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Plan 'B' for Afghanistan

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Plan 'B' for Afghanistan

In a new report titled "[A New Way Forward: Rethinking U.S. Strategy in Afghanistan](#)^[3]," the Afghanistan Study Group, a bipartisan assembly of former government officials, journalists, and leading policy scholars (including my colleague, [Justin Logan](#))^[4], put forth an alternative set of policy options for the nine-year-long war.

One of the study's key points, and that my co-author and I raised in our white paper, ["Escaping the Graveyard of Empires": A Strategy to Exit Afghanistan](#)^[5], last year, is that America's interests does not require a military victory over the Taliban. From the Afghanistan Study Group's report:

"The Taliban is a rural insurgency rooted primarily in Afghanistan's Pashtun population, and succeeded due in some part to the disenfranchisement of rural Pashtuns. The Taliban's seizure of power in the 1990s was due to an unusual set of circumstances that no longer exist and are unlikely to be repeated."

In addition, the Group recommends downsizing and eventually ending military operations in southern Afghanistan, and reducing the U.S. military footprint, as well as focusing security efforts on al Qaeda cells in the region and use part of the savings from our drawdown to bolster U.S. domestic security efforts.

At the [panel discussion](#)^[6] at the New America Foundation Wednesday marking the report's release, the Group's director, [Matthew P. Hoh](#)^[7], a former Marine captain and former State Department political officer in Afghanistan, said the report's most important contribution is to lay out a "consensus view" that the current strategy in Afghanistan is not working; that it's actually making things worse; that it's not making us safer; that it's coming at a staggering and wildly disproportionate cost in blood and treasure; and that there needs to be an alternative approach.

I certainly agree with that assessment, and a lot of the study's contents. Check it out.

More by

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