

# THE NATIONAL INTEREST

Published on *The National Interest* (<http://nationalinterest.org>)

Source URL (retrieved on Sep 14, 2010): <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/counterinsurgency/bloggers-brawl-over-the-afghanistan-study-group-4068>

---

## A Bloggers' Brawl Over the Afghanistan Study Group

| [More](#) <sup>[1]</sup>

| September 14, 2010

| [Paul Behringer](#) <sup>[2]</sup>

The release of Afghanistan Study Group Report has unleashed an emotionally charged back-and-forth in the blogosphere. [The opening volley](#) <sup>[3]</sup> was fired by Michael Cohen, who thinks that the report made the war's critics look "unserious" because the authors spent too little time on a "new way forward." [Registan.net](#) blogger Joshua Foust [followed up](#) <sup>[4]</sup> admittedly "fairly viciously" with a critique of the study group for not including more expertise on Afghanistan and a host of other issues. [Abu Muqawama](#) (aka Andrew Exum) [soon piled on](#) <sup>[5]</sup>, writing that Foust's post "*absolutely demolishes* pretty much everything the report says." For a list of Exum's suggestions on who should have been in on the report, [click here](#) <sup>[6]</sup> (he admits a bias toward military-ops and area-studies specialists). And [Julian Borger](#) [said](#) <sup>[7]</sup> "it seems unlikely" that the study group would have "much impact" on President Obama.

Of course, the study's signatories weren't too pleased about the criticisms. [Bernard Finel](#) [takes on](#) <sup>[8]</sup> Foust's criticisms one by one, saying the criticism that there weren't enough Afghanistan experts is not justified; Foust misunderstands "what the report is about" and "cherry picks pieces of the report"; and "contradicts himself." And writing on *TNI* blog *The Skeptics*, [Justin Logan](#) [said he is](#) <sup>[9]</sup> "forced to conclude that neither Foust nor Exum understands what strategy is."

All this provoked more responses from Foust and Cohen. Foust [gives a detailed answer](#) <sup>[10]</sup> to Finel's analysis, and thinks that he and Finel "agree" that the Afghanistan Study Group "is part of the problem." But he takes Logan's responses more personally, calling Logan's post "hateful," and then goes after the personal credentials of [Anatol Lieven](#) <sup>[11]</sup>, [Selig Harrison](#) and [Parag Khanna](#), among others. Cohen, for his part, [says he can't understand](#) <sup>[12]</sup> "who these folks think they are preaching to" because no one actually thinks the current Afghan strategy "is working." He says the arguments in the report are

basically the same “arguments that some of us were making a year ago,” but without any suggested alternative.

And finally, Afghanistan Study Group Director Matthew Hoh weighs in <sup>[13]</sup> with a lengthy reply at the Huffington Post. He says “the current strategy is not just failing, but is counterproductive,” and thinks that “operational and “tactical involvement” in Afghanistan “unfortunately” appear “to drive our policy and strategy rather than the other way around.”

More by

---

**Source URL (retrieved on Sep 14, 2010):** <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/counterinsurgency/bloggers-brawl-over-the-afghanistan-study-group-4068>

**Links:**

[1] <http://www.addthis.com/bookmark.php?v=250&username=nationalinterest>

[2] <http://nationalinterest.org/profile/paul-behringer>

[3] <http://www.democracyarsenal.org/2010/09/a-new-way-forward-in-afghanistan.html>

[4] <http://www.registan.net/index.php/2010/09/11/the-afghanistan-study-group-report-an-exercise-in-determined-ignorance/>

[5] <http://www.cnas.org/blogs/abumuqawama/2010/09/asg-report.html>

[6] <http://www.cnas.org/blogs/abumuqawama/2010/09/better-asg.html>

[7] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/julian-borger-global-security-blog/2010/sep/13/afghanistan-war-partition>

[8] <http://www.bernardfinel.com/?p=1512>

[9] <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-skeptics/defense-the-afghanistan-study-group-report-4067>

[10] <http://www.registan.net/index.php/2010/09/13/responding-to-critics/>

[11] <http://nationalinterest.org/profile/anatol-lieven>

[12] <http://www.democracyarsenal.org/2010/09/a-bit-more-on-that-afghanistan-study-group-report.html>

[13] [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/matthew-hoh/the-case-for-a-new-way-fo\\_b\\_715596.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/matthew-hoh/the-case-for-a-new-way-fo_b_715596.html)