** described how the highly organized and disciplined Vietcong infrastructure was unique. Taking out the infrastructure and the right people in the infrastructure is critical to your strategy.

## ROUNDTABLE

### ASSESSING THE VIETNAM EXPERIENCE

CHAIR: RON MILAM, TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

JOHN PRADOS, GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

John Prados noted that the technology and military strategies of the time prefigured the extent of WWI carnage. He questioned why WWI generals did not bear witness to the lessons of the U.S. Civil War. Given the parallel with how counterinsurgency prefigures certain outcomes, he questioned the extent that generals in Afghanistan and Iraq considered Vietnam. The official field manual for COIN already existed in a 1972 edition, which was the closest document to accepting various tenets. Although the subsequent edition did not appear until 1981, counterinsurgency was a low-intensity conflict. Since 1981 that aspect of military activity has been overlaid with other components, such as anti-narcotics and peacekeeping operations.

*We have vitiated  
the lessons we  
supposedly took  
away from  
Vietnam.*

—John Prados

The U.S. departed from the counterinsurgency learned in Vietnam. The U.S. Army requirement of Military Science 401 on COIN training was terminated in 1974. At Ft. Leavenworth, COIN training comprised 40 hours through 1977 and only 8 hours afterwards, compared with British staff officers who received 129 hours. Harry Summers's 1981 book on Vietnam for the Army War College largely reinterprets Clausewitz's principles of war. Summers places the guerrilla war perspective in a framework of conventional warfare. He assumes that insurgent operations must proceed into conventional operations as in Vietnam. This premise does not represent a theoretical standard.

The lessons gained by conventional warriors are found in the Powell Doctrine, which stipulates what matters is decisive intervention. The first Gulf War organized an overwhelming force to intervene. The last two wars (Rumsfeld's wars) contravened the Powell Doctrine. Both Iraq and Afghanistan moved away from the lesson of the Vietnam War.

In presidential decision-making, Leslie Gelb and Richard Betts argue against an incremental approach in favor of predetermined options. Similarly, in the run up to the Iraq war and the surge in Afghanistan, American presidents were given predetermined options. George W. Bush was not given an option that Iraq did not have WMDs. Obama was not given a withdrawal option. The U.S. vitiated the lessons it supposedly gained from Vietnam. The U.S. misguidedly thought Vietnam would not occur again, because the U.S. would have exit strategies in the event of a new conflict.

LARRY BERMAN, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS

“Vietnam remains an enigma; for some, a metaphor of defeat; for others, a betrayal; and for just about everyone, a war for which a lesson can be drawn for another military intervention in a distant land,” stated Larry Berman. U.S. failure to achieve its objectives had little to do with Congress, the antiwar movement, professors, or our allies. Vietnam was never a vital security interest that warranted our involvement. Our policy-making cared little about Vietnam and the Vietnamese. We had stunning ignorance about Vietnam and the concerns of the revolution. A lack of intellectual curiosity about Ho Chi Minh existed beyond knowing that he was a communist.

On Afghanistan, Karzai can ignore the U.S. because the U.S. must deal with him. In Vietnam, Diem vocally opposed American troops because he did not want his country to become a wasteland, and look what happened to him. Berman, quoting from Paul Nitze’s memoirs, stated that “one of the most dangerous forms of human error is forgetting what one is trying to achieve.” Through the slow release of Vietnamese documents, historians are researching foreign archives and gaining an understanding of the Vietnam War by examining various perspectives. U.S. objectives in Vietnam frequently shifted from naval issues to containment, to demonstrating that insurgencies could not survive, and to an honorable peace. While LBJ sought the security of South Vietnam from the North, the political goal was a non-communist South Vietnam. The U.S. was not any closer to achieving that objective by 1968 and Richard Nixon sought peace with honor. The “Vietnamization” policy is a corollary of today’s “Afghanization” policy. The endgame in Vietnam was negotiated in the same way it was fought—our Vietnamese allies were kept in the dark.

The U.S. did not lack persistence and will in Vietnam; it lacked understanding. The delusion of LBJ’s policies from 1965 to 1968 was that increasing military forces could work. In the 1969–73 period, the delusion was greater in that the U.S. had the same objectives while decreasing military force. U.S. decision-making misjudged the tenacity of insurgency staying power. The VC infiltrated every level of Vietnamese society through human intelligence. Vietnam became a war of attrition. Search and destroy missions were implemented to prove that the U.S. was making progress. With the change from Westmorland to Abrams was the sense of a winning strategy. Statistics indicated that the U.S. was winning the war from 1970 to 1971, but the change in VC strategy made these statistics irrelevant.

U.S. policymakers did not recognize that the VC insurgency was winning politically. The U.S. was indifferent to the national aspirations of the Vietnamese and took over rather than working in partnership with the Vietnamese. Berman posited that perhaps the U.S. has learned this lesson. For all the highways the U.S. built and funded, when aid stopped the infrastructure collapsed because of the lack of newly trained leadership.

*Given the limited political objectives, the [Vietnam] War was unwinnable.*

—Larry Berman

*Unlike South Vietnam, what the communists had on their side was that they were fighting for an idea.*

*Developing a plausible political cause would have been the best support for non-communist Vietnamese.*

—Larry Berman

Berman stated that the U.S. is trying to create an indigenous Afghan government that people are willing to die for when we leave. Karzai is perhaps an inadequate strategic partner, uninterested in building a civil Afghan society. Karzai can pack the election panel, but what can the U.S. do? That is a lesson of Vietnam. Vietnam largely destroyed a great U.S. societal program. Will Afghanistan similarly drain Obama on the domestic side?

FRANCIS J. “BING” WEST, JOURNALIST

On Afghanistan, F. J. West put forth two major concerns: first, while the U.S. promotes partnering with local Afghan troops and offering them a way of life similar to U.S. troops, this requires an unlikely largesse from the U.S. Congress that may not be there.

*We don't really  
have a belief in  
ourselves,  
in what we're  
fighting for,  
and a belief in  
redemption  
anymore.*

—F.J. “Bing” West

Second, the nature of society and the acceptance of death is a key concern. In Vietnam, the U.S. lost 50,000 soldiers, while in Afghanistan the U.S. has lost 1,000. Whereas WWII forced U.S. society to accept death on a large scale, today, there is not an acceptance of death. In Afghanistan, this lack of acceptance is evidenced in the U.S. volunteer army. This view is exemplified by three to four separate services for each fallen soldier, and commanders who say their goal is to bring everyone home. West attributed this view to no longer believing in God. Soldiers ask themselves, “Why do I want to die?” West contended that except for the British and Australians, European allies of the U.S. are inflexible and unwilling to take risks, acting more like bus drivers than soldiers. West asked, how will the U.S. adjust as a society for the next war with an attitude of losing no one and not engaging with the enemy? A belief in something more than ourselves and in redemption no longer exists. The gradually changing attitudes toward a dying man reflect this.

JEFFREY RACE, AUTHOR

Jeffrey Race focused on the quality and kind of analysis that has to be applied to decision-making. He argued for evidence-based decision-making, rather than hunches and the best that can be agreed upon. He described a kind of decision-making reflected in the internal structure of two kinds of machines. The state machine has fixed input and output relationships, whereas the intelligence machine is far more complex. Humans are complex and intelligent machines, and they change dials and proceed forward and restructure themselves internally. If humans are not able to think faster than their adversaries, then they will lose. In terms of applicability, in Iraq, poor results were due to procedural aspects of decision-making. They were also due to organizational factors and personal animosities that distorted decisions, such as the personal arrogance and incompetence that resulted in the disbanding of the Iraqi army and widespread civilian death. Race argued that by understanding history, such

*Most human  
problems are not  
state machines  
but intelligence  
machines.*

—Jeffrey Race

as accounts by Pericles of his compatriots, it is easier to deal with present-day reality. Further, one must adopt a set of rules, and the first rule is that of prudence.

RUFUS PHILLIPS, AUTHOR

Rufus Phillips countered Jeffrey Race that creating a scientific decision-making process for complex foreign policy questions of intervention is impossible. All human beings are fallible to some degree. In Vietnam, the U.S. misunderstood the nature of the problem it was trying to solve, thinking that through pressure they [the GVN] would defeat their adversaries. Phillips agreed with Ahern that collectively the U.S. did not understand themselves, their enemy, or their allies. Some people with Vietcong documents, however, understood the nature of the war and how to fight the war, but they lacked access to upper leadership. The U.S. Army has too many bureaucratic levels and remains structured to fight WWII and Korea. Further, counterinsurgency doctrine has not varied much.

For Phillips, Diem sought to understand grievances against the governmental system. As a result he installed an informal system for land reform measures. He removed officials who abused people, and utilized small, controlled, counter-terror teams, which were effective and had institutional support. The notion that Diem could not have improved performance is wrong.

Similar to Afghanistan, a belief existed that only the Vietnamese could win the war at the local provincial level. Every province in Afghanistan differs, as in Vietnam, which must be addressed. Intelligence must be at the local level to be useful. The U.S. is learning in Afghanistan, however, the major questions that determine victory or defeat are whether we have the right national leadership, and can the U.S. reform the system from the local to the national level.

*What is the nature of the problem [i.e., the Vietnam conflict] we are trying to solve? ... There are people who do understand. How well we understand this institutionally, I have my doubts. The idea of going out there and working directly with the people [is resisted].*

—Rufus Phillips

#### OPEN FORUM

- **F. J. West** and **John Prados** disputed whether the South Vietnamese expended fifty times more ammunition than the North in 1974.
- *Stephen Maxner: What would you tell President Obama is the most significant lesson of the Vietnam War and its practical application to Afghanistan?* **Rufus Phillips** replied that the U.S. must carefully examine politics in Afghanistan. Does the U.S. have the same kind of team with McChrystal and Ikenberry that it did in Petraeus and Crocker in Iraq? The U.S. can work with Karzai, however, real teamwork is needed in order to double team him. **Phillips** expressed concern about Ikenberry wanting complete authority, including creating his own separate civilian command. **Jeffrey Race** argued that endless

chains of cause and effect happen for a reason. Unlike Vietnam, the U.S. must ascertain the inherent logic behind given recommendations, and question why people are making such recommendations. The decision-making system must be examined. **Larry Berman** advised to always be wary of anyone who cites “progress.” He would remind the president that in 1971 the Vietnam War strategically turned at a time of a presidential election that originally had three candidates. In the election President Hu rigged the commission and had Qi disqualified, leaving him against Minh. The Vietcong knew that a sole candidate would discredit the process, so they forced Big Minh from participating in the election. In Afghanistan, Karzai is similarly handpicking members of the electoral commission and removing U.N. oversight. **Prados** emphasized the Afghan political side of the equation. The war will be fought under their rules. If the U.S. cannot structure its military operations to account for the Afghan political environment, then U.S. efforts will be ineffective. However, prior American economic problems may likely render such courses of action irrelevant. **West** remarked that Obama knows from advisors that Afghanistan is a 50-50 bet, and winning is contingent on Karzai. Unlike Nixon who undercut General Abrams, Obama must directly communicate with McChrystal rather than solely with Admiral Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. The process has become too rigid. In sports metaphor, Obama is the owner and McChrystal is the coach. **Ron Milam** noted that a reading of Alexander’s experience in Bactria 2000 years ago informs the process.

- *What lesson does the Vietnam War offer for engaging the home front and its application to Iraq, Afghanistan, and future wars?* **West:** a future war requires shared sacrifice. **Prados:** American presidents made an error at the outset of Vietnam by not conducting a debate with the American people and reaching a consensus on the intervention. **Berman:** presidential responsibility is to engage the public in an honest and forthright discussion before committing troops to battle. **Race:** the first task is to rebuild trust and, second, public benefit and shared sacrifice. That a person in authority would lie was unimaginable for many, but that changed with the Vietnam War. The Pentagon Papers are a revealing series of lies. **Phillips:** no mechanism exists for debate in our society. Greater dialogue is needed between the president and Congress, who represents the people on contentious issues.



## SESSION III

### COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS IN IRAQ

CHAIR: PATRICK CRONIN, CENTER FOR A NEW AMERICAN SECURITY

LINDA ROBINSON, AUTHOR AND CONSULTANT

*[The U.S. made] five strategic errors: (1) disbanding the Ba'ath Party and Saddam Hussein's military and security forces, which basically guaranteed an insurgency; (2) proceeding with the 2005 elections while knowing of the impending Sunni boycott; (3) writing the constitution with Shia ideas at the forefront; (4) ignoring the Shia threat; and (5) treating the Sunni as enemy, which involved indiscriminate targeting.*

—Linda Robinson

Linda Robinson discussed what the U.S. learned from the turnaround in Iraq in 2007–08. She surmised that this is the most intensive period of war for the U.S. since it departed Vietnam. Robinson predicted that like the aftermath of the Vietnam war, experts no doubt will spend years arguing polemics over the narrative of Iraq and Afghanistan.

**Strategic counterinsurgency.** Robinson argued that those who covered the war focused too much on military operations, and not on the country of Iraq. U.S. achievements and failures need to be scrutinized, as well as political dynamics. She put forth five strategic errors: (1) disbanding the Ba'ath Party and Saddam Hussein's military and security forces, which basically guaranteed an insurgency; (2) proceeding with the 2005 elections while knowing of the impending Sunni boycott; (3) writing the constitution with Shia ideas at the forefront; (4) ignoring the Shia threat; and (5) treating the Sunni as enemy, which involved indiscriminate targeting.

**Political accommodation.** In 2007 Petraeus was named commanding general of U.S. troops in Iraq, and he formed the multidisciplinary and multinational Joint Strategic Assessment team (JSAC), headed by McMaster. The JSAC determined that the war had primarily become a Shia-Sunni communal struggle to be resolved through political accommodation. In consultation with regional experts, brought together by Ambassador Crocker, the strategy combined enemy-centric and population-centric approaches. On the military side, the key was gathering better intelligence and more precise targeting.

**The dispersal of troops.** Robinson argued that in terms of essential tactics and procedures, the massing of effects over time and space is critical. If the big picture is wrong, then tactics are irrelevant. In Baghdad, which was the main effort, dispersing troops into joint security stations and combat outposts was critical. At the peak, 68 Iraqi outposts transformed the neighborhoods by erecting walls in the main market areas. The erection of more checkpoints and vehicle bans separated insurgents from population areas. Intel Ops groups became faster and information centers multiplied. Biometric systems recorded pictures and fingerprints in specific areas, computer databases were shareable, and human terrain teams captured the shifting ethno-sectarian makeup.

**The end game is political.** Robinson emphasized that the Sons of Iraq did not spontaneously flip. Rather, the change occurred through the dispersion of soldiers and direct outreach, resulting in great human

intelligence. The turn-around was remarkable in the polemic atmosphere of Washington, D.C. A critical moment is now with the end game and elections. Unfortunately, Maliki did not form a wider alliance. Incorporating the 100,000 Sons of Iraq, which represented the bulk of insurgency, into the security forces and the political and economic structures is critical.

The U.S. must accept a federal structure with a more centralized Iraqi government. Iraq is more secular than the U.S. realizes, and progress is achievable with the efforts of Crocker and second-tier Iraqi politicians who are more pragmatic than their superiors. Ambassador Chris Hill does not have the needed experience in the region. The U.S. needs internal stability in Iraq. A Shia axis is inevitable, but Iraq has historically served as a counterweight to Iran, and this will continue. The U.S. needs to promote regional deals and professionalism in their forces.

Robinson's concern is that having won the battle, the U.S. may lose the war. She concluded that political analysis is vital in that every country differs and no template exists. Population-centered approaches do not require an overwhelming quantity of American troops. She suggested that Afghanistan be localized along with the use of informal structures. The "clear, hold, build" formula connotes a mechanistic, physical, and sequential process, yet COIN practice rarely is.

THOMAS RICKS, CENTER FOR A NEW AMERICAN SECURITY

Thomas Ricks questioned the extent to which Vietnam informs the current situations in Iraq and Afghanistan, though he noted that Petraeus was conscious of the Vietnam and Algerian wars, the former having been the topic of his Ph.D. thesis.

*What did Petraeus do?* Ricks argued that the surge achieved a tactical goal of improving security rather than a strategic victory, because it did not resolve issues, such as Kirkuk, oil sharing revenue, whether Iraq is to be a strong central government or loose federation, and the role of Iran. Petraeus offered a new modesty in American goals, which was significant for operations in the Anbar province in 2006. In collaboration with local Anbar police, outposts among the population served as innovative means to facilitate talks with the tribes. In 2006–07 seasoned U.S. leaders, such as Colonel Shawn McFarland, were finally listening to, and urging respect and engagement with the Iraqi populace rather than putting forth demands. Most importantly, Petraeus "shoved COIN theory down the throat of the military establishment," and, in turn, made every command adhere to the same rules of engagement. In doing so, Iraqis were no longer treated indifferently, such as previously when signs of how close one could approach convoys were written in English. In terms of timing, Petraeus and Odierno had a very seasoned force. Further, they both had commanded divisions and had a better understanding of the war and more credibility with subordinate commanders than their predecessors, Generals Casey and

*How does this end? It may be that victory is when the host government is strong enough to kick us out. Try explaining that to the American people.*

—Thomas Ricks

Sanchez. They sought information from lower officers, recognizing the knowledge of company commanders on their second and third tours.

***How the U.S. deals with the host government.*** While the French and British were fighting the colonial COIN campaigns to retain a presence, victory for the U.S. is establishing a strong host government that allows U.S. withdrawal. In a recently published report, Ricks referred to keeping 30,000–50,000 troops in Iraq to deter a slide backward into civil war, and possibly a regional war. Time is essential for new political leaders to emerge. The U.S. should have begun with local neighborhood elections, followed by elections in towns, cities, and provinces. Instead, the U.S. quickly sought to hold national elections and place exiles and sectarian leaders in key positions. He maintained that Iraq is very strategic for the U.S., and the U.S. must proceed wisely.

ANDREW EXUM, CENTER FOR A NEW AMERICAN SECURITY

***The integration of Special Operations forces and conventional operations is really important and has not been in the narrative enough.***

—Andrew Exum

Andrew Exum discussed changes in the U.S. military in light of Iraq and the direction forward. He noted the initial misguided U.S. approaches in the Iraq war, such as indiscriminate targeting in fall 2003–04. The Special Operations units misdiagnosed the war, and confused a nascent insurgency for a counter terror organization, and misinterpreted the enemy as a red army faction identifiable on lists. A key under-acknowledged factor was the integration of Special Operations forces and conventional operations. McChrystal and Petraeus forged an important relationship. The perspectives of the Iraqi people and commanders are needed, such as Matt Gallagher’s valuable insights from fighting as a platoon leader. Exum disputed Tom Ricks’s contention that the surge failed; instead arguing that the surge created a political process.

***What drives innovation in military organizations?*** Explanations vary among rationalist and cultural issues. One rationalist explanation highlights promotion pipelines. Issues also involve bottom-up or top-down innovations. Regarding cultural explanations, military leaders, such as Petraeus, can purposefully change the culture. External situations also create innovation. Unlike Vietnam, Iraq may constitute a big enough external shock to institutionalize change in the way the military does business politically, strategically, and tactically. The lessons from British intelligence are largely inapplicable, because the U.S. is not fighting counterinsurgency at home similar to the British in North Ireland. Occasionally the U.S. appears to have operational genius, but political naiveté. The non-alignment of U.S. and Iraqi interests is the real problem. In third party interventions, assessing how leverage is employed over the host government is vital.

***Culture matters.*** This includes knowing one’s own operational culture and its biases. American strategic culture is based on technological fetishism and an aversion to casualties. A properly executed COIN comprises a lot of risk. Exum agreed with Ricks that pushing Petraeus’s

vision down the throats of the whole military command, in a manner similar to Odierno's approach with the one stars, is necessary. Exum advocated a similar approach with the coalition troops in Afghanistan.

#### OPEN FORUM

- *Patrick Cronin: What is the Iraqi security force projection?* **Thomas Ricks** observed that advisors contend when the U.S. leaves, Iraq will revert back to Saddam's ways. 2010 will indicate how post-occupation Iraqi security forces behave and where Iraq's political loyalties lie. **Linda Robinson** argued that the Iraqi security force is less problematic than the threat of political manipulation by the civilians and the potential purging of their ranks. U.S. intelligence relied on Iraqi officers for insights into the political chain of influence. Building, training, and maintaining a viable non-partisan professional force is a long-term generational process. According to **Andrew Exum**, the U.S. made tactical and mechanical gains for more than eight years about how to build security forces, such as rolling troops off the line, building security forces from the ground up, and partnering with them. However, the U.S. needs to better consider the strategic component, such as the speed in which security forces are built and their equipment, which acts as leverage over the host governments of Iraq and Afghanistan.
- *Does Ahmad Chalabi have influence?* **Robinson** replied that earlier diplomatic intervention was required before 500 people were purged from the electoral rolls. Full representation in the Iraqi parliament across the spectrum is critical to producing multi-sectarian coalition building that will generate required legislation for the end game. While the Arab-power sharing arrangement is central, the Kurdish powers are highly significant. **Ricks** described the U.S. as repeatedly underestimating Chalabi and Muqtada al-Sadr, characterizing the former as a Mississippi River boat gambler and the latter as an Al Sharpton with heavy weapons. If Chalabi becomes prime minister, he will be pro-Iranian.
- *Rufus Phillips: How do we train local forces in terms of duty and allegiance to their own people?* **Exum** replied that the U.S. previously emphasized marksmanship and physical fitness in training programs. In Afghanistan, the U.S. shifted emphasis to partnering and mentoring. Unlike the big brother-little brother approach in Iraq, this resulted in more Afghans (and fewer U.S.) troops on the ground living, planning, and operating together. While this approach influences the host nation, it does not impart patriotic and nationalistic values.

*Strategic and political lessons have not been adequately learned, such as the inherent problem of supplying leverage when conducting COIN as a third party. It remains to be seen whether or not cultural changes are enduring or fleeting.*

—Andrew Exum

*What happens after the U.S. troops leave, when it still has logistical contracts with the Iraqi military lasting five to ten years?*

—Andrew Exum

*If we get really good at low-intensity and conventional conflicts then the enemy will prepare for cyber war. If we get really good at cyber war and neglect conventional conflict, then we may face a return of the old industrial state-on-state wars of the century. One of the lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan is not to get really good at COIN, but to have flexible, nimble organizations, especially building an officer corps that is intellectually nimble and open to change.*

—Andrew Exum

- *If a counterinsurgent is already engaged, what happens when he doesn't have a legitimate partner in the host nation government?* **Exum** acknowledged that a government facing an insurgency is typically facing a crisis in legitimacy. In Iraq, military and diplomatic stakeholders were joined at the hip. In contrast, McChrystal and Ikenberry may work well together in Afghanistan, but obstacles involve other stakeholders of the coalition, such as various country ambassadors and U.N. and NATO representatives. The U.S. presence in Afghanistan is largely dependent on what the host nation government does. **Robinson** added the U.S. needs to find local legitimate leaders in Afghanistan and replace the more corrupt leaders with preferably elected leaders or if not, then with traditional leaders.
- *Why did the U.S. not anticipate a need for a COIN manual before 2003?* **Ricks** pointed out that U.S. military leadership is tactically the best in the world, yet vulnerable to insurgencies and WMDs. The widespread consensus after the end of the Vietnam War was that the U.S. military would not become involved in such a conflict again. By the 1990s we were dominant with conventional warfare, and after the Gulf War, we became extraordinarily complacent.
- *Is priority given to U.S. veterans?* **Exum** expressed concern about veterans' long-term prominence in the political decision-making process. Only approximately 0.5 percent of the American public, including families, are directly affected by warfare. The desire is undoubtedly to avoid counterinsurgency campaigns again. The U.S. may become more oriented to protecting offshore balancing, global economy, space odyssey, and addressing more conventional threats, yet the caveat is that the enemy always gets a vote.
- *A concern was expressed about arming the Sons of Iraq:* **Ricks** observed that short-term solutions implemented by Petraeus and Odierno may be long-term problems. According to the Sons of Iraq, they are waiting to attack the government. The enemy has learned that it can take on U.S. forces. In 2006, Hezbollah irregular forces clearly had sufficient precision and firepower against overwhelming conventional Israeli forces. What we may see is "high intensity insurgencies." Another host government solution is exemplified by the Pakistani government inviting the former British governor to broker negotiations in the Northwest Frontier Province. This reflects an approach of performing some of the same functions but in a subordinate position to the host government. **Robinson** argued that the Mahdi Army and Sons of Iraq were already armed. Iraq security forces should have incorporated at least 50 percent of them for three reasons: (1) in order to rebalance local forces, (2) "you

can't kill your way to victory", and (3) the populace trusts them. The job training program must be further developed. The future is the hybrid warfare model because it is very hard to counter current tactics. John Campbell, the brigadier general in Iraq during a critical era, is credited with closely working with, and serving as an example and mentor to the Iraqis and the Baghdad operational command. The U.S. must have a small COIN model in mind, in terms of supporting the host nation government and forces.

*This may be just a human failing: every generation has to learn these same damn lessons over again, and that is a human tragedy.*

—Thomas Ricks

## SESSION IV

### COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

CHAIR: COLIN JACKSON, U.S. NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

GILLES DORRONSORO, CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR  
INTERNATIONAL PEACE

Gilles Dorronsoro posited four important differences between Iraqi and Afghan insurgencies and political parties, though he noted that comparisons are often too complicated to be useful: (1) the Iraqi insurgency was fragmented, the Afghan is cohesive; (2) the Iraqi insurgency affected the old social order, i.e., the tribe, while the Taliban is cleverly weakening the Afghan tribal system yet in a very interactive way; (3) the Iraqi insurgency is urban, the Afghan is rural; (4) the Iraqi insurgency did not have a sanctuary, the Afghan does. Further, while Iraqi political parties are key, Afghan parties do not exist. Local comparative methodology of, for instance, decision-making and escalation processes, is useful, and even when not politically correct, such as examining the Soviet and British experiences in Afghanistan.

In Vietnam, the U.S. had problems defining its goal. The importance of Vietnam and the negative consequences of losing the war were overemphasized. The same is true regarding Afghanistan. Politicians tend toward irrational discourse about losing a war. Culture is a problematic category comprising things we do not understand. The U.S. is creating a war economy with high levels of corruption that is destroying the country. It assumes that more resources lead to better outcomes, yet the Taliban receives \$10 million from every \$100 million. Bad metrics are combined with unrealistic objectives, such as creating an Afghan army of 250,000 in less than three years.

The assumption is that COIN worked in Iraq, so it will work in Afghanistan. Yet historical texts are not properly analyzed, and experiences, such as the French in Algeria, greatly differ. Although the operation in Marja mobilized 50,000 men, it lacked in strategic importance and 5,000 stationed troops were required. What about Kandahar? The COIN doctrine does not describe that supporting militias are targeting and eliminating Taliban commanders. Any final solution must be negotiated.

The U.S. situation in Afghanistan is comparable to the Soviet experience. In the 1980s, people belonged to communist parties in the belief that modernity was good, women should vote, and Americans are better than the Taliban. Given that the U.S. is working with the same social groups, it needs to examine Soviet actions after 1986, such as the way urban centers were secured.

*In Vietnam, the U.S. had problems defining its goal. The importance of Vietnam and the negative consequences of losing the war were overemphasized. The same is true regarding Afghanistan. Politicians tend toward irrational discourse about losing a war. Culture is a problematic category comprising things we do not understand.*

—Gilles Dorronsoro

GERALD MEYERLE, CNA, CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

Gerald Meyerle remarked that the British experience in Afghanistan at the turn of the century and the Soviet period in the 1980s are apt comparisons to the war in Afghanistan. Many U.S. bases are former Soviet bases, and many Taliban leaders fought the Soviets with similar tactics and areas of influence. Although the war in Afghanistan and those in Vietnam and Iraq greatly differ, Meyerle discussed numerous points of comparison:

***Never underestimate the enemy.*** The Taliban has a well-organized operation in the villages and districts. They operate well at infiltrating areas, setting up political organizations, recruiting fighters, and building functioning institutions at the local level. The Vietcong was similarly adept in merging its military operations with its political organizations, whereas the U.S. military is not.

***Never underestimate the weakness of the Afghan government.*** In Afghanistan, the governing institutions at the national and local levels are weak and highly dependent on U.S. funds and support. The Afghan police and even the army depend on U.S. and NATO forces on the ground, especially in the Pashtun belt. The U.S. faced similar problems in Vietnam—a weak government in the capital and villages, and a top-heavy and ineffective conventional army. In contrast, the Vietcong governed reasonably well in the areas they controlled and even in those contested. Rather than conquering the South after U.S. withdrawal, the South Vietnamese government and military collapsed and the Vietcong invaded with little resistance. Similarly, if the U.S. prematurely withdraws from Afghanistan, the new government probably will quickly fall, and the Taliban will resurge in many areas uncontested.

***The importance of foreign internal defense.*** Meyerle argued against a U.S. focus on combat operations in Afghanistan. He agreed with Tom Ricks and Linda Robinson that foreign internal defense, such as building indigenous forces, should be the primary mission. The U.S. forces training their Afghan counterparts cannot fully trust in their combat support and assume a great deal of risk. In Vietnam, the U.S. also focused on combat operations rather than building a viable Vietnamese force. When the U.S. pulled back, it invariably collapsed.

***Rural guerrilla wars, such as Afghanistan and Vietnam, are more difficult to fight.*** The Afghan populace is distributed among thousands of small, self-governing rural villages. If COIN is employed, a similar dispersal of U.S. forces is required. In contrast, the Iraqi population is largely concentrated in a few cities, which enables a military to control cities similar to the French in Algiers. In Vietnam, the U.S. controlled the cities, but the Vietcong controlled the rural areas. The Taliban, like their predecessors the *mujahidin*, is also a rural guerrilla movement with little urban support. Such guerrilla wars favor insurgents rather than governments and they particularly disfavor foreign occupying forces.

*However, [the Soviet experience in Afghanistan] is a negative comparison. The Soviets obviously lost the war in Afghanistan, they alienated every single Afghan, they followed policies that depopulated entire areas of the south, they dropped mines shaped like children's toys, they alienated the population in a major way. There are few positive lessons we can learn from the Soviets.*

—Gerald Meyerle

HON. RONALD E. NEUMANN, U.S. AMBASSADOR TO  
AFGHANISTAN

Although Ambassador Neumann shared doubts about the relevancy of Vietnam to Afghanistan and Iraq, he noted that specialists search for comparable British and Soviet experiences, and the United States looks to its own experiences. As a useful learning technique, comparative analysis offers different perspectives from that gained as a platoon leader and ambassador.

***We have to decide strategy with reference to the enemy.*** The challenge is a well-organized enemy in Afghanistan capable of command and control. The U.S. needs to understand the reasons that bring enemy combatants into the war.

***Resist the simple.*** Proper execution at the local level is primary for stability. For example, if thuggish militia commanders are reinforced, a measure of stability is simply built on sand. If possible, the government needs to connect with community groups. The Taliban regularly destroy tribal elements. The U.S. must operate at a higher level of detail than working with tribes. This requires a slow gathering of extensive local knowledge in contrast to our current inclination to move quickly and in different places with people on short tours. The U.S. has an excess of assumptions and must strive for humility.

***While reform of the corrupt Karzai regime is needed, he is not always wrong.*** In Afghanistan, the U.S. needs to achieve a balance between a high degree of social change, which has been destabilizing, and not enough structure. The Soviets failed because they sought massive social change at the village level. The U.S. must publicly accept Karzai as a partner and not promote the conspiratorial tone from Afghanistan. Thirty-six troop contributors and sixty donors compose the sovereign nations, each with their own objectives. Despite developing a “new” strategy, a great deal of decision-making is needed to solve overriding problems. For instance, the strategy of placing the population front and center is driving resources. Logic states that Afghan forces are needed to protect people, and a substantial period of time is needed to build Afghan forces. Churchill said “alliance warfare is a tale of mutual incrimination.”

***Unless you can provide a fair degree of security to people who are trapped, nothing else matters.*** In postcolonial development, no instances exist where a quick and functioning government is achieved. Military victory precedes success in development and governance. In terms of timelines, the U.S. has adopted an overly mechanistic discourse and is imprisoned by habits of building and training. We will never have control of the Afghan part. “There is a time requirement for success in the military that exceeds the time requirement for success in development.”

JOHN K. WOOD, NEAR EAST AND SOUTH ASIA CENTER FOR  
STRATEGIC STUDIES

***Irregular warfare is a long-term endeavor.*** John K. Wood asserted that this insight from Vietnam and Iraq applies in Afghanistan. Long-term is variable, however, in that time cycles differ among audiences that include the Afghan and U.S. governments, and the tolerance of the U.S. public, which is disconnected from the U.S. military today (essentially a separate class of Americans). Has a coalition ever prevailed in a counterinsurgency? I'm not sure that a historical example exists.

***Legitimacy, trust, and trustworthiness matter.*** Moral and political legitimacy on a broad scale is important for Afghanistan, the U.S., and its allies. Problems of legitimacy exist in Afghanistan as they did in South Vietnam. Beyond having elections, the conduct of government is primary and corruption could be as significant a problem as the insurgency.

The level of mutual trust between Afghanistan and the U.S. is fragile. Psychological components with multiple inflections are evident in any struggle. Despite considerable U.S. investments in the South Vietnamese national security forces, they fought poorly in 1975, because they lost conviction when their sometime U.S. ally abandoned them. The sending of significant forces into Basra by Maliki reflected his willingness to address the most difficult of problems. The U.S. is waiting for Hamid Karzai to act in a likewise manner. Despite high political cost, George W. Bush's decision on the surge reflected a high level of commitment that changed the dynamics of having American forces on the ground.

***Resist simple generalizations about policy and strategy circulating in Washington.*** The U.S. must resist applying rational actor models to an inherently irrational endeavor. Do not equate the scale of U.S. involvement to the impact on the American psyche. A new generation is seeing a long duration and high degree of violence.

Regarding current aims and strategies, a well-developed plan requires greater resources and time. The 2010 plan comprised merely a repackaging of the strategy in place since 2002. This population-centric action plan recognized the importance of legitimacy and reconciliation. With the exception of 2005, which followed a sizeable request for funding on the non-military side by Ambassador Kalilzad, Washington has instead cut requests on the non-kinetic, population-centric side of the strategy nearly in half. The U.S. does not need a new strategy—it has had a winning strategy for a long time. Rather, it must make the costly investment necessary to achieve its objectives.

## OPEN FORUM

- *Colin Jackson: There are two rival visions of what politics mean: the first, rebellion is a product of bad government, and the second, rebellion is an elite fight for control. Which is the right way to conceptualize the problem? Is it a technocratic/ administrative problem or a fight for control? What is the proper relationship with local leaders?* **Gilles Dorransoro** put forth two main problems in Afghanistan. First, people were rapidly alienated from coalition forces and the Afghan government, and joined the Taliban because the situation was unbearable. Second, the U.S. is haphazardly supporting armed groups. The Taliban is a decentralized political movement, and if the U.S. fails to make a political deal, then it will not solve the primary problems. **Gerald Meyerle** asserted that an understanding is needed on how insurgents operate covertly in small groups and set up political organizations in remote areas. Driven by necessity, they militarily swept through southern and then northern Afghanistan, after which they provided public goods and built up the government. After 2001, the Taliban went from an overt force that ran the country to a covert insurgency. They switched sides and sent cadres into remote areas similar to the Vietcong and attacked U.S. forces. **Ronald Neumann** warned against single model answers. Building fractured structures of military commanders creates little. The government is poor, which leaves a conundrum because the U.S. is legalistic, and not a colonial power. If the U.S. replaces or appoints leaders, then it is governing and responsible for everything wrong. The answer involves art, political acumen, balancing, and an infinity of “it depends.” **John Wood** cautioned against focusing on a personality versus an institution. President Karzai reflects the way the U.S. made him. He is a decent person, but a bad president. The U.S. should invest in alternatives at the institutional level rather than overinvest in a single person. **Neumann** added that the current lack of institutions in Afghanistan for reinforcement is the dilemma. **Wood** said that the Afghan legislature’s recent rejection of numerous Karzai’s nominees for ministries is a hopeful sign. **Dorransoro** agreed that a credible political institution in Afghanistan does not exist now. Karzai has 10–15 percent popular support and less support expected in 2011. The U.S. is playing with limited resources.
  
- *How apt is a comparison between Afghanistan and Columbia?* **Wood** asserted that unlike Afghanistan, Columbia has a relatively mature governmental structure and institutions, a well-trained army and police force, and a president with fortitude and bold leadership. Although a mature narcotic trade exists, there are multiple alternatives to support the Columbian economy, such as coffee

production. At the tactical level, decisions on how to target narcotic problems are politically based. **Neumann** added that the antinarcotics strategy has been unsuccessful for counterinsurgency in Peru, Columbia, and Afghanistan. This is reflected in Karzai's rejection of aerial spraying of opium in Afghanistan. **Dorrnsoro** noted that Karzai is more dependent on opium traffic than the Taliban. Opium is a marginal problem for current events.

- *What does the Soviet model, which was arguably successful, offer in terms of lessons?* **Dorrnsoro** replied that the first issue is determining how to process information and which questions to ask. The second is that the communist party was not corrupt. The lack of political parties in Afghanistan is a key problem that Americans and Afghans are not properly addressing. The so-called population-center strategy doesn't exist in Afghanistan. Rather than secure the population, the Soviets more reasonably sought to secure the cities. Between 1984 and 1986 they managed to secure most of the cities, though, governing Kandahar is mostly hopeless. This approach would be prudent for the U.S. **Meyerle** argued that the U.S. has little to learn from the Soviet experience and should not associate itself with Soviet policies and operations. The Soviets lost in Afghanistan. They were despised throughout Afghanistan. They practiced depopulation by planting 3 million mines. They burned, tortured, and killed randomly. The U.S. must learn how the enemy operates, because the Taliban's methods are similar to those that the *mujahidin* used against the Soviets. **Dorrnsoro** asserted that the U.S. is not more popular than the Soviets were in Kandahar. Success is not measured by popularity, yet Najibullah posters are everywhere. **Wood** stated that it is easier to speak well of the dead and the evil that will not return.
- *Linda Robinson: How do you identify local legitimate leaders? Traditionally it is through elections, yet the constitution does not call for election of district and provincial governors. What is your solution institutionally?* **Dorrnsoro** stated that the answer is in the question: the solution is institutions and not people. When the U.S. commander plays tribes off each other, it signals that everything is wrong. Given that Afghans consider the state as neutral, the U.S. should empower neutral institutions. The U.S. faces difficult situations in Mazar-e-sharif and Kandahar; in the latter, the U.S. is supporting the most violent people.
- *Why are we in Afghanistan?* According to **Neumann**, the reasons are to deter war involving domestic as well as foreign actors, the replanting of al-Qaeda, and the strategic rear for extremism situated

*It will be a large al-Qaeda victory if the U.S. withdraws from Afghanistan. It is unlikely that a unilateral disengagement from a two-sided war will have any positive outcomes. We have to ask whether we can succeed and at what cost. It is too early to accept failure because we have never properly tried. The risks are sufficient to justify the expenditure.*

—Hon. Ronald E. Neumann

in Pakistan. We need to prevent instability in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia. The larger question is the Islamic jihad. They have a strategy made public for over a decade to bring the U.S. into an unwinnable war. We have a problem accepting that we are at war. Jihadist websites refer to 9/11 as the raid on New York. **Dorransoro** argued that the costs must be acknowledged, for instance, NATO has been destroyed as a political organization in Afghanistan. The Dutch are out of Afghanistan, and the Italians and Canadians are prepared to leave. This is a high cost in terms of credibility. There is a tendency to overstate risks. Is it a major problem if al-Qaeda is marginally back? Costs are out of control, and the likelihood of success is marginal. How do you disconnect the Taliban from al-Qaeda? The Taliban are willing to make a deal. The nationalist elements of the Taliban are strongest. **Wood** asserted that the U.S. is in Afghanistan for numerous reasons: (1) the potential of civil war, (2) the possible expansion of a civil war into a riskier regional war, (3) a regional war could lead to greater instability in Pakistan with its nuclear arsenal and contentious relations with India, (4) the need to regain momentum against extremism, (5) the potential return of safe havens, (6) the moral obligation to women and Afghans, (7) the failure of NATO, and (8) international legitimacy. Throughout Afghanistan and Pakistan, one encounters the question: “You are not going to abandon us again, are you?” **Wood** posited the questions: What was the cost to the U.S. in international influence during post-1975 that can be attributed to Vietnam? What would be the cost if we failed in Afghanistan and Iraq? **Neumann** asserted that the debate about price should turn on its inherent pros and cons, rather than on a stale historical argument of which parallel fits the future, when in all probability, none fits.



## ROUNDTABLE

### LESSONS LEARNED, LESSONS LOST

CHAIR: THOMAS KEANEY, STRATEGIC STUDIES, SAIS

GORDON ADAMS, AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

Gordon Adams compared budgetary and institutional consequences of the Vietnam War and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The comparison comprised the total defense budgets, the courses of spending, how the wars were funded, the impact of the wars on the economy, and the institutional consequences.

*The consequence of a broken priority setting machinery and a lesson learned—I believe in some cases lonely—from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is the enormous pressure to keep the level of defense spending very high and push it higher.*

—Gordon Adams

*In Vietnam, the U.S. spent in the peak years of 1966 and 1967 between 38 and 44 percent of the entire federal budget on defense.*

The U.S. funded the Vietnam War with approximately 80 percent of the normal defense budget funding and 22 percent of supplemental funding. The difficulty in ascertaining exact economic consequences is due to many moving parts of the economy. The defense component consumed 5–7 percent of the GDP, and 4–6 percent of the labor force. The economy was at a fairly full production capacity. It was not necessarily an inflationary war.

*The institutional consequences of the Vietnam War included large cuts in the military establishment and less forces after the war.*

A very politically engaged argument existed for the next ten years about the role of defense in American policy and the real extent of the Soviet threat. There was a reluctance to increase defense spending.

In the current wartime situation, DoD comprises 16–19 percent of the total federal budget, and 60 percent of discretionary spending. This reflects a smaller share of the budget compared to Vietnam. However, the wars are funded largely through supplemental budgets constituting 80–93 percent of funding above the base budget. Defense constitutes 3–4 percent of the GDP and the wars comprise 1.3–1.5 percent of the labor force.

*The institutional consequences include, first, a corrupting effect on the budget process. The Pentagon is awash with money, highly fungible budgets, and little oversight.* Second, the U.S. is not planning to build down its capacity for counterinsurgency and stabilization. Rather, capacities for strategic communications, overseas training, stabilization, peacekeeping, counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, reconstruction, and governance missions are set to increase amid a systematic weakening of civilian oversight of these military budgets. Unlike in the aftermath of Vietnam, enormous pressures to increase high defense spending exist, yet these pressures will collide with widening budget deficits.

*What does this mean in the end?* Two consequences: (1) the systematic weakening of the capacity for the civilian overseas engagement with the American government; and (2) that pressure is going to fly right into the propeller of a revival of deficit reduction efforts.

## MARK MOYAR, MARINE CORPS UNIVERSITY

The U.S. must strive to improve the quality of leadership among coalition, U.S., and Afghan forces rather than merely advocating for elections. Mark Moyer contended that the U.S. spent unproductive years in Vietnam and Iraq before prioritizing quality leadership. Robert Komer, who headed the pacification effort in Vietnam during the late 1960s, admitted afterwards, “I started out looking at Vietnam as a problem in resource allocation, and ended up looking at Vietnam more as a problem in getting the right Vietnamese in the right job. It was much less a question of the size of the [South Vietnamese Army] or the size of the Vietnamese Civil Service than of the qualities of leadership.” Abrams and Petraeus succeeded because they inserted U.S. forces where the host-nation forces had failed, and recognized the importance of improving the quality of the host-nation commanders. Neither Abrams nor Petraeus abandoned offensive operations against the enemy, as proponents of population-centric counterinsurgency often claim.

Regardless of McChrystal’s efforts, U.S. and coalition commanders must strive further to train Afghan officers in partnered units to become better leaders. Previous leadership training programs were kept short to produce new forces quickly, but those forces deserted, defected, or abused the citizenry far more often than well-led forces. Police training is now being transferred to the NATO training mission. Hundreds of NATO officers are lengthening leadership training, fixing recruitment problems, and increasing instructor quality. The Afghan National Army is well ahead of the Afghan National Police in officer development. The U.S. needs to exhort the Afghans to engage subordinates, relieve underperformers, and refrain from micromanagement.

Although not fully recognized in Washington, NATO has tried the bottom-up approach in Afghanistan intermittently since 2001. This approach has often failed because the empowerment of one tribe or personality resulted in the oppression of others, turning them into insurgents. Similarly, an approach advocating elections for provincial and district offices can easily lead to tyranny of the majority in a country where the powerful often trample the less powerful. Afghan elites require smart leaders who extensively study tribal dynamics and individual personalities, and who have the social skills and patience for building personal relationships through protracted meetings. The belief that Vietnam demonstrated futile counterinsurgency when the indigenous government lacks legitimacy is contravened by numerous successes in Vietnam and the ultimate demise of the Vietcong. The Vietcong was by far a better insurgency than are the Taliban and other Afghan insurgencies.

*Across cases, the most important variable in determining success is the quality of leadership, particularly those at the local level...effective counterinsurgency is usually decentralized and requires adaptation to local conditions.*

—Mark Moyer

AUSTIN LONG, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

***The importance of understanding differences of local elites and groups at the village level.*** Austin Long discussed this as the first of five tactical similarities among Iraq, Afghanistan, and Vietnam. In Vietnam, local elites' motivations drove civilian regular defense groups. In Iraq, the same motivations drove the Anbar awakening and the quasi successor Sons of Iraq. In Afghanistan, local defense initiatives utilized U.S. Army Special Forces at the village level. "The U.S. can change people's incentives but not their interests."

***What motivates people to fight?*** People do not fight for macro issues, such as nationalism and religion, but for local incentives. In Iraq, certain underemployed individuals readily seek to supplement their salary through cooperating with insurgents.

***Organization of the insurgency is critical.*** The Vietcong were incredibly bureaucratic, organized, disciplined, and effective until they committed mass suicide in the Tet Offensive. In Iraq, an initially fragmented insurgency in 2003–04, particularly in the Anbar province, was replaced with a cohesive, effective, and ultimately hegemonic insurgency led by al-Qaeda. The Taliban has not reached the level of organization of al-Qaeda but it is nonetheless well organized. The well-organized Haqqani network is potentially the greatest threat to U.S. forces in Afghanistan.

***The current COIN doctrine is not new.*** One needs only to compare COIN manuals on Vietnam elucidating the same points, such as good governance, benign colonialism, and the importance of intelligence.

***Building security forces is a long, hard process.*** The Iraqi and Afghani logistic systems will have difficulty supporting their forces when the U.S. leaves.

***On a macro issue, the U.S. should be humble about its ability to build a state or provide aid to build a state.*** The U.S. has a strong anti-status ideology, for instance, the Tea Party movement, and is not set up socially, culturally, and institutionally to build a state. Germany after WWII was already a strong state. Further, the U.S. should be humble about its extent of agency and ability to influence events. The U.S. can change people's incentives but not their interests. Even prior to the surge, changes in alignment happened in Anbar when tribes perceived al-Qaeda in Iraq as a greater threat than the U.S. In the Panshir Valley, Afghanistan, the Panshiris hate the Taliban more than the U.S. The problem is with the Pashtuns where our interests do not align.

There are perennial problems with being a third party fighting counterinsurgencies in other countries, including language and cultural barriers. The central problem is that the U.S. does not have as much leverage as it thinks. U.S. threats to cut aid are met with similar threats by Hamid Karzai and Maliki (as with the rulers of Vietnam). U.S. threats become meaningless in light of declarations of its national interest in having a presence in Afghanistan and Iraq.

***Paradoxically, the less we are committed to these countries, the more leverage we actually have because the threat to cut ties, to cut aid, etc. are actually more convincing...U.S. threats become meaningless in light of declarations of its national interest in having a presence in Afghanistan and Iraq.***

—Austin Long

## OPEN FORUM

- *Thomas Keaney: What consequences and costs have already occurred?* **Gordon Adams** asserted that the U.S. has raised the overall defense budget to unprecedented levels, expanded the size of the ground force significantly, broken the planning and budgeting system of the DoD, and created high expectations, which will be difficult to reverse, of a newly reconstructed doctrine. The problem of fragile states causes immense security consequences for the given country, region, and the U.S. Although Afghanistan and Iraq were hostile states, the U.S. invasion turned them into failed states. What is the appropriate way for the U.S. to effectively engage failed states?
- *Thomas Keaney: Can you compare the adaptability of officers today, such as battalion commanders and lower, with Vietnam?* **Mark Moyar** replied that the armed forces can not necessarily enhance creativity, adaptability, and initiative of officers, yet the tendency today toward micromanagement and standardization stifles such attributes. Commanders are currently more averse to risk, which among things decreases U.S. partnering with Afghan units.
- *Thomas Keaney: Was there any U.S. action similar to the Anbar awakening that led to regional successes against the Vietcong?* **Austin Long** cited the use of local actors in Southeast Asia where the U.S. had a minimal footprint, a lot of airpower, a few Thai advisors, and mostly locals holding huge chunks of territory for the government.
- *What institutional changes should the U.S. make?* **Adams** cited the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) undertaken by the Department of State and USAID. This greatly needed first-time endeavor could result in a clearly focused and defined vision of a set of civilian missions. This will drive change and address recruiting and training efforts of civilians, which will increase our level of engagement. **Moyar** expressed skepticism about a massive infusion of civilians in order to succeed. **Long** asserted that an organization dedicated to counterinsurgency and fixing up fragile countries is needed, yet this is a colonial service and the U.S. is an anti-colonial country. **Adams** argued against the concept of a colonial service. If the U.S. pursues civilian engagement, then it must work with the United Nations and other countries and organizations to address governance and state building. The personnel requirement for that method is substantially less than what a counterinsurgency-related civilian agency demands.

*What does the U.S. need to do to sharpen our civilian capabilities to deal with failed states?*

—Gordon Adams

- *What would have happened in Afghanistan if the U.S. did not divert its resources to Iraq?* **Moyar** and **Long** asserted that even if the U.S. had not invaded Iraq, it would not have realized until 2005 at the earliest that not having troops on the ground is as bad as having too many. **Thomas Keaney** added that the second phase of Afghanistan, which was to be a continual operation, such as eliminating al-Qaeda, instead became Iraq in 2006–2010.
- *Was the American press the ultimate culprit of the U.S. defeat in Vietnam War?* **Moyar** said that in 1963 the U.S. loss largely derived from the press on the coup that overthrew Diem, but the later impact of the press was exaggerated. Lyndon Johnson poorly sold the war to the American people due to his domestic priorities. **Keaney** noted that the press greatly informs the American public of the needs of the military forces. **Long** asserted that the American people are justly skeptical in believing that the U.S. lacks a coherent story on why it is in Afghanistan.
- *Larry Berman: Now that we have a time limit on moving U.S. forces, what are the strategic issues of our adversaries in light of Vietnam?* **Moyar** argued that Iraq could devolve again into a civil war. More optimism exists in Afghanistan that the U.S. will not halt aid due to fear of another Taliban [*sic*] attack on U.S. soil. **Long** asserted that the current role of the U.S. in Iraq is of mediator rather than combatant. This role will probably continue after the alleged final withdrawal. For instance, the U.S. will protect Iraq's airspace which will create some deterrence. **Adams** said that our actions are overstated and too many uncertainties exist.

Following acknowledgments by William M. Wise and Stephen F. Maxner, the conference adjourned.



## BIOGRAPHIES

### KEYNOTE SPEAKER

**Michael G. (“Mike”) Vickers**, Ph.D., was nominated as assistant secretary of defense for special operations/low-intensity conflict and interdependent capabilities (ASD (SO/LIC&IC)) by President Bush on April 4, 2007, and was unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate on July 23, 2007. President Obama announced on February 26, 2009 that Mr. Vickers would continue to serve as ASD (SO/LIC&IC). Mr. Vickers is the senior civilian advisor to the secretary of defense on the operational employment and capabilities of Special Operations forces. He is also the senior civilian adviser on counterterrorism, irregular warfare, counternarcotics, and special activities. In his Interdependent Capabilities role, he advises the secretary of defense on the operational employment and capabilities of strategic and conventional forces. Prior to his appointment as ASD (SO/LIC&IC), Mr. Vickers served as senior vice president, strategic studies at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. From 1973 to 1986, Mr. Vickers served as a U.S. Army Special Forces non-commissioned officer, Special Forces officer, and CIA operations officer. During this period, Mr. Vickers had operational and combat experience in Central America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, and Central and South Asia. His operational experience spans covert action and espionage, unconventional warfare, counterterrorism (including hostage rescue operations), counterinsurgency, and foreign internal defense. During the mid-1980s, Mr. Vickers was the principal strategist for the largest covert action program in the CIA’s history: the paramilitary operation that drove the Soviet army out of Afghanistan. Mr. Vickers received a B.A., with honors, from the University of Alabama, an M.B.A. from the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, and a Ph.D. in international relations/strategic studies from the Johns Hopkins University.

### PARTICIPANTS *(alphabetical order by family name)*

**Gordon Adams**, Ph.D., serves as professor of international relations at the School of International Service, American University. He is a distinguished fellow at the Henry L. Stimson Center, where he directs the program on Budgeting for Foreign Affairs and Defense. He was a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (2006–07); a professor of the Practice of International Affairs and director of the Security Policy Studies Program at the Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University (1999–2006); the deputy director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, where he developed the IISS corporate membership program (1998–99); and a senior White House official for national security and foreign policy budgets, serving as the associate director for National Security and International Affairs at the Office of Management and Budget (1993–97). He was the founding director of the Defense Budget Project, a nonpartisan research center in Washington D.C. His publications include *Transforming European Militaries: Coalition Operations and the Technology Gap* (Routledge, 2006); *The Iron Triangle: The Politics of Defense Contracting* (Transaction Press, 1981); and *Strengthening Statecraft and Security: Reforming U.S. Planning and Resource Allocation* (MIT Security Studies Program); as well as numerous monographs and articles for the *Financial Times*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, the *Baltimore Sun*, the *Boston Globe*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Defense News*. He is the recipient of numerous fellowships and awards, including the Defense Department’s Medal for Distinguished Public Service. He graduated *magna cum laude* in political science from Stanford University, and received a Ph.D. in political science from Columbia University.

**Thomas L. Ahern Jr.** is a consultant at the Center for the Study of Intelligence. He served as a CIA operations officer (1954–89), with concurrent service in the U.S. Army (1954–57). His CIA service included four tours of duty relating to rural security in developing countries that comprised Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam during the Vietnam War, as well as the Philippines. In Laos, he created and led an irregular Laotian force in the upper Panhandle. In Vietnam, he created two of three programs that were later adopted by the Saigon government as its own instruments of rural pacification. In Cambodia, he managed the CIA human intelligence (HUMINT) program of collection against the Khmer Rouge and the North Vietnamese military presence. He is the author of eight volumes of intelligence history for the CIA that focus on intelligence and covert activities of the CIA in Indochina during the Vietnam War. A native of Wisconsin, he received a B.A. from the University of Notre Dame, and is a graduate of the National War College (with course offerings by the George Washington University), focusing on diplomatic history.

**Guy Bailey**, Ph.D., became the fifteenth president of Texas Tech University on August 1, 2008. Prior to joining Texas Tech University, he served as chancellor of the University of Missouri-Kansas City from January 2006 until July 2008. He served as provost and executive vice president for academic affairs at the University of Texas-San Antonio from 1999 through 2005. He is the author of approximately 100 books and articles, many co-authored by

his wife, Dr. Jan Tillery. His research interests include language variation and change, with a special emphasis on the English of Texas and the American South, and computational linguistics. He received a B.A. and M.A. in English from the University of Alabama, and a Ph.D. in English linguistics from the University of Tennessee.

**Larry Berman**, Ph.D., serves as professor of political science at the University of California, Davis and the director of the UC Davis Washington Program. He has been a member of the faculty at UC Davis since 1977. He is an expert on American politics, foreign policy, the American presidency, and the Vietnam War. His publications include *Perfect Spy: The Incredible Double Life of Pham Xuan An, Time Magazine Reporter and Vietnamese Communist Agent* (Smithsonian Press-Harper Collins, 2007); *No Peace, No Honor: Nixon, Kissinger, and Betrayal in Vietnam* (The Free Press, 2001); *Lyndon Johnson's War: The Road to Stalemate in Vietnam* (W.W. Norton, 1989); and *Planning a Tragedy: The Americanization of the War in Vietnam* (W.W. Norton, 1982). Dr. Berman is currently working on a biography of Admiral Elmo Zumwalt Jr. who rose to command of the U.S. Navy during the 1970s. He has received numerous fellowships and honors, including the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars Fellowship (1998–99) and the Bernath Lecture Prize (1993). He received a Ph.D. from Princeton University.

**Patrick Cronin**, Ph.D., serves as senior advisor and senior director of the Asia-Pacific Security Program at the Center for a New American Security. Previously, he was the director of the Institute for National Strategic Studies at the National Defense University. He has had a 25-year career in government and academic research centers, focusing on defense affairs, foreign policy, and development assistance. In 2001, he was confirmed by the U.S. Senate to the third-ranking position at the U.S. Agency for International Development. From 1998 until 2001, Dr. Cronin served as director of research at the U.S. Institute of Peace. He has been a senior analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses, a U.S. naval reserve intelligence officer, and an analyst with the Congressional Research Service and SRI International. He was an adjunct professor at the Security Studies Program, Georgetown University; the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University; and the Woodrow Wilson Department of Government, University of Virginia. His publications include *Global Strategic Assessment, 2009: America's Security Role in a Changing World* (NDU Press, 2009); *Civilian Surge: Key to Complex Operations* (NDU Press, 2009); *The Impenetrable Fog of War: Reflections on Modern Warfare and Strategic Surprise* (Praeger, 2008); *The Evolution of Strategic Thought: Adelphi Paper Classics* (Routledge, 2008); and *Double Trouble: Iran and North Korea as Challenges to International Security* (Praeger, 2007). He received M.Phil. and D.Phil. degrees from the University of Oxford.

**Gilles Dorronsoro**, Ph.D., is a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and an expert on Afghanistan, Turkey, and South Asia. His research focuses on security and political development in Afghanistan, particularly the role of the International Security Assistance Force, the necessary steps for a viable government in Kabul, and the conditions necessary for withdrawal scenarios. Previously, Dorronsoro was a professor of political science at the Sorbonne, Paris and the Institute of Political Studies of Rennes. He also served as the scientific coordinator at the French Institute of Anatolian Studies in Istanbul. He is the co-founder and editor of the *South Asian Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* and the *European Journal of Turkish Studies*. His publications include *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan, 1979 to the Present* (Columbia University Press, 2005), and *La révolution afghane, des communistes aux Taleban* (Karthala Publishers, 2000), and editor of *La Turquie contestée. Régime sécuritaire et mobilisations sociales* (Editions du CNRS, 2005). Dr. Dorronsoro is an associate member of the French Institute of Anatolian Studies. He received an M.A. in contemporary history from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales; and an M.A. in international relations and a master's degree in law from Paris 1 Sorbonne; and a Ph.D. in political sociology from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.

**Andrew M. Exum**, Ph.D. candidate, is a fellow at the Center for a New American Security. He served on active duty in the U.S. Army from 2000 through 2004. He led a platoon of light infantry in Afghanistan in 2002 and a platoon of Army Rangers in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2003 and 2004, respectively. Most recently, he served as an advisor on the CENTCOM Assessment Team and as a civilian advisor to General Stanley McChrystal in Afghanistan. His publications include *This Man's Army: A Soldier's Story from the Frontlines of the War on Terror* (Gotham, 2004) and opinion pieces in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Guardian*. He studied classics and English literature at the University of Pennsylvania and received a M.A. in Middle Eastern studies from the American University of Beirut. A native of East Tennessee, he is a doctoral candidate in the Department of War Studies at King's College in London and the founder of the counterinsurgency blog *Abu Muqawama*.

**Andrew R. Finlayson** served 25 years in the U.S. Marine Corps as an infantry officer, retiring as a colonel in 1991. He served 32 months in South Vietnam as a Force Reconnaissance platoon commander, infantry company commander,

and Provincial Reconnaissance Unit (PRU) commander and advisor. Following his retirement from the U.S. Marine Corps, he worked for the Vinnell and Northrop Grumman Corporations in management positions specializing in military training, strategic planning, and security biometrics (1991–2007). He worked for five years in Saudi Arabia training Saudi military units and took the first New Iraqi Army training team into Iraq in July 2003. For a year in Romania, he advised the Romanian Ministry of National Defense on U.S. military base development and training procedures. His most recent publication is a monograph for the U.S. Marine Corps History Division about the USMC contribution to the CIA's PRU program during the Vietnam War. He is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy.

**Marc Jason Gilbert**, Ph.D., has held the National Endowment for the Humanities Endowed Chair in World History at Hawai'i Pacific University since 2006. He was a founding member and elected officer of the American Institute for Afghan Studies (2003–05). He served as a staff assistant to a wartime DARPA-funded conflict resolution study that addressed the role of Vietnam in international diplomatic negotiations. Following doctoral studies at UCLA in 1978, he was co-director of the University System of Georgia's programs in South and Southeast Asia. He is the author and/or editor of several works on U.S.-Vietnamese affairs, including "Persuading the Enemy: Vietnamese Appeals to Non-White Forces of Occupation, 1945-1975" in Wynn Wilcox (ed.), *Vietnam and the West: New Approaches* (2010); "Fatal Amnesia: American Nation-Building in Afghanistan and Iraq" in *Journal of Third World Studies* (fall 2004); *Why the North Won the Vietnam War* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); *The Vietnam War on Campus: Other Voices, More Distant Drums* (Praeger Publishers, 2001); *The Tet Offensive* (with William Head, Praeger Publishers, 1996); and *The Vietnam War: Teaching Approaches and Resources* (Greenwood Press, 1991). His dissertation focused on the making of the Durand Line, or the boundary between Afghanistan and what is today Pakistan. He received a Ph.D. in history from UCLA.

**Richard Hunt**, Ph.D., manages the Oral History Program in the Historical Office of the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Until 2000, he served in the U.S. Army Center of Military History, where his main project was the history of the pacification program in Vietnam. He served at the Center as chief of oral history, interviewing the secretary of the army, the chief of staff of the army, and general officers on the army staff. Prior to obtaining his doctorate, he served in the U.S. Army (1969–71), reaching the rank of captain. He was assigned to the Military Assistance Command in Vietnam, working as a historian on the annual command history (1970–71). He is currently writing the *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense* (Vol. 7), which covers Melvin Laird's tenure as secretary (1969–73). His publications include *Pacification: The American Struggle for Vietnam's Hearts and Minds* (Westview Press, 1998); and *Lessons from an Unconventional War: Reassessing U.S. Strategies for Future Conflicts* (co-editor and author with Richard Schultz, Pergamon Press, 1982). He received a Ph.D. in history from the University of Pennsylvania.

**Colin F. Jackson**, Ph.D., serves as assistant professor in the Strategy and Policy Department at the U.S. Naval War College. He worked for several years in the corporate sector in financial trading, telecommunications, transportation markets, and power development. He served four years on active duty with the United States Army in Germany as an armor and cavalry officer. He continues to serve as a military intelligence officer in the U.S. Army Reserve. His current research focuses on irregular warfare and counterinsurgency, organizational learning, the economic dimensions of warfare, public and private sector risk management, and intelligence operations. He received an M.B.A. in finance from the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania; an M.A. in international economics and strategic studies from the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University; a B.A. in public and international affairs from the Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University; and a Ph.D. in political science (security studies) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

**Thomas A. Keaney**, Ph.D., serves as the associate director of the Strategic Studies Program, executive director of the Philip Merrill Center for Strategic Studies, and senior adjunct professor at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University. Until 1998 he was professor of military strategy at the National War College, and director of its core courses on military thought and strategy. During 1991 and 1992, he was a researcher/author with the Gulf War Air Power Survey. He was co-author of two reports of that survey: *The Summary Report* and *The Effects and Effectiveness of Air Power* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993). Other publications include *Revolution in Warfare?: Air Power in the Persian Gulf* (with Eliot A. Cohen, U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1995) and *Strategic Bombers and Conventional Weapons: Air Power Options* (National Defense University Press, 1984). During a career in the U.S. Air Force, he served as associate professor of history at the U.S. Air Force Academy, planner on the Air Staff, forward air controller in Vietnam, and a B-52 squadron commander. He retired as a colonel in 1991. He is a graduate of the National War College. He received a B.S. from the U.S. Air Force Academy, and an M.A. and Ph.D. in history from the University of Michigan.

**Austin Long**, Ph.D., serves as assistant professor at the School of International and Public Affairs and a member of the Arnold A. Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies, Columbia University. His research interests include low-intensity conflict, intelligence, military operations, nuclear forces, military innovation, and the political economy of national security. He previously worked as associate political scientist at the RAND Corporation where he authored reports for the Carnegie Corporation, Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense. While at RAND, he served in Iraq as an analyst and advisor to the Multi-National Force Iraq's Task Force 134/Detention Operations and the I Marine Expeditionary Force. He has served as a consultant to the Lincoln Laboratory at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Science Applications International Corporation, the International Crisis Group, and the Office of Net Assessment. He received a B.S. from the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs, Georgia Institute of Technology, and a Ph.D. in political science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

**Stephen F. Maxner**, Ph.D., has been director of the Vietnam Center at Texas Tech University since 2007. In 2008, he was appointed by President George Bush to serve on the Board of Directors for the Vietnam Education Foundation, where he currently serves as chairman. Originally from Massachusetts, he joined the U.S. Army at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, serving with the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) and the 1st Special Operations Command (Airborne). He served as an infantry platoon leader at Fort Benning, Georgia. His publications include the *Modern Southeast Asia Series* (series editor, Texas Tech University Press), and *War and Death: Changes in American Attitudes Toward Sacrifice and the Effects on National Security Policy* (Ph.D. dissertation, Texas Tech University, 2006). He received a B.A. (*magna cum laude*) and M.A. in history and a Regular Army ROTC Commission (Distinguished Military Graduate) from the University of North Carolina, Wilmington. He received a Ph.D. in history from Texas Tech University.

**Gerald Meyerle**, Ph.D., is a research analyst in the Stability and Development Program, CNA, Center for Strategic Studies. He has written several studies on the insurgency in Afghanistan, and articles on regional security and political violence in Pakistan and India. He speaks frequently on these issues at conferences, seminars, and briefing sessions to deploying units. He served on Afghanistan and Pakistan policy reviews for the U.S. Central Command. In 2008, he was an advisor to the commander of the Kunar Provincial Reconstruction Team in eastern Afghanistan where he worked on Pakistan border issues. He served as adjunct professor at the University of Virginia where he taught courses on counterinsurgency and guerrilla warfare. He received a Ph.D. in political science and South Asian studies from the University of Virginia.

**Ron Milam**, Ph.D., is assistant professor in the History Department, Texas Tech University. He serves as the faculty advisor of the Veteran's Association at Texas Tech University and is on the board of directors of the David Westphall Veterans' Foundation in Angel Fire, New Mexico. His research interests include U.S. history, military history, the history of insurgency, and the Vietnam War. He served as the executive officer of the 1st Brigade Headquarters Company of the 82nd Airborne Division and as an infantry advisor to the Peoples Self-Defense Forces and ARVN units in Pleiku Province, Republic of Vietnam (1970–71). His publications include *Not a Gentleman's War: An Inside View of Junior Officers in the Vietnam War* (University of North Carolina Press, 2009), as well as numerous articles, chapters, and book reviews. He received a B.A., M.B.A., and M.A. in political science from Wayne State University. After 27 years in the oil and gas industry, he earned a Ph.D. in U.S. history from the University of Houston.

**Edward Miller**, Ph.D., serves as assistant professor of history at Dartmouth College, teaching on American foreign relations, Vietnamese history and the Vietnam War. He held teaching appointments at Harvard University and Bentley College. He is currently writing a study of U.S. relations with Ngô Đình Diệm's South Vietnam based on research in United States, French, and Vietnamese archives. His work has appeared in the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, the *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* and on the website of the Cold War International History Project. He is a graduate of Swarthmore College and received a Ph.D. in U.S. and international history from Harvard University.

**Mark Moyer**, Ph.D., is a professor of national security affairs at the U.S. Marine Corps University. An expert on counterinsurgency, leadership, military history, and foreign policy, he speaks frequently to military officers and civilian officials at all levels. He frequently speaks to American personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan during previous visits, and regularly lectures American officers preparing to deploy to those locations. His publications include *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq* (Yale University Press, 2009); *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965* (Cambridge University Press, 2006); and *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism in Vietnam* (Naval Institute Press, 1997). His writings have appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. He received a B.A. *summa cum laude* from Harvard University and a Ph.D. from Cambridge University.

**Ronald E. Neumann** served as former deputy assistant secretary and three times as the U.S. ambassador, to Algeria (1994–97), Bahrain (2001–04), and finally to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2005–07). Prior to his tenure in Afghanistan, Mr. Neumann, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, served in Baghdad from February 2004 with the Coalition Provisional Authority and then as the embassy's principal interlocutor with the Multinational Command, where he was deeply involved in coordinating the political part of military. His publications include *The Other War: Winning and Losing in Afghanistan* (Potomac Press, forthcoming), and numerous monographs and articles. At the Academy he has focused particularly on efforts to expand State Department and USAID personnel to enable these institutions to carry out their responsibilities. He served as an army infantry officer in Vietnam and holds a Bronze Star, Army Commendation Medal, and Combat Infantry Badge.

**Rufus Phillips**, beginning in 1954, conducted pacification and political work as an army officer for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) for over 14 years in South Vietnam. As a government advisor and consultant to the U.S. Department of State, he was a strong proponent of helping to build a stable democratic government that the South Vietnamese would willingly fight to preserve from the communist North, and a vocal opponent of sending in American combat troops. As assistant director in the USAID mission, he was responsible for developing innovative counterinsurgency programs that were an integral part of the later CORDS effort. Through 1968 he provided support to the Lansdale mission, made five visits to Vietnam, and served as an advisor to Vice President Hubert Humphrey. Among numerous honors, he earned the CIA's Intelligence Medal of Merit.

**John Prados**, Ph.D., serves as senior fellow and project director with the National Security Archive at George Washington University, and an analyst of national security based in Washington, D.C. His research interests focus on presidential power, international relations, intelligence and military affairs. His publications include *Vietnam: The History of an Unwinnable War, 1945-1975* (University Press of Kansas, 2009). He is the author or editor of sixteen other books, with titles on national security, the American presidency, intelligence matters, diplomatic history and military affairs, including Iraq, Vietnam, the Soviet Union, and World War II. His current research project is an anthology of combat writing from the Vietnam War. The works *Vietnam: The History of an Unwinnable War*; *Combined Fleet Decoded: The Secret History of American Intelligence and the Japanese Navy in World War II* (U.S. Naval Institute Press, 2001); and *Keepers of the Keys: A History of the National Security Council from Truman to Bush* (William Morrow & Company, 1992) were each nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. He is an award-winning designer of board strategy games for many publishers. He is a contributing editor to *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History*. His articles have appeared widely in many notable magazines and internet sites. He received a Ph.D. in political science (international relations) from Columbia University.

**Jeffrey Race**, Ph.D., has worked in the academic, private, media, military, and legal sectors. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Signal Corps of the U.S. Army Reserve in June 1965. He served two years of active duty in the Vietnam combat zone (volunteering a second year to transfer to an infantry advisory assignment). He completed the Signal Officers Basic and Advanced Courses and Command and General Staff College. He held annual active duty assignments in stability studies, intelligence, and operations and planning at the HQ Southeast Asia Treaty Organization Bangkok, HQ U.S. Army Pacific Honolulu, Office of Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Office of Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. He was awarded the Combat Infantryman's Badge for service in Vietnam and the Meritorious Service Medal upon retirement from the Army Reserve in 1993 with the rank of lieutenant colonel. He received an A.B., A.M., and Ph.D. from Harvard University in political science, with additional studies in development economics, psychology, and sociology.

**Thomas E. Ricks** is a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security and a contributing editor of *Foreign Policy*. He writes the online blog, "The Best Defense," for ForeignPolicy.com. He covered the U.S. military for the *Washington Post* from 2000–08, and the *Wall Street Journal* (17 years until 1999), reporting on U.S. military activities in Somalia, Haiti, Korea, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Kuwait, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Iraq. He is the author of several national bestselling books on the U.S. military, including *The Gamble: General Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-08* (Penguin Press, 2009); *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (Penguin Press, 2006); and *Making the Corps* (Simon & Schuster, 1998). He was a member of two Pulitzer Prize winning reporting teams: a *Washington Post* team reporting on the U.S. counteroffensive against terrorism (2002); and a *Wall Street Journal* team reporting on the need for change by the U.S. military during the 21st century (2000). He was raised in New York and Afghanistan and graduated from Yale University.

**Linda Robinson** is an author and consultant on national security and interagency issues following a long career as a journalist. Her current projects include Afghanistan and Pakistan, irregular warfare, and international police and rule of law training. During 2008, she was author in residence at the Philip Merrill Center for Strategic Studies, Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University. She covered national security issues as a senior writer for *U.S. News & World Report* in 2001–07. She reported extensively from Iraq and Afghanistan at all echelons, including combat missions in such violent areas as Adhamiya, Ameriya, and Khost. From 1989 to 2000, as the *U.S. News* Latin America Bureau Chief, she covered numerous conflicts, including nine insurgencies, military interventions, and stability operations in Panama and Haiti; drug trafficking; and democratic transitions throughout the region. She received the Maria Moors Cabot Prize (1999), the highest award for coverage of the region. Recent publications include *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq* (PublicAffairs, 2008); *Masters of Chaos: The Secret History of the Special Forces* (PublicAffairs, 2005); and *Intervention or Neglect: The United States and Central America Beyond the 1980s* (Council on Foreign Relations, 1991).

**F. J. “Bing” West** served as assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs in the Reagan administration. He was dean of research at the Naval War College. He served in Vietnam with a Combined Action Platoon that fought for 485 days in a remote village. He was a member of the Marine Force Recon team that initiated Operation Stingray to strike the North Vietnamese behind their lines. He was an analyst at the Rand Corporation, specializing in counterinsurgency. His publications include *The Strongest Tribe: War, Politics, and the Endgame in Iraq* (Random House, 2008); *No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah* (Random House, 2005); *The Village* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); *Small Unit Action in Vietnam, Summer 1966* (Arno Press, 1981) as well as numerous articles in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Atlantic*, and the *National Review*. He has made two dozen extended trips to Iraq and Afghanistan, and is writing a book about the war in Afghanistan. He is the recipient of Marine Corps Heritage Award, the Colby History Award, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Media Award. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the Middle East Institute, and the Infantry Order of St. Crispin. He is a graduate of Georgetown University and Princeton University.

**James H. Willbanks**, Ph.D., is the General of the Armies George C. Marshall Chair of Military History and the director of the Department of Military History at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He was a faculty member since 1992, retiring from the U.S. Army as a lieutenant colonel. He served 23 years in military service as an infantry officer in various assignments, including a tour as an advisor with a South Vietnamese regiment during the 1972 North Vietnamese Easter Offensive. His publications include *Vietnam War Almanac* (Facts on File, 2009); *The Tet Offensive: A Concise History* (Columbia University Press, 2006); *The Vietnam War, The International Library of Essays on Military History* (editor, Ashgate Publishing of London, 2006); *The Battle of An Loc* (Indiana University Press, 2005); and *Abandoning Vietnam* (University Press of Kansas, 2004). He is an honor graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College and the School of Advanced Military Studies. He received a B.A. in history from Texas A&M University, and an M.A. and a Ph.D. in history from the University of Kansas.

**William M. Wise** is the associate practitioner-in-residence and associate director of the Southeast Asia Studies Program, Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University. He was deputy national security advisor to the vice president (1992–97); chief of policy at the U.S. Pacific Command in Honolulu (1989–92); and deputy director for Policy Planning, East Asia & Pacific Region, Office of the Secretary of Defense in the Pentagon (1983–89). From 1967 to 1983 he held various positions in the U.S. intelligence community. He served as an intelligence officer in Vietnam (1969–70) and subsequently as a Vietnam intelligence analyst. He spent more than 30 years in military service, retiring from the U.S. Air Force as a colonel. Mr. Wise served as an advisor to three government commissions: the U.S. Commission on National Security/21<sup>st</sup> Century (Hart-Rudman Commission), the National Commission on Terrorism, and the Deutch Commission on combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. He was a public policy scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (2000). He is the author of *Indonesia’s War on Terror* (United States-Indonesia Society, 2005). He is a graduate of Amherst College and received an M.A. from the University of Hawaii.

**John K. Wood** is the director for Afghanistan-Pakistan Coordination at the Near East and South Asia Center for Strategic Studies. He served as the senior director for Afghanistan on the National Security Council under the Bush and Obama administrations (2007–09). He was the assistant deputy director for Politico-Military Affairs – Asia, The Joint Staff in the Pentagon, where he was responsible for regional planning and policies for the implementation of the National Security Strategy for Asia, providing politico-military advice to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the National Command Authorities, and supporting the commanders of the U.S. Central Command and the U.S.

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Pacific Command. He served 28 years in the United States Army as an armor officer, retiring as a colonel. He received a bachelor's degree from the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, and master's degrees from the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California (Operations Research and Systems Analysis Engineering) and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, National Defense University, Washington, D.C. He is a graduate of the Combined Arms and Services Staff School, the Command and General Staff College, and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces.



## CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

### **Keynote Speaker**

Michael G. Vickers, assistant secretary of defense for special operations/low-intensity conflict and interdependent capabilities, U.S. Department of Defense

### **The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University**

Thomas Keaney, executive director, Philip Merrill Center for Strategic Studies; associate director, Strategic Studies Program; senior adjunct professor  
William M. Wise, associate director, Southeast Asia Studies Program; associate practitioner-in-residence

### **Texas Tech University**

Guy Bailey, president  
Stephen F. Maxner, director, Vietnam Center and Archive  
Ron Milam, assistant professor, History Department

### **Other Specialists and Guests**

Gordon Adams, professor, School of International Service, American University  
Thomas L. Ahern, consultant, Center for the Study of Intelligence  
Larry Berman, professor, Department of Political Science, University of California, Davis  
Patrick Cronin, senior advisor and senior director, Asia-Pacific Security Program, Center for a New American Security  
Gilles Dorronsoro, visiting scholar, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace  
Andrew M. Exum, fellow, Center for a New American Security  
Andrew R. Finlayson, independent researcher  
Marc Jason Gilbert, National Endowment for the Humanities Endowed Chair in World History, Hawai'i Pacific University  
Richard Hunt, Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense  
Colin Jackson, assistant professor, Strategy and Policy, U.S. Naval War College  
Austin Long, assistant professor, School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University  
Gerald Meyerle, research analyst, Stability and Development Program, CNA, Center for Strategic Studies  
Edward Miller, assistant professor, History Department, Dartmouth College  
Mark Moyar, professor, National Security Affairs, U.S. Marine Corps University  
Ronald E. Neumann, U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, 2005–2007  
Rufus Phillips, author  
John Prados, senior fellow and project director, National Security Archive, George Washington University  
Jeffrey Race, author  
Thomas Ricks, fellow, Center for a New American Security  
Linda Robinson, author and consultant  
F.J. "Bing" West, journalist  
James H. Willbanks, director, Department of Military History, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College  
John K. Wood, director, Afghanistan-Pakistan Coordination, Near East and South Asia Center for Strategic Studies

## CONFERENCE REPORT EDITORIAL STAFF

Frederick Z. Brown, contributing editor  
Jacqueline Ganem, editor  
Seth Kane, rapporteur  
William M. Wise, editor