The overall situation in Afghanistan probably will deteriorate *modestly* this year in the face of persistent political instability, sustained attacks by the Taliban-led insurgency, unsteady Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) performance, and chronic financial shortfalls.

Dan Coats – United States Director National Intelligence – February 2018
"I believe the strategy (US South Asia) is working."

Gen. John W. Nicholson, Outgoing ISAF and NATO Commander
Current Security Situation

US South Asia Strategy in Action

High Politics

International and Regional Commitment
CURRENT SECURITY SITUATION
Security August 2018 – Some Major Incidents

- Taliban penetrated Ghazni City undetected (?) took shelter in several civilian homes in the city quarters such as Bala Hisar, Moy-e-Mubarak, PD 2, PD5, Bakawol, Qala-e-Shahada and Naw Abad.
- Eviction operations 10 – 14 August.
- Ghazni City second to be threatened in 2018 after Farah.
- Awami National Party Pakistan Afrasiab Khattak alleged that several dead bodies of Pakistanis killed in Ghazni clashes transported to Pakistan??
Security August 2018 – Some Major Incidents

- Eviction of the Islamic State of Khorasan (ISK) from Jawjzan province with ISK preferring to surrender to government troops.
- Taliban announced withdrawal of security guarantee for the International Red Cross.
- Rocket Attacks in Kabul on Eid ul Adha 21 August 2018
ONGOING MAJOR CLASHES AUGUST 2018
Going Backwards to Jan in Kabul

- January - 162 people killed and 286 injured in 50 attacks.
- January 27 - Sadarat Square. Afghan Ministry of Interior (MoI) put the toll at 103 dead and 235 others injured.
- January 22 - Kabul Intercontinental Hotel - 25 including 15 foreigners killed and 16 injured.
- January 29 - 11 security personnel killed and 16 injured in Daesh attack on a military base in the Qargha area of Kabul.
- Year on year despite the cease fire the casualties were 12 percent higher in 2018 than 2017 in first half as per Pajhwok News Data Report.
Taliban control in Afghanistan

By administrative district

AS OF APRIL 12
- Taliban
- Contested
- Unconfirmed
- Taliban claim

Source Washington Post
Graphic Based on Long War Journal Inputs
HISTORICAL DISTRICT CONTROL IN AFGHANISTAN

Jan 2016: Afghan Government Control or Influence 71%
May 2016: Afghan Government Control or Influence 66%
Aug 2016: Afghan Government Control or Influence 63%
Nov 2016: Afghan Government Control or Influence 57%
Feb 2017: Afghan Government Control or Influence 60%
May 2017: Afghan Government Control or Influence 57%
Aug 2017: Afghan Government Control or Influence 57%
Oct 2017: Afghan Government Control or Influence 56%
Jan 2018: Afghan Government Control or Influence 56%

Source: USFOR-A reports to SIGAR 3/22/2018; USFOR-A, reports to SIGAR
017, 10/15/2017, and

Note: Components may not add to 100 because of rounding.
Civilian Deaths & Injured
January to June 2009 - 2018

Based on UNAMA reports
ISIS Khorasan

- 52 per cent of civilian casualties from suicide and complex attacks ascribed to Daesh/ISKP [Islamic State-Khorasan Province] in Jan-June 2018 as per UNAMA Report on civilian casualties.
- ISIS-K claimed responsibility for attacks against Shia minorities and ANDSF around the country, including increased claimed attacks in Kabul.
- Developed funding sources in Afghanistan, lacks funding from the core organisation in Syria-Iraq.
- Conflict for resources and thus territory with Taliban and other groups.
- Kabul youth attracted to ISIS K?
GROWING ISIS PRESENCE IN KABUL

No of Cells in Capital??
UNODC REPORT
2017 – 328,000 HECTARES
US$ 4.1 to 6.6 billion or 20 and 32 per cent of GDP,
Conclusion Pentagon Report – June 2018

- Afghanistan continues to face an externally enabled and resilient insurgency.
- Afghan forces have shown determination and growing capability in their fight against the Taliban-led insurgency.
- The Afghan government retains control of Kabul, major population centers, most key transit routes, provincial capitals, and a majority of district centers.
- Taliban contested district centers; however, the Taliban did not seriously threaten provincial capitals.
- ANDSF operations increased compared to the same period 12 months ago. With these increased operations, the ANDSF successfully pushed the Taliban from population centers into rural areas and denied the Taliban their operational goal of capturing provincial centers.
- ANDSF casualties suffered while conducting local patrols and checkpoint operations was 14 percent higher during this period than that of previous December 2016 – April 2017.
- Number of casualties incurred during planned offensive operations has decreased over the same period.
The Taliban and other militant groups continue to perpetrate high-profile attacks (HPAs), particularly in the capital region, to attract media attention, create the perception of widespread insecurity, and undermine the legitimacy of the Afghan government.

From December 1, 2017, through May 31, 2018, the number of HPAs increased in Kabul and in the remainder of the country compared to the same period last year.

It is very likely that the Taliban will continue to execute HPAs in urban areas this year as they face battlefield losses elsewhere and if the ANDSF continues to deny them control of provincial capitals.

The Taliban conduct HPAs to cast doubt on the ability of the Afghan government to secure its citizens.
US SOUTH ASIA STRATEGY IN ACTION
US Strategic Concept

- United States President Donald Trump announced the new U.S. strategy for South Asia on August 21, 2017.
- Conditions-based strategy to support the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) and the Afghan government.
- Shift from a time-based to conditions-based approach also sowed new doubt in the Taliban as per US claims.
- Combination of US air and training support with improved capability of ANDSF to exercise maximum pressure on the Taliban.
- Aim - Force Taliban to the negotiating table.
US Security Projections Post South Asia Strategy

- **R4+S** — Reinforce, Realign, Regionalize, Reconcile, and Sustain

- February 2018 U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) allocated additional combat enablers such as intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets, attack aviation, fire support, and medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) assets to support ANDSF and coalition forces.
US Security Projections Post South Asia Strategy

- United States approximately 14,000 military personnel in Afghanistan as part of NATO’s RS mission and OFS – targeting al Qaeda and ISK.
- Bases in Kabul and Bagram with regional outstations in Nangarhar, Kandahar, Herat Province and Balkh.
- The 1st SFAB (Security Force Assistance Brigade) contributed 6 Brigade Advisory Teams (BAT), 36 Maneuver Kandak Advisory Teams (KAT), 14 Combat Service Support Kandak Advisory Teams (CS/S KAT), and one Corps Advisory Team.
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<th>Country</th>
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Three Pressure Points

- Military pressure.
- Social pressure to engage internationally with Islamic nations and Islamic scholars to delegitimize insurgent and terrorist forces.
- Diplomatic Pressure - On Afghan and foreign enablers of the insurgency, particularly those elements in Pakistan that support terrorist networks.
Afghan Government Strategy

- Military pressure to force Taliban towards peace negotiations with reconcilable factions of the Taliban.
- Social Pressure – Ulema and civil society.
- Plan for negotiated peace.
- Hizb Islami Gulbuddin (HIG) model planned.
- Outcome - Taliban is not militarily marginalised nor the support network cut by the Pakistan Army and ISI unlike the HIG.
High Politics
High Politics

- National Unity Government Consensus?

- President Ashraf Ghani and first vice-president Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum met for the first time on 30 July after the return of the latter to the country after almost 13 months in exile.

- Grand National Coalition of Afghanistan formed under the leadership of First Vice President of Afghanistan General Abdul Rashid Dostum, Jamiat Islami Chief Executive Atta Mohammad Noor, Second Deputy Chief Executive Mohammad Mohaqiq, and other key figures.

- Ethnic minorities remain concerned over exclusion from government and consolidation of power around the Pashtun elite.

- Concern grown with the inclusion of the Pashtun-dominated Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin (HIG) in the mainstream.
Elections

- Parliamentary elections delayed by three years to be held on 20 October 2018.
- Preparations in progress, voter registration largely completed.
- Major protests by Disqualified Candidates.
- Grand National Coalition seeks to have transparent process and threatened to boycott elections.
- Presidential elections dates announced on 20 April 2019.
Security of Parliamentary Elections

- 7,355 polling stations
- 1,100 polling stations across the nation face high security threats.
- 948 polling stations are not under the control of government forces.
- 15% of the are said to be insecure.
- In addition 1,122 centers are under medium threat
- 30% of the booths which are not secure.
- The ability of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces to secure all the booths and more specifically the 2242 booths which are most vulnerable remains a question mark.
Reconciliation with Taliban

- Negative response to President Ashraf Ghani’s appeal for unconditional talks at Kabul Peace Process Conference in February.
- Willing to hold direct talks with various government representatives.
- Head of Taliban office in Qatar Maulvi Sher Abbas Stanekzai led the Taliban team in talks with American Under Secretary of State Alice Wells.
- Taliban delegation level talks in Tashkent.
- Taliban hold talks in Indonesia with Vice President J P Kalla and Foreign Minister
- Taliban invited for Moscow meet on 4 September and likely to attend. Afghan government declined to attend Moscow Talks.
Taliban Projected Strategy?

- Gain political legitimacy as a party to the Afghanistan solution.
- Disrupt the process of elections thereby ensuring that Afghanistan’s transition to a parliamentary democracy remains work in progress.
- Hold talks with the United States from a position of strength thereby enhancing bargaining power.
- Carve what is known as safe zones where they would establish their system of governance.
- Emerge as an alternate centre of power in the country while aiming for complete control of the country in the years ahead when foreign troops leave and Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) are left on their own to defend the country.
- In short, attempt redux of the situation post Soviet departure from Afghanistan in 1989.
International and Regional Commitment
• “We, the Heads of State and Government of the nations contributing to the Resolute Support Mission, and the President of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, met today in Brussels to reaffirm our shared commitment to Afghanistan’s long-term security and stability. The people of Afghanistan demand peace and we are encouraged by the momentum building in that direction. We remain united in our commitment to help Afghanistan attain it.”

• NATO Heads of State and Government summit in Brussels 11-12 July 2018. Pledged budgetary support to Afghan security forces till 2024.
Change of Approach towards and by Pakistan

- The next pillar of our new strategy is to change the approach and how to deal with Pakistan.
- We can no longer be silent about Pakistan’s safe havens for terrorist organizations, the Taliban, and other groups that pose a threat to the region and beyond.
- Pakistan has much to gain from partnering with our effort in Afghanistan.
- It has much to lose by continuing to harbor criminals and terrorists.

President Donald Trump – August 2017

- What are the Payoffs for Pakistan to cooperate and/or continue to remain ambivalent? What leverages does the US have to change Pakistan’s approach?
Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS)

1. Pakistan will support the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process and reconciliation.

2. The two countries will undertake effective actions against fugitives and the irreconcilable elements posing security threats to either of the two countries.

3. Both countries commit to deny use of their respective territories by any country, network, group, or individuals for anti-state activities against either country.

4. To put in place a joint supervision, coordination, and confirmation mechanism through liaison officers for the realization of the agreed actions.

5. To avoid territorial and aerial violations of each other’s territory.

6. Both countries will avoid the public “blame game” and instead use APAPPS cooperation mechanisms to respond to mutual issues of contention and concern.

7. To establish working groups and necessary cooperation mechanisms as per APAPPS for full implementation of the APAPPS and above mutually reinforcing principles.
Other Regional Actors

- Geopolitical dissonance impacting approach to Afghanistan
- Domestic drivers such as growth of ISIS and drugs for Russia and Central Asian Republics and concern over spread of terrorism to the ethnically sensitive Xinjiang region drives Chinese policy.
- Iran’s goal stable Afghanistan where Shi’a communities are safe, Iran’s economic interests are protected, and the U.S. military presence is reduced.
- Varied strategies adopted to achieve the objectives.
ASSURED SUSTAINED MULTI PRONGED PARTNERSHIP

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI INAUGURATION OF AFGHAN PARLIAMENT
“The poor results of Afghanistan stabilization may make it tempting to conclude that stabilization should never be undertaken again. However, given the security challenges we face in today’s world, that simply may not be a realistic choice.”

United States Department of Defence Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
John Sopko