

# *Afghanistan's Brighter Prospects*

"Silk Road to Success" by S. Frederick Starr, in *The National Interest* (Winter 2004–05), 1615 L St., N.W., Ste. 1230, Washington, D.C. 20036.

The forecasts were for bloodshed, gross corruption, and low turnout, but Afghanistan's October elections proved the experts wrong. That October surprise is one of several strong indications that the U.S. effort at state building in Afghanistan is now succeeding, contends Starr, chairman of Johns Hopkins University's Central Asia Caucus Institute in Washington.

That's a marked change from the situation in 2003, when the effort may well have been in danger of failing. Pentagon planners had paid too little attention to the need for security and governance. But after an April 2003 visit by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, the United States and President Hamid Karzai changed course.

Karzai took control of the Ministry of Defense away from Marshal Fahim, "the greatest force for disunity and corruption," who kept his own militia in Kabul and "cut deals with warlords elsewhere, undermining hopes for a national army." More than

half of Afghanistan's governors lost their jobs when Karzai's new interior minister, Ali Jalali, sacked those who were warlords or in league with warlords. Karzai reached out to alienated ethnic groups and built up a national army, 13,700 strong and slated to double in size by 2006. "The scales are tipping against the warlords," says Starr, "making their demobilization an attainable goal." Plans called for the demobilization of 18,000 warlord troops in 2004. Now "with a general amnesty in force, Karzai must offer a face-saving role to every demobilized militia commander not guilty of criminal acts."

Afghanistan remains "the world's poorest country after Sierra Leone [and] a dangerous place." While the economy grew by 30 percent in 2003, half the country's gross domestic product derives from the production of opium and heroin. Most of the profits go to criminals in Russia, Turkey, Iran, the Balkans, and Western Europe; it's estimat-

## EXCERPT

### *Democracy in Low Gear*

*Only a few years into the new century, the grand hope that it will prove the age of democracy's global triumph appears far more tenuous than it seemed just 10 or 15 years ago.*

*American policy makers determined to make democracy promotion a major element of U.S. foreign policy will have to do better than rely on attractive but superficial slogans like "freedom is on the march." It is necessary to move away from the mindset that a democratic trend is advancing in the world and that U.S. policy should aim to support it. The challenges now are more fundamental: how to stimulate democracy in regions where authoritarianism has bested the democratic trend, and how to support democracy where it is under siege because of poor performance. Responding to these challenges will require a greater willingness to pressure authoritarian leaders who offer short-term economic and security benefits to the United States but spell long-term trouble. . . . And it will require the United States to construct more effective partnerships . . . where democracy is under siege. Democracy promotion is a convenient, even easy rhetorical framework for a global policy, especially in the context of the war on terrorism. Making it work in practice is neither convenient nor easy.*

—Thomas Carothers, director of the Democracy and Rule of Law Project at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, in *Current History* (Dec. 2004)

ed that only 10 percent of Afghans derive any income from the business. Despite the drug trade, Starr believes that Afghanistan “now has a reasonable chance of becoming, over time, a normal and prosperous country.” Last March, encouraged by the progress they’d seen, donor countries decided to give \$4.5 billion in a single year, instead of over three to five years, as previously promised.

“Most Afghans are optimistic about the

future,” says Starr. “This is affirmed by the decision of two million Afghans to return to their homes from Pakistan and another 1.2 million from Iran.” The demise of the Taliban has provided Pakistan and the new states of Central Asia “the greatest opportunity for positive change since they gained independence.” For the United States, the post-9/11 sacrifice of lives and treasure in Afghanistan is slowly paying off in enhanced U.S. security.

## *Coping with the Nuclear Genie*

“Proliferation Rings: New Challenges to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime” by Chaim Braun and Christopher F. Chyba, in *International Security* (Fall 2004), Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Univ., 79 John F. Kennedy St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

Last year’s revelations of a Pakistan-based ring headed by scientist A. Q. Khan that clandestinely exported uranium enrichment technology to North Korea, Libya, and perhaps other nations signal the arrival of an ominous new era in which developing countries “trade among themselves to bolster one another’s nuclear and strategic weapons efforts.” No longer will efforts to keep nuclear technology and material in developed countries from being sold or stolen suffice. Combating “proliferation rings” in the developing world will require strong efforts on “both the supply and demand sides of the problem,” write Braun, a senior fellow at Stanford University’s Center for International Security and Cooperation, and Chyba, the center’s codirector.

On the supply side, the Bush administration took “an important new step” in 2003 with the Proliferation Security Initiative. Fifteen nations, backed by more than 60 others, agreed to “practical steps to interdict shipments of missiles, chemical and biological agents, and nuclear components.” The initiative requires good intelligence to work. Its best-known success to date: the 2003 seizure in Italy’s Taranto Harbor of a German-owned ship traveling from Malaysia and bound for Libya with parts for thousands of centrifuges used in uranium enrichment. Libyan president Muammar al-Qaddafi subsequently renounced his country’s nuclear and chemical weapons programs.

Also at the behest of the Bush administration, the UN Security Council last April adopted Resolution 1540, requiring all states to adopt export controls to prevent proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. It’s a laudable effort, say the authors, and more promising than calls for a global treaty with tough enforcement measures, which “could take a long time” to obtain.

But supply-side efforts won’t be enough to halt the “globalization of technology and know-how.” Some countries may eventually be able to produce nuclear weapons on their own. Therefore, demand-side measures also are needed to induce such states to forgo nuclear weapons. These include security guarantees and economic sanctions, which have been used in the past, at times successfully. Carefully designed international efforts to make civilian nuclear power more available to developing nations would be a useful “sweetener.”

Threats of preventive (or, to use the Bush administration’s term, “preemptive”) attacks are likely to be counterproductive, increasing the desire for nuclear weapons, predict Braun and Chyba. “While preventive wars against some proliferators may play their role in the future, the United States will likely often find itself strongly deterred from exercising such options except as a last resort, and in the face of high costs. The United States should therefore place an extremely high priority” on achieving nonproliferation in other ways.