State, Security and Economy in Afghanistan
Current Challenges, Possible Solutions
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Contents

Introduction .........................................................................................................................................2

Colloquium Summary .........................................................................................................................4

Colloquium Presentations

H.E. Mohammad Karim Khalili ........................................................................................................ 12
Ambassador Francesc Vendrell ......................................................................................................... 15
M. Masoom Stanekzai ...................................................................................................................... 17
Ambassador Zahir Tanin .................................................................................................................. 19
Peter Feith ....................................................................................................................................... 21
Andrew Wilder ................................................................................................................................. 23
Barbara J. Stapleton ........................................................................................................................ 29
Richard Atwood .............................................................................................................................. 33
J Alexander Thier ............................................................................................................................ 36
William Maley .................................................................................................................................. 38
Marvin G. Weinbaum ...................................................................................................................... 42
Rani Mullen .................................................................................................................................... 44
Amin Saikal ..................................................................................................................................... 47
Ambassador Robert Finn ................................................................................................................ 48

Appendix I: Colloquium Participants ............................................................................................. 53

Appendix II: Reconstruction and Development Project Analysis ............................................ 56

Appendix III: Wolfgang Danspeckgruber, “Notes from Kabul” .................................................. 60
Introduction

Over the past six years Afghanistan has achieved some impressive gains. Although Afghanistan is today the fifth poorest country in the world and its 28 million people have suffered occupation, war and destruction – including a bloody thirty-year mujahideen civil war – significant accomplishments have been made. There is a democratically elected president and parliament, ongoing progress in human rights, and the growth of a quite vibrant free media. There have been remarkable advancements in health and education. Health services are now available to some 80% of the population. Maternal death in the post-perinatal period has been reduced by 30% and child mortality rates have also improved with an estimated 50,000 babies saved. Education and access to it has improved with over 6 million children – 35% of them girls – going to school. Important strides have also been made in regards to the nation’s infrastructure. More than 4,000 miles of roads have been built, and a major working cell phone communication system has been established with approximately three million users. Many provinces, especially in the North and West are beginning to see sustained economic development. Also, many Afghan displaced persons are returning, unfortunately however most end up in larger urban areas like Kabul.

These are all achievements that have been bolstered by a strong international presence and it appears that a majority of Afghans want the international presence to remain. The EU and its member states for example have spent some four billion euros in civilian assistance, not counting the costs of their military and assistance operations with which the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy and Spain have been deeply involved.

These achievements need to be sustained but there is a growing sense of drift among both the Afghan public and our own, and concern that what seemed a success story could be going wrong. Since 2006 an insurgency has spread, reaching provinces close to Kabul. Suicide attacks, almost unheard of in Afghanistan in 2001, have become routine. Unfortunately, security problems, the “war on terror” and military operations in the South and East permit very little by way of state-building in these regions and provinces see much less economic development than in the West and North. This lack of economic assistance is exploited by the Taliban – “where the street ends, the Taliban begins.” The war in Iraq has absorbed US and international resources, and worse, has influenced insurgent strategies like suicide bombings which have increased dramatically since 2006. The suicide bombers are Afghans and are deliberately targeting western and international actors, troops and governmental officials.

Civilian deaths – more than 8,000 in 2007 alone – have badly strained the relationship between ISAF and Afghans. Matters were made worse by the sometimes totally inappropriate ways that NATO and US forces dealt with civilian deaths. This helped to enable the Taliban and radical forces to exploit resulting popular disapproval. There are growing numbers of voices which call the international forces “occupiers.”

At the 2006 London Conference it was expected that the insurgency would be reduced, but since 2006 it has dramatically increased. Pakistan has been its major stronghold and supply base. We are surprised by its extent, virulence and dramatic expansion and have perhaps underestimated Pakistan’s negative influence. This was an issue never really addressed in UN Security Council discussions.

Another major security problem is the failure of an effective and sufficient police force. The Afghan National Police force requires training, equipment and better pay. Police officers wounded on missions must receive adequate support. Since 2007, German efforts have been augmented by the US as well as the development of the EU Police Reform Mission (EUPOL).

Narcotics production is on the rise and threatens to corrode the Afghan body politic. The Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups has achieved few tangible results. Proceeds from the narcotics trade are apparently used widely throughout the country, even by members of the government. The result is a government which lacks a monopoly of violence and whose writ over areas regarded as relatively quiet has weakened. The government apparently does not have the confidence of the population with its legitimacy undermined by corruption, a culture of impunity, bad governance and significant absence of rule of law.

As the UN Office on Drugs and Crime explained in its last report on poppy production in Afghanistan, poppy cultivation and local refining has increased dramatically even though eradication programs combined with alternative livelihood programs have worked in some districts. Spraying as an eradication strategy has proven not to work, but paying the farmers with security protection and available alternative agricultural initiatives has worked in some areas.

There are also increasing problems between key members of the international community and the Karzai Administration. Initiatives by the international community, including some 1,500 NGOs working in Afghanistan, often appear to be disconnected from Afghan reality. Afghans complain that there is little Afghan ownership or involvement in their nation’s reconstruction and development. There is a pressing need to develop programs in scope, intensity and with timeframes that mesh with Afghan needs, expectations and criteria.

Most importantly, the trust of the population is shaken both with respect to the Karzai Administration and the international community. The lingering questions remain of how long and under which conditions will the international community remain and assist the country. If international forces leave from unstable regions – particularly in the South and East – and the Afghan government has no grip there either, with whom should and will the population ally itself?

So the Afghans and the international community find themselves at a crossroads. As is the perception both within and outside Afghanistan, we must win the situation now or the security conundrum may endanger effective international assistance and push the Afghans to align themselves with those who may regain power. We also have to begin to prepare for presidential and parliamentary elections, but under the current security conditions will it be possible to conduct meaningful elections? All of these problems must be addressed immediately.

The Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination at Princeton University (LISD) has been involved in issues concerning security, stabilization and state-building in Afghanistan since 2001. In November 2007, LISD convened a meeting in Brussels, Belgium - the seat of the EU and NATO - bringing together senior policy makers, diplomats, academics, government representatives, and representatives of the private sector, civil-society institutions, the UN and NGOs active in Afghanistan to discuss critical challenges facing Afghanistan, to hear Afghan perspectives, and to do so under considerations of the possible contribution of the international community, especially the EU, in light of the other pressing financial obligations and challenges.

For the outstanding organization of this Liechtenstein Colloquium in Brussels I would like to thank Lilo Berner-Dettwiler, my student organization team, and particularly Carol Wang and Miriam Schive.
Colloquium Summary

Opening Press Conference
Afghanistan’s Drug Problem

The colloquium commenced with a press conference co-organized by the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs’ Office of External Affairs and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). At the press conference, UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa launched the UNODC’s 2007 Annual Report on Afghanistan. Costa drew attention to the fact that the Afghan poppy cultivation in 2007 was the largest crop in 150 years. The report made clear that poppy growing areas were synonymous with regions that lacked state control and infrastructure. The report also showed that Europe was the largest consumer of Afghan heroin – and as such the problem was a shared responsibility. The heroin trade accounted for over 50% of Afghanistan’s GDP during the period of the report.

Session One
State-Building and Security: Challenges and Prospects

The Political Environment

In the first formal session of the colloquium the participants leapt straight into an issue that was to permeate the entire meeting – namely, whether the international community should negotiate with the Taliban, and if so, how the international community should define the Taliban today. Does the Taliban only mean groups like Mullah Omar’s, or does it also include locally organized groups?

From this initial question the discussion stepped back to examine the state of progress in a number of areas of Afghanistan’s rehabilitation. The point was made that the international community should acknowledge the substantial gains that had been made in Afghanistan since 2001 – particularly in the areas of healthcare, infant mortality and education. Currently there is $3-4 billion in international development assistance being disbursed in Afghanistan. It was also noted that some of the recommendations from LISD’s October 2006 colloquium on Afghanistan had been addressed by the Afghan government.

However there remained a number of areas of concern, one being that all the international assistance provided was not well coordinated or effectively implemented. There was general agreement about the need for greater sub-national governance, and the link between sub-national governance and security. The impact of the US’s Iraq policy on Afghanistan policy was raised and it was acknowledged that these two countries could not be treated in the same way by the international community. The international community’s outreach to Urdu and Arabic audiences had been inadequate to date, and in addition the international community’s outreach to the religious community had not been as effective as the Taliban’s.

A number of projections were discussed for Afghanistan’s security in the year ahead. Although progress was being made, the outlook, like the year before, was not good due to a lack of an effective counter-insurgency strategy. The battle against the Taliban had to be more than a military one – it had to include intelligence, ideas and perceptions. Flagging support for European nations’ continued military involvement in Afghanistan was of serious concern.

A number of proposals were made in this session. For the Afghan government they were to 1) reform itself
and reduce corruption, 2) improve relations with the Parliament, and 3) develop an economic vision. For the international community the proposals were to 1) improve the effectiveness of its development work, 2) increase the scale of assistance, and 3) for NATO to play a more serious role in training and developing local security capacity.

**Rule of Law**

The second main policy area addressed in this session was rule of law. Discussions pointed to a clear need for a better-integrated rule of law strategy. Examples were given of “blurred perspectives” between different donors working in the same sector and a lack of coordination between different arms of the justice sector – from police to prosecutors, the courts and prisons – and between the district, provincial and Kabul levels. A criticism of the international community’s efforts in this sector noted that the state-building agenda had always taken a back seat to counter-insurgency in Afghanistan and that this had resulted in the international community entrenching potential war criminals in official positions. It was noted that good governance and the rule of law should be the bulwark against the insurgency. The problem was how to make them effective in areas where the insurgency has taken hold.

The idea of creating “pockets of competence” where rule of law could be effective and work as an example for the rest of the country was raised. It was proposed that this would be most effective in combination with a strategy of provincialization and localization. This issue was also related to the point concerning the need for greater sub-national governance. The group also acknowledged the need to work more closely with the informal justice system, including by making it more accountable.

The Afghan people’s faith in the institutions of justice is terribly low. The judiciary is reported as the institution that is perceived as the least fair and most corrupt. The police service is not far behind. The continued impunity of those who had broken the law, had not been punished and were now holding positions of power had done much to undermine any semblance of legitimacy that these organs had. Vetting of public officials and building the capacity of the civil service were issues that the international community had come to too late, but which at least were now on the agenda.

The issue of police reform was considered in particular. The original three-year plan for police reform may have been too ambitious, given that the police forces were effectively being built from scratch and illiteracy and other problems of human capacity would necessarily slow the process down. The mentoring programs had not been particularly effective. The Ministry of Interior needed substantial investments for reform.

**Elections**

Another major issue for this first session revolved around the next presidential and parliamentary elections in Afghanistan. The well known problems with the Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV) electoral system were noted and it was proposed that this system, a barrier to the creation of effective political party creation, should be changed ahead of the next elections. The SNTV system was cumbersome, expensive and easy to manipulate. A proposed timeframe for such a change was discussed, along with the political will that would have to be generated to make such a change. Other issues of concern included the difficulties of accurate voter registration, and the need to continue to support the creation of a permanent electoral commission.

**PRTs and the Provision of Security**

A final issue discussed in the first session concerned the security situation and the role of Provincial Re-
construction Teams (PRTs). The key concern that the NATO International Security Assistance Force for Afghanistan (ISAF) did not have adequate troop numbers from contributing countries was given serious attention. It was noted that the profile of the insurgency was shifting rapidly along local lines of allegiance, and that the links between armed opposition groups and criminal elements was becoming more opaque. Regions that were once stable, in the North and the West for example, were now becoming dangerous for aid workers. There have been an increased number of political assassinations. The PRT concept was not an effective substitute for a national government strategy for combating this problem. The concept of “civilianization” of PRTs was also discussed.

Other Key Issues Arising from Discussion

During the discussion session that followed a number of interesting questions were raised, including:

• Whether military conscription could address the dual problems of inadequate Afghan military forces and youth unemployment and radicalization;
• Why the census (originally a primary requirement of the Bonn Agreement) had not yet been held and what the prospects were for holding one in the current security environment;
• Whether the insurgency was actually on the rise, or whether this was a “war of perceptions.”

Session Two
Afghanistan’s Regional Relationships

Afghanistan and Its East: Pakistan, Border Issues and India

The session began with a discussion of the strategic, political and economic interconnectivity between Pakistan and Afghanistan, and it was noted that a deteriorating political situation in one country could have a devastating effect on the other. The history of the Afghanistan-Pakistan bilateral relationship has been beset by border disputes, refugee flows, trade issues and internal challenges.

A confronting question was raised at the outset – has the window of opportunity been lost for effective cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan in order to defeat the insurgency? This led to a discussion of the debate about whether the insurgency was largely a proxy invasion by Pakistan or whether Afghans were leading the insurgency. The different groups of Taliban – Afghan versus Pakistani versus Central Asian – made it difficult to tell who was in control.

A debate concerning Pakistan’s intentions in Afghanistan generated some strong positions on whether Pakistan had a two track policy toward Afghanistan; whether it sought a friendly, non-threatening, stable Afghanistan or a failed state; and whether Pakistan sought to exploit ethnic divisions within Afghanistan to create a “Pashtunistan.” The difficulties of defining the border between the two states – a remnant of the Durand Line legacy – has allowed both countries to manipulate support for aggressive bilateral policies as needed.

Taking the debate away from the Afghan perspective to the Pakistan viewpoint, the need was raised for the international community to provide support to the Pakistan government to help them control the border, and to provide humanitarian and development assistance to the North Western Frontier Province (NWFP) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in order to ease the poverty burden. The confused role of the US in bolstering President Musharraf on the one hand and making demands for Pakistani democratization on the other was raised as an issue feeding into regional relations and the border issue. Border issues were a constant barrier to effective bilateral diplomacy and the lack of security on the Afghanistan-Pakistan
border led to enormous human cost in terms of refugees. Participants discussed the potential impact of the upcoming Pakistan elections and the impact of a new government on Pakistan’s willingness and ability to attack insurgents.

The recent Peace Jirga was raised as a positive channel for furthering diplomatic relations.

**Afghanistan and India**

Afghanistan has traditionally been the land bridge between the sub-continent and Central Asia, and this strategic position has been the focus of recent India-Afghanistan bilateral relations. India has gained leverage over Pakistan post-September 11, including through its rapprochement with Iran and Central Asian countries. India is a crucial donor to Afghanistan’s reconstruction and the bilateral relationship is strong. To the international community, India is perceived as a regional role model of democratization, particularly for Afghanistan. For its part, India seeks a strong, secular Afghanistan as a check on Pakistan and also to build trade and access to resources.

**Afghanistan and Its West: Iran**

The Iran-Afghanistan bilateral relationship was entirely different from Afghanistan’s relationship with Pakistan. Iran has a range of growing interests in Afghanistan, including media interests, water resources and hydrocarbon flows.

Iran’s strategic context has changed in recent years. The war in Iraq has extended Iranian influence as far as Lebanon. The re-election of Ahmadinejad has increased US and Israeli hostility toward Iran, and the pursuit of nuclear fissile material has increased tensions and the possibility of Israeli strikes against Iran. In terms of Iran’s relations with the West, there was a danger that Afghanistan could become a pawn in the dispute between Iran and the US. Despite Iran’s long-term interests in a stable Afghan neighbor, in the context of global relations Iran could seek to destabilize Afghanistan by providing support for the insurgency, to ensure a US failure there.

The question was raised whether Track II diplomacy between Iran and the West could be an appropriate forum for discussing regional issues, including Afghanistan’s future.

**Afghanistan and Its North: Central Asia**

Central Asia and Afghanistan have a long shared history and Afghanistan serves as a passage point for trade, drugs and population movements. Approximately 17% of the narcotics coming from Afghanistan go through Tajikistan. While the percentage is small, it is sufficient to destabilize the region.

The potential for human capital in Central Asia has been overlooked as the Soviets supported large numbers of educated people during their occupation. A recommendation was for the international community and Afghan government to bring in doctors, teachers and other civil officials from Central Asia at lower costs. Another was that people should begin to think of regional development on both sides of the Central Asian border, especially in terms of energy, health and education related projects.
Session Three
Security and International Priorities

The third session began with a discussion of a recent report profiling Afghan suicide bombers which showed clearly that such bombings were certainly a cross-border issue. It was noted that the quality of suicide bombers in Afghanistan was very low – the martyrs were poor, disabled and uneducated. This led to the question of what the incentives or pressures were for such individuals to become suicide bombers.

On the insurgency emerging from the South but moving to the North, the point was made that there was no common platform for the insurgency, it was not a coherent movement, it was without a political platform and more akin to a protest vote by disenfranchised groups. Whatever the motivation, such groups were increasingly resorting to violence. There were concerns that President Karzai had lost the support of several Pashtun tribes who had become marginalized in the South, and that this might affect his prospects of re-election in 2009.

The point was made that the US made a potentially fatal mistake in not investing enough troops in Afghanistan initially, assuming a swift and easy victory, and diverted resources too quickly away to the Iraq campaign. This mistake left President Karzai in the position of having to distribute key positions around the country to local powerbrokers and potential spoilers, which had a negative impact not only on the security situation but also on the image of the state in the eyes of Afghans.

ISAF in Afghanistan

The discussion moved on to the role and impact of NATO forces in Afghanistan. NATO’s experience of transformation in Afghanistan may reflect the transformation of military operations for the next ten to fifteen years. Afghanistan is currently the number one priority for NATO, but it should not be assumed that it will remain so indefinitely. NATO and Afghan security forces can, with the right capabilities, move into the South and displace the Taliban. However the ability to maintain such a military presence and establish good governance does not yet exist. The challenge of engaging in parallel counter-insurgency, counter-terrorist and reconstruction operations continued.

The lack of domestic support in several European NATO countries meant that troop and equipment restrictions, and caveats on troop operations and mobility severely hampered NATO’s efforts. In terms of the EU’s commitment to Afghanistan the point was made that there appeared to be confusion within the EU between resistance to the Bush Administration’s policies on the one hand, and an appreciation of Afghanistan's relevance to each EU member’s national security on the other.

The NATO approach lacked coherence and as a result it was difficult to develop a comprehensive NATO strategy. NATO does not have a development mandate. Although PRTs may assist with development, they generally lack non-military capability which is one of their key weaknesses at present.

A discussion followed concerning international troops’ ability to win “hearts and minds” and whether this was even a priority, or whether such troops should rather be working hard to empower Afghan leaders to be able to deliver governance and resources to the people. ISAF’s advantage over the Coalition forces in terms of the image war was that ISAF troops included Muslim troop-contributing countries as part of a broad-based military alliance. Across Afghanistan there were tribal disputes at play that made ISAF forces vulnerable to manipulation. PRTs were not in a position to provide governance, as opposed to security, at the provincial level and an increased investment needed to be made in sub-national administration. In this regard corrup-
tion by Afghan officials had created an enormously negative perception of the government among the people of Afghanistan, which in turn has led to a lack of trust.

Afghan national security forces were receiving support and training from ISAF. The Afghan National Army's (ANA) numbers stand at 45,000 and by the end of 2008 could be as many as 70,000. The Afghan National Police (ANP) would take much longer to build up. The point was made that Afghanistan cannot be won back with military means only. Intelligence activities were crucial in order to mobilize communities against the insurgency. Development and reconstruction were key weapons on the ground.

**Afghanistan’s Drug Problem**

A further session on the UNODC report on the drug trade in Afghanistan raised additional interesting points. The relationship between the Taliban and the opium trade was discussed. It was impossible to say whether the Taliban fostered the growing drug trade or whether poppy cultivation had fostered the revitalization of the Taliban.

An emerging problem was that for provinces which had cleaned up the poppy cultivation, the consequence was reduced international attention and assistance, providing a disincentive to keep the province “clean.” Poppy eradication had not been effective to date. The destruction of crops right before harvest punished the farmers and not those controlling the trade and created massive resentment against the government. Providing incentives to farmers to turn to alternative livelihoods in some cases had encouraged other farmers to start cultivating poppy, in order to receive similar incentives.

**Session Four**

**Policy Recommendations, Projections and Further Initiatives**

The session opened with an acknowledgement that the current situation in Afghanistan needed to be viewed through the lens of the country’s history – as a path of conquest, migration and trade, as a pawn in the Cold War game, and as a country recovering from almost thirty years of war.

While some participants were pessimistic about the overall lack of progress in Afghanistan since 2001, and in some cases, negative trends in security and governance, others emphasized how much had been accomplished in such a short time. However as one of the participants noted during this final session, in terms of the future of Afghanistan, “The sky is not falling but it’s definitely darkening.” What was needed were concrete recommendations delivered in a tone that reflected that although Afghanistan was not a lost cause, there were dangerous warning signals that needed to be heeded.

An issue that had not been fleshed out in earlier discussions was raised here – that of “moderate Islam” and how it might be a helpful concept in the Afghan context, particularly as a tool to combat Islamic extremism, and as a “halfway point” for the many Afghans who were inherently skeptical of what they perceive as left-wing/socialist policy. A “new face” of moderate Islam within the group of emerging leaders could provide such middle ground. However it was crucial that the international community’s activities not be perceived as undermining traditional Islam, a pillar of Afghan society.

In a reflection on the international community’s and the Karzai government’s performance to date, a number of potential errors were discussed. It was posed that the dismissal of some long-term activists from government had been too swift and now ethnic diversity had been lost in the government. This had led to polariza-
tion within Afghanistan’s elite politics. The international community had put “all its eggs in one basket” and this had translated into a lack of support for political diversity. Another criticism was that the international community’s military intervention was perceived as having resulted in too many civilian casualties.

In a brainstorming session on future priorities for the Government of Afghanistan and the international community, several participants identified a range of issues for further attention. This included the need to determine whether the international community is prepared to make a serious commitment to Afghanistan’s future in order to allow long-term planning and exit strategies to be formulated and implemented with certainty.

**On Development**

- Either lower expectations of attaining certain goals, or start achieving those goals because the lack of accomplishment was disheartening for the Afghan public and their support for international intervention, as well as for domestic constituencies of contributing nations;
- Ensure that there is an Afghan face on all development initiatives, whether international or domestic.

**On Democratization**

- Start election planning and reform now;
- Conduct a census before the next election;
- Address transitional justice issues with more commitment ahead of the next elections to ensure alleged war criminals are not able to stand for election;
- Increase Afghan participation at all levels of engagement, especially through supporting civil society;
- Acknowledge the need for the international community to engage more with young Afghans;
- Develop and harness the middle class;
- Develop and manage a stronger and more responsible sense of freedom of expression within the media.

**On the Rule of Law and Governance**

- Undertake constitutional reform, particularly in relation to the President’s role and the current centralization of power at the Kabul level;
- Increase the pace of decentralization and the spread of resources to the local level to reduce the sense of ordinary Afghans’ detachment from the capital and Kabul’s lack of awareness of local issues and concerns;
- Increase the role of women in the justice sector;
- Build the capacity of the civil service;
- Establish a leadership training institute for young Afghan leaders.

**On Corruption**

- Reduce nepotism and rivalry in the allocation of ministries to different vested interest groups;
- Attack corruption, which has become endemic in many government agencies;
- Establish international monitoring mechanisms within individual ministries to counter corruption and malpractice, or alternatively an independent corruption “watchdog” agency;
• Improve the government’s public relations as a signal to ordinary Afghans of the positive work that has been done.

On Security

• Use the April 2008 NATO summit as an opportunity to discuss the non-military aspects of security and to develop long-term NATO aims for Afghanistan;
• Acknowledge that stability and security are not national but regional issues and invest in improving relations with Afghanistan’s neighbors.

Participants acknowledged that each of these needs involved extensive investment of human and financial resources, as well as a holistic long-term strategy.

Additional Issues for Further Consideration

The range of issues discussed over three days was extensive. There were a number of additional issues that were flagged but not discussed in detail, or mentioned in the margins of the colloquium that deserved further attention in future meetings. These included:

• The human rights situation in Afghanistan;
• The importance of building the role of civil society;
• Implementation of the national transitional justice Plan of Action and its interaction with the amnesty and reintegration program;
• The need for a final resolution of the Durand Line border dispute;
• Economic development;
• Afghan refugees in Pakistan;
• Capacity building for Afghans across sectors;
• Public administration reform;
• Tension between the executive and legislature.
Colloquium Presentations

Opening Address
H.E. Mohammad Karim Khalili
Second Vice-President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful:

First of all, let me express Hamid Karzi, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, members of the Afghan Cabinet, my companions, the great people of Afghanistan and my sincere greeting and good wishes to you all and wish the conference success.

It is my pleasure to participate at this very important conference in which the most important and key issues regarding peace, security, reconstruction, recognition and analysis of challenges faced by Afghanistan and their possible solutions are discussed. The government and people of Afghanistan appreciate the efforts of the international community in helping Afghanistan and its people. We would like to use your noble opinions to find better ways of bringing forth stability in Afghanistan. Therefore, it is a golden opportunity to express my appreciation to organizers of this conference, the host country, and I would also like to thank Professor Wolfgang Danspeckgruber and his honorable team that provided the opportunity and possibilities of this important conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Although we are facing serious challenges in the Afghanistan, what we hear and see is not the real picture of the country. Problems and successive events overshadow our remarkable achievements obtained in the past six years.

Today Afghanistan has its own democratic regime backed by a democratic constitution, elected president and parliament, free press, equal rights of men and women in the light of religious and cultural values, the growth of civil society, and comprehensive struggle to eliminate poverty from the country. The Afghan National Army has turned into a trusted institution. Works are being done on the development of the Afghan National Police, and fundamental changes were made in the justice system of the country. Several important bills were passed and enacted legalizing the democratic principles of the society as well as paving the ground for private sectors as the main engines of economic growth in the country. Furthermore, the implementations of DDR and DIAG programs and demilitarizing the society to some extent have paved the road toward rule of law.

Since the Bonn Conference, more than 13,000 boys’ and girls’ schools have been built, and more than 6.3 million Afghan students (boys and girls) found the opportunity to join schools. Also, 85% of the people have access to basic health services. And, the mortality rate of children under the age of five dropped dramatically which has been a significant accomplishment saving 85,000 lives of children in Afghanistan.

Fundamental economic infrastructure such as the construction of 2,500 kilometers of main ring roads and over 25,000 kilometers of secondary roads were built and rehabilitated. Up to date, more than 3.2 million people have access to telecommunications such as phone and cell phone services. Also, Afghanistan has paved the ground for application of a modern fiber optic network for the better usage of information communication technology.
Afghanistan has been successful in the rehabilitation of economic infrastructure of the country especially in the field of telecommunication, banking, and land and aerial transportation systems. Steps have been taken to improve accessibility of people to energy resources such as power, imported from the neighboring countries, which is a significant sign of collaboration in the region. Also, with the direct collaboration of local people in more than 280 districts that include 18,000 villages, over 31,000 projects were completed by the National Solidarity Program to improve the lives of rural people.

Of course, Afghanistan could not be successful without the support of the world community which is highly appreciable. At the same time, we should admit that Afghanistan is still facing challenges and in order for Afghanistan to achieve stability, we need to pay particular attention to these challenges effectively and on time. Otherwise, the region turns into a safe and strong haven for international terrorism from which both the West and East will suffer.

Afghans and the world elites unanimously agree on the main and important challenges which exist on the way to establishment of systems, security and public welfare. The main challenges are the activities of anti-government armed forces supported from outside of the country, production and smuggling of narcotics that prevails in the system corruption and funding of terrorism activities, and weaknesses of security forces, local administrations and the justice system. These challenges caused us to miss the opportunities to consider peoples’ problems. Their expectations regarding alleviation from poverty, unemployment, injustice and lack of security have not been met.

I suppose perception of and consensus on the problem is the first step toward solutions, but is not a complete solution to a problem. To focus on fundamental solutions and prevent exacerbating the problems, I would like to briefly point out a few points.

1. Reconsideration and revision of the existing strategies by the world community and the Afghan state.

The state of Afghanistan and its international supporters need to plan an integrated and comprehensive strategy to fight against anti-government armed forces and terrorists. When we are in an irregular war we can not fight successfully by using regular ways. The key to success in this war is to use Afghan National Forces and giving them core roles.

2. Hot discussions are made on the lack of coordination and mechanism of coordination on different levels, but the problem remains the same.

We believe until the international community coordinates with one another and while their donations flow from different inefficient channels, establishment of a powerful and effective system will be far from realization, because the existing parallel systems and numerous decision making centers impede its progression. And until the budget is not considered as a principal tool for coordination, capacity-building in the state of Afghanistan will take years.

3. Regional consensus on Afghanistan issues.

More attention should be paid to expansion of regional cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbors because it will help to maintain unanimity in the region in order to establish stability in Afghanistan.

4. The focus of the international community on helping the state of Afghanistan and its people in creating employment and capital making opportunities is very critical.
Development will not be accomplished unless basic infrastructures are built in order to strengthen the national economy.

5. Stability in our neighboring country Pakistan is highly important for our country.

Currently we observe the failing results of focusing on unilateral interest policies and its reversed impacts. Comprehensive cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighboring countries has an important role in the effective fighting against terrorism. Thus, measures should be taken to reduce tension in the region.

6. To succeed in the combating against corruption, narcotics and gaining the trust of the people, it is necessary to address the following points and place them in priority.

- Strengthening, equipping and training National Security Forces of Afghanistan especially the National Police of the country.
- Focusing on and investing in local administration by taking coordinated measures to enable the local administrations taking the lead and making initiatives in bringing forth stability in the country.
- Creating job opportunities by investing in major sectors such as infrastructure, transit, natural resources, agriculture and water to generate alternative livelihoods which is the best way to fight against drug cultivation.
- Building trust and national unity is the most important factor in bringing stability in the country. A society in which efforts were made to proliferate enmity and animosity for years needs crucial steps in unifying and resolving disputes. A free and committed press can play a remarkable role in this regard. Positive application of free press for democracy in the framework of law, cultural, religious and national values can enable our country to face challenges effectively.

I hope this conference, considering the challenges and obstacles that exist on the way to security and durable peace, discovers proper and practical solutions to these problems.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the world community for their immense assistance for the realization of peace, security and reconstruction in Afghanistan. And I hope that the quality and quantity of these assistances improve for the better.

Once again I would like to thank the hosts of this conference for their warm hospitality.
Keynote Address
Ambassador Francesc Vendrell
Special Representative of the EU for Afghanistan

Afghanistan now has a constitution with separation of powers and human rights. The 2005-2006 elections provided for a legitimate president and parliament. The National Army is increasingly able to perform on its own. There is more professionalism in the police, while there is still a long way to go. There is progress in human rights, their protection and gender rights. There is a relatively free media, though there are increasing problems. There is an Independent Human Rights Commission that is among the most professional in the third world.

It is always a mistake to believe that you can try to reconstruct a country with such a long civil war history in just three to four years. There has been decent progress on the easy stuff – politics. However there is slow, inadequate progress on rule of law institutions – the police and the judiciary. Now there is awareness that we need to focus more on these. The EU is focusing on this. The US is playing a major role. But it will take a long time, and there is no one model to imitate. It will depend on the local situation.

Political parties are not so popular with lots of Afghans. We need to make progress on political institutions and forces that will sustain the reform of the country. We also need to make progress on Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups.

The security situation has become worse, although not particularly in the last year. There have been successes in the South for example. But the feeling of insecurity has increased, because of proximity of the insurgency to Kabul and its spread to the Northwest, Taliban use of suicide attacks which have a huge psychological impact, and the increase in criminal gangs, believed to have links to officials in the Ministry of Interior.

Regarding narcotics, the situation has become worse. The UNODC says there is no linkage between drug production and poverty, but I disagree. The connection is made between the Taliban and drugs. But I am not so sure. They may protect the drug trade, but drugs are not the only source of financing for the Taliban, while there would be a huge drug trade without the Taliban. There is no really clean distinction between the North and the South on drugs. There's been progress against drugs in the North, but there is significant drug trafficking and labs in the North, and there is an arms-for-drugs trade in the North.

In this regard there are seven steps that should be taken:

- Administrative measures – the government must not include officials broadly known to be involved with narcotics.
- Convictions of a few major traffickers.
- Interdiction by ISAF, or by ISAF supplying information to the Afghan government so that the government can take care of it.
- Economic development.
- Alternatives and incentives for farmers – maybe pay a higher price for wheat?
- Afghan’s neighbors – they’ve been too complacent. Pakistan’s intelligence services have been giving support to radical Mujahideen for many years, and now it will be more difficult to control the Taliban influence in Pakistan than it would have been years ago. Iran’s role, on the other hand, has been pretty benign. They have recently become closer with Pashtuns. Recently they may have given some war materiel to the Taliban as a proof of good faith, just in case. But they probably will not go further because they do not want to jeopardize relationships with other Afghan parties.
• We need to make sure Afghanistan is not used as a pawn in the diplomatic conflict between the West and Iran.

There are challenges that must be tackled together:

• Continue to encourage better governance and deal with corruption. People should have faith in their local governments.

• End the conflict with the Taliban as soon as possible, but we do not want to give them the idea that they can just wait us out. I take interest with the idea of “civilianizing” the conflict.

• Try to find ways to talk with the so-called Taliban. Find out if they are under unified command or if they are splintered into local groups that could maybe be brought over.

It’s a good sign that the world remains so committed to working with and for Afghanistan.
M. Masoom Stanekzai
Advisor to the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

How can the Afghan government be enabled to take the lead that should be supported by the international partners? The Afghans must be a responsible, accountable owner of the process. This is a very difficult challenge, but it must be achieved. Capacity means that Afghans are able to implement policies and receive support when necessary.

When we look to national security institutions, we always undermine non-English-speaking Afghans who have a capacity that is underutilized. We lack in number of police, ANA, but look to the streets of Kabul city and ask a potato seller how many years he has been trained and served in the ANA. The potential and capacity actually exists, but it is hidden. Instead of bringing 5,000 trainers from outside, bring 2,000 trainers and train 5,000 Afghan trainers, mix them together and use them to train army and police forces.

What about the limitations of troop provision from foreign countries? Instead, hire officers not on a permanent basis but as a quick reaction force like the Gurkhas are employed from Nepal. They can be trained and utilized in times of difficulty and insecurity. They should be supported, commanded, trained and stood up by NATO and ISAF.

The cost of reconstruction increases every day. More than 25% of the cost of reconstruction goes to the provision of security. How effectively can we utilize these additional fundings to reduce cost and actually build local and national capacity? Eighty private security companies exist, instead, and they cannot be controlled and represent an exorbitant cost. Regulation, monitoring and supervision are required if these companies are to operate credibly.

The PRTs will not be able to provide governance at the provincial level: their capabilities and resources are different and, more importantly, they are rotated every six to nine months. In this short period of time, it is too difficult to learn. We need to seriously think about strengthening local administration, which requires greater support: this new directorate needs to be strengthened early on and right away.

With regard to corruption, this is a major challenge for Afghanistan. But there is a perception of corruption as well. In this sense, the morale of the system has been damaged, such that ordinary people cannot trust it. Some kind of political space must be provided for capable individuals to have the opportunity to make their case and prove their worth. Instead of constantly shutting down many small projects because of the chance of corruption, the cycle ought to be terminated. Some level of consistency ought to exist.

At a very senior level, the Vice-President of Afghanistan participated in this conference, as did four parliamentarians and ministerial officers. This is proof not only of Afghanistan’s commitment to engage in this kind of forum, but also a reflection of the improvement of institutional capacity within Afghanistan. The media is largely responsible for a new-found accountability that officials of the state feel and seem to be acting on. This is an important development and will be reflected by the Afghan attendees as they return to their political roles.

Ordinary Afghans will follow the hero more than they will the academic, so it is important to keep these kinds of discussions grounded in reality. Leaders who are prepared to take a risk are necessary; unless Afghan leaders are prepared to do so and the international community does not undermine this kind of initiative, the state-building process will not move forward. Sixty percent of a minister’s time is spent meeting with
internationals. How much time will he have to focus on his own organizational problems? To make things happen? It is important to not make this about the international community. Ultimately, it is implementation capacity that is required.

Ultimately, military means are not the way to win in Afghanistan: intelligence, mobilizing community or the public against the elements of the insurgency, are critical. For operational purposes, the most important task of intelligence is to determine how best to mobilize the resistance of the people against extremism. Sending troops to buy the hearts and minds of the people will not work – governors, district administrators, parliamentarians and the representatives of the provincial/district councils are the individuals who ought to be reaching out to the Afghan people and, ultimately, to win their hearts and minds.
Addressing Challenges Facing Afghanistan
Ambassador Zahir Tanin
Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the UN

What has gone wrong in Afghanistan? In responding to concerns about the situation in the country it is necessary to concentrate on a balanced assessment of achievements, shortcomings and challenges. Despite the focus on negative trends, a new Afghanistan has emerged in the last six years: an Afghanistan that is no longer a base for regional and global terrorists, an Afghanistan that is rebuilding itself, and an Afghanistan that works hard to secure its future as a viable and functioning state.

However, challenges remain. Some may wonder how and when the country will be able to stand on its feet and arrive at a point of end to conflict. The source of problems is mainly the “proxy war” in southern Afghanistan that is increasingly endangering all attempts towards stabilization and reconstruction. This is a direct challenge to the authority and ability of the Government of Afghanistan, the resolve and relevance of NATO in our time, and the future of peace and stability in the region. With ongoing terrorist campaigns nurtured by well-established cross-border sanctuaries and networks of support, it is nearly impossible to succeed in establishing the rule of law, good governance and the implementation of large-scale development projects. These projects form the key pillars for stability and are crucial to winning the trust of the Afghan people, who find themselves caught in the middle of the Taliban and Al Qaeda campaigns of fear and terror.

With these challenges, the inability of the Afghan government to deal with the complex issues of security, governance and development is often singled out. The fact of the matter is that expectations are too high. The Afghan government has only just emerged from the ashes of a collapsed state and a broken society. The international community should not only focus on difficulties within the Afghan government in trying to deal with the complex issues of security, governance and development.

Instead, the international community is now at a stage where additional efforts are required to strengthen state institutions in Afghanistan and to enable us to operate as a functioning system. These additional efforts require time and resources, as well as the sustained support of the international community in years to come. For example, stabilization efforts can hardly succeed if the international community and the Government of Afghanistan are not able to prove that they have the military superiority. This is the prerequisite for any successful civil-military approach and for any comprehensive strategy aimed at engaging all Afghan people in the reconstruction process.

The international community must not cast a blind eye to other factors that are destabilizing to Afghanistan. First, the international community should understand how to operate more effectively in Afghanistan. It has become increasingly evident that greater coordination, cooperation and synergy are required in the military and reconstruction efforts by our international partners. As has been widely recognized, these efforts currently suffer from a lack of synergy and unity of approach. Greater unity of vision and effort by the international community is paramount to the prospects of a peaceful and stable Afghanistan.

The regional environment is yet another factor. A positive and constructive regional environment is not only necessary for improving security but also for stabilization of the political process and socio-economic development. Pakistan continues to have an integral effect on the regional environment. Peace and stability in Afghanistan and Pakistan are interlinked. Terrorist campaigns are a common threat to both countries. It is, therefore, vital to put an end to sanctuaries and centers of training and logistics for the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Pakistan. The road to peace in Afghanistan starts from Islamabad.
However, Afghans are not yet convinced of having the necessary level of support from Pakistan in dealing with the complex security challenge in Afghanistan. Afghans and the international community need to find a way to revive the spirit of the Bonn Agreement and prevent regional and other actors from utilizing Afghanistan to advance their national interests. Afghanistan needs greater investment in strengthening state institutions and it is important to manage the expectations of the people in a more adequate manner.

Placing sole blame on the Afghan government will in no way contribute to achieving the goals for Afghanistan. The international community should take a more comprehensive approach that includes more sustainable and coordinated delivery of resources and full consideration of regional influences. This updated approach will go further in achieving the lofty goal of a strong, stable and democratic Afghanistan.
Building an Afghan Police Force as Part of Nation-Building

Peter Feith
Deputy Director General, EU Council Secretariat

For police reform, rapid deployment is our model. The European Defense Policy is using a broad range of instruments – not only military and police, but strengthening the rule of law. In conflict and post-conflict situations as in Afghanistan priority issues are strengthening the rule of law and police reform. I am happy to have this opportunity to exchange views with participants here, particularly Afghan participants.

On February 12, 2007, the Council, confirming strong EU commitment to Afghanistan, agreed on the principle of a mission to Afghanistan in the field of policing with linkages to the wider rule of law. This mission will be under the European Defense and Security Policy. The aims of the mission are to develop an Afghan police force that respects human rights and operates within the framework of the rule of law. Issues of police reform at the central, regional and provincial levels will be addressed.

Following the Council’s adoption of a Joint Action on the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan on May 30, 2007 the mission EUPOL was officially launched on June 15, 2007. It consists of some 160 police officers deployed at central (Kabul), regional (the 5 regional police commands) and provincial levels (deployment in provinces, mostly in Provincial Reconstruction Teams).

Complementing these efforts, the EC has launched a program for justice reform. This justice program will aim to professionalize the judicial and public prosecution service, for example through reforms to pay, grading and recruitment, as well as the establishment of a code of ethics. The program will also aim to assist in the development of a new national legal aid system and thus improve citizens’ access to justice.

The police reform project that we launched had very severe teething problems. We were not very quick and agile coming off the ground, and this is sadly as a result of the deteriorating security conditions in Afghanistan during 2006. It also has to do with our, let me be frank, inexperience in deploying into a high-risk conflict and combat area. This brings certain additional requirements that we perhaps had not properly identified when we launched the mission. But importantly, I should express my feelings of sympathy with the Afghan National Police force who over the past period have borne the brunt of taking part in combat duty and have suffered enormously as a consequence. It has hit the Afghan National Police force even more than the military force. We had a difficult start but we are now rapidly catching up and overcoming this.

Whatever happens in terms of security challenges we should not deviate from our ultimate objective. The EU goal is to create a civil police that is professional, efficient and at the service of the Afghan people.

The first priority in time that we would like to address is to develop a strategy and concept of what we think the Afghan National Police should look like in the medium term. This is not an easy question, because there may be room for varieties according to the provinces as to the requirements and tasks of police to take on. In southern provinces, the police are part of the counter-insurgency and there must be proper provision for that. We understand that the border police have their own requirements.

For us, the principle of local ownership is fundamental. We are not going to build up and use Afghan resources without seeking and obtaining the full cooperation and consent of the Afghan government. Whereas our American friends are concentrating on numbers, equipping and training, we think that this can be complemented by our approach, going from the top end from the Minister of the Interior down to regional command centers providing advice, monitoring and mentoring at various levels. In addition, we would like
to have linkages into the judicial sector, give support to the Attorney General’s Office, and thereby we would like to address the whole chain of command of Afghan authorities.

To that end, we are now deploying the mission to its full strength of 200,000 police and justice experts in central and regional levels. Inshallah, we will reach this target by spring 2008. Maybe we can do it quicker, but this depends on variables including the support we can hope to obtain from our partners. Our aims are to: 1) build up a trusted and efficient police force to stand the test of time, and 2) strengthen interaction between the police and wider criminal justice system.

We will support police reform in the international community and strengthen the buy-in of the Afghan government. We work closely with UNAMA, value its strategic advice on this, and hope that police reform will be high on the agenda of further dialogue with the Afghan government. And we hope that we can get the necessary support from NATO and ISAF. We have a good understanding with ISAF command. On that basis we can be deploying out of Kabul very soon.

Let me also add that this particular operation is in close conjunction with community programs. That the commission is providing its support to police reform is in particular evident in the law and order trust fund, which provides for enhanced remuneration for the police force. So rounding off, we hope that we can meet our targets in deploying, we hope that we can get support from US friends and their collaboration, and also an agreement on a compatible and joint approach. Working with others is ensured through the International Police Coordination Board. We think that structure should be chaired or co-chaired by the Minister of Interior or his deputy, to give visible evidence of Afghan ownership. We will provide the Secretariat with the necessary conceptual work that should underpin the structures of coordination with the international community. So I would like to thank you for this opportunity.
Cops or Robbers?: The Struggle to Reform the Afghan National Police
Andrew Wilder
Research Director, Feinstein International Center, Tufts University

Overview of the Police Sector

Afghanistan has never had a very strong or effective civilian police force. Whatever progress was made in developing a police force during the 1970s was lost during the more than two decades of conflict that followed. Following the defeat of the Taliban in the Fall of 2001, anti-Taliban Northern Alliance commanders were quick to exploit the power vacuum and filled many of the district and provincial police forces with private militias who had little or no police training or experience. The daunting challenge confronting police reformers in the Spring of 2002 was to create an effective civilian police force from an untrained force manned primarily by factional commanders and their militias, who had little or no equipment or infrastructure, who were unpaid or under-paid, and who operated within the corrupt and factionalized institutional structure of the Ministry of Interior (MoI).

The Afghan National Police (ANP) is Afghanistan’s over-arching police institution, which consists of the following forces: Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP) who are responsible for most day-to-day police activities; Afghan Border Police (ABP); Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP); and the Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA). In 2006 a temporary force, the Afghanistan National Auxiliary Police (ANAP), was established separate from the ANP to support counter-insurgency operations. The ANP operate under the authority of the Ministry of Interior, which is also responsible for overseeing provincial and district administration and for implementing the government’s counter-narcotics policies.

The 2006 Afghanistan Compact authorized a police force numbering 62,000. The increase in insurgent activities in southern Afghanistan in 2006 resulted in several “temporary” measures to increase the size of the police force beyond this authorized level. One controversial quick-fix measure was the creation of ANAP, a force of 11,270 who are recruited locally, given ten days of training, and then deployed initially to six southern provinces most directly affected by the Taliban insurgency. By late 2006, the US began strongly advocating for an increase in the authorized ANP size from 62,000 to 82,000, which was subsequently approved at the fifth Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board Meeting (JCMB V) in April 2007. The decision to increase police numbers, largely as a result of the growing insurgency, is not fully supported by all other international police reform actors. Some are concerned that the focus of reform efforts is shifting away from establishing a civilian police force to a paramilitary or counter-insurgency force, while others have raised concerns about the fiscal sustainability of increasing the size of the ANP. An area where there is consensus is the need for more policewomen – of the 63,000 police in 2006, only 180 were women.

International Actors and Police Sector Coordination

The police sector in Afghanistan is currently supported by approximately 25 countries and several international organizations. The main police coordination bodies are the Interagency Police Coordinated Action Group (IPCAG) and the recently established International Police Coordination Board (IPCB). The UNDP-managed Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA) has primary responsibility for coordinating support for police salaries. The European Commission has been the single largest donor of police salaries, contributing nearly half of the $330 million channeled by donors through LOTFA between 2002 and 2006.

1. The complete PDF version of this Issues Paper published by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit can be downloaded at www.areu.org.af.
From 2002 to 2007 Germany was responsible for coordinating international support for the ANP as the “lead donor” or “key partner” for the police sector. During this period it contributed approximately $80 million to support police reform activities, mostly implemented by the German Police Project Office (GPPO). In 2007 Germany’s key partner role will be subsumed within the overall umbrella of the newly established European Police (EUPOL) mission in Afghanistan. The EUPOL mission is expected to consist of 160 police advisors, trainers and mentors, contributed by 23 nations (including some non-EU nations like Norway, Canada and Australia) and deployed throughout the country. Since 2004, the US has been by far the largest overall contributor of human and financial resources to support the police sector, with its 2007 contribution alone expected to be $2.5 billion. The US police program is implemented by the US Department of Defense’s Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan (CSTC-A), which is also responsible for training and developing the Afghan National Army (ANA). The main coordination challenges in the police sector are:

- Achieving effective strategic coordination in the absence of a common vision on the role of the ANP and a common strategy on how to achieve that vision. This makes it difficult to extend coordination beyond simple information sharing.
- Strengthening weak coordination between the different security sector “pillars,” especially between the police and judicial sectors.
- Managing the inherent tensions in a situation where a very high percentage of overall human and financial resources are contributed by one donor, which effectively enables it to dominate decision making.
- Strengthening weak coordination between Kabul and the regional and provincial levels.
- Strengthening the government’s ability to govern and coordinate the security sector, including improving government-donor coordination and intra-government coordination among competing ministries.

### Police Reform Activities

#### Training and Mentoring

The main focus of police reform from 2002 to 2005 was police training. The central component of the GPPO program in Kabul was to rebuild and re-establish the Kabul Police Academy (KPA), which trains commissioned officers in a three-year course, and non-commissioned officers in a nine-month course. US support has focused on providing basic training to fresh recruits and serving patrolmen at a Central Training Center (CTC) for police in Kabul, as well as at seven Regional Training Centers (RTCs). The main police training challenges are:

- High rates of illiteracy and semi-literacy among ANP patrolmen and recruits, which makes it difficult to provide effective training and severely limits the policing tasks that can be performed.
- Weak or non-existent recruiting and vetting systems resulting in little attention given to who is trained, and little follow-up to determine what happens to those who have been trained. In some areas this has had the perverse effect of strengthening forces opposed to the central government.

The focus of reform efforts is now shifting from police training to reinforcing this training through police mentoring programs. The largest mentoring program is the US-financed program implemented by Dyn-Corp, which by the end of 2006 had employed approximately 500 international police trainers and mentors. Most of the 160 EUPOL mission personnel will also be given mentoring responsibilities. The main mentoring challenges will be:
• Finding sufficient numbers of highly qualified international police mentors, with an appropriate mix of political as well as technical skills, who are willing to work in remote and often inhospitable areas of Afghanistan.

• Ensuring commitment to police and MoI reform from the top levels of the government and MoI. In the absence of comprehensive MoI reform, large-scale mentoring programs to strengthen the capacity of individual police officials are unlikely to have a major impact on improving the overall effectiveness of the ANP.

• Ensuring that effective assessment systems are established to determine whether the mentoring programs have enough of a positive impact to justify their enormous expense.

Equipment and Infrastructure

Inadequate police equipment and infrastructure are important contributing factors to the ineffectiveness of the Afghan police, as well as to the large number of police casualties. Large amounts of donor funding are now going into building and renovating police infrastructure and donating police equipment. The biggest challenges to equipping the Afghan police are:

• The lack of internal controls and accountability systems in a notoriously corrupt institutional environment.

• Finding the funds to operate and maintain all the donated equipment, vehicles and infrastructure. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that 95% of donated police equipment is non-standard, and some is substandard.

Restructuring and Reforming

By 2005 there was a growing realization that simply providing more training and equipment to individuals who then returned to work in the unreformed institutional environment of the ANP and the MoI was having limited impact. At the same time, the escalation of the insurgency in southern Afghanistan led to greater appreciation of the need for a more effective police force. These two factors have resulted in more attention and resources now being given to institutional restructuring and reform of the ANP and the MoI. The most important institutional reform initiatives in the police sector have been pay and rank reforms, which began to be implemented in late 2005. The major objectives of these reforms are: 1) to restructure a top-heavy police force by reducing senior officer positions, 2) to institute a rigorous process for testing and selecting officers based on merit rather than personal and factional connections and bribery, and 3) to increase pay to facilitate recruitment and retention and reduce corruption.

The most important component of pay and rank reform was instituting a merit-based process for selecting police officers for the greatly reduced number of officer positions. The selection process ran into serious trouble when President Karzai disregarded the recommendations of the selection committee, and instead appointed 14 police chiefs who, among many serious shortcomings, had failed the qualifying exam. After an unusually strong international reaction, and the establishment of a probation board to review the appointments, 11 of the 14 police chiefs were replaced. A major challenge that remains is ensuring that merit-based appointments and promotions are not circumvented in a similar manner in the future.

Key Issues and Recommendations

If police reform is to succeed in Afghanistan, and the big increase in resources to reform the ANP are not to be wasted, the major actors – especially the government, the US and the EUPOL mission – will need to address five key issues.
1. Develop a shared vision and strategy for the ANP.

The most fundamental issue that must be resolved for police reform efforts to succeed in Afghanistan is the need for a shared vision of the role of the ANP, and a shared strategy on how to achieve that vision. In particular, there is a need to reconcile the “German vision” of the police as a civilian law and order force, and the “US vision” of the police as a security force with a major counter-insurgency role. These two visions, shaped in part by the US focus on defeating the Taliban-led insurgency in southern Afghanistan and the German focus on relatively peaceful areas of northern Afghanistan, need to be reconciled and consensus reached on a shared vision that addresses the policing needs of all of Afghanistan. Given the alarming increase in police casualties, urgent attention must be given to developing alternatives to using poorly trained and equipped police (especially ANAP) as a counter-insurgency force. The role envisioned for the ANP has major implications for how police should be recruited, trained, equipped and deployed, as well as for the composition and size of the police force. The differing German and US visions, combined with the government’s lack of vision, are seriously undermining police reform efforts.

2. Replace separate SSR pillars with a comprehensive and integrated rule of law strategy.

The failure of the government and the international community to develop and implement an effective strategy for reforming and strengthening the judicial sector is a potentially crippling flaw of current police reform efforts. A civilian police force, no matter how well trained and equipped, will have little ability to uphold and promote the rule of law in the absence of a functioning judicial system. The failure to adopt a more integrated approach to strengthening the police and justice sectors is related to the failed policy of maintaining separate Security Sector Reform (SSR) “pillars” headed by “lead donors” or “key partners.” This separation made success within each pillar hostage to the enormous differences in the planning, funding and implementation capacities of each lead donor. The separate pillars also created barriers to developing a comprehensive and integrated rule of law strategy that would provide a coherent overall framework within which the individual sectoral strategies could be developed and implemented. For police reform efforts to succeed, there is an urgent need to develop and implement a comprehensive and integrated rule of law strategy, within which reform of the judicial sector should be prioritized equally, if not higher, than reform of the ANP and ANA.

3. Make donor assistance conditional on comprehensive MoI reform.

The most consistent theme that emerged in interviews for this presentation was that without comprehensive reform of the MoI, police reform efforts will fail and the money spent on reform wasted. The MoI is notoriously corrupt, factionalized and an increasingly important actor in the illegal drug economy of Afghanistan. Since 2005 there has been a belated recognition that the focus on training and equipping the police, with little regard for who was being trained or equipped (a process that one provincial Chief of Police described as “putting uniforms on thieves”), will not have much positive impact unless the overall structure within which the police operate – the MoI – is also reformed. While significant progress was made in 2006 to reform ANP pay and rank structures, a much more comprehensive approach to reforming the entire MoI, not just the police section, is necessary if reform efforts are to be effective and sustainable. There has been a tendency to address police reform as a technical problem requiring technical solutions, rather than recognizing that MoI reform is first and foremost a political task requiring a carefully designed political strategy supported at the top levels of government and the international community. A major failure of reform efforts for the past five years has been the lack of political will to proceed beyond recognizing and talking about the problem of a corrupt, factionalized and criminalized MoI. Donors should make their assistance more conditional on comprehensive top-down reform of the MoI, without which their contributions toward police reform efforts are likely to be wasted.
4. Prioritize quality of police over quantity.

There has been a damaging tendency to let immediate issues like the presidential elections, and more recently the growing Taliban insurgency, result in “quick fix” solutions that prioritize the quantity of police over the quality. A recent example was the 2006 decision to create the Afghan National Auxiliary Police to assist in counter-insurgency operations. Such measures to quickly increase police numbers are undermining the longer-term objective of creating an effective police force. While too few police may indeed be a serious problem in some areas, a more serious problem is that the local police that are present are often corrupt and ineffective, and as far as the public are concerned do more harm than good. The reputation of the police (as well as other local government departments) as corrupt and criminalized is eroding the legitimacy of the government, and is one of the important destabilizing factors in Afghanistan today. Increasing the quantity of police will only have a positive impact after more progress has been made in improving the quality of the police through measures such as comprehensive MoI reform, more careful recruiting and vetting, better training, strengthened internal control systems, and stronger links to a reformed judicial sector. As long as the police are viewed as part of the security problem rather than part of the solution, hastily increasing the number of poorly trained police to work in a corrupt institutional environment is more likely to have a negative rather than a positive security impact.

5. Prioritize fiscal sustainability of the security sector.

It is widely recognized that in the foreseeable future Afghanistan will not have the resources to independently sustain the security sector institutions that are currently being developed. Despite this knowledge, few concrete measures are being taken to address the problem, and few decisions are being made to bring security sector costs more in line with what Afghanistan can afford. Failure to act soon to prioritize the fiscal sustainability of the security sector is likely to have a crippling effect on the development of other public and private sector institutions. It may also have a negative impact on the development of democratic institutions, and could result in the destabilizing collapse of security institutions once external resources dry up. International donors must make more of an effort to assess the fiscal implications of reform initiatives such as the massive investments in police equipment and infrastructure, and the decisions to increase the size and salaries of the ANP. They must ensure that the planning and approval of such initiatives are not just based on narrow sectoral perspectives that are negotiated with self-interested ministries, but involve the Ministry of Finance and are based on a national perspective that balances the often competing priorities and demands of different sectors. Prior to the sixth Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board meeting (JCMB VI) in the autumn of 2007, and prior to the recruitment of additional police, the affordability of the JCMB V decision to increase force numbers from 62,000 to 82,000 should be reassessed. Even if major cost-cutting measures are introduced, international donors will still need to make medium- to long-term commitments to continue financing a major percentage of the ANP’s recurrent costs.

Conclusion

Despite some notable achievements, the overall result of police reform efforts during the past five years has been disappointing, and many Afghans still perceive the ANP to be part of the security problem rather than part of the solution. If the key issues that undermined past reform efforts are not addressed, the major increase in human and financial resources directed towards reforming the ANP are likely to be wasted. It is troubling that these issues are all very self-evident, and for the most part have been widely recognized as serious problems for several years. The failure to address them, despite the recognition of their importance, highlights the serious inadequacies of the international community when it comes to institution-building and state-building.
Afghanistan is unlikely to ever again have the levels of international attention and resources devoted to reforming the police that it has today. There is now a unique opportunity to move away from the multitude of individual police reform projects toward a more coordinated, comprehensive and longer-term approach that stands a much greater chance of effectively addressing the complex and difficult task of reforming the ANP. It is time to clarify today’s blurred vision on the role of police in Afghanistan, and to achieve consensus on a common vision and strategy for developing a police force that will operate as “cops” rather than robbers.
Security and PRTs

Barbara J. Stapleton
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Though the insurgency does not pose a military threat and international military forces come out on top of any military engagement, the insurgents in the South and Southeast now have the psychological upper hand. Earlier perceptions that US and NATO forces were all-powerful have evaporated. The success of what has proved a comparatively sophisticated propaganda strategy on the part of the insurgents combined with an ability to swiftly exploit gaps – as recently demonstrated in Arghandab in the Southwest and Badghis in the Northwest – and to take district centers on a regular if transitory basis has succeeded in achieving the desired effects. Along with a ruthless use of terror which has cowed the population.

ISAF, hampered by insufficient ground troops, which the recent NATO “force generation” meeting did nothing to alter, is left chasing the pieces around the chess board. At the same time the alienation of the population, especially in Kandahar and Helmand as a result of civilian casualties largely related to the use of airpower is growing significantly. This has not translated into widespread support for the Taliban in provincial capitals but it is causing indifference and a dangerous sense of resignation. There are other costs to the use of airpower. Why would an Afghan villager report on a Taliban presence in his village if he knew that would lead to ISAF operations with the strong possibility that 500 pound bombs could be dropped if air power was resorted to?

Afghan sources report that it is now too dangerous for people to make open statements of support for the government in much of the Southwest. Government supporters in villages are moving to the provincial capitals. In the Southeast Afghans working for international organizations based in Gardez have moved their families to Kabul. In the EUSR Office national staff from provinces surrounding Kabul such as Wardak and Loghar have also moved their families to the capital to escape the risk of them being targeted.

In briefly looking at the current dynamics of the security situation a number of observations can be made:

North-South Divide

The so called “comparatively stable North” is increasingly anything but in the Northwest. It is too early to judge but the targeting of a leading Shia politician at the opening of a sugar factory in Baghlan on 6 November which caused a terrible loss of life including the death of five other parliamentarians, may have profound ramifications. It has added to the general sense of insecurity. Afghans now think that anything could happen anywhere. At least one prominent Northern Alliance figure immediately issued statements following the incident hostile to the principle of disarmament.

We need to drop the overly simplistic view of the North-South divide in terms of security notably apparent in claims made for success in reducing opium cultivation in the North which had no discernable effect on narco-trafficking in the region. Opium is trafficked from the South to the North and weapons are traded from the North, where they are cheaper, to the South.

The common perception, that only the South and East, the main loci of the conflict, represent a threat to civilian development actors is an inaccurate one. If the insurgency stopped tomorrow that would only reduce security incidents affecting NGOs by 50% or less. Crime, banditry, narco-trading and corruption combined with an often predatory local administration threaten NGOs along with the Afghan people.
The areas of highest conflict see the lowest number of security incidents affecting NGOs, largely because there is a much reduced NGO and UN agency presence in such areas and therefore less exposure. The inverse is true of the North. The majority of fatal incidents this year have been in the North and Northeast.

Having underlined the security threats posed by increasing impunity and criminality there are emerging security dynamics linked to the expanding insurgency:

The Spread of the Insurgency

The predominant routes of the expanding insurgency are westwards into Afghanistan from the Pakistan border. The Tora Bora front in Nangahar reopened this year under Hizb-e-Islami Khalis. Insurgent movements into Nuristan and Kunar also in the East are mainly controlled by Hizb-e-Islami and Lashkar-e-Taiba. Insurgent groups from Waziristan and Quetta have moved northwards and from Helmand groups have moved into the Northwest affecting Farah and Badghis. From the Southeast insurgents have moved through the central-eastern region of Wardak and Ghazni into the North. These changes are reflected in Programme Accessibility Maps issued by the UNDSS. Though insurgent groups may number under one hundred as in the case of Wardak they have had an impact beyond their numbers.

The ability to maintain development programming in Afghanistan has depended since the Mujahideen era on a network of relationships and contacts between NGOs and local power-holders ranging from commanders to community elders. This arrangement is coming under increasing threat where insurgent forces have spread into new areas of the country. The profile of the insurgency is so fluid that relationships and allegiances can change overnight. Local elders often cannot track what is happening and can no longer provide security for NGOs that might have worked in the area for twenty years or more. The country director of an international NGO working in Pakia informed me that national staff now judge the situation as being so unstable that they are unable to leave Gardez, the provincial capital. This follows some years by the NGO in question of employing a series of coping strategies as security deteriorated to allow the continuation of service delivery and engage in development programs such as NSP in the Southeast. The office of the same organization in Ghazni closed last year due to national staff no longer being able to work in the region.

The Emerging Nexus Between Armed Opposition Groups and Criminal Groups

The development of organized crime has evolved rapidly from 2003 onwards. As Mark Shaw pointed out in his important contribution1 to the 2006 UNODC report on Afghanistan, “Law enforcement (including any international presence) may be slow in adjusting to new trends, whereas organized crime groups are able to rapidly adjust to changing social, economic and political contexts.”

The movement of insurgent groups into new areas starting this Spring is altering and increasing the nature of the security threat. An emerging nexus between armed opposition groups (AOGs) and criminal networks – which can also involve elements of the provincial and district government administration including the police – is complicating the existing complex and diverse sets of relationships between local militias, criminal groups and the administration at local levels. Mounting anecdotal evidence indicates that when AOGs enter a new district a jirga-type meeting is held with local criminal and illegally armed groups to arrive at a modus vivendi. Local criminal groups are allowed to continue to conduct business as usual, but in return when the insurgent group needs additional men for an attack on a police post these will be provided.

Each district is different but anecdotal evidence indicates that cooperative agreements on these lines are being

reached. If this trend strengthens it has major implications for the processes involved in state consolidation that the international community is struggling to pursue.

The implications for security, which is rendered much more unpredictable, are equally worrying. The merging of interests between criminal gangs and the Taliban, reported in the Pakistani press in November, mirrors events in parts of Afghanistan. On taking over the Swat Valley the Taliban not only destroyed whatever Gandharan heritage they could, they also immediately went into partnership with the local timber mafia to denude the forest.

Security analysts are now finding it harder to determine which acts are insurgent related and which are criminal. The distinction is already irrelevant in northern Nimroz and up through Farah on the ring road where it is impossible to distinguish between the so-called “police” and the insurgents. However, government forces playing it on both sides tends to take place where the international presence is not strong such as Daikundi, Ghor, Farah, Badghis and Nimroz.

In Kandahar province in a number of areas deals have reportedly been struck between district police chiefs and armed opposition groups to mutual advantage. In leaving district centers nominally under the control of the police direct conflict is avoided. The district police chief can report back continuing control and the insurgents can pursue their objectives which may amount to needing areas of safe passage to move resources through.

The Manipulation of Tribal Rivalries

The insurgents’ knowledge and exploitation of tribal rivalries and disputes has long been a tactic in prosecuting objectives in the South. This tactic is now being employed in the Northwest. In Badghis the Taliban sought to ignite existing tensions between the Aimaqs and the Pashtuns. When the district center in Gulistan was taken some of the police were unable to escape and reportedly eight to ten of them were beheaded and/or mutilated to alienate the tribe from which most of the police came from. By utilizing factional tensions to galvanize conflict, people are forced to choose sides and the insurgents’ overriding objective of gaining more supporters is attained.

Intimidation of the Population

There have been an increased number of assassinations of Afghans supportive of the government and of those who wield influence at local levels who may not be supportive of the government but do not agree with the neo-Taliban. This year an average of 40-50 people have been killed for political reasons every month. This is occurring regularly in the South and Southeast and irregularly in expansion areas like Farah, Badghis, Loghar and Kunar. Targets include provincial council members, mullahs and elders. These events often take place in public when people are going to or returning from the mosque or in front of their families sending a clear public message.

The Future Security Scenario

The continuation of the status quo would constitute both a “best case” and “worst case” scenario in which given current trends:

Armed opposition groups will have increasing control of the hinterland but the cooption of both local criminal groups and governance would allow them to entrench themselves at local levels in a more sustainable way.
As long as international forces remain, the government will only control provincial and district centers in much of the southern half of the country.

The control of roads will become increasingly difficult as the insurgents’ ability to mount road blocks to devastating effect has been repeatedly demonstrated. Carrying a government ID is a death warrant. In Farah in September a road block was set up in Baqua along the ring road, people were pulled out of cars and two government employees and a teacher were killed. Reportedly the road block only lasted one hour.

There is also a convergence of interests among narco-criminals, the insurgents and corrupt officials over the control of roads and illegal border crossing points (BCPs). Five hundred illegal BCPs exist. The 14 official BCPs are the focus of US-led plans to strengthen border control.

The role of the police is crucial to the establishment of law and order which people want above all else. Focused District Development (FDD) is the new plan developed by CSTC Alpha for improving police at the district level. But like everything else, FDD outcomes will be influenced by continuing paradoxes at the center, most critically within the Ministry of Interior.

Conclusion

I was also tasked with the subject of PRTs which I will briefly comment on. The need for a coherent and united strategy between the international community itself and between the international community and the Afghan leadership is ever more starkly clear. The diverse approaches taken by PRTs as well as the national caveats employed by capitals illustrate the ongoing difficulties in achieving this.

The PRTs remain essentially peripheral to the bigger political challenges in Afghanistan which continue to hold the reform process hostage. The woolly thinking underway in Kabul and international capitals on the future role of PRTs in which “civilianizing” PRTs is considered by some a viable option reflects the growing desire to shift from a military to a predominantly civilian engagement. It also raises the question of what international actors are prepared to continue to do and what they are not. Meanwhile short-term responses militate against long-term institutional building and in the process chances of bringing forward an exit strategy are further distanced.
Framework for Election Administration in Afghanistan
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I worked as Chief of Operations to the Joint Electoral Management Body, the joint UN-Afghan body responsible for elections in the transitional period, and was largely responsible for the election operation for the National Assembly and local council elections in 2005. I returned a couple of weeks ago to Kabul to brief parliamentary committees of both houses of the National Assembly as they consider revising the elections law ahead of the next electoral cycle. Today I want to look at aspects of the framework for election administration in Afghanistan about which I spoke to these committees.

The significant successes of the 2005 elections – not least the fact that they actually took place – were overshadowed by shortcomings. Turnout was lower than for presidential elections the previous year. There were widespread reports of fraud, and the resultant perceptions of fraud damaged the legitimacy of the elections. Understandably disappointing for some donors in Kabul was that the elections had been administered largely to political, rather than developmental imperatives. It was an event, rather than process-driven operation, with little time to concentrate on developing the capacity of the national election administration. This was compounded by the fact that 2005 elections cost more than the figure initially presented, causing a shortfall in the budget of about $15 million.

There are different reasons for these shortcomings. Certainly some of the decisions taken in 2005 were factors. However, many shortcomings that impacted the legitimacy and sustainability of the 2005 elections are due to weaknesses in the electoral framework. Some of these still exist and I want to highlight four of them now in the hope that they can be addressed ahead of the next elections.

Electoral System

The first is the electoral system: the single non-transferable vote (SNTV) system. The political consequences of SNTV in 2005 are well known. The system does not allow for a clear effective vote – not obvious why some groups win more seats and some less – there were large discrepancies in the numbers of votes with which different candidates won seats. It undermined in 2005 the development of a stable party system. It produced a fragmented legislature disinclined to work constructively to pass laws or with the executive. For these reasons SNTV is a system used only in a handful of democracies worldwide, and never recommended for countries emerging from conflict, where you have a special need for a clear system that ensures fair representation for all groups.

But aside from these significant political shortcomings, SNTV in Afghanistan’s large electoral districts places huge burdens on election administration. SNTV in large districts means a lot of candidates, which means big ballots. These are difficult for voters and expensive and difficult to produce and distribute to different corners of the country. (In 2005 ballot papers alone weighed about 12,000 tons.)

Also, small vote margins separate winners from losers in SNTV. So there are huge incentives for fraud and minor fraud can quite easily change who wins seats. In Iraq, for example, the proportional system requires a manipulation of between 5,000 and 10,000 votes to change a seat. In Afghanistan in some cases, it would require less than ten.

From what I understand, there are two proposals discussed in Kabul for the electoral system for the next elections. The first is the same SNTV that was used in 2005, but splitting bigger constituencies – those elect-
ing more than ten members. This has been discussed recently in the Cabinet. Second is an initiative in the National Assembly. It introduces a proportional element to the system by setting aside some Wolesi Jirga seats – 80 of the 249 – for lists of candidates running in a national-level constituency.

This second option would have some important and positive consequences. It would open up some space for groupings of interests to run together in elections and then work together in Parliament. It would make the vote more clear and effective and Parliament more functional. It would also be likely to reduce the number of candidates that run in districts, thus reducing the size of ballots and some of the other complications in administering the elections.

I understand the history of parties in Afghanistan and the reluctance to move to a system that is in any way party-based. However, there should be serious consideration of exploring alternative options to SNTV, or at least opening it up for lists, or parties, as in the proposal in Parliament. If SNTV is selected again, people – donors – should be aware not only of its political consequences, but also its huge deficiencies in terms of sustainability and legitimacy.

Electoral Calendar

The second aspect of the framework is the electoral calendar. The Constitution schedules presidential and lower house elections every five years and provincial council elections every four. Elections held according to this schedule would take place in eleven of the next seventeen years. According to a strict interpretation of these articles of the Constitution, presidential elections would be scheduled for spring 2009, provincial council elections for some point in 2009 – it is not clear when – and lower house elections in 2010.

First, it’s not possible to hold credible elections in spring in Afghanistan. You need at least three-month access across the country. Elections must really be held in late summer. Second, holding elections in two consecutive years will be difficult and expensive – and challenging to ensure security. I know less about the Constitution than many here, but there are suggestions that there is sufficient ambiguity in the Constitution – particularly in Article 160 – that could allow the elections to be held together. This should certainly be explored and a decision taken as quickly as possible.

Voter Registry

The third aspect I want to talk about is the voter registry. A good voter registry is usually the cornerstone of a credible election in terms of preventing fraud and planning. Unfortunately, the voter registration conducted in 2003 and 2004 and the update in 2005 failed to collect accurate data. There were no safeguards against multiple registration and no means to determine where people would return to vote. The main mechanism to protect against fraud was the indelible ink applied to voters’ fingers. The ink proved problematic during both elections: infamously in 2004 but also less conspicuously in 2005.

Inaccurate voter registry data also makes planning difficult and the election much more expensive. First, because a large number of people have registered more than once, many of the 12.5 million names on the voter register are likely to be duplicates or false – so election administration must budget for non-existent voters. Second, because they do not know where people will vote, electoral planners have to produce a massive surplus of ballots so that no location runs out on election day if more people show up than expected. In 2005 we produced and distributed 40 million ballots at a cost of over $25 million – these figures would probably be halved with an accurate voter registry.
Since the elections, attention – including in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy – has focused on conducting a joint civil and voter registry between the Ministry of Interior and the election administration. But the pilot projects that took place earlier this year have raised serious questions as to whether a combined civil and voter registry is feasible before the next elections. If it is not feasible, a full voter registration should be planned for the summer of next year, possibly using biometric data capture to prevent against multiple registration. Unfortunately there is no escape from the fact that a full voter registration is necessary ahead of the next elections.

**Election Administration**

The last aspect I will raise is the election administration. Largely because of the timeline for the 2004 and 2005 elections, it was difficult to build up the capacity of the Afghan Independent Election Commission. Since the elections, there has been little international support to the election administration, although it has been kept alive in part thanks to the national budget and US funding. The election commission would currently find it very difficult to plan, administer and protect the integrity of a national-level election.

In any case, because of the likelihood of fraud and because of the complicated ballots, it is inevitable that a large number of international staff will be needed again. If serious efforts start this winter, then it may still be possible to build up the capacity of the election commission so that internationals play an advisory rather than management role. Long term, of course the election administration should be a permanent body sustained mainly through the national budget. However, in the immediate, without serious international investment now, you are looking at a big expensive internationally-led election infrastructure much like the one in 2005.

**Conclusion**

The four aspects I have raised – the system, the calendar, the registry and the election administration – are not the only challenges facing the next elections. Candidate vetting will prove difficult, as will delimitation, redrawing boundaries, if it is required. The security situation of course poses the biggest threat to any national-level operation.

It is understandable that after the presidential and parliamentary elections, people tired of elections. It is inevitable there is a lull in international attention and activity, in particular after their perceived expense, not to mention – as is clear from the conference – all other imperatives. But although elections still seem some way off, operational and budgetary planning must start and some of these framework issues must be addressed quickly.

Support to the electoral sector is becoming – as was recognized in the UN Secretary General’s recent report to the Security Council – a matter of urgency. If the next round of elections is going to stand a chance of being credible and more sustainable than those in 2005, we need to start preparing now.
Six years after the fall of the Taliban, Afghanistan is still facing a fundamental crisis of governance. Creating a capable and legitimate Afghan government is the sine qua non of the intervention in Afghanistan: without which there is no sustainable security; without which there is no sustainable development; without which there is no political legitimacy.

The immediate rational for the intervention in Afghanistan in October 2001 was to destroy Al Qaeda and topple the extremist Taliban regime that was hosting Bin Laden. However, it was immediately clear within US and international policy circles that any serious effort to prevent Afghanistan from reverting to a failed state and terrorist safe-haven would entail a dramatic program of political and physical reconstruction. Indeed, in a speech at the Virginia Military Institute in April 2002, President George W. Bush invoked the Marshall Plan to describe our efforts in Afghanistan. Yet the state-building mission in Afghanistan has always taken a back-seat to the counter-terrorism mission in terms of funding, manpower and political attention. As a result, the fundamental objective of building a competent government that can provide security and justice and gain the trust of the Afghan people has lagged.

Afghanistan was always going to be an incredibly difficult mission. The poorest country in the world outside of sub-Saharan Africa, Afghanistan has low literacy levels, extremely high infant and maternal mortality, challenging mountainous terrain, and an unstable neighborhood. Strong central government that provides public goods to a majority of the population has always been in short supply. Furthermore, after thirty years of war and repressive regimes, Afghans are understandably leery of government. Recent research and opinion polls on attitudes toward police and justice sector institutions reveal that Afghan government capacity is not only weak in these areas, but that existing capacity is often considered inept and corrupt. Part of the problem, going back to the initial intervention, is that numerous senior political figures – provincial governors, members of the cabinet and parliamentarians – are considered serial human rights abusers by large segments of the population. This sense of impunity shakes popular confidence in the concepts of democracy and rule of law. The out-of-control opium economy has also impacted rule of law and governance in significant ways. Underpaid civil servants are expected to engage in dangerous policing and eradication programs in environments awash in cash for bribes. Senior government officials and militia commanders control trade routes yielding millions of dollars in illicit taxes or funds from engaging directly in the trade. Meanwhile, poppy eradication programs directed at farmers are deeply unpopular and unevenly enforced, leading to increased resentment in already unstable areas against the government.

This litany of problems in governance and rule of law has made room for challenges to the government’s legitimacy and primacy by Taliban, Haqqani, Hezb-e-Islami, and other anti-government, anti-coalition forces. These combined forces of insurgency are not especially strong or popular within Afghanistan, but rather the government is weak and increasingly unpopular. More than building houses, roads and schools, Afghans fundamentally look to government to provide security and justice. At present, it is evident that the Afghan government is incapable of doing this, and so Afghans are beginning to hedge their bets in terms of open support for the government.

Therefore, a coherent and resourced strategy to increase the reach, capacity and legitimacy of the Afghan government must be at the top of our priority list. Afghanistan's new constitution creates a blueprint for a modern Islamic state, replete with a powerful central government; checks and balances between its president,
bi-cameral legislature and independent judiciary; and neat administrative boundaries and elected provincial councils. A national army and national police force will provide security, with a courthouse in every district to enforce the law and protect citizens’ rights. The problem, of course, is that none of these things yet exists.

Reestablishing a legitimate justice system in this context presents enormous challenges. Every aspect of the picture of a functioning justice system is presently absent. There are few buildings to house judges, prosecutors, attorneys, police and prisoners. There are equally few skilled professionals to fill the buildings. There is no communications infrastructure or libraries, and few files. It often remains unclear which laws are in force – but even those approved by Kabul are not in the hands of officials in the provinces. Fundamentally, a political culture that respects the rule of law is also missing.

Efforts thus far to build institutions of state and establish rule of law have been ad hoc, poorly coordinated and under-funded. The Afghan government and international community have focused on high profile events, such as elections and the effort to draft and ratify a new constitution, but the difficult work of creating a strong system of central and provincial governance that enables and empowers accountable local actors has been lacking. Creeping insecurity had made such efforts more difficult in some parts of the country. However, somewhat paradoxically, we continue spend far more in places where progress is nearly impossible while letting the low-hanging fruit in safer regions rot on the vine.

There have been important advances, however, with the support of the international community. Many governors and police chiefs with questionable credentials or records of past abuse have been removed. A recent presidential appointments panel was created to vet high-level appointments, although it has yet to begin its work. The heads of the major justice sector institutions – the Supreme Court, the Ministry of Justice, and the Office of the Attorney General – have all been replaced with competent, moderate reformers. Significant additional attention and funds are now devoted to the creation of the national police force, although reform of the police and the troubled Ministry of Interior remains very nascent. The establishment of a new department of sub-national governance outside of the Ministry of Interior and headed by a well-regarded official is another positive step. The creation of over 18,000 local Community Development Councils (CDCs) as part of the National Solidarity Program seems to be having a positive effect on village-level governance and delivery of reconstruction aid directly to communities. In line with these efforts, the government is also devising policy allowing the formal justice system to interact effectively with community-based dispute resolution mechanisms – which in reality handle some 80% of civil and criminal disputes. Such policies encourage the government to harness existing capacity at a local level – the level of governance closest to and most trusted by a majority of Afghans.

In order to improve governance and the rule of law in Afghanistan, a series of recommendations for the Afghan government and the international community will be presented, in the areas of institution-building, policing, appointments and vetting of senior officials, increased provincialization and localization of governance, and the establishment of “pockets of competence” in the justice sector.
Corruption, Nepotism and Trust: Problems of Governance in Afghanistan
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There is now a widespread perception that Afghanistan’s post-2001 transition has run into severe difficulties. To account for this, several different lines of reasoning have been put forward. One approach, associated with writers such as Astri Suhrke and Anatol Lieven, questions the viability of the state-building model which was adopted as a central element of the transition.1 Another, reflected in a range of reports and studies, emphasizes the malignant effect of Pakistan's longstanding and ongoing meddling in Afghanistan.2 A third approach, however, looks inwards, and blames the Afghans for what has gone wrong: “The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars but in ourselves.” This approach has the convenient effect of absolving the wider world of much of the blame for what has gone wrong, and increasingly figures in post-prandial discussions in diplomatic circles in Kabul.

The first approach offers a useful corrective to simplistic approaches to state-building, which indeed has been pursued in a haphazard fashion in Afghanistan, especially given the fatal distraction created by the invasion of Iraq in March 2003.3 The second approach identifies a key factor explaining the emergence of a bloody insurgency in southern and eastern Afghanistan. As Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf put it in a speech in Kabul in August 2007, “There is no doubt Afghan militants are supported from Pakistan soil. The problem that you have in your region is because support is provided from our side.”4 Dealing with these sanctuaries is the single most important step that needs to be taken to stabilize Afghanistan.

However, it is with the third approach that my remarks are concerned. The virtue of the third approach is that it draws attention to problems of corruption, nepotism and maladministration which are serious concerns for ordinary Afghans in many different strata of society. What I wish to suggest, however, is that discussions of these problems which paint them simply as evidence of moral failings on the Afghans' part are seriously wide of the mark. Governance challenges in Afghanistan cannot be overcome simply by finding “better Afghans.” Rather, what one needs is careful attention to the consequences, both intended and unintended, of the incentive structures created by different aspects of the transition process; and an awareness of the difficulty in implementing “model” solutions in a country whose population has been traumatized and impoverished by decades of conflict – in which, in other words, the exploitation of positional goods for personal gain can be a rational strategy.


The presentation is divided into three sections. In the first, I identify three serious failings in the Western approach to Afghanistan that set the scene for major governance problems. In the second, I identify some of the patterns of official behavior which are most likely to compromise the state’s legitimacy, and the key factors underpinning them. In the third, I offer some brief suggestions as to how one might seek to address these problems.

Part I

It is easy to overlook that some of the key decisions that shaped the course of Afghanistan’s transition were taken outside Afghanistan, and in some cases under intense time pressures which worked against their broader ramifications being properly appreciated. One of the most important was the decision taken at the Bonn Conference in November-December 2001 to have an Interim Administration with more than twenty departments. This precluded any serious discussion of what kind of state Afghanistan needed. Instead, the antiquated Afghan bureaucratic structure became the point of departure for an allocation of offices to Afghan political parties as a way of locking them into supporting the transition. One can hardly blame the officials who promoted this approach, since they had very little glue to use. However, the longer-term consequences were unfortunate to say the least. Most “departments” existed largely on paper. The widespread expectation was that donor money would be supplied to build them up, and with most Afghan “parties” being more like patronage networks than actors competing for support from the general public, the battle was soon on to maximize the flow of resources into one’s own bailiwick at the expense of the aspirations of one’s competitors. The consequence was rampant political nepotism in at least some ministries, and the generation of a divisive pattern of interagency politics in Kabul that has persisted to the present, blighting the life of the President whose time is wasted in adjudicating between bureaucratic interests in bitter competition with each other.

Troubling as these problems have been, their impact on the daily lives of ordinary Afghans scattered through the country’s provinces has probably not been that great. Another decision taken outside Afghanistan has had much more serious ramifications at the level of everyday life. This was the 2002 blocking by Washington of the expansion beyond Kabul of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), a deployment to which ordinary Afghans had looked forward with the greatest of anticipation. This truly disastrous blunder undercut the momentum of Bonn, and more or less forced President Karzai to offer state positions in areas beyond Kabul to potential “spoilers,” as a way of averting an immediate crisis. In the South and East, the beneficiaries of this approach were for the most part so-called “American warlords,” many of them thuggish types who had marketed themselves as enemies of Al Qaeda, but were interested above all in the opportunities for predation that access to positions in the state could offer. Their conduct, documented in searing detail by a number of commentators, had the effect in the long-run of contaminating the reputation of the state. As a result of this, the lives of ordinary Afghans are all too often marked by a pervasive sense of insecurity, and a profound lack of confidence in the state.

A third set of policy decisions taken largely outside Afghanistan relate to the opium trade. The US policy of promoting crop eradication has been a political disaster for Afghanistan, damaging the state and playing straight into the hands of its enemies. There is no doubt that the Taliban receive a certain amount of cash directly from narcotics. However, this is trivial compared to the political benefit that they receive from the periodic discussion of mass eradication as a device for dealing with the problem. To see why this is the case, it is important to grasp a number of the peculiarities of opium cultivation in Afghanistan. While around 80% of opium profits go to drug barons and traffickers, the 20% that are received at farm-gate level support roughly two million people, many of them poor wage laborers whose “opium income” can make the dif-

ference between survival and utter destitution. Blithe statements about the importance of eradication strike terror into the hearts of such people, and make them easy picking for Taliban recruiters. The complexity of opium economies in Afghanistan is something to which analysts and practitioners alike have attested, and this points to the need for nuanced, local, long-term solutions. Unfortunately, Afghanistan is caught in a policy trap which is by now decades old, and this makes the promotion of effective as opposed to counterproductive strategies extremely difficult. Most regrettably, the US was not prepared to move against the narcotics trade in the early days of its revival after the overthrow of the Taliban, when carefully-crafted measures directed against a small crop might have sent a useful signal. It was perceived that this would compromise the pursuit of the “Global War on Terror.” This was aggravated by food-aid policies that undermined wheat production and drove farmers towards opium cultivation. A small but potentially significant window of opportunity was thus lost, and opium is now a truly intractable problem, fuelling the corruption of political processes at many levels.

Part II

The phenomenon of corruption is by no means new in Afghanistan. In 1978, the historian Hasan Kakar wrote that “Afghan civil servants are probably among the lowest paid in the world. It is impossible for them to live decently on their salaries unless they are supplemented by other sources of income. Corruption and embezzlement are accepted facts of Afghan bureaucratic life and are objected to only when excesses are committed.” This captures a core understanding of corruption, namely unjust enrichment through exploitation of office. Alatas captures this in his definition of corruption as “stealing through deception in a situation which betrays a trust.” However, corruption has complex effects, not all of them negative. Furthermore, as Jonathan Goodhand has pointed out, “not all forms of corruption are equally harmful or equally wrong in the eyes of most Afghans. . . . It seems probable that people will tolerate corruption if the state can deliver some tangible benefits to them and their families.”

There is no doubt that Afghanistan can boast some spectacular examples of ill-gotten gains on the part of those who have exploited their positions in the state: the Sherpur district of Kabul, with its hideous, glitzy palaces, more than attests to the problem. However, many of the beneficiaries of corruption are not in this class, and instead, as in the past, exploit their positions in the state as “positional goods” through which they extract resources to feed their families, fund weddings, and discharge other social obligations.

police are the obvious example. But small fry like this, although the cumulative effects of their behavior is politically disastrous, could well hit back at their critics by pointing to the extravagant donor funding of inefficient private contractors,\textsuperscript{15} to the inadequate “due diligence” procedures of some donors,\textsuperscript{16} and to the waste associated with the employment of certain Afghan expatriates on astronomical salaries. This does no good to the standing of the Afghan state either. As Nipa Banerjee has pointed out, the Afghan government is “often loosely accused of corruption, and often without much supporting evidence.”\textsuperscript{17} But in politics, of course, it is perceptions rather than realities that matter.

It might be useful analytically to conceive Afghanistan’s problems not so much as corruption but as 	extit{abuse of power}, of which financial corruption and nepotism are specific examples. Abuse of power can be driven by the dearth of trust in a political system. When years of bitter experience teach one that it is rational to be distrustful of one’s fellows, who can be surprised when ruthlessly self-interested behavior becomes the norm? In such circumstances, a constitutional framework that disperses power and encourages cooperation is desirable. But that is precisely what Afghanistan does not have. The 2004 Constitution has led to a fragmented political system,\textsuperscript{18} but not one in which there are meaningful checks and balances to prevent the abuse of power. Afghanistan lacks not just the rule of law, but effective mechanism for holding power-holders to account.\textsuperscript{19} The point here is that deeply-rooted governance problems are not to be cured by reshuffling the occupants of key offices. What is required is attention to the structural dysfunctionalities of the Afghan political system, and a recognition that the political culture of Afghanistan cannot reasonably be expected, after years of turmoil and mayhem, to be much different from what it has proved to be.

Part III

What might be done? Constitutional reform could help. The presidential system of Afghanistan has created an unmanageably burdensome position for the chief executive, with a raft of responsibilities that would overwhelm any ordinary mortal.\textsuperscript{20} (A presidential system, which creates one “winner” and many “losers,” can leave many political actors, and the constituencies they represent, with a feeling that they have been marginalized.) However, at the same time, popular expectations of what the Afghan state can deliver far exceed its capacities. But that said, it is what happens 	extit{beyond} Kabul that is most important in shaping Afghanistan’s prospects. Here, the donor community needs to work with effective parts of the state to empower legitimate local actors – something easier said than done – rather than simply pledge funds that contribute neither to capacity-building nor a sense of security on the ground.

There are no \textit{magic} solutions to Afghanistan’s governance problems, but it is particularly important to recognize that they will not be solved, either, by ostentatious displays of long-distance purity by political leaders safely ensconced in Western capitals. Such leaders would do better to pressure Pakistan over its meddling in Afghanistan; governance reforms are virtually impossible to implement when one is under daily threat of attack. But that is another story.

\textsuperscript{15} Fariba Nawa, \textit{Afghanistan, Inc.: A CorpWatch Investigative Report} (Oakland: CorpWatch, 2006).
Pakistan: The Eastern Neighbor of Afghanistan
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The strategic, political and economic interconnectivity of Afghanistan and Pakistan is the staring point for any discussion of the relationship between the two countries. Currently, we tend to highlight their intersecting roles in fighting international terrorism. If this requires cooperation, their relationship has instead been a contentious one. Of late it is best described as a “blame game.” Both hold the other responsible for a failure to deal with the issues that divide them. They ascribe many of their serious domestic problems as having their origins across the border.

The colonial-era-defined boundary, the Durand Line, has been the divisive ingredient their relationship over the last sixty years. Pakistan’s Afghan policy has been over time focused on measures to counter demands for a Pashtun state to be carved from Pakistan. And while their territorial dispute continues, the sanctuary provided to the Afghan Taliban in Pakistan’s borderlands generates the most controversy. It is widely acknowledged that the Taliban and other insurgent groups are able with relative impunity to finance, equip, train and launch insurgents into Afghanistan from Pakistani soil.

Pakistan is frequently accused of pursuing policies bent on keeping Afghanistan weak and disunited. It is accused of exploiting the ethnic mosaic among Afghans and is seen as striving to install dependent and pliant governments in Kabul. Pakistan’s policies have for at least a quarter century sought to create strategic depth in Afghanistan as an offset to a conventionally militarily stronger India. Because Afghanistan has attempted to counterbalance which it sees as an overbearing, covetous neighbor, Afghan governments have historically sought ties with India. In response, Pakistan has tried to diminish India’s influence and presence within Afghanistan. Ironically, the policies of Pakistan’s leaders toward Afghanistan have also had an adverse effect domestically, contributing to a breakdown in law and order, contributing to the rise of extremism, and prompting Pakistan’s own Pashtuns to assert their ethnic identity.

Since the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Pakistan’s governments have in effect followed a two-track policy that is often contradictory and self-defeating. One track appreciates the value of having a stable Afghanistan that provides trade routes to Central Asia and is sufficiently secure to allow oil and gas to pass through Afghanistan. If mostly to please Americans and Europeans, Islamabad is publicly committed to a cooperative approach in dealing with the Afghan insurgency and attacking terrorist groups and networks. Pakistan’s leadership also acknowledges that a victory for extremist forces in Afghanistan will have a blowback effect on its country’s security.

But a second track seeks a hedge against an Afghanistan that may disintegrate or otherwise fail as a state. This is premised on the belief that the international community, including the US, will eventually grow weary of fighting the insurgency or prematurely claim victory, especially if some high-profile members of Al Qaeda are captured or killed. To prepare for this contingency, Pakistan holds on to a Pashtun card that will insure that Pakistan is able to create a sphere of influence in the southern and eastern portions of Afghanistan. The desire for a surrogate force leads the government and its security forces to make no serious attempt to curb the Afghan Taliban and their allies. In fact, there is evidence that security forces have facilitated their activities, while also coordinating intelligence on Al Qaeda with American agencies.

We are left now to ask how the recent developments in Pakistan impinge on Afghanistan and its ability to withstand the intensifying insurgency. An assessment must take account of President Musharraf’s continuing two-front war. In addition to a political fight against his domestic political opponents, he and the Pakistan
state face a challenge from extremist elements, notably those lodged in the tribal agencies and districts of the Northwest Frontier Province.

For some time, the US has been willing, despite its rhetoric, to prioritize the war against terrorism and subordinate demands that Musharraf make tangible strides to restore democratic institutions. Only more recently did the US come to believe that a revival of moderate politics in the country could contribute to a more aggressive approach toward the country’s terrorist enclaves and extremist groups. Having long seen Musharraf as indispensable to American objectives, during 2007 Washington came to the conclusion that Musharraf must find common ground with moderate political forces for him to sustain his power. Yet Musharraf found this strategy too risky and instead has opted for repression with emergency rule as the means to retain his presidency.

The imposition of emergency rule was the final step in certifying that Musharraf placed his personal political survival above any domestic or foreign interests. This includes Pakistan’s meeting American demands that more be done to assist in counter-terrorist activities in the borderlands and counter-insurgency in Afghanistan. Musharraf’s ill-conceived attempts to stifle his critics and civil society as well as control the judiciary have become a major distraction. Instead of pursuing an aggressive policy toward insurgents and extremists, Musharraf has targeted moderate, civilian detractors.

Although democracy in Pakistan can be endorsed on its own terms, even if the political system were opened up through truly free and fair elections, there is little reason to believe that Pakistan would be better able in the near term to deal with its challenge from religious radicals in the frontier. Nor will a democratic government necessarily be better positioned to satisfy Kabul or Washington on curbing the Afghan Taliban, and other anti-Kabul forces unless it can also alter the country’s two-track policy toward Afghanistan. Those changes can only occur with an increase in the determination and capacity of the army and other government agencies to press the effort. Putting together broader popular consensus may in the long run be essential to defeat extremism and terrorism, but for the present the Pakistan army and its paramilitary forces will have to overcome a lack of training, equipment and motivation.

The possibility that democratic elections and politics in Pakistan will lead to the formation of a government that would defy the US and its coalition partners on Afghanistan is unlikely. It can ill afford to have an alienated US pushed into a strategic relationship with India that would isolate Pakistan. Whatever leadership emerges in Pakistan will have to work with the country’s military and will need the US for its defense requirements. At the same time, the US will continue to value Pakistan’s logistical and intelligence support to flush out terrorists and will bank on its efforts to reduce the infiltration of insurgents into Afghanistan.

While a political transition occurs in Pakistan, the US must strive to support better relations between Kabul and Islamabad. People-to-people interactions, such as cross-border tribal jirgas, must supplement government-to-government interactions. Improved relations may necessitate mediation by the US and European countries, including improved military coordination and intelligence sharing. Even if not in the immediate future, the two countries must find the means to resolve their dispute over the Durand Line. Otherwise, if Afghanistan remains resentful, Pakistan will always feel threatened by a neighbor that seeks its dismemberment. Gaining greater cooperation from Islamabad on counter-terrorism may also involve applying carefully calibrated and targeted pressure on Islamabad by the US, using the leverage provided by its military assistance programs. Most importantly, the publics in Pakistan and Afghanistan must have increased understanding that the containment and elimination of extremist forces is in their mutual interest, and that only by confronting them jointly can they succeed.
The Current State of Afghan-Indian Relations
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The relationship between Afghanistan and India goes back centuries. Historically, Afghanistan acted in effect as a land bridge between Central Asia and the Indian sub-continent. It is a restoration of this historic economic role that Afghanistan has played that both countries, Afghanistan and India, have pursued.

With the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan, came a new chapter for the US relationship with South Asia and for peace in this region. It also changed the dynamics for Pakistan, which let us not forget was one of the few countries that had recognized the Taliban regime, and for India, a country that had supported the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance.

Since 9/11, the South Asian region was seen as being vital to the security of the US. Pakistan had provided assistance to the war and post-war fight against terrorism. Due to this assistance and the changing dynamics after 9/11 the Pakistani-US relationship has become closer and yet it also has new strains. Essentially the dynamics in South Asia have changed with the US having a new, credible and democratic alternate partner in the form of India. India was seen as a stabilizing force in a region that was often violent and unstable. The warming of the US-Indian relationship in the wake of 9/11 meant that the US now had leverage vis-à-vis Pakistan. After all, the relationship with Pakistan was strategically important to the US. But it was vital, financially and politically, to Pakistan.

Dynamics in India have also changed over the past decade. India moved along the India-Pakistan peace process because with a booming economy and regional, even global ambitions, it had more incentive to address and perhaps even negotiate the perennial Kashmir problem.

Pakistan’s Sandwich Problem

With a rival country on its eastern border, a country with whom it had fought several wars, Pakistan was and is clearly not interested in being sandwiched between two unfriendly states. It has thus sought to establish a client government or at least a weak state of Afghanistan.

Pakistan was also weary from the beginning of President Karzai, a president whose father was assassinated in Pakistan in 1999, and a president who was a graduate of the Himachal Pradesh University in Shimla, India.

Both India and Pakistan, now armed with nuclear weapons which some think means that they are less likely to go to war against each other, have been more willing over the last years to have some rapprochement. This has enabled Pakistan to focus greater attention on its troubled western front, while allowing India greater inward focus as well as pursuit of its regional and global ambitions.

So what is the relationship between Afghanistan and India and what interests does each country have in cooperating with the other? There is noticeable difference in the Afghanistan-Pakistan relationship, compared to the Afghanistan-India relationship.

In regards to the Afghanistan-India relationship, since becoming the Afghan leader in late 2001, Karzai has taken at least four trips to India. Each of these visits was amicable, focused on strengthening economic as well as political ties. One only has to look at the press coverage of these state visits to see that these were friendly visits and meetings out of which both sides seemed to benefit and where both sides treat each other as the heads of states that they are.
As for the Afghanistan-Pakistan relationship, Karzai's state visits to India contrast greatly with his visits to Pakistan. Clearly, the Afghan-Pakistani political relationship is a different relationship since Afghanistan and Pakistan share a direct, largely porous border, have some of the same ethnic groups living on both sides of their borders, and have had a closer political relationship in the past. Given these factors, the relationship between these two countries could be a much closer one than that of Afghanistan and India. But it is clearly not. Here too the meetings between President Karzai and President Musharraf and the press coverage of these meetings is indicative. These meetings have focused on political and security issues and were often characterized by an exchange of accusations. Joint press conferences between the two leaders are unable to disguise the tension between them.

The Indian-Afghan relationship is important for Afghanistan for several reasons. First of all India is the largest South Asian donor to Afghanistan, with India to date having pledged over $750 million for reconstruction. And this does not include gifts such as the giving of Airbus aircrafts to Ariana Airlines, buses for the Afghan public transport system, or vehicles for the Afghan National Army. This assistance is important not only for the financial resources it provides Afghanistan, but also for what it says about the importance India places on a stable, sovereign and democratic Afghanistan. In a security context, having a friendly relationship with India, provides Afghanistan with leverage over Pakistan and of course vice versa.

There is also economic importance. India is Afghanistan's largest export partner, with nearly 22% of Afghanistan's exports going to India and India is Afghanistan's fifth-largest bilateral donor. Both countries have signed a bilateral Preferential Trade Agreement, with India allowing duty concessions on Afghan products such as dry fruits, and Afghans in turn providing concessions on Indian goods such as tea and pharmaceuticals.

Regarding the export of Afghan goods to India, currently, Pakistan allows the shipment of Afghan goods going to India via the land route through Pakistan, but not Indian goods to Afghanistan. It would clearly be in Afghanistan's interest to have access to Indian goods. But it is also clearly in Pakistan's interest to have a captive market in Afghanistan for their goods.

India and Afghanistan have also signed several bilateral agreements on educational exchange and cooperation in rural development and other areas. Both countries continue to foster a closer economic relationship. During a 2007 visit to India for example, Karzai came with a large business delegation, visiting info-tech centers and rural development projects. Clearly there is interest in Afghanistan to establish a closer economic relationship with India.

Finally, there is political importance as well. First, the reality is that since India is the only consolidated democracy in the region around Afghanistan, it provides for a better political model to emulate than the political systems present in other countries in the region. India is also emerging as a regional power and it is therefore in Afghanistan's interest to align itself with this regional power.

Conversely, the Indian-Afghan relationship is also important for India. In terms of economics, access to energy sources is an important factor. India has the world's second largest population and one of the world's fastest growing economies these days. In order to continue their rate of growth they need increasing sources of energy. And given that a large part of the Indian population still does not have access to electricity, automobiles, etc., this voracious appetite for energy is unlikely to decrease any time soon.

How does Afghanistan figure in? Clearly, any pipelines bringing, for example, natural gas from Central Asian countries such as Turkmenistan would have to go through Afghanistan. They would also need to go through Pakistan. Any such pipeline would be beneficial to both India and Afghanistan. For example, the Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline (TAPI), a proposed pipeline currently being developed by the Asian Develop-
ment Bank to transport natural gas from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan and Pakistan to India, would provide India with a much-needed energy source, as well as providing the Afghan government with 8% of the project’s revenue. Economically then, Afghanistan is seen by India as the gateway to the oil- and gas-rich Central Asian republics.

Moreover, the massive reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan offer opportunities for Indian companies. And indeed some Indian companies have already started taking advantage of some of these opportunities by getting involved in road construction and hotel building efforts. And if Pakistan would allow greater transit of Indian goods, Afghanistan could become a larger market for Indian goods, as well as countries neighboring Afghanistan. Historical economic and cultural ties have, after all meant that even Afghans who do not understand Hindi enjoy listening to Bollywood music and watching Bollywood films.

But let us not kid ourselves that India is only interested in a strong Afghanistan for economic reasons. Security and political factors are also significant in India’s calculation to foster a close relationship with Afghanistan. A strong Afghanistan is a better check on Pakistan, especially a Pakistan that today faces its own internal political crisis. After all, the rise in extremism and Taliban and other anti-state forces could lead to less democratic and more hostile regimes in both Pakistan and Afghanistan – which is not in India’s interest (after all, India’s relationship with Afghanistan was at a low point under the Taliban regime).

**Conclusion**

It is thus in the strategic, political and economic interest of both Afghanistan and India to continue building strong ties with each other and each of them is likely to continue to build closer ties with the other, in part also to provide a political check on Pakistan.
Afghanistan, Iran and Security Issues
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Iran has historically not been a significant security threat to Afghanistan. During the post-1979 period, it played a protective role vis-à-vis the Afghan Shia, but was not a major sanctuary for anti-Soviet guerrillas, unlike Pakistan. After 1992, it supported elements of Hazb-e-Wahdat, but did not intervene directly even in the wake of the Afshahr massacre (1993) or the killing of Mazari by the Taliban (1995). Even when Iranian consular staff was killed in 1998 by the Taliban in Mazar-i Sharif, Iran did not intervene militarily, although it arguably had grounds to do so. Iran played a constructive role at the Bonn Conference in November-December 2001.

That said, Iran’s strategic situation has changed in the intervening period. The upshot of the invasion of Iraq by the US and its allies in 2003 has been an expansion of Iranian influence to its west, stretching as far as Lebanon. The election of President Ahmadinejad in 2005 has contributed to an escalation of tension in the relations between Iran and a number of western countries, and to relentless hostility on the part of Israel and the US. The continuation of Iranian enrichment of fissile material opens the possibility of US and/or Israeli strikes against targets in Iran, and of possible Iranian retaliation.

It is the possibility of Iranian retaliation against such strikes that impacts most of all on Afghan security. While Iran could fear population displacement in Afghanistan, seeking to trigger “spoiler activity” against the US and its allies in Afghanistan might appear a reasonable response. Nonetheless, while some Iranian-sourced weaponry may have reached the “neo-Taliban,” a “strategic alliance” between Iran and the “neo-Taliban” is highly unlikely, given the ideological differences between the two sides.

What is to be done? Afghanistan’s own diplomatic engagement with Iran should be welcomed. Track II engagement with Iran should be pursued seriously. Western states should be careful not to play into the hands of President Ahmadinejad by according him a standing which Iran’s own constitution does not, and by providing him with nationalist grievances on which to base a re-election campaign in 2009.
Central Asia has been for many people the blank space on the map. Central Asia is assuming greater importance as the issues that will shape this century become more defined. China and Russia stand on either side, both cooperating and competing. From Sinkiang in western China to the oil-rich Caspian Sea and the Caucasus, Central Asia presents an array of possibilities and problems that are perhaps unmatched. The European Union and the United States are also involved in the intertwined questions of politics, security and development whose players, goals and outcomes are all in flux. The new nations in the region inherited parameters that shape, but do not determine how they will develop, and the area is both stage and player for the drama of the upcoming century.

If one stands in Central Asia and looks southward, Afghanistan provides the break in a wall of mountains and deserts that is the route south to warm lands and the sea. For the people of Central Asia, Afghanistan has historically been a key and a lodestone through which the courses of empire and history have passed.

Afghanistan provided two seminal shocks that shape the current political atmosphere in Central Asia. The first was the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The movement into Afghanistan for the Soviets was a step forward in the path they had followed in the nineteenth century. The subsequent rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Afghanistan only underlined the disaster and provided an active threat for Central Asia as well. The hundreds of fighters who fled south to Afghanistan and Pakistan were following routes that were centuries old.

Looking farther back, the centuries-long Mongol rule of Russia remains as a formative element in the Russian psyche, and physically expressed in a Russia that is today 20% Muslim. The bitter wars in Chechnya can be read as part of the Russian reaction to Islamic fundamentalism and nationalism in Russia itself, where a string of Muslim groups inhabit the Volga River Valley and there are no definitive geographic boundaries between Muslims and Christians. At the same time as Chechnya declared its independence, the far larger and more important republic of Tatarstan was moving in the same direction.

The second shock for Central Asia was the invasion of Afghanistan by international forces after September 11, 2001. Initial cooperation led to the establishment of US bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, a German base in Uzbekistan as well and French forces operating in Tajikistan. Failure to achieve a swift complete victory and growing concern about the ongoing presence on the territory of the ex-Soviet Union led to a call by the 2005 Shanghai Cooperation Organization meeting for a timetable to withdraw troops.

Prior to 2001, the states of Central Asia had justifiably feared that the model of Afghanistan would spread to their countries. This contributed to the end of the Tajik civil war, agreed to in an imperfect compromise solution. To the North, Islam Karimov used the specter of Islamic fundamentalism to establish a police state well known for its human rights abuses. In addition, the Islamic threat made the states of Central Asia renew the ties with Russia that had slackened in the first years after the end of the Soviet Union. Similarly, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, started by China as a vehicle for having a voice in the region, grew to become more substantive.

Most of what Central Asian countries know about democracy and the West they learned from Russia. For the citizens of the Soviet Union, Russia was the West and Russian the language of western civilization. The Central Asian countries did not want to leave the Soviet Union; it dissolved and left them behind. The social
and economic collapse that ensued broke down a system that had been erected with great difficulty, often startling economic and logistical incompetence, and with a high cost in human life.

The newly independent states quickly replaced Soviet iconography with new nationalist imagery. Most infamous was Turkmenistan’s Saparmurad Niyazov, renamed “Turkmenbashi,” literally “Head of the Turkmen,” who erected a golden statue of himself atop a monument that rotated to face the sun. More importantly, the social safety net of the Soviet Union collapsed along with the political structures. Russia, suffering from the same collapse, initially could do little to mitigate the changes.

The two valences of the boom in energy prices and the spread of Islamic fundamentalism led to a basic shift in the power relationships within Central Asia. Russia suddenly had the money to pay off its debts and promise largesse to Central Asia. Tajikistan, which had received 40% of its budget from Moscow in Soviet times and was the poorest state of the former USSR, received promises of a two billion dollar aid package from Moscow. Russia has offered to pay market level prices for energy from the Central Asian states to ensure its monopoly on exports to the West. The goal is to maintain Russia’s hold on energy exports, but it also has the spillover effect of Russia eventually pitting against China and India.

Russia has taken several steps to reassert itself in Central Asia in terms of security. It joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. After the US obtained basing rights in Kyrgyzstan, Russia set up its own base a few miles away. Russia’s on-again off-again relations with Uzbekistan have occasionally resulted in military cooperation. China has taken an increasingly active role in the region for both economic and political reasons. China’s westernmost province, Sinkiang, is home to a Turkic people who have cousins to the West as far as Turkey. In addition to the Uygurs, groups of Kyrgyz and Kazakhs also live on the Chinese side of the border, with a mirror population of Uygurs in the countries to the West, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. There are mirror Turkic populations on both sides of the border.

Sinkiang is also home to an economic and population boom, as millions of ethnic Han Chinese are now the majority ethnic group in the region. Uygur resistance to the process has resulted in some violence. Some Uygur fighters have joined Al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

China has taken active steps to develop its relations with Central Asian states. The US base less than two hundred miles from the border and the presence in Afghanistan is undoubtedly a cause of heartburn. Border adjustments have been made with Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. China claims 10% of eastern Tajikistan as well.

Energy issues are one of the main determinants of national interests in this century. China has purchased an oil field in Kazakhstan and is planning to build the world’s longest pipeline to bring that oil to China, even as it has signed oil purchase agreements with Russia to multiply by several times the oil Russia supplies to western China. China has also become the prime trading partner with both Kazakhstan and Iran. With the latter, it has signed deals worth $100 billion to develop the gas and oil fields at North Pars and Yadavaran and purchase liquefied natural gas, is extending the Teheran metro, and has a wide range of other projects underway. There is also speculation that it will obtain docking rights on the Iranian Gulf shore, further to the large commercial port it is building in Pakistan at Gwadar. China has nearly one billion dollars in investments in Turkmenistan, has obtained an interest in a Turkmen gas field in the Caspian Sea, and is moving forward on building a pipeline to bring that gas to China, scheduled to go online in 2010.

Closer to home, China has signed a $3.4 billion deal to develop the Aynak copper mine in northeast Afghanistan, one of the world’s largest undeveloped deposits. The amount, roughly equal to the total development assistance the US has expended in Afghanistan to date, will include building a railroad – Afghanistan’s first
that will connect the field through Tajikistan with Chinese markets. The estimated worth of the copper is nearly $90 billion. In addition to the road with Tajikistan, China is also upgrading the transport infrastructure on its side of the border including the Karakorum highway that leads to Islamabad and eventually, the new port at Gwadar.

In security issues, China has registered its concern about the US presence in Central Asia both unilaterally and through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Joint Chinese-Russian troop maneuvers have taken place for the first time. China is building a road which would connect the two countries.

The most volatile element for Central Asia is the ongoing war in Afghanistan. Afghanistan presents two immediate threats to its northern neighbors. The first, the threat of fundamentalist Islam, however manipulated it may be by Uzbekistan's Karimov and Russia's Putin, is nevertheless a real one. The failure of the Central Asian successor governments to achieve any real reforms in either political or, with the partial exception of Kazakhstan, economic terms means that the messages of social justice and freedom put forth by the Islamists remain resonant. In spite of their trepidations about US ultimate intentions in the region, the Central Asian countries still cooperate in the war in Afghanistan.

Narcotics is the second threat to Central Asia from Afghanistan. Both usage and traffic have increased as the Afghan drug production outstripped world capacity. Narcotics transit Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to Russia and on to Europe.

Tajikistan, the most fragile state in Central Asia, is also the poorest. Tajiks speak a Persian dialect. The Tajik civil war of the 1990s resulted in over fifty thousand killed and the departure of much of Tajikistan's Russian community, as well as the destruction of Tajikistan's inferior infrastructure. The example of Afghanistan led the Tajiks to accept a negotiated peace that allowed inclusion of the Islamic Party in the Tajik Parliament. Tajikistan has allowed a measure of political freedom and space for civic activities, while at the same time arresting individuals it claims to be members of Hizb ut-Tahrir.

Tajikistan's economy depends largely on a huge Soviet-era aluminum plant on the Uzbek border and the production of cotton in the South. In 2006, Russia, newly flush with energy profits, offered Tajikistan a two billion dollar aid package to enlarge the plant and complete another Soviet legacy project, a hydroelectric dam and generator at Rogun, in an earthquake prone zone. In return, Tajikistan converted into a sovereign Russian base the Russian-run base (nominally a joint Central Asian base) located in mid-Dushanbe. The Russians later failed to fulfill their pledges on support for the Rogun dam and other hydroelectric projects, but the troops remain. Tajikistan also allowed the Indian government to start up its first base outside India on Tajik territory. Finally, Iran came back to Tajikistan with large grants. Iran is completing the tunnel through the 11,000 foot Anzob pass linking north and south Tajikistan for the first time with an all-year-round road. Iran is also planning to build electric lines that will pass through Afghanistan to Iran, tapping Tajikistan's generative capacity. Thus, all of the nations which together supported the Tajik-dominated Northern Alliance in Afghanistan through Tajikistan have placed themselves in prominent positions in this geographically pivotal state.

Additionally, China has taken an active role in Tajikistan. China has invested upwards of one billion dollars in Tajikistan in the last two years. The two nations held joint antiterrorist military exercises in Kulyab in Tajikistan in 2006. Kulyab is the home and power center of Tajikistan's President Imamali Rahman.

Uzbekistan, to the North of Tajikistan, is the most populous country of Central Asia with 27 million people. Islam Karimov, its authoritarian ruler, has maintained a strict rule since independence and is widely criticized for human rights violations. Karimov has jailed thousands of people claiming they were Islamic terrorists.
The densely populated Ferghana Valley remains a center of Islamic foment and ethnic politics.

Uzbekistan has traditionally taken a high-handed approach to its neighbors, particularly Tajikistan, which it regards as both a conduit and a source of Islamic terrorism and drugs. After September 11, 2001, Uzbekistan granted the US base at Karsi Khanabad and a facility to the Germans directly on the Afghan border. After the State Department failed to recertify Uzbekistan for progress on human rights and economic development in 2004, Uzbekistan made the US give up its base.

Karimov’s relations with Russia have waxed and waned. After the Andijon events, Karimov visited both Moscow and Beijing where he did not hear criticism of his acts. Uzbekistan’s problems are economic as well as political. Falling cotton production, market policies designed to benefit a small group of supporters, and a clampdown on NGOs and civil society have created a society that is troubled and held in check only by a very strong hand.

Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan’s other northern neighbor, has belied its early promise. Traditional ethnic rivalries, connections with organized crime, and misuse of power led to the deposition and resignation of President Askher Akayev in the Tulip Revolution of 2005. His replacement, Kurtmanbek Bakiyev, has since evinced the same tendencies. Kyrgyzstan has developed fairly close ties with China. The US base at the Manas airport provides several hundred millions dollars in rent to the Kyrgyz government, in addition to creating security concerns for other states in the region.

Kazakhstan, larger than Europe and sparsely populated, has the greatest possibilities of any of the Central Asian states. Kazakhstan maintains good relations with both Russia and China. Russian President Medvedev significantly chose Kazakhstan as the first foreign country he visited after his inauguration in May 2008. He has since visited several others. Kazakhstan’s Russian population is still nearly 40% and its northern regions, settled by Russians in the eighteenth century, were historically considered part of Russia itself. Kazakhstan has set 2030 as a target date for achieving economic parity with developed countries, but democracy may trail behind.

Both China and Russia have significant and growing economic ties in Kazakhstan, not limited only to the energy sector. US oil companies became heavily involved in developing Kazakhstan’s Caspian Sea deposits in the 1990s. US involvement, still strong, has been mitigated by Kazakhstan’s growing assertiveness in profiting on its deposits.

Turkmenistan, once considered the most hopeless case in Central Asia, has begun to emerge as the classic case of the new Great Game as Russia and Western countries vie to obtain access to its abundant gas resources. Turkmenistan has commitments to supply gas to Russia, China and Iran, but has also promised to provide gas for a pipeline to be built through Afghanistan to Pakistan and India. This year it also spoke of supplying gas directly to Europe. Russia’s concern to maintain its near-monopoly on exports of Turkmen gas led it to increase the price it pays by 50% since the end of 2007, with ongoing negotiations for a further increase underway in June 2008. It is unclear if Turkmenistan will be able to meet the new commitments.

Since the death of Niyazov, Turkmenistan has slowly begun to move away from his legacy of personality cult but the country still has severe limits on the basic freedoms of its citizens, both political and religious.

Iran casts a security and ideological shadow over the region as well. The question of the division of the Caspian Sea and its security necessarily involves Iran. The Teheran Declaration on the Caspian Sea in 2006 states that the littoral states guarantee not to attack one another and that the Caspian Sea cannot be used for the purposes of war. One pointed audience for this declaration would be the United States. Iran has maintained
close relations with both Russia and China. In his 1998 book, *The Grand Chessboard*, Zbigniew Brzezinski predicates that one of the worst outcomes for the US would be if these three nations united against it.

The United States has had a catalytic effect on Central Asia, but has not assumed a primary position of involvement in the region. Unsure at first what to make of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the United States opened embassies in all of the post-Soviet states but continued to view the region as within the Russian sphere of influence. Its programs aimed at fostering civil rights and democracy often took a distinct second place to highly visible commercial deals and military visits. Nevertheless, they had an effect. The US budget for programs related to civil rights and democracy decreased in 2008, with the exception of Turkmenistan.

For the countries of Central Asia, and particularly for Russia and China, the main question is the nature and extent of the US presence. As the Afghanistan war continues, the initial enthusiasm of the Central Asia states has become mitigated. High profile US contacts and profitable business deals with Central Asian oligarchs reinforce popular distrust of the former enemy, abetted by domestic government propaganda questioning US motives.

The European Union is also looking towards Central Asia, which promises to be a region of growth and potential for the next century. EU energy needs and security concerns are intertwined in a world of diminishing possibilities. European countries have begun to explore the possibilities that exist. The EU has already been criticized in some forums for not approaching the latter with the same enthusiasm as it has for energy relationships.

Little is known about Central Asia in the West. The languages, culture and history of the people there were subsumed into the overall fabric of Russia and then the USSR. A fresh approach is needed to understand these countries as partners and cooperators, one that includes an appreciation of their individual histories, languages and cultures. One size does not fit all. Much has to be learned on all sides, and much has to be unlearned as well. Misconceptions and ignorance abound. A concerted effort starting now can have lasting positive effects as economic and political stability develop. The approach should be multilateral, multi-linguistic and inclusive. If the United States and the EU leave it to the popular media to instruct Central Asians as to how they live and what they think, the results will largely reinforce negative preconceptions. The peoples of Central Asia, for their part, grew up with the psychology of being citizens of a world leader, and expect recognition as equals. A project that considers the needs and abilities of all sides would make a substantial contribution towards creating a new equation for Central Asia.
Appendix I: Colloquium Participants

Prince Hans Adam II of Liechtenstein, Ruling Prince of Liechtenstein, Schloss Vaduz

Izhar Ahmad, Counsellor, Embassy of Pakistan to Belgium

Salman Ahmed, Visiting Research Scholar, Woodrow Wilson School and Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination, Princeton University; Chief of Office, Special Assistant, Office of the UN Undersecretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations

Ambassador Christopher Alexander, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan

Richard Atwood, MPP Candidate, Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University; former Chief of Operations for the UN-Afghan Joint Electoral Management Body

Mandeep Bains, Economist-Macroeconomic Support, European Commission, EuropeAid Cooperation Office

Steven Barnes, Assistant Dean of Public Affairs, Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University

Georges Baur, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Liechtenstein to Belgium

Piero Bonadeo, Representative of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime Liaison Office to the EU

Catherine Boucher, First Secretary, Mission of Canada to the EU

Ambassador Ulrich Brandenburg, Permanent Representative of Germany to the North Atlantic Council

Christian Buck, Deputy Representative of Germany to the EU Political and Security Committee

Erin Card, Cure International, Hospital Foundation

Sarah Chayes, Founder, Arghand Cooperative, Kandahar

Antonio Maria Costa, Director General, UN Office on Drugs and Crime

Amin Damji, Representative, Roshan Company/Telecom Development Company of Afghanistan, Ltd.

Wolfgang Danspeckgruber, Director, Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination, Princeton University; Chair, Liechtenstein Colloquium

Ambassador Christopher W. Dell, Deputy Chief of Mission, US Embassy in Afghanistan

Karl Ehrlich, Second Secretary, Permanent Representation of Austria to the EU

Lieutenant General Karl Eikenberry, Deputy Chairman, NATO Military Committee

Ahmet Evin, Dean, Sabanci University, Istanbul

Christine Fair, Senior Political Scientist, RAND Corporation

Peter Feith, Deputy Director General, EU Council Secretariat

Ambassador Robert Finn, Senior Research Associate, Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination, Princeton University; former US Ambassador to Afghanistan, Tajikistan

Caroline Flintoft, Research Director, International Crisis Group, Brussels

Tarek Ghani, Investment Manager, Humanity United

Major General Antonio Li Gobbi, Assistant Director, Operations Division, NATO

Donald W. Goodrich, Co-Founder, Goodrich Foundation

James Gow, Chair, Security Studies Programme, King’s College, London
Nick Grono, Vice-President, International Crisis Group, Brussels
Filip Grzegorzewski, Second Secretary, Permanent Representation of Poland to the EU
Sayed Nooruddi Hashemi, First Secretary, Embassy of Afghanistan to Belgium
General Hilaluddin Hilal, Member of the Wolesi Jirga, Afghan National Assembly (Baghlan Province)
Cyrus Hodes, Senior Fellow, Center for Advanced Defense Studies
Ambassador Ross Hornby, Ambassador of Canada to the EU
Colonel Walter Huhn, Chief of Crisis Management Branch, Policy Planning and Advisory Staff, German Federal Ministry of Defense
Hussein Husseinov, Third Secretary for Political Affairs, Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the EU
Ambassador M. Saeed Khalid, Ambassador of Pakistan to Belgium and the EU
H.E. Mohammad Karim Khalili, Second Vice-President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Fawzia Koofi, Deputy Speaker of the Wolesi Jirga, Afghan National Assembly (Badakhshan Province)
Daniel Korski, Senior Policy Fellow, European Council on Foreign Relations
Ambassador Prince Nikolaus of Liechtenstein, Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein to Belgium
Anne-Marie Lizin, Former President, Belgian Senate
Kenneth Lindharth Madsen, Secretary, Permanent Representation of Denmark to the EU
William Maley, Professor and Director, Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy, Australian National University
Ambassador Alexander Marschik, Director for Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, Austrian Ministry for European and International Affairs
Baquer Moin, Former Head of Persian/Pashto Service, BBC World Service
James Moran, Director for Asia, Directorate-General for External Relations, European Commission
Rani Mullen, Assistant Professor of Government, The College of William and Mary
Ambassador Zia Nezam, Ambassador of Afghanistan to Austria
Sultana Parvanta, Senior Advisor, Ministry of Commerce, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Rizwan Rafi, Counsellor, Embassy of Pakistan to Brussels
Paul Raushenbush, Associate Dean of Religious Life, Princeton University; Co-Director, LISD Program on Religion, Diplomacy and International Relations
Amin Saikal, Professor of Political Science and Director, Center for Arab and Islamic Studies (Middle East and Central Asia), Australian National University
Peter Sawczak, Counsellor, Mission of Australia to the European Union
Pascal Schafhauser, First Secretary, Embassy of Liechtenstein to Belgium
Eckart Schiewek, Political Advisor to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, UNAMA, Kabul
Susanne Schmeidl, Advisor, Tribal Liaison Office, Afghanistan; Senior Research Fellow, Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance, Griffith University
Ambassador Hans-Dietmar Schweisgut, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Austria to the EU
Thomas Seifert, Journalist, Die Presse
Ambassador Hans-Ulrich Seidt, Ambassador of Germany to Afghanistan
Leanne Smith, MPP Candidate, Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University; former UNAMA Human Rights Field Officer
Raymond R. Snider, Executive Officer, Executive Management Division, NATO Headquarters
M. Masoom Stanekzai, Advisor to the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Barbara J. Stapleton, Senior Political Advisor, Office of the EU Special Representative for Afghanistan
Nusrat Suleymanov, Third Secretary, Mission of Azerbaijan to NATO
Daoud Sultanzoy, Member of the Wolesi Jirga, Afghan National Assembly (Ghazni Province)
Michael Sveda, Third Secretary, Permanent Delegation of the Czech Republic to NATO
Ambassador Homayoun Tandar, Ambassador of Afghanistan to Belgium
Ambassador Mohammed Ebrahim Taherian, Director of Afghanistan Department, Iranian Foreign Ministry
Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the UN (New York)
Amin Tarzi, Director of Middle East Studies, Marine Corps University, Quantico
J Alexander Thier, Senior Rule of Law Advisor and Co-Director, International Network to Promote the Rule of Law (INPROL), United States Institute of Peace
Ambassador Ferdinand Trauttmansdorff, Legal Advisor, Austrian Ministry for European and International Affairs
Ambassador Roeland Van de Geer, EU Special Representative for the African Great Lakes Region; former Ambassador of the Netherlands to Afghanistan
Ambassador Francesc Vendrell, EU Special Representative for Afghanistan
Wolfgang von Erffa, Counsellor, Political Affairs, Embassy of Germany to Indonesia
Ambassador Clemens von Goetze, Representative to the Political and Security Committee, German Representation to the EU
Ambassador Veronika Wand-Danielsson, Permanent Representative of Sweden to NATO
Rob Watson, Defense Correspondent, BBC World Service
Marvin Weinbaum, Scholar-in-Residence, Middle East Institute; Professor Emeritus, University of Illinois
Andrew Wilder, Research Director, Feinstein International Center, Tufts University
Faizullah Zaki, Member of the Wolesi Jirga, Afghan National Assembly (Jowzjan Province)
Appendix II: Reconstruction and Development Project Analysis  
Compiled by Carol S. Wang

LISD examined a few reconstruction programs and projects in Afghanistan that had been frequently cited by LISD associates and contacts. The purpose of the study was to identify common factors behind successes and challenges to these reconstruction efforts. To do so, the study examined academic papers, studied Afghanistan development strategies, and conducted interviews with Afghanistan government officials, Asian Development Bank (ADB) representatives, Roshan representatives, and other NGO contacts.

The programs and projects surveyed were drawn from both public and private sectors and serve a great variety of needs within the Afghanistan community. They included:

- Bangladesh Rural Area Committee's (BRAC) microfinance programs;
- Roshan mobile phone company;
- Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG);
- Aynak Copper Deposit – not yet completed but in its beginning phases;
- An oil refinery project;
- Cooperazione Internazionale’s (COOPI) water and sanitation project;
- Gabion Construction Project.

In addition, this study also examined the National Solidarity Program (NSP), and the national community-driven development program run by Afghanistan's Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD). This program itself includes a great variety of projects, including building irrigation systems, wells and drinking water pipes, and schools.

Despite the diversity of reconstruction efforts studied, the study was able to clearly identify some shared contributing elements to successes and challenges within these efforts.

The shared contributing elements to successes included:

- The reputation of the implementing organization, past implementing organizations, or neighboring implementing organizations;
- The past experience of the implementing organization;
- Community buy-in of the project.

Reputation

BRAC found that its reputation as a Muslim organization with some historic ties and little strategic interest in Afghanistan smoothed its operations within Afghanistan. In addition, Roshan's backing by a widely respected religious leader in Afghanistan, the Aga Khan, allows it to bypass bribes that warlords typically demand from other operators. Given the role that religion plays in hindering many reconstruction projects in the context of insurgent groups such as the Taliban, it was particularly interesting to note from this example that religious factors could also contribute to successful reconstruction efforts. Lastly, the NSP also found that the community was more likely to accept NSP involvement when community members could identify successful NSP involvement in other villages or successful past NGO involvement within their own village.

1. Gabion is a cement or sand wall that is constructed in a river along its edge to protect against flooding.
Experience

BRAC’s many years of operation and success in Bangladesh gave it “international credentials” that helped it receive support from international donors. It was also able to apply basic lessons from Bangladesh to cases in Afghanistan.5

Community Buy-In

Ensuring community buy-in of the projects was the most frequently cited factor contributing to success. First, BRAC invests in the development of the members of the village in which it operates. Of its 37 trainers in Afghanistan, two-thirds are local Afghans. In addition, Roshan consults with the elders of a village before it begins any operations. Also, the NSP’s hallmark operative unit is the Community Development Council (CDC), in which community elders themselves determine the type of reconstruction project the community needs. A specific case of the NSP’s facilitating partner, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), illustrated how important this CDC process is to NSP success. The IRC ensured community buy-in by understanding the power-holders and disadvantaged of the community, choosing a staff of Afghans recommended by community leaders, and selecting mullahs to announce election results, presenting the oath and swearing-in of CDC members, and offering a short prayer for the success of the community and its representatives. The IRC acknowledged traditional practices, which then enhanced the legitimacy of the NSP in the communities.6 A fourth case of a water and sanitation project funded by USAID and run by MRRD and COOPI cited its inclusion of local people with its team of engineers as the “only” reason for its success working in one of the most dangerous districts in Kandahar.7

The programs and projects also reported the following individual factors contributing to success:

- Flexibility and adaptability (BRAC);
- Quality of management (Roshan);
- Direct and/or indirect support by the Afghan government (Roshan);
- Ready and comprehensive delivery of material and human resources (NSP);
- Genuine and competitive interest by international corporations (Aynak).

Conversely, the reconstruction efforts identified several shared challenges including:

- Afghanistan’s lack of market and transportation infrastructure;
- Security problems, such as the Taliban attacks;
- Poor governance structures;
- Lack of community buy-in.

Lack of Financial and Transportation Infrastructure

The nascent stage of most of Afghanistan’s financial and transportation infrastructure was cited by BRAC, Roshan and specific projects within the NSP, to be challenging for successful operations. The almost “non-existent” banking sector in Afghanistan is a challenge for BRAC to convince local Afghans of the necessity of saving and borrowing. Roshan cited the difficulty in finding a credit or banking partner as an obstacle to conducting business.8 Lastly, the NSP has many projects that construct community buildings, where a lack of transportation infrastructure would hinder delivery of construction materials.9

Security

Security problems were another frequently-cited obstacle. BRAC cited security as a remaining challenge, explaining that while there is no organized resistance to its activities, two staff members have lost their lives. Roshan’s mobile phone operations encountered resistance in March 2008, when insurgent groups began destroying cell phone signal towers because they believed that coalition troops were using the towers to track down their forces. The NSP experienced security challenges as well. For example, local warlords have turned to physical force to express their objections to local election results.

Poor Governance

Several of the researched projects cited poor governance structures as hindering their operations. Roshan’s telecom operators are required to contribute a portion of their earnings to a government fund to be used in rural and remote areas, but there is no auditing or accounting of how this fund is disbursed. In addition, NSP cites complicated finances as a challenge. For example, the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), the main financial contributor to NSP, stipulates that although donors can express a preference for their ARTF funds to go to NSP, donor funds must pay recurrent government costs first. Thus, money intended for NSP has been taken out to cover government costs, exacerbating already existing cash shortages.

Lack of Community Involvement

The lack of community buy-in in the project has also contributed to obstacles. Roshan discussed cases in which it was not successful in involving the community which led to further problems. For example, in a community where planning did not involve community elders, Roshan’s construction of a mobile phone tower was interrupted by Afghan men who came with guns, because they believed the towers were part of a “government initiative to spy on their women.” Facilitating partners within the NSP encountered problems with community members because of miscommunication. For example, some members believed that the NSP was a communist initiative because of its stipulation of women’s participation in CDC’s. Other community members believed that NSP was an effort to convert people to Christianity. Another NSP project operating in the village of Char Sang in the Kakraiz district of Kandahar encountered obstacles because its planning involved few villagers and no village elders. As a result, the project, known as the Gabion Construction Project, did not address the most urgent needs of the community. When the Taliban came to demand that the laborers stop work on the project and “took” two personnel involved in the project, they did not encounter any resistance from the village elders. Lastly, an oil refinery project began by an associate of LISD ran into obstacles with its operations because not enough local Afghan input was present.

15. Kakar, “Fine-Tuning the NSP.”
Individual challenges to projects included:

- Gender bias towards the staff of certain projects (NSP);
- Misinformation (NSP);
- Ramifications of programs not addressed – meaningful reintegration not provided to ex-combatants (DDR/DIAG);
- Poor evaluation metrics (DDR/DIAG).
Appendix III: Wolfgang Danspeckgruber, “Notes from Kabul”

April 2008

What a surprise it was to be in Kabul once again – particularly after all the pre-trip excitement and trepidation influenced by newspaper reports, information from colleagues, and the general tone of the talk about Afghanistan at home in the US. At first impression upon arrival life seemed so very different from the picture of Afghanistan I formed at home, much more “normal.”

Kabul, indeed the country of Afghanistan – at least as I was told while on a visit to the Presidential Palace – was actually saved by the tragic events of September 11, 2001. When I visited the capital last in 2003 much was still in ruins and the scars of war were visible everywhere. Today Kabul appears to be a booming city. There were many more cars on the road and a level of reconstruction and commercial activity I had not anticipated. In Kabul car noise is everywhere and building projects are to be found, it seems, around every corner. I saw many more women without chador (know more commonly in the US by the term burqa) than five years ago, students, and groups of people from all ethnic communities of Afghanistan interacting within this urban milieu.

If one considers that only 15% of Afghanistan's households have access to potable water and some 10% to electric power, intermittently of course, then Kabul can indeed be considered a booming city, especially given that Kabul is a city originally built for some 500,000 but that has now nearly two million inhabitants with many roads still unpaved, too few jobs, and high living costs. Following international intervention in Operation Enduring Freedom, Kabul has been a hub for hundreds of thousands of refugees. Still there has been a great deal of improvement and normalization. Afghan GNP per capita doubled from $200 in 2004 to $400 today, though it is argued that roughly 60% of Afghanistan's current $8 billion GNP comes from the drug trade.

The most disconcerting change for me personally since my last visit to Kabul in 2003 is that my host insisted on driving me around in an armor-plated car with bodyguards, drivers with a taste for excessively high speeds, and a permanent second-car shadow to prevent other cars from coming too close. One is always cognizant of armed guards, machine gun nests on many corners, fortified road blocks, and the walled-in fortifications of some foreign embassies. This seemed to reflect the international community’s growing concern about personal security, but also the increasing difficulty of venturing out and interacting with Afghans on a daily basis within this context of a consciously created security environment of bodyguards and armored vehicles. I often wondered whether this in fact made us even more of a target. But this was just for us, an ambassador and myself – foreigners – while I saw hundreds walking down the stand-lined streets with dozens of other drivers trying to get around the often chaotic Kabul gridlock. I am of course aware that due to my gracious host and the safe environment I was in, my daily life in Kabul did not necessarily reflect reality.

* * * *

Today, Afghanistan is the fifth poorest country in the world, just coming out from thirty years of armed occupation, civil strive, destruction. Most Afghans face a daily, barebones struggle to make ends meet and survive, particularly in rural areas. From my Western perspective, this is extreme poverty and deprivation. But many Afghans have known nothing different, especially in the countryside, which has begun to “dig out” after decades of war and Taliban rule.

The country embodies the juxtaposition of modernity and the past. Look, for example at advances in com-
In 2001, the country had 29,000 landlines only. Today there are at least three million Afghans who communicate using cell phones via one of the four functioning networks in the country. But by ruining nearly a dozen cell-phone towers, the Taliban has managed to interrupt with brazen force this dramatic step toward modernization. By doing so, the Taliban lives up to its reputation as being a force resisting modernization, really a reactionary movement, but one that is present not only in parts of the country where economic development is scarce but precisely where modernization has made noticeable inroads. It represents something much deeper in Afghanistan: the nation’s very conservative society, especially in the Pashto rural South. Afghanistan in many ways retains an archaic, eighteenth-century society. This anti-modernist movement has the potential to be very dangerous. Indeed, Westernization has already been tried twice in the past – during the 1920s and 1970s – and has twice failed.

What I could learn from interlocutors is that all feel progress has been made in Afghanistan – in different sectors to different degrees of course. What appears to muddle the level of progress is the almost exaggerated in-depth analyses of all details and nuances of state-building efforts by international actors, ex-pats and others abroad. There is a new tendency among some Afghans to call foreigners “invaders” and “occupiers,” like the Soviets in the 1980s and the English in the nineteenth century. Let’s not forget why the “internationals” arrived here originally 2001. Let’s not forget that Operation Enduring Freedom was indeed a truly multilateral undertaking with United Nations Security Council legalization and the only Chapter V mobilization of the NATO Charter.

This all brings to mind the idea that the international community’s approach to aid is perhaps far too complex, sophisticated and dictated according to its schedules. In many ways it is missing the hearts and minds of average Afghan citizens. The sudden entrance of twenty-first century technologies can only cause surprise, backlash and rejection by many – stoking latent and actual anti-modernism within Afghan society. It seems that the international community’s timetable is not necessarily in sync with the needs and complexities of Afghanistan, Afghan society, and Afghan citizens. It seems that much has been undertaken to calm the international community’s concerns and to satisfy its needs.

One should not forget the lessons learned from development aid in Africa during the 1960s and 1970s when assistance often failed to yield intended results because it was inappropriate, above and beyond absorption capability, and marred by political circumstances. Donor fatigue was the predictable out-come, and donor efforts withered and died.

Countless visits of senior US politicians to Afghanistan have taken place. They stay mostly for several hours in the vicinity of Bagram Air Base and talk to the “known” leaders. Indeed these visits seem more like onsite inspections, filled with the appropriate photo-ops, rather than attempts to grasp the country’s complexities and realistically evaluate problems in ways that would enhance policy making. Many of the visitors’ statements both in tone and content appear specifically directed at their constituencies and the media at home rather than reflecting the real needs of Afghanistan. Misconceptions are reinforced and off-the-mark strategies perpetuated. One cannot escape the impression that much of what the international community does in Afghanistan today is based on a silver bullet mentality wherein expectations are that aid will work quickly, fix the worst problems immediately, and pacify domestic constituencies in a way that will not require any further or sustained major efforts.

On the other hand, however, one has to be aware that decision makers in Afghanistan and many others – namely those aspiring to power and those trying to deny power – do indeed closely follow US policy debates, particularly those of the current presidential election cycle. I do not believe that we fully grasp the impact of this on thinking, policies and strategies abroad. It was sobering when some of my Afghan interlocutors actually recited verbatim statements made by the current presidential contenders, beginning to assess what to expect from each.
I wonder to what extent this availability and consumption of information actually hampers further the efficiency of international assistance, and certainly its conditionalities. I am aware that in our open society, little can be done against these undesired effects but I believe it is at least important to be aware of them. All these issues will make the already momentous task of effectively helping the Afghans in no way easier.

* * * *

A key set of problems in the interaction between the international community and Afghanistan emerged in all my talks throughout my visit. Foremost among them are the variants in perceptions of time and realities, and an apparently ever-increasing cleavage between them as seen on one side by the Afghans and on the other by the international community.

The respective realities, how to measure time, length of engagement, speed of progress, and intensity of problems seem to be different for each of these actors in light of their respective perspective, involvement, objective and sometimes other ulterior motives not always directed by the needs of the Afghans. The countless activities – projects, programs, reports, numbers of studies, statements, suggestions, meetings – though well-meaning are certainly expensive, apparently coordinated among the international community itself rarely, and with limited Afghan involvement and ownership. But the fact remains that all of them shape the reality as seen by those who are involved in them and as seen by Afghans who may or may not really be impacted directly by them.

While for many Afghans, coming from the perception of more than three decades of warfare, destruction and suffering, much has been achieved in the relatively short period of time since 2002. But as viewed through the lens of extensive involvement and high casualty rates for some nations within the international community, this same time period is one of costly sacrifices and few results. For the international community, especially some of the NATO members, the time seems to have come already to begin contemplating an Afghanistan exit strategy, using terms like “reduced presence” and “beginning disengagement.” For those same Afghans who see that much has been done, they also recognize that much remains to be done – questions of when, who and how much less support to expect are critical.

* * * *

For the Afghans there exists apparently another, potentially highly problematic external factor: the Afghan diaspora, especially in Europe, the US, and Australia. A number of influential individuals left the country and became ex-pats, and ventured into successful businesses, consulting and even educative projects abroad. But in many cases they also became “experts” on Afghanistan within their host countries wherein those with power in the host country attempted in turn to use, if not exploit, the diaspora’s information and knowledge of Afghanistan to forward their own interests and agendas. This may fit well with some of the diaspora who would like to come back to Afghanistan with heightened power and influence.

But conservative Afghans are often shocked by the behavior of ex-pats who do return home, especially in terms of social mores dealing with alcohol and gender norms. In colloquial terms it is said that they are back from democracies. But by “democracies” ex-pat detractors are referring to Western nations and key members of the international community. Moreover, many of the NGOs and aid organizations active in Afghanistan whose efforts have sometimes yielded disappointing results are based in these countries. Together, these two factors contribute to a negativity about democracy in Afghan popular opinion that I did not experience during my 2003 visit. Certainly this sentiment can be exploited. This bodes ill for the 2009 Afghan presidential and parliamentary elections for which many of the power players and allies inside and outside of the country appear ready to employ any means available to achieve their political objectives.
The overall perception in Kabul seemed to be that the diaspora’s influence rarely has worked to the advantage of Afghanistan but nearly always to their own benefit, especially in economic terms. Some in the diaspora may easily become pawns in the great power game, serving foreign interests – perhaps even without their knowledge or intent – which use and try to manipulate ex-pat connections to and knowledge of Afghanistan. There are also those in the diaspora who try to maximize their personal gain by trying to mobilize their respective ethnic allies in Afghanistan’s neighborhood to influence policies there as well as to influence international donors, namely key governments like the US and UK. Sometimes this unfortunate interplay can also involve official Afghan representatives abroad. Alas, this more often than not ignores the true interests of their country and people and contributes to the general mistrust held by Afghans at home for those abroad, including at least indirectly, the international community.

* * * *

During the last days of my trip, I had the opportunity to meet an array of Afghan leaders in their respective fields, including key ministers of the Karzai Administration. They seem to appreciate my coming to Afghanistan and appeared most interested in the proposed work of crafting an “Afghan vision for Afghanistan’s future” that the international community could support. But serious issues of governance that clearly need to be addressed were also highlighted in these meetings.

The issue of exorbitant moneys spent – where did it all go and where was the accountability were questions I heard again and again – and questions concerning tangible results dominated our discussions. It was eye-opening for me to realize just how intense the indignation and levels of criticism were about a vast number of issues including corruption, crime, governmental authorities and the international community that helped to put them into their positions and continues to support them. Questions were voiced from numerous quarters relating to who really governs, where is law and order, and where was the true implementation of the Constitution? Disappointment in both the government and the international community was palpable.

But still a strong desire was expressed by some to have more stringent monitoring and assistance by the international community, especially over programs it has initiated to fight corruption, nepotism and cronyism within the government. It is claimed that since the international community is so present, it should provide the support in these critical areas, which, as everybody recognizes, have potentially higher problematic consequences than others. If the international community does not offer this, people will continually raise the questions of why is this allowed to happen, and what is the international community here for?

Criticisms were also raised about the filling of governmental positions which many perceive are offered more frequently to one particular ethnic group or clan than others. This is a tendency which has a most destructive potential of undermining weak state institutions by utilizing clan-structure and nepotism instead of merit-based employment. It also puts in doubt the institution-based structure as envisaged by the international community, since Afghan reality works along clan and ethnic lines, and each minister will presumably bring in those close to him, and try to award those within his/her personal networks with contracts and government jobs.

Still Afghans want a voice in the crafting of their country’s future. Some of the most ardently voiced criticisms were those reflecting the feeling that Afghans are not part and parcel to the international reconstruction strategy, to NATO’s defense and security strategy, and to the allocation of various budgets. The head of the armed services committee of the Parliament complained that last year the complete defense purse of five billion dollars was spent without any involvement by them. The problem is aggravated by the Afghan perception that they were more directly involved in 2001 and 2002 in the development of building strategies of their state than today. Now it is argued that the international community still behaves like then in
terms of emphasis on military security but includes and consults the Afghans less and less rather than what Afghans expected – even more direct engagement and involvement in planning and execution which would contribute to even higher levels of Afghan learning, expertise and ownership. I was told, “The international community has not taken account of the significant developments in Afghanistan and still acts like before [2001].”

The deterioration of the relationship between the Afghans and the international community and NGOs alike is enhanced by the focus on military and security issues by many of the leading international community members. The Afghans contend that they could deal with some of these security challenges at least as good in their own way, with some international community support, while much of the donor money could be better spent on economic and governance projects with Afghan ownership and execution, and international support and monitoring.

One suggestion I heard to address the issue of Afghan ownership was to create special working groups with overwhelming Afghan memberships. Such heightened involvement would obviously encourage greater engagement and greater burden sharing (and of course also of the blame if things go wrong) and help average Afghans to embrace the international community as helpful collaborators. There may otherwise be an increasing reticence on the part of Afghans to support the implementation of programs that they feel they have no ownership of and no stake in.

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While suicide bombings in Afghanistan have decreased since last year, there has apparently been an increase of attempted IED attacks, mostly against ISAF units. I was very disconcerted to hear, however that foreigners, returning ex-pats and well-to-do Afghans are now targeted in Kabul and Herat by criminal gangs with drug, mafia and potential Taliban connections, and with reaches into the highest government circles. The crimes committed by these gangs include kidnappings and robbery which are undertaken as cash-creating exercises. The fundamental underlying problem seems to be the apparent impunity for such gangs. One Afghan National Army officer said that the situation was much more secure during the time of the Taliban rule, when you could walk around at night without any fear and could keep your house door open.

This “danger of Columbianization,” as it was described to me, is a new form of challenge and security danger that is very difficult to tackle, and certainly one that cannot be addressed effectively simply by traditional military means. But these criminal activities have ripple effects that could fuel ethnic and clan divisions. It further undermines the confidence in law and order when criminals appear immune from prosecution, and police officers and judges appear or are in reality complicit in criminal activities. The potential for corruption, however, remains real given that police in Kabul receive pay equivalent to only $50 per year while $120 is the estimated minimum amount needed to adequately support a small family.

These security problems concern the population much more than the larger “war on terror,” and while obviously putting into question the capability of the government, reflect very badly on the international community, which seems to be omnipresent but in the eyes of many not able to deliver to the population one fundamental element of a regular and decent daily existence – a feeling of personal security.

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The longer I was in Afghanistan and the more I traveled around, the more I realized that there are many Afghan realities. Kabul is not really representative of Afghanistan, nor is Herat, nor Kandahar, nor Jalalabad, nor Mazar-i Sharif. Life in urban areas is far different from life in rural ones. The country’s provinces and regions too are often profoundly different from each other. Afghanistan cannot be seen as a nation-state in
the traditional sense, but it has always been a barometer of the regional situation and the great power interests in the region at large. Since September 11, this includes the strategic presence of the United States, which seems intent to stay. What the terms of the US presence in Afghanistan will be, and indeed the terms of the presence of the entire international community, remains an open question. But from my observations from the ground, it is clear that the best place to look for an answer is among the frustrations and hopes of the Afghans themselves.
The Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination at Princeton University (LISD) supports teaching, research and publication about issues pertaining to the state, self-determination, self-governance, sovereignty, security, boundaries and crisis diplomacy with particular consideration of socio-cultural, ethnic and religious issues involving state as well as non-state actors. The Institute was founded in 2000 through the generosity of H.S.H. Prince Hans Adam II of Liechtenstein, and is directed by Wolfgang Danspeckgruber, Lecturer in Public and International Affairs at Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs.

LISD seeks to enhance global peace and stability by bringing together academic experts, practitioners, representatives of the public and private sectors, and decision makers to explore key events and conflicts from geostrategic, economic and cultural-religious perspectives in order to find new solutions to current and traditional problems. In addition to conferences convened as part of specific LISD projects, the Institute regularly sponsors public lectures and special meetings that bring a diverse group of experts and policy makers from around the world to Princeton University to share their work with students and members of the wider University and local communities.

Each year since the Institute’s founding, LISD faculty have taught courses that are part of Princeton University’s graduate and undergraduate curricula on topics including international crisis diplomacy, self-determination, Central Asia and Afghanistan. Princeton University graduate and undergraduate students are also involved with all aspects of LISD projects, from planning meetings and conferences to participating in diplomatic discussions and serving as rapporteurs. Student involvement in Institute projects as well as courses taught at Princeton University by LISD faculty are central to the Institute’s commitment to prepare the students of today to be the leaders of tomorrow.

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