



Middle East Studies

at the Marine Corps University

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Future of Direction of Afghanistan: A Look Into History

by Amin Tarzi

Afghans in surprising numbers have gone to the polls to elect their next president and successor to President Hamid Karzai. Karzai has been the longest serving president in Afghanistan's history. While his term is coming to a formal end, Karzai expects to play a crucial role in Afghanistan's future. How much power and influence he is going to wield depends largely on who the Afghans elect to lead them for the next four years and on the severity of voting irregularities discovered in the first and, especially, the expected run-off elections. However, what is sure is that Karzai has already maneuvered to cement his legacy as a nationalist, independent leader who stood against his most powerful patron and ally, the United States.

Afghanistan... (CONTINUED ON PG 2)

Building Yemen's Maritime Security Capacity

by Adam C. Seitz

Over the past decade smuggling across the Gulf of Aden, Red Sea and Bab al-Mandeb has risen steadily. The illegal trafficking of weapons, drugs and people continues to fuel sectarian and political violence, threatening Yemen's fragile political transition. At the same time, with a coastline stretching almost 2,000 km along some of the world most strategic waterways, Yemen's continued internal instability and insecurity perpetuates international concerns that Yemen may become regional hub for transnational smuggling, piracy and terrorism, posing a significant threat to the free flow of international trade and international security. As such, building the capacity of Yemen's maritime security forces should be a top priority, not only for the Yemeni government but for the international community as a whole.

Yemen... (CONTINUED ON PG 3)

MES Notes

Ucoming MES Lecture Series Turkey Panel

On 5 May 2014 Middle East Studies will host a panel on Turkey featuring: Soner Çağaptay (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy), Sinan Ciddi (Georgetown University), and Gönül Tol (Middle East Institute).

Further information about the MES Lecture Series is available at the MES website at <https://www.mcu.usmc.mil> under Affiliate Programs, or you can contact Adam Seitz at (703) 432-5260 or seitzac@grc.usmcu.edu.

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Karzai's actions surrounding the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) provide a good illustration of how he hopes to be remembered as a national figure. According to most calculations, Afghanistan's security situation is likely to deteriorate after the withdrawal of U.S. and other foreign forces. The BSA is a mechanism that would provide a safety net, designed to give Afghanistan's security forces financial and training support and maintain a light American footprint to mitigate any major terrorist threats to the Afghan state and beyond.

In November 2013, an Afghan consultative grand assembly (*loya jirga*) overwhelmingly recommended that signing the BSA was in Afghanistan's interest. Karzai rejected the *loya jirga*'s position, providing a list of many grievances against the United States as his rationale. His refusal to sign has prompted the United States to launch additional contingency plans, including an orderly withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Afghanistan by the end of this year. Arguments can be made, however, that the principal reason behind his actions has more to do with his understanding of his country's history and his own place therein than with actual discontent with the United States.

Earlier this year Karzai compared the BSA to two documents signed by nineteenth century Afghan rulers with British India, namely the 1879 Gandumak Treaty and the 1893 Abdul Rahman-Durand Agreement. These documents, while signed under very different circumstances and for different reasons, are regarded by the majority of Afghans as imposed, humiliating agreements through which Afghanistan lost not only its sovereignty, but also large tracts of territory that now form part of Pakistan.

The Gandumak Treaty, indeed, can be regarded as an imposed treaty. It was prepared without Afghan input by a victorious British military force who occupied portions of eastern and southern Afghanistan. It was then presented to an amir who had just been released from prison and installed as ruler by his defeated father who then fled the capital.

The Abdul Rahman-Durand Agreement, despite prevalent Afghan perceptions, was a negotiated document between British India's Foreign Secretary, Sir Mortimer Durand, and an Afghan amir who was fully cognizant of its provisions and actively participated in its crafting. Moreover, despite Abdul Rahman's own misgivings about certain aspects of the agreement, he and his successors up to the formation of the modern state of Pakistan in 1947 abided by it and reaffirmed it in subsequent treaties.

For Karzai, the historicity of the 1893 Agreement is irrelevant. He seems to embrace, like the majority of his fellow Afghans, the notion that the agreement was imposed on Afghanistan. Thus, in his mind, by signing the BSA, he would risk a legacy of being yet another Afghan ruler who signed away the country's sovereignty to a foreign power. As of late, Karzai has been characterizing U.S. actions as those of a colonial power. Perhaps he is doing this as a means to draw historical parallels between nineteenth century British India and today's United States. If that is the case, he wants to be remembered as a contemporary version of the heroes of the anti-British campaigns rather than of the amirs who dealt with the British, whether under duress or, in the case of Abdul Rahman, as a strategic choice.

Understanding how Karzai is leveraging his country's historical narrative to rationalize his strategic posturing may shed light on what kind of Afghanistan will emerge after the election results are in. If Karzai's favored candidate wins, Karzai likely will maintain his power to maneuver Afghanistan's general policy direction. This would leave the security situation in the country tenuous at best, as Karzai seeks to both appease the Taliban opposition and blame all of Afghanistan's ills on Pakistan. However, a win by an independent candidate could spell a different future for Afghanistan. Perhaps a president, who has a forward-looking strategic vision rather than one bound by an imaginary historical yardstick, could envision his country as part of an interdependent region, partnering and cooperating with all of its neighbors and the larger international community.

Countering Threats to the International Trade and Security

In the late 2000s, the strategic waterways situated between Yemen and the Horn of Africa had become a hot spot for pirate activities, with political instability and insecurity in Somalia providing a viable safe haven for pirates. Responding to the increasing threat of piracy in the region, the multinational Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) established Combined Task Force (CTF) 151 in January 2009, with a mandate to actively deter, disrupt and suppress piracy, to protect global maritime security, and to secure the freedom of navigation for the benefit of all nations. A combination of multinational maritime cooperation and Somali government's increased ability to fight and deter piracy and instability in its coastal regions contributed to a rapid, and sustained, decline in hijackings 2010.

Although acts of piracy in the region remained on a steady decline, by March 2011 U.S. officials assessed that piracy in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden was no longer a strictly Somali enterprise, but was becoming a multinational business, with Yemenis joining Somalis in these lucrative schemes. The assessment coincided with the 2011 Arab uprisings and a rapid deterioration of Yemen's internal security. Continued political instability and insecurity increases the risk of Yemen becoming a viable safe haven for pirates, and other groups, that threaten freedom of navigation in Red Sea and Bab al-Mandeb.

The combined success of CTF-151 and international efforts to enhance the Somali government's capacity to combat piracy highlights not only the value of multinational maritime cooperation to combat maritime threats, but also the need to build the capacity of Yemen's coastal and port security forces to mitigate potential threats to international and maritime security. Furthermore, building the capacity of the Yemeni navy, coast guard and port security forces would not only help to mitigate threats posed to international trade and security, but also help to stem the flow of arms and drugs fueling violence and political instability in Yemen.

Threats to Yemen's Internal Stability

Although there has been a significant drop in piracy in the Gulf of Aden and Red Sea since its peak in 2009, the smuggling of weapons, drugs and people across the Bab al-Mandeb and Red Sea is on the rise. Since 2012 there have been a number of weapons shipments – ranging from Turkish pistols with silencers to missiles and explosives, allegedly from Iran – seized by Yemeni security forces. While the Yemeni coast guard and port security forces have received well deserved praise for the interception of these shipments, the proliferation of weapons to armed opposition

movements, tribal militias and terrorist organizations continues to pose a challenge to internal security and Yemen's political transition. Local Yemeni officials continue to complain of their inability to combat the flow of arms shipments entering through the Red Sea ports of Midi and Mocha, enroute to Houthi rebels fighting in the Saada.

MES Notes (cont.)

January 2014

Adam Seitz contributed the "Yemen" chapter to the American Foreign Policy Council's *World Almanac of Islamism 2014* (Rowman and Littlefield 2014)

February 2014

Adam Seitz published "Ties that Bind and Divide: The 'Arab Spring' and Yemeni Civil-Military Relations" in *Why Yemen Matters: A Society in Transition*, edited by Helen Lackner (Saqi Books 2014).

19 February 2014

Amin Tarzi presented a talk entitled "The Gulf States and the Contest for the Middle East," as part of a panel organized by the Foreign Policy Research Institute in the Reserve Officers Association, Washington, DC.

21 March 2014

Adam Seitz presented a talk entitled "Towards an Understanding of Ties That Bind and Divide in Yemen," to visiting Marshall Fellows to MCU, Quantico, VA.

Furthermore, the smuggling of qat and diesel fuel continues to help fund tribal militias, terrorist organizations and other armed movements in Yemen. Such illicit activity not only contributes to the perpetuation of sectarian and political violence, but also undermines the legitimacy of the Yemen's central government and the international state-building efforts at a critical time. Building the capacity of the Yemeni navy, coast guard, and port security forces would go a long way towards stemming the flow of arms, drugs, and other goods that continue to fuel political and sectarian violence, which continue to undermine Yemen's political transition.

Towards a Win-Win-Win Maritime Security Partnership

While Yemen's partnership in the U.S. counterterrorism efforts has resulted in a substantial amount of military aid and training since the 2001, under the regime of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh much of this U.S. counterterrorism assistance was used to prop-up, or create, what amounted praetorian forces, and sideline potential opposition to the regime. Unlike the army and internal security forces, maritime forces have traditionally been viewed as neither coup proofing forces nor have they been considered potential threats to the government. Thus, while U.S. military aid was to build the capacity of the Republican Guard, Central Security Forces, Special Forces and newly created counterterrorism units, maritime security forces remained largely underequipped, undertrained and under underpaid.

Today, the perception that maritime forces pose little risk to the internal balance of forces provides an opportunity for greater maritime security cooperation between the U.S. and Yemen, which would benefit not only Yemen and the U.S., but the international community as a whole. For the Yemeni government, securing its coastline would cut off an important line of external support to armed opposition, insurgents, terrorist and tribal militias. This would not only help to limit political and sectarian violence, but also contribute to President Abdo Rabo Mansour Hadi's efforts to reform and restructure the Yemeni armed forces under a unified command structure. For the U.S., a strong and sustained maritime partnership would aid efforts to disrupt, dismantle and defeat Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and its local affiliates, by cutting off a source of revenue, arms and potential recruits emigrating from North Africa. For the international community, building the capacity of Yemeni maritime forces would help to secure the strategic waterways between Yemen and the Horn of Africa, especially in the increasingly important Bab al-Mandeb.
