Opening Remarks

Recently Dr O’Hanlon and a colleague, Omer Taspinar examined what they considered to be the top nine Islamic countries:
- Effort was to determine how the broader Islamic world has faired over the last decade
- Countries examined were Indonesia, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, and Nigeria
- Iraq was not in the top nine, it would have been tenth
- There have been positive trends in the much of the Islamic world

Iraq Assessment

Economy
- Is of modest economic importance in the world
  o Neither small nor large
  o Relatively poor in comparison to other Mid East countries
    ▪ Per capita income of $4K per person per year is of the level of Jordan or Syria
  o Is a mid level producer of oil (production ~ 2.5 million barrels per day)
  o Could become a major producer, but not likely soon
    ▪ Does not have enough money to put into infrastructure to make it happen
    ▪ Has just enough revenues to get by, make deals, and create coalitions

Violence levels:
- Despite public perception, data shows violence trending down when you evaluate on a monthly, or longer basis
  o 95% less violent than 5 years ago
  o But, still probably one of the 20 most violent countries in the world
- Security forces
  o Currently 650,000 personnel
  o Most security work has been handled by Iraqi Security for the last 2.5 years
  o Are missing some attacks but demonstrating improvement

Politics:
- 2005 elections reinvigorated sectarian violence
- Some progress in 2007 and 2008
  o Replaced extremists in political office and in the National Police
  o Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki showed some decisiveness to go after Shia
- Regression over the last two years
  o Still no interior Defense Minister
  o No coalition to create a resolution for disputed areas in the north
  o As of 09/10/11 - sense that sectarianism is growing
  o Have not integrated militant groups into government, e.g. Sons of Iraq
U.S. options:
- Malaki and coalition partners (Sadrists) may invite US to stay due to continuing unrest
  - US will stay if asked
  - If US leaves, there is great potential for violence in the North
  - US troops are needed for more than simply training
  - Concern that US plan to begin troop withdrawal from the North is exactly where our presence is the most needed
  - 15-20K troops should stay in Iraq for two – three years

Afghanistan

Overarching Comments
- Importance is derived based on its location in relation to its neighbors
  - Iran to the West, Pakistan to the South and East
- Enjoys higher quality of life now than under the Soviets or Taliban
  - Schools have been built - 50% increase in school attendance
  - Most Afghans do not feel at war
  - 15% more people using roads – political leaders setting the example by using roads
  - Ring Road almost done
  - Medical care is now available for 90% of population within a 1 hour walk

Economy:
- Good news - people have higher standard of living/quality of life than before US involvement (particularly in urban areas)
  - Income is up
  - 8-10% economic growth per year
- Afghanis do not want to regress, especially the urban population

Violence:
- 2,500-2,800 Afghan fatalities in war related violence
  - Afghanistan’s annual violence level comparable to Columbia’s
  - Most of the time, Afghans do not feel as if they are at war
- Most insurgent violence is targeted at government leaders
  - Former President Burhanuddin Rabbani, leader of the government peace council was assassinated by suicide bombers
    - Not a political setback
    - Peace process was going nowhere anyways as proved by assassinating Rabbani under the guise of peace negotiations
- Taliban is a smart enemy
  - Target individuals who are important for building a new Afghanistan
  - Avoid antagonizing population with mass killings as was done in Iraq by Al Qaeda
  - Ensures lower levels of resentment by general population
- Kabul generally less violent than the rest of the South
- Less attacks against population in Kandahar and Helmand provinces

U.S. options:
- U.S. casualty numbers have stabilized
- Not likely to get a decisive victory on our watch
  - Not enough troops or time to see the East progress as much as the South
  - Insurgency is weakened but remains robust nationwide
  - Hope to see insurgent leaders reintegrate
- President Kharzi must step down in 2014
  o Afghanistan cannot tolerate flagrant disregard of constitution
  o US needs to help Afghanistan prepare for the transition
  o System is set up to have all the power in the presidency
  o Parties are weak
- Afghan army is starting to come together
  o Police force is progressing but behind the army
- Goal should be to ensure Afghans have tools to tackle and contain problems on their own
  o Two years ago our hope was for more
  o Need to maintain or increase the current 10% reduction in attacks across the country
- By this time next year we should have 68K troops in country
- By 2014 we should have 20-25K (~20K per year reduction)
  o Should keep troops in key areas
  o Should utilize drones
  o Should mentor and partner in the most tense regions

**Question and Answer Session:**

*Re: The nine Islamic countries that were examined*
- Most are doing “ok”
  o But, this doesn't translate into US popularity
  o Obama’s popularity now down to Bush levels in the broader Islamic world
  o Pakistan and Iran did not have a good decade, the rest (Indonesia, Bangladesh, India, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, and Nigeria) did have a good decade
- Best thing US can do is get its own economy going again so the world economy can get back on track

*Re: Budget Control Act (BCA)*
- Not a strong linkage between BCA and Iraq and Afghan wars
  o Figured out separately
  o Draw down should not be claimed as an accomplishment by budget super committee
  o Wars should be put to the side as a separate category of expense
- For the future
  o Need capability to send forces to several areas/regions of world
  o Perhaps in a NATO Lead coalition, e.g. Yemen
  o US can draw down to 1990’s troop levels, but should not go below that (would not be a prudent strategy)

*Re: Relationship with Pakistan*
- Difficult relationship
- Prospects for improvement
  o There are hypothetical paths/futures
  o Not predictions
  o Likely less than 50% chance for success
- Pakistanis are of the view:
  a. US won't be in Afghanistan long enough to make it stable
  b. US will desert Afghanistan again
  c. Concerned about India allying with Afghanistan
- US should work to show this is not the case so Pakistan will support an independent Afghanistan

- Pakistanis are Hegemonic minded
  - Want to dominate Afghanistan
  - Want control over a weaker flanking country
- Who wants to Find a way to make Pashtus have a predominate roll
- US should stay engaged until army is less Tajik dominated
  - Huge diplomatic challenge
  - US need to play hardball
- US should say to Pakistan - “we need you as a friend - too scary as an enemy”
- US should offer a provisional deal to Pakistan
  - One time major debt forgiveness and free trade agreements if Pakistan shuts down Taliban sanctuaries
    - If US sees it is happening, then will increase economic help
    - Not a high chance of this happening

Re: Multiparty system in Afghanistan
- Proposals for strengthening parliament:
  - Work out a deal where the palace (President) agrees the right party may send a bill to palace for review, then to be voted on
  - Policy oriented “think-tanks” can help think through substance of change ideas
  - Give support to Afghanistan political parties
    - US officials should visit parliament and governors not just the president
  - Constitutional reform is required (but will not happen soon)
  - It would be laborious and inappropriate for outside power (US) to wield great influence

Re: Drones as an element of national power
- US went a little too far in Pakistan with use of drones
- US did reduce civilian casualties but also made mistakes
  - US has not been left with many choices
  - Some of our best successes against AQ through use of drones
- Drones are not totally new
  - Cruise missiles (started using in 1980s), are a single use one way drone
- Appealing way to fight (reduced casualties), but only moderately effective without troops on the ground to provide required intelligence

Re: Potential of Iranian influence in Iraq and Afghanistan
- Currently modest influence in Afghanistan
  - Could change if Iran gets into the “assassination business”
  - Iran is very good at creating a lot of mischief with little resources
  - Sunni population looks East
  - Greater influence in Iraq
- Iraqis are proud Arabs
  - View country as heart of Arab world
  - Realistically 3rd after Egypt and Saudi
  - Iran’s influence is another reason not to let Iraq fall apart again
  - Iran thrives in a situation where it can play various factions against one another (uses insurgent groups)
  - If Iraq falls apart again, may turn into Lebanon circa 1985 (where terrorist sanctuaries were supported)