



Liberté • Égalité • Fraternité
RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES ET EUROPÉENNES

DIRECTION GÉNÉRALE DE L'ADMINISTRATION
ET DE LA MODERNISATION

DIRECTION DES RESSOURCES HUMAINES

Sous-direction de la Formation et des Concours

Bureau des concours et examens professionnels
RH4B

**CONCOURS EXTERNE ET INTERNE POUR L'ACCÈS À L'EMPLOI DE
SECRETARE DES AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES
(CADRE D'ORIENT)
AU TITRE DE L'ANNÉE 2012**

ÉPREUVES ÉCRITES D'ADMISSIBILITÉ

8 septembre – 14 septembre 2011

ANGLAIS

Durée totale de l'épreuve : 3 heures.

Coefficient : 3.

Toute note inférieure à 12 sur 20 est éliminatoire.

Barème de notation des 3 épreuves : QCM 4 points, fiche 6 points, note 10 points.

– QUESTIONNAIRE À CHOIX MULTIPLES –

Réponse à un questionnaire à choix multiples portant sur la grammaire, les structures et les usages de la langue anglaise. – Durée : 30 minutes.

Ce dossier comporte 6 pages (page de garde non comprise).

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* *

SUJET :

Compléter la grille de réponse distribuée séparément, une seule réponse par question.

1. On Friday, the Government failed to win _____ cross-party agreement.

a) on	b) off	c) ø	d) out
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2. The States are keen _____ the up-coming conference as a springboard to announce reforms.

a) in using	b) on use	c) in use	d) on using
-------------	-----------	-----------	-------------

3. In emerging countries, bureaucratic _____ can slow down business considerably.

a) brown ribbon	b) blue ribbon	c) red tape	d) red ribbon
-----------------	----------------	-------------	---------------

4. The _____ in the capital is holding, but remains fragile.

a) truth	b) truce	c) quiet	d) quite
----------	----------	----------	----------

5. The news that the judge had remanded a well-known politician into _____ stunned the nation.

a) arrest	b) imprisonment	c) holding	d) custody
-----------	-----------------	------------	------------

6. There was an increase _____ the tensions on the border between the two countries.

a) in	b) by	c) ø	d) on
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7. Unless the crisis _____ resolved shortly, severe fighting could take place.

a) will be	b) should be	c) have to be	d) is
------------	--------------	---------------	-------

8. Some have expressed fears that the new regulation _____ stifle initiative.

a) could	b) ought	c) must to	d) would have
----------	----------	------------	---------------

9. In the last twenty years the opposition and the government _____ many times without results.

a) could negotiate	b) would negotiate	c) negotiate	d) have negotiated
--------------------	--------------------	--------------	--------------------

10. Despite many attempts at finding a compromise, EU members remained _____ over the opportunity of an intervention in Libya.

a) cross	b) in agreement	c) split	d) broken up
----------	-----------------	----------	--------------

11. Agro-industry has come _____ fire from the regulators.

a) to	b) under	c) in	d) through
-------	----------	-------	------------

12. Japanese industry was badly _____ by the tsunami.

a) stroke	b) strike	c) stricken	d) striked
-----------	-----------	-------------	------------

13. After muted activity over the winter, tourism _____ to pick up in May.

a) will expected	b) is expected	c) has expected	d) should expect
------------------	----------------	-----------------	------------------

14. Despite aggressive rhetoric, neither North nor South Sudan _____ a return to war.

a) is wanting	b) wants	c) want	d) are wanting
---------------	----------	---------	----------------

15. The Government claims that the current protests _____ plotted by foreign conspirators.

a) have been	b) are	c) have	d) are been
--------------	--------	---------	-------------

16. Many experts argue that the turning point _____ the evolution of the Iranian regime was the repression of the 2009 "Green movement".

a) over	b) through	c) in	d) about
---------	------------	-------	----------

17. The boundaries between the States were redrawn _____ April 2000.

a) on	b) about	c) in	d) at
-------	----------	-------	-------

18. They will never agree anyway, so why are we _____ these concessions ?

a) doing	b) giving in	c) making	d) raising
----------	--------------	-----------	------------

19. There was a time when he _____ that he would be elected to the highest office.

a) believed	b) was believed	c) believes	d) has believed
-------------	-----------------	-------------	-----------------

20. Had there been a more constructive approach, this whole situation _____ been avoided.

a) have had	b) would have	c) can have	d) had
-------------	---------------	-------------	--------

21. The USA cannot stand _____ and allow the Pentagon to be attacked by cyber-criminals.

a) from	b) off	c) away	d) by
---------	--------	---------	-------

22. Hackney secondary school is just a _____ throw from a street riddled with gang violence.

- | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| a) rock's | b) hand's | c) arrow's | d) stone's |
|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|

23. When the officer took charge, he discovered a large _____ of unresolved cases.

- | | | | |
|------------|-----------|------------|--------------|
| a) backlog | b) log up | c) log off | d) front log |
|------------|-----------|------------|--------------|

24. Russia _____ the Bush administration's plans for missile defense in Europe.

- | | | | |
|---------------|------------|-------------------|----------------|
| a) opposed to | b) opposed | c) opposed itself | d) was opposed |
|---------------|------------|-------------------|----------------|

25. At the _____, the government's strategy gave the opposition a chance to progress.

- | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|------------|----------|
| a) outset | b) offset | c) downset | d) upset |
|-----------|-----------|------------|----------|

26. Since the start of the war three months ago, the country _____ repeated calls for a ceasefire.

- | | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|
| a) resisted | b) is resisting | c) resists | d) has resisted |
|-------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|

27. The organization must _____ to encourage members to participate more.

- | | | | |
|----------------|-------------|------------------|--------------|
| a) to continue | b) continue | c) be continuing | d) continues |
|----------------|-------------|------------------|--------------|

28. The Ministry would do well to _____ adopting a different strategy.

- | | | | |
|-------------|----------------|----------|-------------|
| a) consider | b) considering | c) think | d) thinking |
|-------------|----------------|----------|-------------|

29. Yesterday's party nominations generated the most intense debate in _____ memory.

- | | | | |
|---------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| a) live | b) living | c) alive | d) lively |
|---------|-----------|----------|-----------|

30. The national economy is _____ of collapse.

- | | | | |
|-----------|--------------------|----------|-----------------|
| a) nearby | b) in the vicinity | c) close | d) on the verge |
|-----------|--------------------|----------|-----------------|

31. Many changes have been made by the regulatory body, and workers are expected to _____ to them.

- | | | | |
|-----------|---------|-----------|--------------|
| a) extend | b) vary | c) adjust | d) transform |
|-----------|---------|-----------|--------------|

32. The sale of weapons to the Nicaraguan Contras _____ to be a public relations nightmare for the Reagan administration.

- | | | | |
|---------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------|
| a) proved out | b) turned out | c) ended up | d) resulted out |
|---------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------|

33. Unfortunately, most countries only pay _____ to human rights and democratic values.

- | | | | |
|------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| a) mouth service | b) lip service | c) limited service | d) ear service |
|------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|

34. Protestors in Arab countries want their government to be _____ to the people.

- | | | | |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|-----------|
| a) accountable | b) dependable | c) susceptible | d) liable |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|-----------|

35. The reason the problem was _____ hard to solve was that it had far-reaching legal implications.

- | | | | |
|---------|-----------|-------|---------|
| a) such | b) enough | c) so | d) ever |
|---------|-----------|-------|---------|

36. We had to make provisions _____ something unexpected turned up.

- | | | | |
|------------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| a) in case | b) provided | c) no matter | d) if |
|------------|-------------|--------------|-------|

37. Journalists wondered _____ the Government had taken the full measure of the social unrest.

- | | | | |
|------------|---------|------------|----------|
| a) whether | b) what | c) to whom | d) which |
|------------|---------|------------|----------|

38. Among the Republican party's solutions to limit dependence on foreign oil is the idea of _____ for oil in natural reserves.

- | | | | |
|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| a) shilling | b) milling | c) filling | d) drilling |
|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|

39. The treaty can be signed if both parties agree _____ the clauses.

- | | | | |
|-------|--------|-------|---------|
| a) in | b) for | c) on | d) from |
|-------|--------|-------|---------|

40. Many refugees have _____ into Turkey from Syria on foot.

- | | | | |
|----------|---------|---------|----------|
| a) flown | b) fled | c) fled | d) flied |
|----------|---------|---------|----------|

41. _____ to conduct a negotiation, a diplomat must have clear instructions from his capital.

- | | | | |
|--------|--------------------|-------|-------------|
| a) For | b) In the interest | c) So | d) In order |
|--------|--------------------|-------|-------------|

42. Only _____ information was given at the press conference.

- | | | | |
|----------|-------------|-------------|--------|
| a) a few | b) a little | c) slightly | d) any |
|----------|-------------|-------------|--------|

43. There is _____ point in discussing this as no data is available.

a) a little	b) little	c) few	d) a few
-------------	-----------	--------	----------

44. Do you mind if I just _____ a quick call from your office ?

a) call	b) do	c) make	d) phone
---------	-------	---------	----------

45. Do you know what the acronym OECD _____ for ?

a) stands	b) sets	c) indicates	d) says
-----------	---------	--------------	---------

46. As urban areas grow, surrounding _____ areas are destroyed.

a) landed	b) rural	c) country	d) wooden
-----------	----------	------------	-----------

47. Could you give me the name of the person in _____ of this department ?

a) top	b) charge	c) head	d) direction
--------	-----------	---------	--------------

48. There are several reasons _____ this contract should not be signed.

a) that	b) for that	c) why	d) for why
---------	-------------	--------	------------

49. I regret having missed that deadline last week. It is a mistake that I _____.

a) ought to not make	b) must not have made	c) had not to have made	d) ought not to have made
----------------------	-----------------------	-------------------------	---------------------------

50. Seldom _____ the commission seen such unreasonable demands.

a) is	b) has	c) did	d) has had
-------	--------	--------	------------

51. At no time _____ anyone suspect that he would leak information.

a) did	b) has	c) had	d) ought
--------	--------	--------	----------

52. Tax is levied on income _____ year.

a) both	b) either	c) every	d) neither
---------	-----------	----------	------------

53. It's time we _____ an ultimatum.

a) were issuing	b) have issued	c) issued	d) had issued
-----------------	----------------	-----------	---------------

54. In spite of _____ the chairman of the committee, he had little influence over decisions.

a) his position	b) be	c) he was	d) being
-----------------	-------	-----------	----------

55. The prisoner denied _____ anything wrong.

a) to have done	b) to be doing	c) having done	d) has done
-----------------	----------------	----------------	-------------

56. The woman _____ bag was snatched in the street complained to the police.

a) who's	b) of whom	c) whose	d) which
----------	------------	----------	----------

57. Let's go and buy the tickets, _____ we ?

a) will	b) shall	c) would	d) don't
---------	----------	----------	----------

58. We need to show the _____ for the goods before taking delivery.

a) recipe	b) received	c) receipt	d) reseized
-----------	-------------	------------	-------------

59. The school-board's decision was criticized by teachers and students _____ .

a) unlike	b) dislike	c) alike	d) unlikely
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60. For your registration to be processed, your form must arrive no _____ than the end of July.

a) after	b) latest	c) late	d) later
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– FICHE DE SYNTHÈSE EN FRANÇAIS –

Rédaction en français d'une fiche de synthèse (450 mots avec une tolérance de plus ou moins 10%) à partir de documents en anglais. – Durée (note et fiche de synthèse) : 2 heures 30 minutes.

Ce dossier comporte 11 pages (page de garde et sommaire non compris).

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SUJET : A partir des éléments d'information fournis dans le dossier joint, vous présenterez, de façon synthétique et en les regroupant par grands thèmes, les principaux mots d'ordre et éléments de programme de la campagne de Michele Bachmann.

Composition du dossier
(11 pages)

Document n°1 : "Bachmann Launches Presidential Campaign, Says Nation "Cannot Afford" Second Obama Term" (2 pages)

Document n°2 : "Michele Bachmann: the Tea Party crusader electrifying the US right" (2 pages)

Document n°3 : "Queen of the Tea Party" (3 pages)

Document n°4 : "10 Of The Craziest Things Michele Bachmann Has Ever Said" (2 pages)

Document n°5 : "Michele Bachmann on Afghanistan" (1 page)

Document n°6 : "Bachmann Criticizes Obama's Withdrawal Timeline for Afghanistan" (1 page)

Bachmann Launches Presidential Campaign, Says Nation 'Cannot Afford' Second Obama Term

Published June 27, 2011 | FoxNews.com

Rep. Michele Bachmann, stressing her Iowa roots and appealing directly to Tea Party voters, came out swinging Monday as she formally launched her campaign for president.

Buoyed by a strong showing in several recent polls, the Minnesota congresswoman cast her campaign as the voice for "constitutional conservatives" looking for a government that lives within its means while giving the private sector the room to grow. She launched a broadside against President Obama for racking up too much debt while stimulating too little job growth and vowed to make him a "one-term president."

"We cannot afford four more years of Barack Obama," she declared, later adding: "We can win in 2012 and we will win."

In her announcement, Bachmann described a special bond with Iowa, the nation's leadoff caucus state. She held the kickoff in her hometown of Waterloo, Iowa, and called herself a "descendent of generations of Iowans," saying the state is where she learned "everything I needed to know." She also appealed to another vital primary constituency, calling herself part of the Tea Party movement and defending it as a cross-section of Republicans, independents and disaffected Democrats.

Trying to show she has what it takes to not just win primaries but take on the president, Bachmann pulled no punches in attacking the Obama administration as she wove in details about her personal life and convictions. As she spoke about faith and family, she also accused the president of failing to revive the economy and putting far too much on the nation's credit card.

"We can't continue to rack up debt. ... We can't afford the unconstitutional health care law that will cost us too much and deliver too little. We can't afford four more years of failed leadership here at home and abroad," she said. "We can't afford four more years of millions of Americans who are out of work. ... And we can't afford four more years of a foreign policy with a president who leads from behind and who doesn't stand up for our friends like Israel."

Still, Bachmann said in an interview with The Associated Press that her bid to unseat Obama is not "personal."

The nothing-personal message was a departure from her 2008 comments questioning whether Obama had "anti-American" views. She has said she wishes she framed her criticism differently. In her announcement, Bachmann said the country's problems have been caused by the policies of both parties and made an appeal for unity.

Bachmann, who filed her papers to run for president two weeks ago, plans to head next to the early primary states of New Hampshire and South Carolina.

The Iowa Democratic Party quickly put out a statement Monday morning assailing Bachmann's presidential bid, chastising her for supporting Republicans' budget plan that would overhaul Medicare.

"With candidates like Michele Bachmann, the choice couldn't be clearer -- do Iowans want to double down on the flawed economic policies that cost us millions of jobs and almost sent us into a second Great Depression, or do they want to continue down the path to recovery that has taken us from massive job losses to 15 straight months of private sector job growth and a focus on strengthening the middle class?" party Chairwoman Sue Dvorsky said.

But the congresswoman has been surging in recent polls. A key Iowa poll over the weekend showed former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney with 23 percent support and Bachmann with 22 percent among those who said they were likely to vote in the nation's first Republican nomination contest. The top five included Georgia businessman Herman Cain, at 10 percent, and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich and Rep. Ron Paul of Texas, with 7 percent each.

Speaking Sunday to hundreds at a local ballroom, Bachmann effusively mentioned her Iowa roots.

"We need more Waterloo. We need more Iowa. We need more closeness, more families, more love for each other," she told her enthusiastic crowd.

The audience soaked it up.

"She's one of `us.' There are too many of `them' in Washington and not enough of `us,'" said insurance salesman David Alderman. "I think she's got star power. She's a front-runner right now."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Michele Bachmann: the Tea Party crusader electrifying the US right

Congresswoman will come under scrutiny about hardline politics. But will she be able to reach beyond her Tea Party base?

Paul Harris in Stillwater, Minnesota

guardian.co.uk, Saturday 18 June 2011 22.43 BST

(...) Bachmann, who announced her White House run last week, and then shone in the first major Republican debate, is eclipsing Sarah Palin as the new darling of the Tea Party. She is an evangelical whose husband runs a controversial Christian counselling service. She is a Minnesota congresswoman who has vowed to repeal healthcare reform and lambasts Barack Obama as a socialist. Like Palin, she makes political capital of her role as a mother to a large family: five children of her own and more than 20 foster kids. She is also a glamorous woman in a party that is frequently dominated by older white men.

(...) Even Bachmann's admirers, however, sometimes confess that her passionate style of ultra-rightwing politics has its drawbacks. "It is very attractive to some folks, and she certainly does not hesitate to say what she thinks. But that can upset others," said Edwin Cain, a Stillwater-based lobbyist who has worked frequently with Bachmann.

Indeed, it is not hard to find Bachmann critics, even among Republican supporters in the town. Though she makes her home here – in a million-dollar house on an upmarket estate near the golf course – this is not automatically Bachmann territory. The town is prosperous and thrives on a tourist economy; Main Street is packed with bistros and bars and represents a slice of urban city life with a hint of liberal values. Preston Norris, who works in a bar, voted for Bachmann for Congress but will not do so for the presidency. "She has some views that are just too much for that office," he said bluntly.

It is not hard to see what those views are. Bachmann's criticism of homosexuality is open and brutal. She has led the charge against gay marriage, even at the cost of a once-close relationship with a lesbian stepsister. In 2004 Bachmann said of gay people: "It's a very sad life. It's part of Satan, I think, to say that this is gay. It's anything but gay."

She is on record as viewing homosexuality as a "disorder" or a "sexual dysfunction" and is a staunchly anti-abortion Christian conservative. She believes Obama is "the final leap to socialism" in America, and has accused him of wanting to set up youth indoctrination camps for teenagers.

She has called for investigations into fellow congressional politicians to see if they are "anti-American". She once claimed to know of a plan to give up half of Iraq to Iran. She is against raising America's debt ceiling for running up its deficit, and wants to repeal healthcare reform in its entirety.

She is a firm sceptic on the dangers of global warming. She once introduced a resolution seeking to prevent the dollar being replaced by a foreign currency, despite the fact that such a

move is already illegal. She has called the Environmental Protection Agency a "job-killing" organisation.

(...) Reconciling the liberal and conservative visions of Bachmann is impossible. Her detractors and supporters inhabit different worlds. But it has led to speculation that Bachmann might privately not believe all she says in public: that her ambition is simply to bask in the spotlight.

Perhaps, like Palin, she may have more of an eye on realising her value on the lucrative TV talk show circuit than on winning a political race.

Bremer is unsure of the theory and not keen to test it. "Does she believe what she says? Or is it just a road to success?" he said. "I don't know the answer to that – but I do think she should be stopped."

IN HER OWN WORDS

On the job market

If we took away the minimum wage – if conceivably it was gone – we could potentially virtually wipe out unemployment completely because we would be able to offer jobs at whatever level.

On patriotic politics

I wish the American media would take a great look at the views of the people in Congress and find out: Are they pro-America or anti-America?

On global warming

Carbon dioxide is... not harmful... Yet we're being told that we have to reduce this natural substance, reduce the American standard of living, to create an arbitrary reduction in something that is naturally occurring in Earth.

On mysterious pandemics

I find it interesting that... in the 1970s... swine flu broke out under another... Democrat president, Jimmy Carter. I'm not blaming this on President Obama, I just think it's an interesting coincidence.

Queen of the Tea Party

The presidential campaign of Michele Bachmann

Jul 4, 2011, Vol. 16, No. 40 • By MATTHEW CONTINETTI

(...) Energetic, charismatic, intelligent, and attractive, the 55-year-old Bachmann is no stranger to publicity. Since she arrived on the national scene in 2007, her prominence in the conservative movement has skyrocketed. In the world of talk radio and cable news, she possesses something like Most Favoured Guest status. She plays the outside game, using media appearances to further the right's agenda. She's been featured in calendars of female conservative superstars. There's even a Michele Bachmann action figure. What Bachmann lacked until recently was mainstream credibility. And the skepticism was bipartisan.

Democrats loathed her—and still do—because she's about as far from an apologetic conservative as you can get. But plenty of Republican officials and consultant types also didn't like Bachmann. Republican elites muttered that she was a show horse, not a work horse. Her fame alienated colleagues. One congressman recently told me that Bachmann had been upbraided during a House GOP conference meeting for undermining the leadership's message on fiscal issues. Bachmann's tendency to shoot from the hip is said to limit her appeal. "I think Bachmann's chances of landing on Jupiter are higher than her chances of being nominated," Republican strategist Mike Murphy told me in an April interview for Washingtonpost.com.

Well, get ready for an interplanetary expedition. Bachmann is a far more serious candidate for the Republican nomination than her reputation would suggest. She's a talented fundraiser who raised \$13.5 million for her 2010 re-election campaign. She's a television star who appropriately tailors her message to her audience. Her combativeness will delight conservatives eager to fight Barack Obama. Her movement credentials—she founded the House Tea Party Caucus—put her at the cutting edge of right-wing politics. And in a primary campaign where authenticity counts, no other candidate has Bachmann's unique history: an Iowa native who put herself through law school, raised her five children and took in 23 foster children, and has never lost an election for state or federal office. (...)

What no one anticipated was a revolution in the character of the conservative movement. Social and economic conservatives had been distinct groups within the Republican party for decades. They were often at odds. But the Tea Party fused economic and social conservatism in a novel way. Most Tea Partiers focus on the looming insolvency of the United States, but they also hold traditional positions on social issues.

The kind of normative politics that's long existed in the social conservative movement, where voters take their positions from a fixed moral code, is now being applied to government spending and taxation. "You cannot separate the fiscal issues from the moral issues," said Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

The fight over health care is important to conservatives for this reason: How America provides health insurance isn't only a question of finance. To the extent that health care law affects how one lives, and determines which behaviors government legitimizes through

subsidy, it too is a question of morality. And when the Tea Party arrived at the crossroads of economic and social conservatism, Michele Bachmann was there waiting. (...)

Bachmann's activism had found a new purpose: stopping the president. The contest over Barack Obama's policies was the Profile of Learning controversy writ large. King and Bachmann organized another rally for March 20, 2010, when Congress passed Obamacare.

This was the moment Bachmann began thinking of running for president. "I knew that whoever our nominee is, they have to be committed to the repeal of Obamacare," she said. "Because that is the foundation stone that will ultimately give us socialized medicine." The repeal of any law is difficult; the repeal of Obamacare requires the courage to fight the status quo in both parties.

Michele and Marcus discussed a possible presidential bid. Their youngest child would be off to college after the spring of 2011. And Bachmann continued to be disappointed in the GOP message. "I felt that we could do better to reflect the pulse of the people," she said. Why not take this opportunity? Obama was looking more and more like Jimmy Carter. Michele remembered standing in her kitchen way back in 1979, fixated on the televised images of the Ayatollah Khomeini being welcomed into Tehran. The lack of American leadership then was not so unlike what's happening in the Middle East today. "As bad as the economy is," she said, "my concerns are the greatest on the foreign policy front."

Bachmann supported the war in Iraq and wants to finish the job in Afghanistan. But she opposes Obama's action in Libya. "Not only did he take his eyes off the real issue in the room, which is Iran with a nuclear weapon, he's created an even worse problem in Libya," she said.

She also dislikes the president's energy policy. "We've got so much," she said. "And here you've got Denmark trying to claim ownership" of territory in the oil-rich Arctic. "Denmark?" She waved her hand dismissively. "Get out of here, you pipsqueak! This is ours! We should be drilling everywhere for oil, and natural gas, and shale, and all of it. Do every bit of it."

The extent of Bachmann's disagreements with the president propelled her nascent candidacy. She saw a field divided between establishment types lacking a connection to the Tea Party and gadflies without much potential. And all of them were men. The departure of Mike Huckabee from the race cleared the way for Bachmann in her native Iowa. Many of Huckabee's former staff joined her team. Bachmann was encouraged by the response to hints she might run for president. Momentum was building. It would soon be time to make an announcement.

A talented politician uses television appearances to make news. When Bachmann walked onstage at the CNN debate in Goffstown on June 13, she had a plan. The stage was made of shiny metal, and surrounded by huge electronic screens filled with bright and endlessly changing graphics. The moderator, John King, asked each candidate to deliver a short introduction. Then the questions began. The first topic was economics. What would each candidate do to create jobs and growth?

Herman Cain answered first. Then Rick Santorum, then Tim Pawlenty, then Mitt Romney, then Newt Gingrich. Finally it was Bachmann's turn.

"Before I fully answer that," she said, "I just want to make an announcement here for you, John, on CNN tonight."

Her eyes lit up.

"I filed today my paperwork to seek the office of the presidency of the United States," she said. "And I'll very soon be making my formal announcement. So I wanted you to be the first to know."

Applause broke out. Bachmann beamed. The other candidates smiled nervously. And grassroots conservatives across America understood: The queen of the Tea Party had arrived.

Matthew Continetti is opinion editor of The Weekly Standard and author, most recently, of The Persecution of Sarah Palin.

10 Of The Craziest Things Michele Bachmann Has Ever Said

This week, Rep. Michele Bachmann (R-MN) announced she had filed the papers to run for President. It's not a frivolous pursuit: She is extremely well liked by the Republican base and is an unusually effective fundraiser, taking in more dollars in the last election cycle she than any of her Congressional colleagues.

Still, Bachmann's candidacy is not without potential landmines. Over the last decade, she has taken positions that are dangerous, stemming from her radical ideology. To Bachmann's credit, she is aware of this, lamenting to Glenn Beck, "I have experienced that throughout my political career, being labeled a kook."

ThinkProgress has assembled 10 of the nuttiest things Bachmann has ever said:

(1) BACHMANN WARNED 'THE LION KING' WAS GAY PROPAGANDA: At the November 2004 EdWatch National Education Conference, Bachmann said the "normalization" of homosexuality would lead to "desensitization": "Very effective way to do this with a bunch of second graders, is take a picture of 'The Lion King' for instance, and a teacher might say, 'Do you know that the music for this movie was written by a gay man?' The message is: I'm better at what I do, because I'm gay."

(2) BACHMANN CLAIMED ABOLISHING THE MINIMUM WAGE WOULD CREATE JOBS: While testifying in front of the Minnesota Senate in 2005, Bachmann said, "Literally, if we took away the minimum wage — if conceivably it was gone — we could potentially virtually wipe out unemployment completely because we would be able to offer jobs at whatever level." This isn't remotely true. Even simply reducing the minimum wage would, as Paul Krugman noted, "at best do nothing for employment; more likely it would actually be contractionary."

(3) BACHMANN CLAIMED THAT SCIENTISTS ARE SUPPORTERS OF INTELLIGENT DESIGN: During a 2006 debate, Bachmann said, "There are hundreds and hundreds of scientists, many of them holding Nobel Prizes, who believe in intelligent design." This was, and is, not true.

(4) BACHMANN CLAIMED TERRI SCHIAVO WAS 'HEALTHY': Not long after Terri Schiavo died, Bachmann said she would have voted for the Palm Sunday Compromise because Schiavo "was healthy. She had brain damage — there was brain damage, there was no question. But from a health point of view, she was not terminally ill." An autopsy found that Schiavo had suffered irreversible brain damage and her brain, said the medical examiner, was "profoundly atrophied."

(5) BACHMANN LIKENED VISITING IRAQ TO VISITING MALL OF AMERICA: In 2007, Bachmann returned from a junket to Iraq and told her colleagues, "[T]here's a commonality with the Mall of America, in that it's on that proportion. There's marble everywhere. The other thing I remarked about was there is water everywhere." As ThinkProgress documented at the time, the comparison was preposterous.

(6) BACHMANN CLAIMED THAT CARBON DIOXIDE IS 'HARMLESS': In 2008, a Stanford scientist revealed “direct links” between increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and “increases in human mortality” — globally, he found that as many as “20,000 air-pollution-related deaths per year per degree Celsius may be due to this greenhouse gas.” The next year, Bachmann, who is not a scientist, said that “carbon dioxide is portrayed as harmful. But there isn't even one study that can be produced that shows that carbon dioxide is a harmful gas.”

(7) BACHMANN CALLED FOR A CONGRESSIONAL WITCH HUNT: Pivoting off the news of Barack Obama's alleged relationship to former Weather Underground member William Ayers, and his former pastor, Rev. Jeremiah Wright, Bachmann accused the candidate of having “anti-American views.” She then suggested that Congressional liberals — including Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid — ought to be subject to “an exposé” by the media because of their views. “I think people would love to see like that,” she told a stunned Chris Matthews.

(8) BACHMANN SUGGESTED GAY SINGER SHOULD REPENT AFTER GETTING CANCER: Bachmann saw Melissa Etheridge's cancer as a teachable moment: “Unfortunately she is now suffering from breast cancer, so keep her in your prayers,” she said in November 2004. “This may be an opportunity for her now to be open to some spiritual things, now that she is suffering with that physical disease. She is a lesbian.”

(9) BACHMANN BOASTED ABOUT BREAKING THE LAW: In advance of the 2010 national Census, Bachmann told The Washington Times that she would break the law by not completing the forms. “I know for my family, the only question we will be answering is how many people are in our home,” she said. “We won't be answering any information beyond that, because the Constitution doesn't require any information beyond that.”

(10) BACHMANN CLAIMED THAT GLENN BECK COULD SOLVE THE DEBT CRISIS: During a February trip to South Carolina, Bachmann told a South Carolina audience, “I think if we give Glenn Beck the numbers, he can solve this [the national debt].”

By Elon Green | Sourced from Think Progress

Posted at June 16, 2011, 8:04 am

Michele Bachmann on Afghanistan

The Minnesota congresswoman says to stay the course.

9:42 AM, Jun 22, 2011 • By MATTHEW CONTINETTI

In a speech tonight, President Obama is expected to announce the staggered withdrawal, over the course of the next year, of the surge troops in Afghanistan. Don't expect Minnesota congresswoman and 2012 presidential candidate Michele Bachmann to praise his decision. Here's what Bachmann had to say on Afghanistan during a recent interview with me:

On Afghanistan, I firmly believe that we are at a point where we've got to stay the course, and we've got to finish the job. Reports coming out of Helmand right now are positive. ... David Petraeus, who wrote the book on counterinsurgency and on the surge strategy, is successfully prosecuting the surge.

Now, President Obama has not told the story the way President Bush did. President Bush did let the country know where we were at, and I give him a lot of credit because when he was getting all sorts of invective pointed against him, he stood against the world for what he knew to be right in dealing with terrorism. And perhaps no other would have stood the way that he did. I give him great credit for that.

Now in Afghanistan, we are making great progress. We have to win southern Afghanistan, then we have to go on and win eastern Afghanistan. I believe that we will be victorious, and we'll end it. I understand why people are frustrated. I completely understand. But I do trust General Petraeus in that effort and in what he is doing over there. And I think that they are doing what we need to do.

Bachmann Criticizes Obama's Withdrawal Timeline for Afghanistan

9:34 AM, Jun 30, 2011 • By DANIEL HALPER

Republican presidential candidate Michele Bachmann criticized President Obama's plan to withdraw troops from Afghanistan yesterday in an interview with NPR's Mara Liasson.

LIASSON: What about Afghanistan? Do you think the president is pulling out too fast? What would a President Bachmann do about Afghanistan?

BACHMANN: This was a major move on the part of President Obama. And clearly, it seems to me, the president said that this was a war of necessity in Afghanistan. Now it seems to be the politics of necessity. And it appears for President Obama that he is acting more on political strategy than military strategy. That's very concerning, because it also seems that this is more the Obama-Biden plan for early withdrawal, as opposed to the Petraeus plan. Gen. Petraeus, who's in charge of winning the war effort in Afghanistan, understands that we need to win the war on terror. We must never forget that 9/11 was hatched in the caves and the mountains of Afghanistan. The Taliban has a presence there. Al-Qaida has a presence there. We must defeat them in their backyard. And it's important that Gen. Petraeus and Gen. Allen have the resources that they need to be successful in southern Afghanistan and then also in eastern Afghanistan, so —

LIASSON: So you think he's pulling out too fast.

BACHMANN: I think that the president needs to follow what the advice is to be successful. Let me tell you this: as president of the United States, I would — knowing that we have a war hero like Gen. Petraeus — I would call Gen. Petraeus into my office. We would have a very short conversation. It would be something like this: It would be, "General, how quickly can we conclude the war in Afghanistan?" No. 2, "What do you need?" And I would, I would trust his judgment. He wrote the book on counterinsurgency. He turned around the war effort in Iraq. We need to trust him on Afghanistan. Simply because he's demonstrated results. With the resources he's had, he's demonstrated positive results, particularly in southern Afghanistan. But let's remember, if we pull out now, we could cause all of the advances we've made to collapse. And we have to remember, the greatest treasure we've expended in Afghanistan has been the blood of our soldiers. Not to mention the resources of the American people to be able to provide the assets required. So let's be as successful as we possibly can in Afghanistan. Let's not undermine those efforts — Gen. Allen's job is far more difficult now, I believe, because of President Obama's early withdrawal timeline.



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(15 pages)

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The Washington Post

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Obama's drawdown in Afghanistan will shift tactics in war

By **Karen DeYoung**, Published: June 23

The withdrawal of 33,000 U.S. troops from Afghanistan by next summer signals a coming shift in both where and how the war has been fought over the past two years.

The "surge" troops President Obama deployed last year have been concentrating on battling the Taliban in the flat, desert south through a counterinsurgency strategy that requires intensive investments of money and personnel.

But Obama, making a virtue of necessity fueled by budget constraints, a restive Congress and faltering public support, has now declared those areas sufficiently stabilized to begin lowering the U.S. profile there.

"We are starting this drawdown from a position of strength," he said Wednesday night.

The same cannot be said of the Afghan east, where the fight is more about killing declared enemies than pacifying broad swaths of the population in a nation long defined by instability.

Although the east has been a secondary focus of U.S. attention compared with the Taliban heartland in southern Afghanistan, some of the insurgency's most vicious fighters, along with the forces most directly tied to al-Qaeda, hold sway in the rugged eastern mountain valleys and have made increasing inroads from their havens in Pakistan, which borders these provinces.

The east, one military official said, has always presented a "tougher kinetic fight" than the south.

Meanwhile, in Pakistan, CIA operations against al-Qaeda senior figures and hideouts have become more difficult as U.S.-Pakistani relations have worsened following the U.S. commando raid last month that killed Osama bin Laden in his Abbottabad compound.

"It is a different fight, and it has been for some period of time," said Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John F. Kerry (D-Mass.), who has urged a greater focus on eastern Afghanistan and on Pakistan.

"The president talks about [insurgent] sanctuaries," Kerry said in an interview after Obama's address. "That is where almost all the mischief comes from. If we can change that equation . . . that is the best opportunity to protect what we have gained in Afghanistan."

Although the administration has denied any shift in the strategy that Obama announced in December

2009, a renewed focus on the east will amount to a de facto change in the balance between the counterinsurgency tactics that have been central to the southern mission and the targeted counterterrorism that has marked U.S. operations in eastern Afghanistan and Pakistan. The switch has long been advocated by many within the White House, including Vice President Biden.

Gen. David H. Petraeus, the outgoing coalition commander in Afghanistan, was already planning an increase in forces in the eastern provinces, although he had hoped to be able to shift them from the south without an early decrease in the overall number of U.S. troops.

One of the reasons Obama has had difficulty in sustaining support for his Afghan strategy has been the absence of al-Qaeda from the southern battlefields, which has raised questions about why the United States is fighting in Afghanistan. But if the administration identifies the fight more directly with the battles in the east and in Pakistan, the case for the war is likely to be easier to make.

In his speech, Obama began to do so, saying that "the goal that we seek is achievable and can be expressed simply: no safe haven from which al-Qaeda or its affiliates can launch attacks against our homeland or our allies. We will not try to make Afghanistan a perfect place. . . . Of course, our efforts must also address terrorist safe havens in Pakistan."

While numerous international terrorist plots have emerged from Pakistan in recent years, "we haven't seen a terrorist threat emanating from Afghanistan for the past seven or eight years," a senior administration official said.

"There has been clearly fighting and threats inside of Afghanistan, but the assessment of anywhere between 50, 75 or so al-Qaeda types that are embedded in Haqqani [insurgent] units . . . are focused inside Afghanistan, with no indication at all that there is any effort . . . to use Afghanistan as a launching pad to carry out attacks outside of Afghan borders," the official said.

U.S. forces in the southern Afghan provinces of Kandahar and Helmand have been fighting Taliban members loyal to Mohammad Omar, the leader of the former Taliban government that fled into Pakistan's Baluchistan province. The separate Haqqani network of Afghan militants is based in Pakistan's federally administered tribal regions, along Afghanistan's eastern border.

Haqqani sanctuaries — from which attacks are launched throughout eastern Afghanistan — are most closely intertwined with those belonging to al-Qaeda; together, they have been the primary targets of drone-launched CIA missiles in Pakistan.

The current estrangement between the United States and Pakistan — including Pakistani demands that the CIA withdraw from the base where many of the drones are based — has also helped convince administration officials of the importance of expanding the U.S. military presence in eastern Afghanistan.

"We will work with the Pakistani government to root out the cancer of violent extremism," Obama said, "and we will insist that it keep its commitments."

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June 25, 2011

What Would Nixon Do?

By **GIDEON ROSE**

PRESIDENT OBAMA has made good on his pledge to begin drawing down American forces in Afghanistan, but his stated strategy is unlikely to lead to a successful withdrawal.

Mr. Obama announced last week that 10,000 troops would come home by December and another 23,000 by next summer. By 2014, he confidently proclaimed, "the Afghan people will be responsible for their own security."

Administration hawks, largely in the military, are uneasy; they had wanted to go slower, so as to safeguard recent gains made against the Taliban. Administration doves, largely in the White House, are disappointed; they had wanted to pull back faster, seeing the killing of Osama bin Laden as an ideal opportunity to get out.

The president split the difference, suggesting that he was charting a "centered course." But he has actually once again evaded the fundamental choice between accepting the costs of staying and the risks of leaving.

What he needs is a strategy for getting out without turning a retreat into a rout — and he would be wise to borrow one from the last American administration to extricate itself from a thankless, seemingly endless counterinsurgency in a remote and strategically marginal region. Mr. Obama should ask himself, in short: What would Nixon do?

Richard M. Nixon and his national security adviser, Henry A. Kissinger, tried to manage the risks of exiting the Vietnam War by masking their withdrawal with deliberate deception and aggressive covering fire. They almost succeeded — and if tried again in today's more favorable environment, their strategy would most likely work.

The Nixonian approach has its costs: it would generate charges of lying, escalation and betrayal. And embracing it would require the president to display a deftness and a tough-mindedness he has rarely shown. But it could also provide the ticket home. Indeed, Mr. Obama's best option is to repeat Mr. Nixon's Vietnam endgame and hope for a different outcome — to get 1973, one might say, without having it followed by 1975.

It may seem crazy to regard the American withdrawal from Vietnam as anything but disastrous. Our local ally collapsed two years after signing a peace deal, our enemies triumphantly conquered the country we had fought for more than a decade to defend, and the image of panicked friends reaching in vain for the last helicopter out of Saigon remains seared into our national consciousness. But Mr. Nixon actually did a lot right in Vietnam, and his approach there was not the primary cause of the war's ignominious end.

In late 1969, faced with increasing domestic pressure to end the war, the president and Mr. Kissinger settled on a strategy to reduce the American role in ground combat while fending off a South Vietnamese collapse. They sought to walk away from the war, get American prisoners back and avoid formally betraying an ally — something they believed would damage America's reputation. They recognized that their approach would leave the South Vietnamese vulnerable following the American withdrawal, but considered that an acceptable price to pay for getting out.

They never said this last bit publicly, of course. But in private, they were more candid, as the White House tapes showed. During an August 1972 Oval Office chat, Mr. Nixon told Mr. Kissinger:

"Let's be perfectly cold-blooded about it... I look at the tide of history out there, South Vietnam probably is never gonna survive anyway... [C]an we have a viable foreign policy if a year from now or two years from now, North Vietnam gobbles up South Vietnam?"

Mr. Kissinger replied that American policy could remain viable if Saigon's collapse "looks as if it's the result of South Vietnamese incompetence. If we now sell out in such a way that, say, in a three- to four-month period, we have pushed President Thieu over the brink... it will worry everybody... So we've got to find some formula that holds the thing together a year or two, after which... no one will give a damn."

Although Mr. Nixon and Mr. Kissinger had steeled themselves for the possibility of an eventual South Vietnamese collapse, they hoped it could be avoided and did what they could to prevent it. And had events in Washington played out differently — with Watergate not crippling the administration and with Congress less hell-bent on slamming the door behind the departing ground troops — they might have succeeded.

Mr. Obama does not have a Watergate to contend with, nor does he face a passionately antiwar Congress. And his opponents on the battlefield don't have the capabilities or support the North Vietnamese did. Without these stumbling blocks, he should be able to pull off a Nixonian strategy in Afghanistan. But this will involve more than simply tinkering with the number of troops being pulled out. It will mean denying what is going on, aggressively

covering the retreat and staying after leaving.

THE first rule of withdrawal is you do not talk about withdrawal. You may agree with the doves about the value of exiting, but you should respect the hawks' fears about what will happen once people realize what you are doing. You must deflect attention from the true state of affairs, doing everything you can to keep your foes and even your friends in the dark as long as possible.

The second rule of withdrawal is to lay down suppressive fire so the enemy cannot rush into the gap you leave behind. The Nixon administration was brutal and ham-fisted about this, using secret bombing runs along the Ho Chi Minh Trail and expeditions into Cambodia and Laos to buy time and space for its "Vietnamization" programs to work. Thanks to technological advances, the Obama administration can do the same thing while incurring far fewer human, financial, legal and political costs. Drone attacks and raids against enemy targets in Pakistani sanctuaries today are a precision replay of actions in Cambodia and Laos, but more effective and less controversial.

The third rule of withdrawal is to remain engaged, providing enough support to beleaguered local partners so they can fend off collapse for as long as possible. Withdrawal should be defined as the removal of ground forces from direct combat, not the abandonment of the country in question.

The Nixon administration tried to do this, and its success in stopping North Vietnam's Easter offensive in 1972 showed that it could work. But once American troops and prisoners came home, few displayed any appetite for reengagement. Congress ordered an end to all military operations in Southeast Asia and cut aid to Saigon, making its eventual collapse a foregone conclusion. A weakened Nixon and his novice successor could do little to help their erstwhile allies in Saigon, even if they had wanted to.

Unlike Mr. Nixon, however, Mr. Obama is relatively popular and widely trusted. He has gained credibility on national security thanks to the killing of Osama bin Laden. Congress is obsessed with domestic economic issues rather than foreign policy and deferential rather than hostile to military leaders — who themselves support staying engaged in Afghanistan.

Such a favorable domestic environment is matched by a relatively favorable international one, in which America's ability to project power remains strong and most of the world shuns radical jihadists. Should Mr. Obama seek to fend off a complete enemy victory in Afghanistan even after most American combat forces leave, he should be able to succeed — at least until, as Mr. Kissinger put it, no one gives a damn.

Having tired of the fight in Afghanistan, the United States now has to perform political triage, deciding what goals are still worth fighting for and how they can be achieved.

In Vietnam, Mr. Nixon and Mr. Kissinger sought to extricate the United States from a war even as the local combatants continued to struggle. The Obama administration should try to do the same in Afghanistan — while planning carefully for how to keep withdrawal from turning into defeat.

Gideon Rose is the editor of Foreign Affairs and author of "How Wars End: Why We Always Fight the Last Battle."

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: June 26, 2011

An earlier version of this article incorrectly described the end of Richard M. Nixon's presidency. He resigned; he was not impeached.

latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-afghan-talks-20110628,0,4823315.story

latimes.com

U.S. steps up efforts for talks with Taliban

Increased U.S. military pressure on the Taliban has made the militants more willing to talk, officials say, with both sides setting aside their preconditions for negotiations. It may still not mean a speedy U.S. exit from Afghanistan.

By Paul Richter and Alex Rodriguez, Los Angeles Times

June 28, 2011

Reporting from Washington and Kabul, Afghanistan

As Obama administration officials look beyond the planned drawdown of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, one path dominates their thinking about how to finally exit the war — a negotiated deal with the Taliban.

After months of quiet, behind-the-scenes diplomacy, officials last week began claiming progress in the effort to begin talks.

"Only now are we beginning to see the kind of outreach that evidences a willingness to discuss the future," Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton told a Senate committee on Thursday.

Another senior U.S. official said that increased U.S. military pressure on the Taliban had made the militants willing to talk. In addition, discussions with the Afghan government and allies had helped forge a common position on negotiations and created "openings that didn't exist 18 months ago," the official said.

In Kabul, too, sources with ties to the Taliban confirmed that talks were underway.

"Negotiations have begun, and the Taliban have shown interest," said Waheed Mujda, who was a government official during the Taliban regime and maintains contact with Taliban leaders. "In the past, the Taliban has insisted that unless the United States leaves Afghanistan, it will never come to the negotiating table. But now it seems that problem has been solved, and that important condition has been set aside."

U.S. officials met three times this spring with Mohammed Tayeb Agha, an aide to Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar, and have pushed to take Taliban leaders off a United Nations blacklist, a move that would make it easier for them to travel abroad.

Even so, U.S. officials remain cautious about the effort. President Obama mentioned the talks Wednesday in his East Room address from the White House on the Afghanistan drawdown, but notably made no promises.

The growing public focus on a negotiated solution marks a shift. As recently as January 2010, U.S. officials at an international conference on the war were silent on the idea of negotiating with Taliban leaders, though they did call for efforts to rehabilitate lower-level fighters back into Afghan society.

But as U.S. public support for the war has ebbed, the drive to negotiate has become more urgent.

Marc Grossman, the U.S. special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, spends almost all his time trying to negotiate an end to the war, officials say. By contrast, that effort was only one of the missions of his predecessor, the late Richard C. Holbrooke.

The administration's eagerness is clear in the way it has pushed ahead with preliminary talks without the Afghan government's participation, even though the Obama administration's official line is that any talks must be Afghan-led.

And administration officials have shown increasing flexibility in their demands. Clinton announced in February that the United States was willing to hold talks with the Taliban even without an initial agreement to the three key U.S. conditions for any deal: The militants must renounce violence, end any alliance with Al Qaeda and agree to respect the Afghan Constitution.

U.S. officials also have been actively trying to draw neighboring nations into the talks, believing that only a broadly accepted deal will help extinguish regional tensions.

The administration has convened a "core group," including Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United States, to try to reach agreement on the issues. It has also sought to bring others, including India, China, Russia, Iran and Central Asian nations, into the discussions, Clinton told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Diplomats have "made progress" with all of them, even Iran, she said.

Yet while the administration was boasting that U.S. military pressure was drawing militants to the negotiating table, some experts in Washington and Kabul were arguing that Obama's drawdown plans could convince the Taliban that the military pressure soon will be easing.

The drawdown announcement "will certainly affect the way the Taliban looks at the need for reconciliation," said Robert Zarate, analyst with the Foreign Policy Initiative research group in Washington.

Afghan analyst Haroon Mir said the drawdown could embolden insurgents and diminish their interest in talks.

"The objective for the Taliban is to take control of the south," Mir said. "Much depends on what happens between now and the end of this year. If the Taliban move back into districts in Kandahar and Helmand, they will regain momentum that, up until now, everyone has been saying has been broken."

A wild card is Pakistan, which has built ties to militant groups in the past.

Afghan Taliban militants based in Pakistan's tribal border areas routinely cross into Afghanistan to carry out attacks on NATO and Afghan forces. As long as Pakistan gives militants ample space in these rugged areas, Washington's strategy of ramping up military pressure to get insurgents to negotiate won't work, Afghan analysts say.

"Until we put pressure on the sources of political support for the Taliban, it will be difficult to bring them to the table," said Sanjar Sohail, a political analyst and Afghan newspaper publisher. "Maybe we can get mid-level Taliban to talk about peace, but I don't think the top Taliban leadership will come to the talks if they continue to get support from Pakistan."

It will probably be difficult, too, to win support from various Afghan constituencies, said Thomas Ruttig of the Afghan Analysts Network in Kabul, the capital.

Although the Afghan government talks a lot about a deal. "are they really ready to share power and access to resources?" Ruttig said.

Likewise, powerful former mujahedin warlords may fear that they could be punished for human rights abuses, and many ordinary Afghans might resist a deal with the Taliban, fearing that the fundamentalist group could again take away their rights and freedoms, he said.

So the deal that the administration hungers for may not arrive soon enough to satisfy its desire for a quick resolution to the conflict.

Andrew Wilder of the U.S. Institute of Peace said the key "is to have different groups, bit by bit, take their seat in a legitimate peace process."

But, noting that a similar process took 15 years in neighboring Tajikistan, he added, "Don't expect to see a great signing ceremony in the next two years."

paul.richter@latimes.com

alex.rodriquez@latimes.com

Richter reported from Washington and Rodriguez from Kabul.

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latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-afghans-drawdown-20110624,0,111667.story

latimes.com

Afghans fear U.S. drawdown will allow Taliban to regroup

Afghans don't have much confidence in the country's inexperienced security forces.

By Alex Rodriguez, Los Angeles Times

June 24, 2011

Reporting from Kabul, Afghanistan

President Obama's planned drawdown of 33,000 U.S. troops from Afghanistan has generated ripples of anxiety for Afghans who worry that the Taliban will overwhelm the country's inexperienced, ill-equipped security forces.

Many Afghans concerned about feeling abandoned by the U.S. are asking with some urgency, "Will we be ready?"

The country will see 10,000 U.S. troops leave by the end of this year, and the rest of the additional forces Obama dispatched to Afghanistan in late 2009 head out by September 2012. The U.S. combat mission is scheduled to wrap up by the end of 2014, when American and NATO forces will limit their involvement to training and equipping Afghan army and police forces.

What isn't known despite Obama's address Wednesday, Afghans say, is to what extent the Taliban insurgency's fighting capacity will be diminished by 2014, or whether efforts to bring insurgent leaders to the negotiating table will bear fruit.

"The core Taliban group's idea is to topple the system, to reverse the process," Abdullah Abdullah, a former Afghan foreign minister and President Hamid Karzai's main opponent in the last presidential election, told reporters in Kabul on Thursday. "They will continue that struggle; that's very obvious."

Haroon Mir, an Afghan political and security analyst, said many concerns involve what the Taliban may achieve by 2014, rather than in the next several months.

"We know the Taliban won't amass a bunch of fighters because 10,000 U.S. troops have left this year, but in 2014, that might be the case," Mir said. "People are afraid that the Taliban will return, and the Afghan security forces won't be able to defend the country."

Afghans acknowledge a substantial lack of confidence in the country's security forces, which now number about 150,000 army troops and 122,000 police officers. Since 2009, there have been 16 cases of Afghan security personnel shooting and killing NATO troops and Western military contractors. An estimated 80% of Afghan police and army recruits cannot read.

Next month, Afghanistan is expected to assume security responsibility in two provinces, four provincial

capitals and most of Kabul. One of those provincial capitals, Lashkar Gah in Helmand, has been the site of fierce fighting between coalition troops and Taliban insurgents. Even relatively quiet provinces like Bamian, also slated for a handoff to Afghan forces next month, recently have been hit by Taliban violence. This year, the beheaded corpse of the Bamian provincial council chief was found on a roadside.

Karzai welcomed Obama's speech, saying the drawdown announcement signaled the start of Afghanistan's self-determination.

"Every nation protects its own land, and Afghans can do it better," he said in a statement. "We have proved it over the course of history, and we are proud of that."

Nevertheless, Afghans say the drawdown probably will rekindle fear of a U.S. abandonment of the region akin to that of the early 1990s, when the Soviet Union collapsed and Washington no longer saw a need to nurture strong links with Afghanistan and Pakistan. Washington has said on numerous occasions that it will not make the same mistake, but Afghans remain unconvinced.

"America left us, and Afghanistan became a safe haven for terrorists," said Samad, a manager of a Kabul wedding hall who, like many Afghans, goes by one name.

Experts say Afghans' concerns about the drawdown will be eased if Washington ramps up its pressure on Pakistan to rein in Afghan Taliban militants who use Pakistan's largely lawless tribal areas along the Afghan border as sanctuary from which to launch attacks on NATO and Afghan forces in Afghanistan.

Top U.S. civilian and military leaders have met with their counterparts in Islamabad, the Pakistani capital, on numerous occasions in an attempt to get Pakistan's military to uproot Afghan Taliban fighters and commanders, particularly those that belong to the Taliban wing known as the Haqqani network, from their strongholds in the North Waziristan region. Pakistani military leaders have consistently refused.

When U.S. officials have raised allegations that elements of the Pakistani security establishment maintain links with Afghan Taliban militants in the tribal areas, Pakistani military and intelligence officials have steadfastly denied the charges.

Abdullah was among those who said Washington must succeed in prodding Pakistan to clamp down on militants if conditions are to improve in Afghanistan.

"What will happen to the support that the Taliban gets in Pakistan?" Abdullah said. "Will they still have training camps, bomb-making factories where they make IEDs used against the Afghan people and international troops? Whether the U.S. effectively uses its leverage with Pakistan to convince them that supporting the Taliban is not in their interest — this is a question."

alex.rodriguez@latimes.com

Special correspondent Aimal Yaqubi contributed to this report.

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Op-Ed

Doyle McManus: A pivot point in Afghanistan

President Obama's decision for a quicker drawdown of U.S. troops is a pivot point, both in U.S. strategy and in the politics of the war at home.

Doyle McManus

June 23, 2011

In 1966, as President Lyndon B. Johnson was becoming ever more enmeshed in the war in Vietnam, a Republican senator from Vermont named George D. Aiken proposed an audacious alternative strategy. The United States, Aiken said, should declare victory and withdraw.

At the time, some believed Aiken was joking, but the senator was quite serious, and his proposal was considerably more subtle than it sounded. The United States, he said, should stop seeking objectives that were beyond its reach and focus on doing whatever was necessary to reach a negotiated solution it could live with.

There was an element of Aikenism in President Obama's announcement Wednesday that the time has come to begin withdrawing U.S. troops from Afghanistan, and to do it a little faster than some of his generals wanted.

Even as U.S. forces continue to battle on the ground in Afghanistan, White House aides told reporters that the president's decision was based on the success of U.S. and allied forces over the last 18 months. Reducing the number of troops reflects military progress, the White House said, not reverses.

But more important, Obama staffers were insistent in noting that the United States has limited goals in Afghanistan — far more limited than when we entered the war a decade ago. In those days, the administration of President George W. Bush hoped to turn the war-wracked country into a rapidly modernizing democracy.

Now, the goal is to make sure Afghanistan can't be turned again into a staging ground for terrorism directed against the United States or Pakistan.

"It is important to note that defeating the Taliban is not the objective here," Obama spokesman Jay Carney said this week. Instead, officials said, the objective is to negotiate a deal with the now-weakened Taliban, one that could see some of the Islamist insurgents return to a role in Afghanistan's government.

A White House official said Obama hoped that Americans would see Wednesday night's speech as a

"pivot point" in the almost 10-year-old war — as the moment when the United States shifted from increasing the number of its troops in Afghanistan to bringing them home.

The timetable presented by the White House on Wednesday covered only about a third of the roughly 100,000 U.S. troops now in Afghanistan: the 33,000 who were sent in the "surge" Obama ordered at the end of 2009. But the official said the president wants withdrawals to continue even after the surge troops are out.

That calendar is a bit quicker than U.S. military commanders had wanted. Military officials had asked for most of the surge troops to remain until the end of 2012, to keep them on the ground through the entire "fighting season." Instead, Obama decided that the surge troops should be out by September 2012.

That apparent conflict — and the timetable's coincidence with the presidential election campaign, which will be in full swing next September — was the focus of much of the initial reaction to Obama's move.

In fact, though, the September withdrawal date is roughly what Obama signed up for in December 2009, when he agreed to the military's request for a surge that would last about 24 months at full strength. Underlying the president's rebuff to the generals' request for more time was his desire to make it clear that the decision to draw down was serious and immutable.

For all that, though, this withdrawal timetable is no rush for the exits. Under Obama's calendar, there will still be about 67,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan in the fall of 2012. That's twice as many as were in the country when Obama entered the White House.

And U.S. officials are talking increasingly of a long-term commitment of military trainers, advisors and others that would remain for many years. The commander of the U.S. training mission in Afghanistan, Lt. Gen. William B. Caldwell, said this month that his mission of building the Afghan army and national police would take "until about 2016, 2017."

Will this plan work? It's far too early to say, of course. The parts of the puzzle that are most susceptible to applications of U.S. military power — tracking down and killing Taliban leaders, and training Afghan army troops — appear to be going well. The non-military parts — nudging Afghanistan's civilian government toward more efficiency and less corruption, persuading Taliban leaders to negotiate an end to the war — don't.

Obama's decision is a gamble, but so are many decisions in war. If Afghans on both sides conclude that the United States is leaving the battlefield, and the Taliban resurges, the president's choice this week won't look brilliant. But if the U.S. military's assessments of the Taliban are accurate, that's not likely to happen.

So yes, it's a pivot point, both in U.S. strategy and in the politics of the war at home. From now until election day in 2012, Obama can (and doubtless will) cast our progress in Afghanistan in a new, more hopeful narrative. The late Sen. Aiken would have recognized the approach: We've redefined our goals, we're winning, and we're getting out.

doyle.mcmanus@latimes.com

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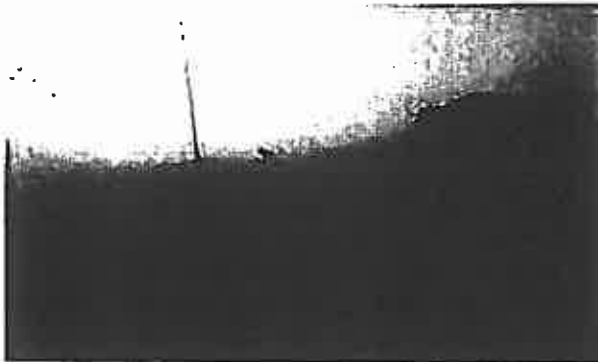
Obama must not undo success of surge in Afghanistan

A rapid US troop withdrawal might help win the 2012 election for President Obama – but risks losing the war itself



Tom Rogan
guardian.co.uk, Thursday 23 June 2011 21:00 BST

A [short comment](#)



As President Obama announces the beginning of the US troop withdrawal, an American soldier stands guard on a watch tower overlooking villages in Khost province, eastern Afghanistan. All US and British combat troops are due to depart the country by 2014. Photograph: Ted Aljiba/AFP

On Wednesday evening, President Obama announced his intention to withdraw 10,000 US forces from Afghanistan by the end of this year and 29,000 more by the end of 2012. These drawdowns are heavy in scale and rapid in speed. As commander-in-chief, the president must ensure that his timeline proceeds with central regard to the evolving situation in Afghanistan, in precedence to that in Washington. If circumstances demand, Obama must alter his withdrawal deadlines accordingly.

America must not lose a war for the sake of short-term domestic political expediency.

Since December 2009, the Obama administration has implemented an effective counter-insurgency strategy in Afghanistan. A strategy with three main objectives – to deny al-Qaida a safe haven, to deny the Taliban the ability to overthrow the Afghan government and to develop the Afghan security forces to a point where they can assume responsibility for their country. I wrote in support of this strategy at its inception because it presented – and presents – the best chance for crucial American success in Afghanistan.

In security terms, the effectiveness of Obama's strategy up to this point has been significant, most especially in Afghanistan's restive south. Through the accelerated establishment of numerous security posts deep in what were once effective Taliban safe zones, the US military and Nato have developed a "presence" factor that has allowed US and allied forces to exert an unprecedented level of military pressure on the Taliban, driving the group out of settlements, weakening their influence and denying their access to supplies. This aggressive strategy has also imposed huge losses on the Taliban's military leadership, draining the group of valuable tactical experience, knowledge and local strategic direction.

Further, Obama's strategy has helped develop Afghan security forces that are increasing in number and improving in quality. All of these facts represent real, substantial but, in the short term, also reversible achievements. These gains must be held and translated into political effects.

At the political level, while Karzai's administration continues its abysmal record of corruption and while governance efforts remain unsatisfactory, the space granted by security gains means that a civilian "surge" of governance support can now take place. Added to this opportunity is the new US focus on fostering empowerment at the local and provincial levels rather than at the central level. This tough-minded realism (powerfully summed up by counter-insurgency expert Andrew Exum) provides a reasonable and practical basis by which security gains can have a transferred political effect going forward.

If President Obama enforces significant troop withdrawals even though this "governance surge" is yet to be fully implemented, his Afghanistan strategy will likely fail. So, the president should proceed with sensible caution.

First, Obama must resist those arguing for more rapid withdrawals on the basis of false strategic logic. These individuals were wrong on the Iraq surge, and they are wrong now. While al-Qaida is weakened in Afghanistan, the group represents only one element of a broader movement of groups that retain capability and ambition. A precipitous US withdrawal would invite these groups to return to Afghanistan, buoyed by a perceived American defeat and focused on attacking the United States.

Put bluntly, rapid withdrawal will equal US defeat. The president cannot allow this.

Second, Obama must resist the belief (hinted in his speech) that Afghanistan is now too expensive. Although financial costs in Afghanistan have been extreme, to argue that finances now make US involvement prohibitive is morally indefensible. Over 1,600 Americans have died in the US Afghanistan mission and many more have been wounded. Put simply, domestic financial concerns are nothing compared to the personal pain of the wounded or lost and their families, suffered through service in Afghanistan for a mission that can still be accomplished.

As for Republicans who argue for withdrawal (after years of aggressive talk), they serve only to fulfil Lincoln's fear of the party becoming "a mere sucked egg, all shell and no principle in it". The moral and strategic costs of failure in Afghanistan would be truly disastrous for the United States.

Instead of making policy through the hazy scope of November 2012, the president should pursue his withdrawals under application of three key considerations. First, Obama should ensure that conditions in Afghanistan dictate the speed and scale of withdrawals. Second, as recommended by Secretary Gates, Obama should allow the military flexibility to decide which type of forces it withdraws first. Third, Obama should ensure that substantive negotiations with the Taliban only take place in a situation of relative American strength. At some point, reconciliation negotiations will be necessary, but if the US acts from a position of weakness, negotiations will lead to a US defeat.

The president has made his decision to begin withdrawing troops. Whether one agrees or disagrees with his broader national security judgement, this decision is his to make. In implementing the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, though, Obama must ensure that his duties as president take precedence over his natural political desire for re-election.

America can still succeed in Afghanistan. As he goes forward, this understanding and objective must be central in the president's mind.