



by SAM ABRAMS

On November 16 in Washington D.C., the *SAIS Review* — that’s the journal of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, in case you didn’t know — hosted counter-insurgency experts David Kilcullen, Shawn Brimley, Max Manwaring, Chris Preble and Tom Donnelly to discuss insurgents, the future of war, and U.S. strategy. [The audio is available here.](#)

Full disclosure: I am the *Review*’s managing editor.

Kilcullen opened the show with a keynote address that included a brief assessment of Afghanistan. Kilcullen said Afghanistan is more like a stabilization operation than a counter-insurgency campaign. In gross, oversimplified terms, Kilcullen explained, violence in Afghanistan can be understood as a cycle: the corrupt and abusive Afghan government creates space for the Taliban to operate. While in charge, the Taliban promotes the growth of poppy, which acts like Taliban CERP funds (the Commander’s Emergency Response Program provides funds that Provincial Reconstruction Teams use to implement development projects quickly) and fuels the Afghan government’s corruption and other bad behaviors. In this situation, counter-insurgency is part of the solution, but not the whole solution.

Kilcullen also described some of the challenges facing USAID. Last year, for the first time, more than half of USAID spending went to conflict and post-conflict zones. Delivering aid in these types of places is difficult, of course, since people sometimes shoot aid workers. Furthermore, since USAID does little development work itself, the contractors it relies on can refuse to work in dangerous, but strategically important, areas. Insurgencies create special problems too: not only are people shooting at aid workers, aid is also competitive.

Kilcullen and others said much more to say on the future of war and U.S. strategy. Check back soon for part II.

(Photo: *SAIS Review*)

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Kilcullen is a bold liar. The Opium crop was the lowest under Taliban rule. And 30 years ago opium was insignificant. It came with the CIA in 1979. And Halliburton and all the other fellows are as corrupt as Karzai who is one them. This article is to trap midwesterners who think there is highway to Europe. The last days of the