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# What is Condoleezza Rice Talking About?

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In an [interview](#) with *Fortune* magazine, former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice says, "The last time we left Afghanistan, and we abandoned Pakistan, that territory became the very territory on which Al Qaeda trained and attacked us on September 11th." She goes on to say, "So our national security interests are very much tied up in not letting Afghanistan fail again and become a safe haven for terrorists." She declared, "It's that simple, if you want another terrorist attack in the U.S., abandon Afghanistan."

Actually, Ms. Rice, it's not that simple. Your logic ignores the fact that terrorists can move to governed spaces. Rather than setting up in weak, ungoverned states, enemies can flourish in strong states because these countries have formally recognized governments with the sovereignty to reject foreign interference in their domestic affairs. This is one reason why terrorists find sanctuary across the border in Pakistan. Besides, 9/11 was planned in many other countries with competent law enforcement agencies, Germany and the United States included.

If there were (God forbid!) another 9/11, it would prove that invading and forcibly democratizing two Muslim-majority countries has not made America safer. In fact, if Ms. Rice is so concerned about abandoning Afghanistan, where was she in 2002 when her boss diverted America's resources away from those who attacked us on 9/11 by invading a country that did not?

Americans should reject Ms. Rice's atrocious interpretation of policy and remember that she and her ilk were adept at keeping the American public in an elevated state of panic. Fear-mongering should be rejected and replaced with a sober analysis of policy and its consequences.

Al Qaeda poses a manageable security problem, not an existential threat to America. Yet, as I mention [here](#), policymakers tend to conflate al Qaeda with indigenous Pashtun-dominated militias. America's security, however, will not be at risk even if an oppressive regime takes over a contiguous fraction of Afghan territory; and if the Taliban were to provide sanctuary to al Qaeda once again, it would be easier to strike at the group within Afghanistan than in neighboring, nuclear-armed Pakistan.

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