

# *U.S. Next Steps in Afghanistan*



University of Washington  
Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies

Task Force 2010



# Next Steps for the U.S. in Afghanistan

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# Introduction

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Since that fateful day eight years ago, the United States has set itself upon a path that has profoundly altered the very nature of global politics and relations. Upon entrance into Afghanistan following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, the United States has followed a stringent policy of intolerance of terrorism, promotion of freedom and support for the construction of a strong and secure Afghan state. However, the success of these ventures has been variable and the U.S. came close to repeating past mistakes when U.S. attention was diverted to Iraq for several years.

Following the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1979, the United States made concerted efforts to oust its rivals from the region, funding the mujahedeen and funneling weapons through Pakistan. Upon the withdrawal of Soviet troops nine years later, in 1988, the U.S. effectively abandoned Afghanistan, a nation devastated by decades of war, draught and disappointment.

In the years since America's reentrance into Afghanistan in October 2001, the initial struggle against al Qaeda and its Taliban supporters has evolved into a complex counterinsurgency effort to eradicate violent extremism, repression and instability and to assist the newly formed Afghan government to achieve security and independence. As emphasis on Afghanistan has been renewed, a critical evaluation and revision of current United States foreign policy is necessary in order to secure American interests in the region.

It is imperative that the United States fulfills its commitments to the Afghan people. The United States must not, as it has done so often before within the region, lose interest and turn its gaze elsewhere. It must remain dedicated to American goals in Afghanistan and in the region as a whole. However, with this must come the caveat that has been established by the Obama Administration, General Stanley McChrystal and the Government of Afghanistan itself: all operations must be transferred to the Afghan people. Accompanying American strategy to "disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda," as President Obama outlined in his December 1, 2009 speech to U.S. Military Academy at West Point, the United States must drastically increase its civilian and diplomatic efforts in Afghanistan. This "civilian surge" will be imperative, given President Obama's announced withdrawal of American troops by July 2011, as security cannot be maintained without a stable government and strong support from Afghanistan's neighbors and



allies. The State Department must reevaluate its role as American military contributions subside within the next year and diplomatic and civilian initiatives come to the fore.

The United States must recognize that our mission in Afghanistan is transitory. Afghan resilience has existed long before the United States ever came to the country and will exist long after our troops withdraw. The United States must respect the autonomy of the region and the wishes and well-being of its people, lest the United States risks our alliance with such an important nation. The policies outlined in this report embrace the new ideologies adopted by the Obama and Karzai administrations and offer concrete solutions to aid in the transfer of responsibility, security and governance to the Afghan people, while maintaining and supporting American interests in the country and the region. Our policies outline United States strategy and the most effective means by which the United States should support the Afghan Government and people while ensuring the security and interests of the United States.

## Executive Summary

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As Representative Gary Ackerman (D-NY) reiterated in a speech to the House of Representatives in April of 2009, Afghanistan is truly the “central front in the struggle to secure our nation.”<sup>11</sup> Located at the core of the Asian continent, Afghanistan is the middle ground between Europe, Russia, China, the Middle East and the Central and South Asian states. It is the crossroads of nations and the key to security in the region.

With United States military and diplomatic efforts focused primarily on Iraq beginning in 2003, Afghanistan quietly slipped into the background of American foreign affairs. It has only been within the past few months that Afghanistan has again appeared as front line news and a top priority for American efforts in the region. Thus, it is at this critical juncture in United States involvement in the region that a comprehensive, critical review of United States policy in Afghanistan must be addressed.

The United States must reaffirm its commitment to Afghanistan and the surrounding region. Failure to do so would be a gross miscalculation of the risks involved in the continued presence of the United States in Afghanistan and a fatal blow to America’s credibility in Asia. Broad themes of security for the United States, Afghanistan and the region, along with transference of operations and responsibility to the Afghan people are at the fore of these policy recommendations. There must be a refocused American effort on these two vital initiatives, along with a renewed focus on accountability and corruption within the Afghan government as well as foreign support for the state. Finally, it is imperative that all actors make concerted efforts to improve cooperation and establish a system for coordinating military, humanitarian, political, economic and social aid. Without communication between the great powers involved in the region, American and international efforts to build a stable and prosperous Afghanistan could be for naught.

This report is divided into six sections, each of which details the primary concerns of the United States in Afghanistan and presents policies to promote and safeguard American interests. The first section examines governance; the second section discusses infrastructure; the third section addresses Afghan economy; the fourth section examines public services; the fifth section

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<sup>11</sup> U.S. Strategy for Afghanistan: Achieving Peace and Stability in the Graveyard of Empires. *House of Representatives, Subcommittee on the Middle East, South Asia, Committee on Foreign Affairs.* (2009)

studies the impact of regional actors and the final section analyzes multilateral organizations. Each section is further divided into chapters, which flesh out the most pertinent issues in designing United States policy towards Afghanistan.

The first chapter within governance focuses on Afghan security, specifically identifying the actions required in order to build and strengthen the Afghan National Army and Police. The following chapter tackles the issue of corruption within the Afghan government and presents options for decreasing the amount of corruption that sabotages the collective efforts of the Afghan people to reclaim their country. The third chapter addresses the most recent initiative of the Karzai administration to bring Taliban members into Afghan society through policies that reintegrate, reconcile, and redress former insurgents as part of short-term and long-term goals toward building a national identity.

The second section of this report delves into infrastructure development as the backbone for economic growth in Afghanistan. The third section, economy, details the need to develop the agricultural sector and provide sustainable alternatives to the growing poppy industry. The following chapter investigates the issue of opium production and counternarcotics efforts. The last chapter lays out the necessary steps to build a market economy in Afghanistan to ensure a prosperous future for the Afghan people.

The fourth section, public services, begins with a chapter evaluating the education system in Afghanistan and addresses the issue of widespread illiteracy in the country. The next chapter focuses on the implementation of crucial improvements in the public health care system and the third chapter evaluates the impact of reintegration and repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons on Afghan society.

Regional actors are the focus of the fifth section, starting with a comprehensive analysis of U.S. policy towards Pakistan in relation to Afghanistan. This chapter details a serious rethinking of U.S. policy toward Pakistan in order to ensure an effective partnership with this vital ally in the region, specifically focusing on issues of counterterrorist and counterinsurgency operations as well as an increased focus on the wellbeing of the Pakistani people. This is followed by a chapter on the role of China, India and Russia in Afghanistan. The role of these nations in supplying humanitarian aid and economic support, training Afghan security forces, battling rampant drug-trafficking across Afghan borders and assisting U.S forces in their efforts to secure the region is invaluable. Assuring their support while balancing these nations' interests

in the region against those of the United States' requires nuanced policy decisions and a clear vision of success in the region. The final chapter deals with the Central Asian states of Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as well as Iran.

The sixth and final section evaluates the role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, International Security Assistance Force, the European Union and the United Nations in Afghanistan. The first chapter focuses specifically on the U.S. relationship with the International Security Assistance Force and explores pragmatic solutions for increasing the efficiency of Provincial Reconstruction Teams at a time when the continuity of existing national commitments are uncertain. The final chapter offers an overview of American relations with the three main international organizations in Afghanistan and provides various recommendations to strengthen American relationships abroad.

Together, this Task Force aims to provide nuanced recommendations for the United States Department of State that are focused on protecting American interests in Afghanistan. United States policy toward this region of the world must be sensitive to the complex situation on the ground, and adjust itself accordingly to the rapid pace of developments and events in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Success in Afghanistan will be difficult to achieve, but it is not impossible as long as the United States remains fully committed to the counterinsurgency mission of winning "hearts and minds" that it has embarked upon. As Task Force members, we hope that the recommendations in the following pages will be implemented with the knowledge that while there is a long and difficult road ahead for the United States and its allies in the region, the commitment to build a secure and prosperous Afghanistan is a worthwhile endeavor.

## List of Abbreviations

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“6+2”	China, Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Russia, and United States
“6+3”	“6+2” and NATO
“3P”	Poppy to Pill Program
ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AEP	Afghan Education Projects
AISA	Afghanistan Investment Support Agency
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSA	Afghanistan National Standardization Authority
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
ARoLP	Afghanistan Rule of Law Project
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BHC	Basic Health Center
BHCS	Basic Health Care Services
BPHS	Basic package of health services
CARD	Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development Program
CARICC	Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre
CBE	Community Based Education
CFR	Council on Foreign Relations
CHW	Community health workers
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CM Levels	Capacity and Milestone Levels
CRC	Civilian Response Corps
CSTC-A	Combined Security Transition Command- Afghanistan
DABM	Afghanistan Electricity Authority
DEA	Drug Enforcement Agency
EC	European Commission
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Aid
ETT	Embedded Training Teams
EU	European Union

EUPOL	European Union Police Mission to Afghanistan
EUSR	European Union Special Representative
EUSRA	European Union Special Representation to Afghanistan
FATA	Federally-Administered Tribal Areas
FDD	Focused District Development Program
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
ICARDA	International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IEDs	Improvised Explosive Devices
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
INCB	International Narcotics Control Board
IO	Bureau of International Organization Affairs
IP	Iran-Pakistan pipeline
IPI	Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISI	Directorate of Inter-Services Intelligence
MAAH	Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock
MCIT	Ministry for Communication and Information Technology
MEW	Ministry of Energy and Water
MFI	Microfinance Institution
MMR	Maternal mortality rate
MoC	Ministry of Commerce
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
MPW	Ministry of Public Works
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NACS	National Anti-Corruption Strategy
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDN	Northern Distribution Network
NESP	National Education Strategic Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NWFP	Northwest Frontier Province
OEF	Operation <i>Enduring Freedom</i>

OMLT	Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
P4M	Poppy for Medicine
PMT	Police Mentoring Teams
PNP	Peace and Reintegration Programme
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
PTS	Program Takhim-e-Solh
RC	Regional Command
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SCR/S	Office of Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stability
SID	Special Identity Card
SOE	State-Owned Enterprise
TAPI	Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline
U.S.	United States
U5MR	Under-5 mortality rate
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan
UNCAC	United Nations Convention Against Corruption
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USAID	United States Agency of International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WB	World Bank
WTO	World Trade Organization





# Section I

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## Governance



# Security: The Afghan National Army & Police

Jessica McBride

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## Policy Recommendations

- Reevaluate and adjust target goals and deadlines
  - Increase training personnel to meet 80% of requirements
  - Provide the equipment necessary to validate and effectively track salaries, weapons, and progress.
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## Abstract

The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)<sup>1</sup> are ill-equipped<sup>2</sup> to assume control of security in Afghanistan and maintain self sustainability by current U.S. deadlines. Three factors pertaining to U.S. policy are responsible for this: 1) current policy's deadlines, 2) inadequate training, and 3) equipment shortages. Failure to develop capable ANSF will prolong U.S. military entanglement<sup>3</sup>, increase financial costs, and leave the U.S. vulnerable to unintended consequences.<sup>4</sup> It is in U.S. interests that policy aggressively and patiently addresses these issues.

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<sup>1</sup> Afghan National Security Forces includes the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police.

<sup>2</sup>The ANSF are defined as ill-equipped because of their inexperience and heavy reliance on international assistance which renders them independently unable to appropriately handle daily duties, unqualified to lead successful team operations and further training programs, incapable of independently assessing security concerns and implementing effective responses, and vulnerable to corruption.

<sup>3</sup> Lieutenant General James M. Dubik, U.S. Army 2009

<sup>4</sup> Unintended consequences include increased risk for insurgent attacks on the global community, American troops, and an incapable ANSF

## **ISSUE**

The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), which includes the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP), are ill-equipped to assume control of security in Afghanistan and maintain self sustainability by current U.S. deadlines.<sup>5</sup> An adept ANSF would provide Afghanistan with the security essential for developing its education, economy, governance, and infrastructure. Failure to develop the ANSF will prolong U.S. military entanglement, increase financial costs and leave the U.S. vulnerable to unintended consequences.<sup>6</sup> There are three central areas for understanding the ANSF's current status and outlining U.S. policies next steps: 1) current policy's deadlines 2) inadequate training and 3) equipment shortages.

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Context***

The Combined Security Transition Command -Afghanistan (CSTC-A), with assistance from International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF)<sup>7</sup>, the Afghan government and the international community, is responsible for security within Afghanistan's borders, and equipping and training the ANSF.<sup>8</sup> The U.S. Department of Defense has committed US\$30 billion dollars, 100,000 military personnel, plus an additional 30,000 troops for the recent surge, and has over 104,000 contractor employees assigned to train the ANA and ANP, and to maintain security in

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<sup>5</sup> This report focuses on the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police.

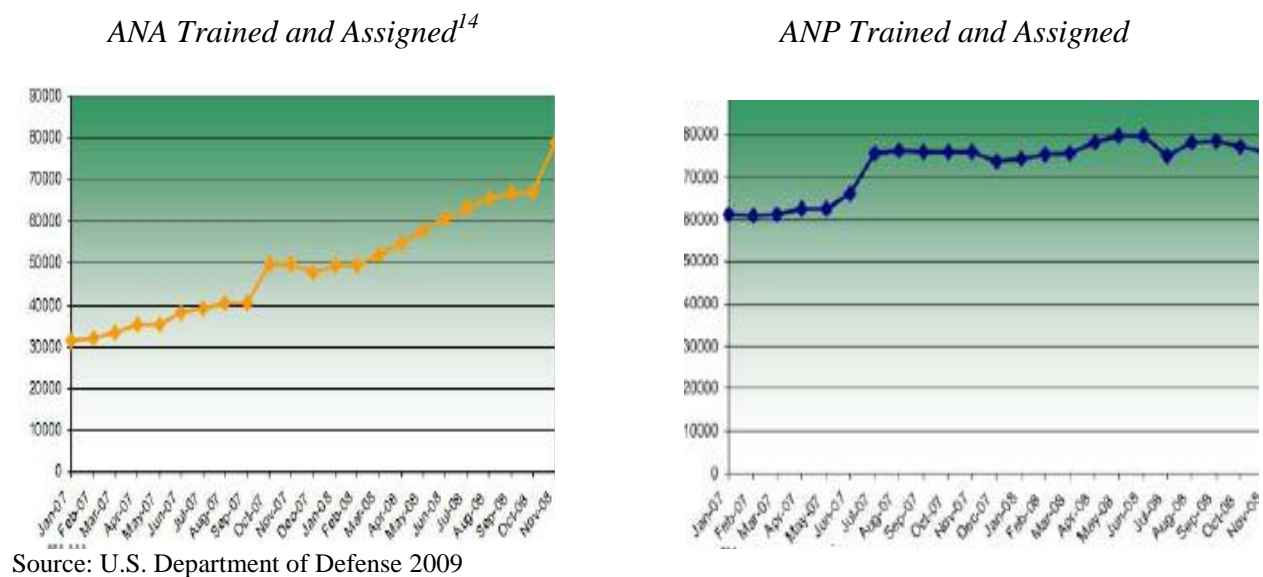
<sup>6</sup> Lieutenant General James M. Dubik, 2009; Cordesman, Washington Post 2009; Unintended consequences include prolonged U.S. military presence and financial cost, increased risk for insurgent attacks on the global community, American troops, and an incapable ANSF

<sup>7</sup> Katzman Congressional Research Services 2009, 42; Department of Defense 2008, 33; ISAF, led by NATO, was created by the Bonn Agreement and U.N. Security Council Resolution 1386

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Defense 2009, 37

Afghanistan.<sup>9</sup> The ANA, under the Afghan Ministry of Defense, has grown from nothing in 2002 to near 100,000 strong and is assuming more responsibility and national acceptance.<sup>10</sup> In comparison, the ANP, subordinate to the Afghan Ministry of Interior, lags behind the ANA by nearly five to six years and struggles with corruption and a lack of professionalism.<sup>11</sup> Theoretically, given the massive growth both forces have experienced since 2002, the nascent forces should command more control over security. However, violence has increased over 500%, levels unprecedented since U.S. involvement.<sup>12</sup> Figure 1 demonstrates the correlation between mass growth of the ANSF and the increased violence.

**Figure 1: Violence and Force Levels of ANSF<sup>13</sup>**



<sup>9</sup> Commission on Wartime contracting 2010, 2

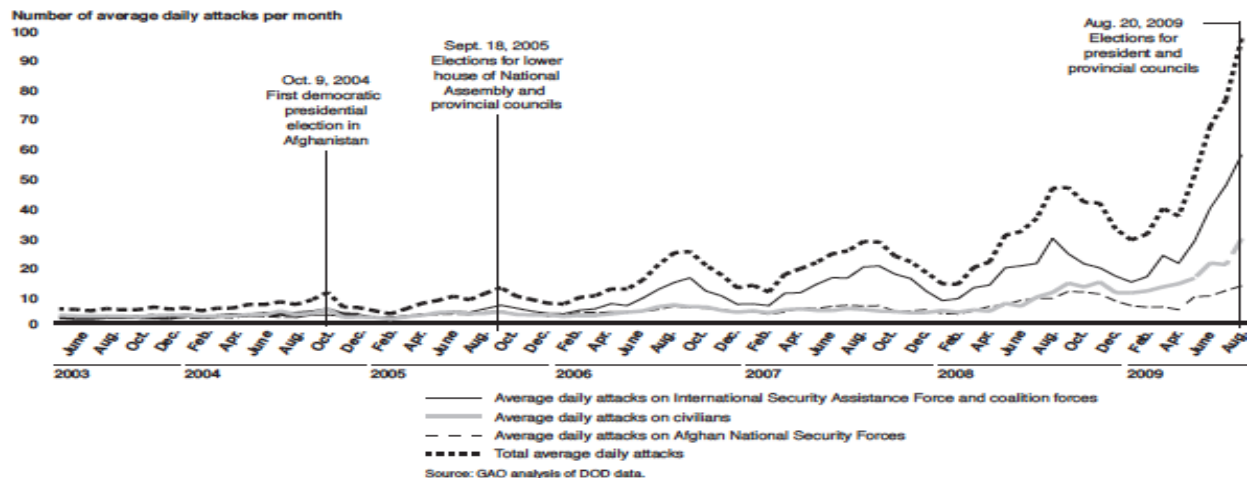
<sup>10</sup> Ibid 56

<sup>11</sup> Cordesman, CSIS 2009, 108

<sup>12</sup> CNN 2010, 1

<sup>13</sup> GAO 0 8661 Afghanistan's Security Environment 2009; Since January of 2007

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Department of Defense 2009; Prior to January 2007 troop levels were insignificant, following a similar trend as the number of insurgent attacks



Note: Data on attacks against civilians include attacks against Afghan nationals and other civilians, U.S. and non-U.S. contractors, nongovernmental organizations, and Afghan government personnel. Data on attacks against the International Security Assistance Force and coalition forces include attacks against U.S. and International Security Assistance Force military personnel.

Source: GAO 2009

In addition to increased instability, the ANSF continues to rely heavily on foreign assistance, and its personnel are incapable of independently executing daily duties, unqualified to lead team operations and further training programs, and remains vulnerable to corruption. This is the result of current policy's deadlines, inadequate training, and chronic equipment shortages.

### ***Current U.S. Policy Deadlines***

Current U.S. policy towards Afghanistan focuses on rapid growth of the ANSF and an accelerated timeline for withdrawal.<sup>15</sup> While President Obama declines commitment to a deadline for complete military withdrawal, he has surrendered to a deadline of July 2011, at which time the troop surge of 30,000 personnel will abate. While reduction of U.S. military presence and a rapid increase of ANSF strength is a top priority, the deadlines are unrealistic and counterproductive. Current target goals increase the Afghan National Army by almost 70,000 in only 18 months.<sup>16</sup> By 2013 the ANA have an expected target growth rate of 80% to reach 240,000; a number that may or may not be sufficient. Similarly, the ANP's target growth rate is

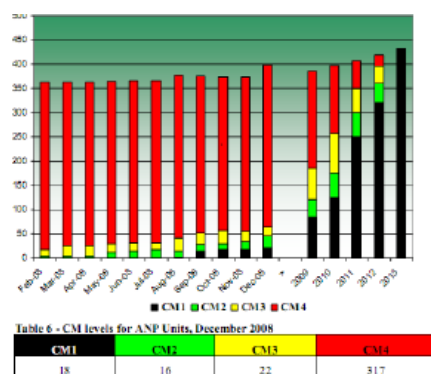
<sup>15</sup> U.S. Department of State 2010

<sup>16</sup> Nordland New York Times 2010, 1

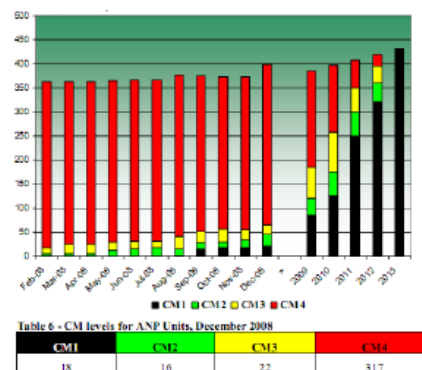
set at 65% by 2013.<sup>17</sup> This means that the current rate of growth would need to be more than doubled to meet these deadlines.<sup>18</sup> These numbers may be achievable, but maintaining the expected Capacity and Milestone (CM) levels are not feasible. Figure 2 illustrates expected CM levels doubling and tripling each year; a feat that Ambassador Moorefield, the Assistant Inspector General of the U.S. Department of State, claims “is highly unlikely they will be able to accomplish that mission [at the current level of resources].”<sup>19</sup>

**Figure 2: ANA and ANP Expected and Reported Capacity and Milestone Levels for 2006-2013**

*Afghan National Army CM levels<sup>20</sup>*



*Afghan National Police CM levels<sup>21</sup>*



Source: U.S. Department of Defense 2009

CM1: capable of operating independently; CM2: capable of planning, executing, and sustaining counterinsurgency operations at the battalion level with international support; CM3: partially capable of conducting counterinsurgency operations at the company level with support from international forces; CM4: formed but not yet capable of conducting primary operational missions.

<sup>17</sup> General McChrystal Press Roundtable 2010, 1

<sup>18</sup> Katzman Congressional Research Service 2009, 46; Bruno, Gregg 2009, Council on Foreign Relations

<sup>19</sup> Commission on Wartime Contracting 2010, 45; See Inadequate Training Section for more information

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Department of Defense 2009, 42

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 48

These goals and deadlines are counterproductive in two main ways. First they pressure trainers to lower standard CM level expectations, allow improper progression, ignore incomplete training, and eschew proper vetting to meet unrealistic goals. While this allows for high volume, it 1) reflects a false measurement of strength 2) reduces quality of ANSF personnel trained and 3) hinders capabilities for future successful growth.

Subsequently, if these goals are not met successfully, “then U.S. policy has only set an arbitrary date for withdrawal, which emboldens [American] enemies and dispirits [American] allies”.<sup>22</sup> This harms the international perception of U.S. leadership, discourages further international commitment, and erodes Afghan civilian loyalty to the U.S. and the ANSF.

### ***Inadequate Training***<sup>23</sup>

Proper training is essential to building capable Afghan security forces and allowing for U.S. transference of responsibility to Afghanistan. The ANSF is stymied by a lack of adequate training personnel, illiteracy, poverty, drugs, ethnic tensions and an unstable security environment. Fox News reports that after eight weeks of training, an average of 5 percent of recruits cannot pass firearms tests. Yet these new recruits are still given a gun and sent out on duty.<sup>24</sup> Numerous reports cite incidents of recruits accidentally shooting themselves or their trainers on assignments.<sup>25</sup> Not only does inadequate training impede the ANSF’s rate of growth and prolong U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, but it also increases the risk of unintended consequences.

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<sup>22</sup> McCain, CBS News 2010

<sup>23</sup> Department of Defense 2009; Currently ISAF is in charge of training the ANA through Operational Mentor and Liaison teams (OMLT). The U.S. leads the training of the ANP through U.S. Embedded Training Teams (ETTs) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) as well as employed contractors working with the Department of Defense.

<sup>24</sup> Fox News Reports 2010, 1

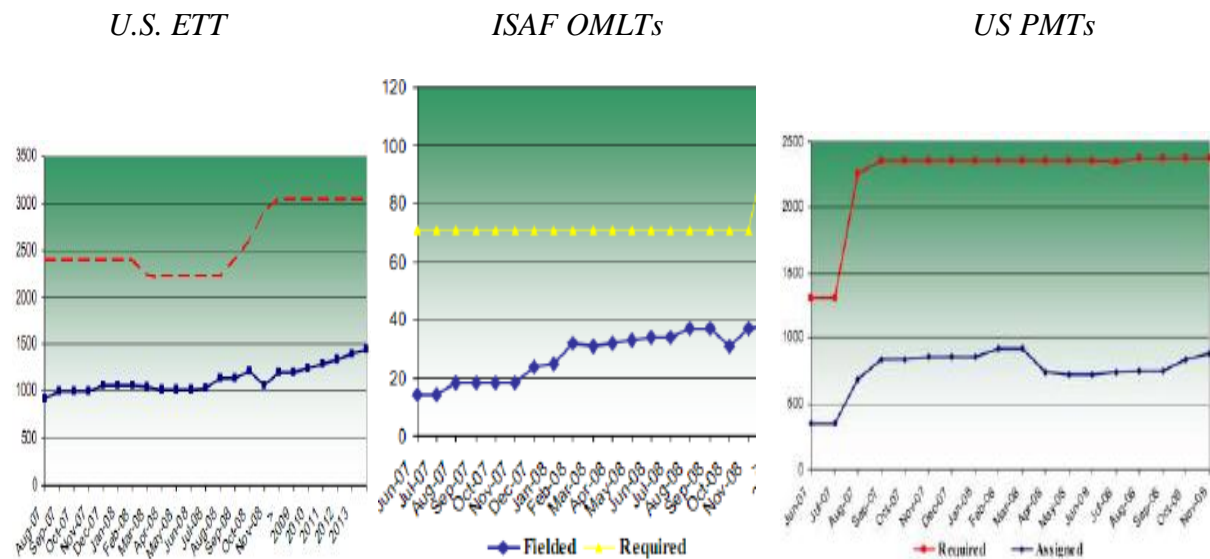
<sup>25</sup> 60 Minutes Lara Logan 2010, 1



### ***Insufficient Supply of Training Personnel***

In 2009, the U.S. only provided 51% of personnel required for training in U.S. Embedded Training Teams (ETTs), and only 37% of required Police Mentoring Teams (PMTs).<sup>26</sup>

**Figure 3: US/ISAF Trainers and Mentors Required and Assigned<sup>27</sup>**



Source: U.S. Department of Defense 2009

The degree of scarcity in training mentors raises the number of trainees to each trainer which ultimately results in larger class sizes, shorter training periods, lowered expectations of CM levels and limited follow up training. Consequently, there is little ability for trainers to track progression, and allow for appropriate promotion and vetting.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Literacy***

About 70% of ANSF recruits are functionally illiterate.<sup>29</sup> Low literacy rates make rapid completion of milestones, and recruitment to a number of specialty positions in the ANSF

<sup>26</sup> U.S. Department of Defense 2009, 34

<sup>27</sup> Ibid 38, 39,44

<sup>28</sup> Katzman Congressional Research services 2009; Screening for the removal of corrupt recruits, or personnel that do not meet acceptable standards, participate in terrorist activities, human rights violations, and drug trafficking.

<sup>29</sup> Cordesman: Afghan Security Forces 2009, 40

difficult to achieve. In general, illiteracy handicaps the recruits' ability to perform daily functions like reading licenses, log-in books, signs, maps, and execute written orders. The shortage of qualified trainers and teachers contributes to the slow rate of improvement. While literacy has begun to surface as a priority, the ANSF does not have a literacy development plan with metrics for performance assessments or clear guidelines for personnel.<sup>30</sup>

### ***Poverty***

According to the U.S. Committee of Foreign Affairs, Afghanistan is the fifth poorest country in the world.<sup>31</sup> Poverty is a critical issue in producing quality troops, increasing retention rates and discouraging corruption and/or insurgent activities. Desperate for income, ANSF recruits are vulnerable to corruption. The ANSF battles issues of bribery, weapon theft, narcotics, and high rates of desertion.<sup>32</sup> While there are no official numbers for absentee rates for the ANP, the International Crisis Group cites Hanif Atmar, the Ministry of Interior, who estimates that approximately 20% of recruits desert each year.<sup>33</sup> In addition, one in five recruits tests positive for drugs.<sup>34</sup> This impairs Afghan recruits from performing at their maximum potential.

With Afghanistan's underdeveloped economy, the ANSF competes with income from the Taliban and illegal narcotic trade. Currently, the U.S. pays US\$50-150 less per month than the Taliban.<sup>35</sup> While pay and benefit reforms<sup>36</sup> have produced moderate effects, the ANSF's low

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<sup>30</sup> Abrashi, 2009; For further discussion on education, please see chapter 8.

<sup>31</sup> United States Congress Afghanistan on the Brink 2007, 51

<sup>32</sup> Department of Defense 2009, 28

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> Nordland, New York Times 2009

<sup>35</sup> Council on Foreign Relations 2010; Cordesman Afghan Security Forces 2009, 77

<sup>36</sup> Nordland New York Times 2009; Pay increased up to 30% since 2009.

salary has contributed to high attrition rates, insufficient reenlistment and lower recruiting rates.<sup>37</sup>

### ***Ethnic Tensions***

Afghanistan's ethnic conflicts and tribal loyalties have significant impacts on the completion of training programs and force development.<sup>38</sup> Creating an ethnically balanced ANA and ANP is critical to maintaining a balance of power and stability. Currently, Tajiks make up some 41% of officers, but only 27% of the population.<sup>39</sup> These conflicts have contributed to the misuse of promotions, pay and benefits, and bribery.<sup>40</sup> In general, reports testify that ethnic and religious discrimination is common among Afghan leaders promoting and deciding pay and benefits based on family connections and bribery rather than performance or merit. This produces false CM levels, increases corruption and discourages respectable performance.

### ***Communication***

Translation difficulties between trainers and trainees frustrate and prolong training. Interpreters are often unable to accurately translate colloquial dialogue, and thick description is limited. The ANA's official website reports that recruits who spoke only Pashto experienced difficulty because instruction was given through interpreters who spoke Farsi.<sup>41</sup> These frustrations contribute to the bypassing of training standards, as trainers lower their expectations in order to meet their own goals and deadlines, as well as attrition rates by frustrated recruits. This results in inappropriate progression and a lack of proper vetting procedures; an issue that may reflect a false measurement of the ANSF's strength.

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<sup>37</sup> U.S. Department of Defense 2009, 39; Pay and benefit reforms are thought to have contributed to the drop in ANA Absence Without Leave (AWOL) rates, which fell close to 5% between 2007 and 2008.

<sup>38</sup> United States Congress. Senate. Committee on Armed Services, 2009

<sup>39</sup> Cordesman Afghan Security Forces 2009, 53

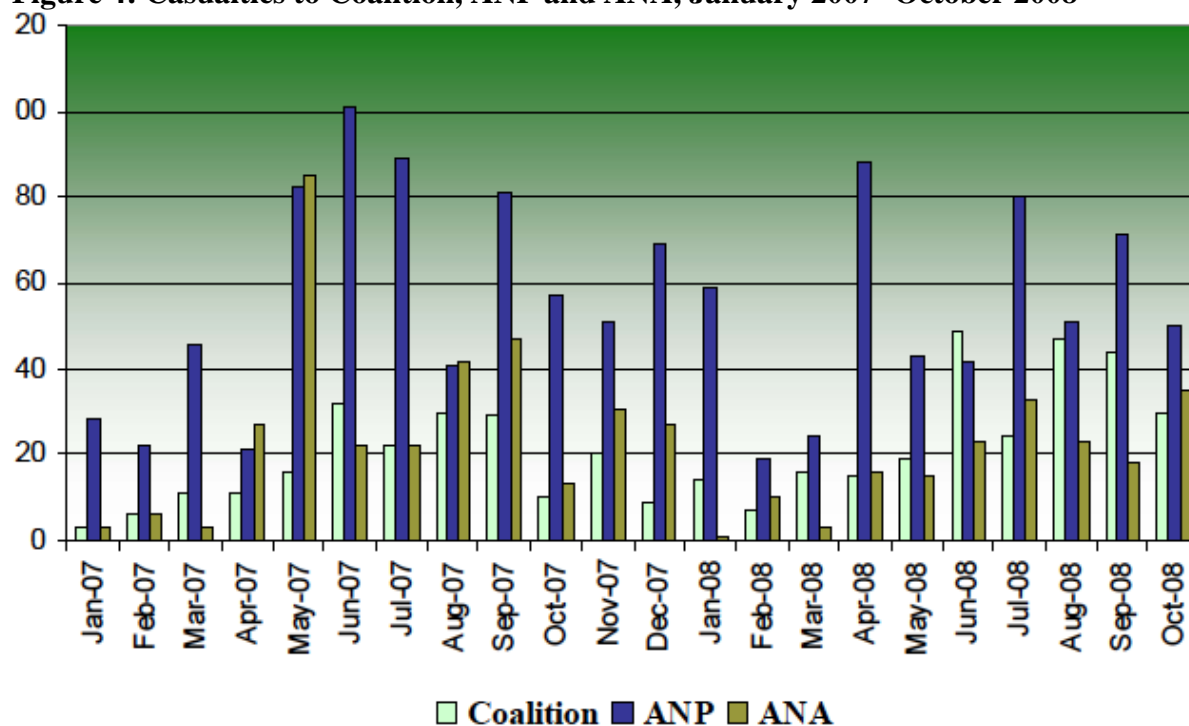
<sup>40</sup> Cordesman 2009; Afghan Security Forces 15

<sup>41</sup> ANA official website

## Unstable Security Environment

Despite the growth of the ANSF, security in Afghanistan has rapidly deteriorated since 2005.<sup>42</sup> Figure 1 indicates the upsurge in attacks on the ANSF and civilian targets. A volatile security environment disrupts and hinders completion of training courses, as recruits are prematurely deployed as emergency reinforcements to assist security matters.<sup>43</sup> The recent surge of violence in Afghanistan increases pressure on recruits who are unprepared to counter their enemies' relatively unprecedented strategy of attacks, particularly Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). Attacks by IEDs constitute 75% of all ANSF casualties.<sup>44</sup> Figure 4 indicates the number of casualties between 2007 and 2008 as a result of insurgent attacks.

**Figure 4: Casualties to Coalition, ANP and ANA, January 2007- October 2008<sup>45</sup>**



Source: U.S. Department of Defense 2009

<sup>42</sup> United States Congress. Senate. Committee on Armed Services, 2009

<sup>43</sup> GAO 10 178R Afghanistan's Security Environment 2009, 5

<sup>44</sup> USAToday 2010, 1

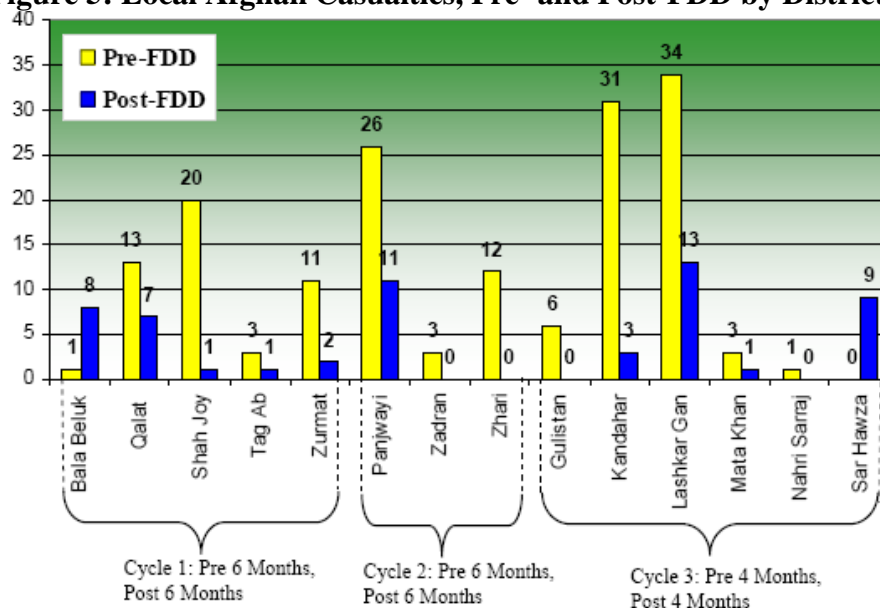
<sup>45</sup> U.S. Department of Defense 2009, 33

Furthermore, the risks of attack are directly tied to personnel commitment to the ANSF as reflected in attrition and retention rates. As the risks increase, attrition rates and casualty rates increase, hindering growth and countering training efforts.

### ***Success***

To combat these issues, the U.S. launched the U.S. Focused District Development program (FDD)<sup>46</sup> in 2007. The FDD is responsible for reevaluating ANP units after graduation from basic training and if necessary retraining personnel to meet standards.<sup>47</sup> This program has had considerable success and is an example for future U.S. policy. Since the inception of the FDD, the ANP have increased their CM levels and reduced local national casualties by 85%.<sup>48</sup> Figure 5 demonstrates the value of effective training on security for local Afghans and the success of the FDD.

**Figure 5: Local Afghan Casualties, Pre- and Post-FDD by District, November 2008<sup>49</sup>**



Source: Department of Defense 2009

<sup>46</sup> The FDD has instituted critical reforms that has aided in the development of the ANP, including increased PMT training and follow-up guidance for graduates after unit assignment.

<sup>47</sup> Department of Defense 2008, 23

<sup>48</sup> Department of Defense 2009, 45

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 46

Without adequate training for ANSF personnel, Afghanistan is defenseless and vulnerable to extremist enemy combatants and warlords whose agenda is to destabilize, corrupt and prevent the development of a unified government.<sup>50</sup> The resolution of this issue requires increased commitment of U.S. and international resources to ensure security and stability.<sup>51</sup>

### ***Equipment***

The ANSF lacks the ability to successfully validate payees, and track training, performance and equipment.<sup>52</sup> Without proper accountability and recordkeeping, salaries are misallocated, weapons and security equipment disappear, training completion is unmonitored, and performance is mismanaged.<sup>53</sup> This has dangerous and counterproductive consequences. Salaries distributed to unidentified recipients and weapons disappearing to end up in the wrong hands could fuel the insurgency rather than the forces meant to defeat them. It is imperative that resolving this issue is a top U.S. priority.

### **Tracking Pay and Distribution Databases**

Equipment is desperately needed to track and identify the validity of all payroll accounts. Prior to direct pay, paychecks were distributed through commanders and were subject to various forms of overt corruption.<sup>54</sup> In addition, personnel were forced to take leave so that they could transfer money to their families. This resulted in prolonged leave and increased attrition rates. Since the inception of direct pay, which eliminated the distribution of pay through commanders, corruption has significantly decreased.<sup>55</sup> However, the ANSF continues to lack the capability to

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<sup>50</sup> Cordesman, Anthony H. 2010, 50

<sup>51</sup> United States Congress. Senate. Committee on Armed Services, 2009

<sup>52</sup> Government Accountability Office 2009

<sup>53</sup> Bruno, Council on Foreign Relations 2009

<sup>54</sup> Government Accountability Office 2009

<sup>55</sup> Department of Defense 2009, 38

successfully track and account for all payroll accounts. There are still “less open forms of extortion” and an issue of phantom soldiers who draw salaries.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, ANSF personnel complain that their salaries are often on an erratic, unpunctual pay schedule or given in the incorrect amounts.<sup>57</sup> This is due to inadequate tracking and mismanagement of salaries. This further decreases the trust of Afghan soldiers and police in the institutions they serve, raises attrition rates, and decreases retention, while simultaneously strengthening positive perceptions of the Taliban, who, in general, pay higher rates. Without the appropriate equipment to track salaries, the U.S. and the international community risk misappropriation of ANSF funds.

### **Accountability and Tracking of Weapon Supply**

The U.S. Government Accountability Office reports that out of a total of 242, 203 U.S. procured armaments donated to the ANSF, more than a third were unaccounted for.<sup>58</sup> This limits the ability of the ANSF to carry out successful operations. Donated security equipment including ammunition, weapons, radios, protective armor, and vehicles are reported by ANA Corps commanders to be old, defective, unreliable, and of low quality. Officials estimate that only about 1 in 5 of the nearly 50,000 AK047 automatic rifles received in 2008 were of good quality.<sup>59</sup> Proper equipment is essential to protecting trained troops from insurgent and IED attacks.<sup>60</sup> It is in American interest that this issue is solved. Economically, supplies of poor equipment increases U.S. costs and prolongs U.S. commitment in Afghanistan. Anthony Cordesman, holder of the Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy at the Center for Strategic and

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<sup>56</sup> Cordesman, CSIS 2010 Phantom soldiers are names and accounts issued paychecks but are not employed pr cannot be accounted for.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> American Chronicle 2009 U.S. procured armaments included 117,163 rifles, 62,055 pistols, 35,778 Machine guns, 18,656 Grenade launchers, 6,704 Shotguns, 1,620 Rocket-propelled granade launchers and 227 Mortars and other weapons for a total of 242,203. The U.S. weapons shipments to Afghanistan for ANSF began in December 2004.

<sup>59</sup> GAO 08 661 Afghanistan’s Security, 2008

<sup>60</sup> GAO 10 178R Afghanistan’s Security Environment, 2009

International Studies and a national security analyst for ABC News claims that “a trained Afghan soldier is more expensive to replace than his weapons and ammunition, should he become a casualty or fail to reenlist due to substandard equipment that puts him at undue risk”.<sup>61</sup> This is a situation that must be immediately and aggressively corrected.<sup>62</sup> Figure 6 indicates the clear discrepancy between required and available equipment supplied to the ANSF thus hindering their operational success, safety and further growth.<sup>63</sup>

### Figure 6: Severe Shortage of Essential Security Equipment to the ANSF<sup>64</sup>

**Table 7: Critical Equipment Items for ANA Combat Forces with Less Than Half the Required Amount On Hand, as of February 2008**

Item	Number required	Number on hand	Percent of required on hand
<b>Vehicles and generators</b>			
15-Kilowatt Generator	40	19	48
Excavating Vehicle	120	56	47
M872A4 Semi-trailer	316	82	26
30-Kilowatt Generator	75	16	21
Armored Humvee	4,580	469	10
Dump Truck	60	5	8
Humvee Ambulance	710	0	0
<b>Eastern bloc<sup>a</sup> weapons</b>			
DsHK 12.7 mm Heavy Machine Gun	576	175	30
<b>NATO-standard<sup>b</sup> weapons</b>			
M500 Shotgun	525	116	22
M224 60mm Mortar	68	15	22
M203A2 40mm Grenade Launcher	2,851	527	19
M16A2 Semi-automatic Rifle	53,287	6,018	11

Source: GAO 08 661 2009, 27

### U.S. INTERESTS

Building a sustainable and equipped ANSF that is free from corruption and able to independently provide adequate security is critical to U.S. interests. Successful training and

<sup>61</sup> Cordesman, Anthony CSIS 2009, 28

<sup>62</sup> Cordesman, Anthony CSIS 2010 62

<sup>63</sup> Retention rates lower, and AOWL rates increase with added risk, undersupplied equipment raises the risk of failure to defend oneself and successfully carry out missions.

<sup>64</sup> Government Accountability Office 08 661 2009 Afghanistan Security, 27



deployment of an adequate number of ANSF personnel is the bedrock of American strategy for the eventual transfer of power to the Afghan government. The ANSF is intended to enforce a just rule of law in Afghan society. This will separate Afghan civilians from extremists and provide Afghanistan with the basic enforcement and judicial infrastructure necessary for further development in education, economics, and good governance.

Only when the ANSF can successfully and efficiently take control over security can the U.S. reclaim its resources and reprioritize its efforts. Currently, the ANSF consumes 56% of all U.S. funding to Afghanistan.<sup>65</sup> This has an enormous strain on the American economy and resources; however, this is a commitment of necessity. If the U.S. continues to pursue current policy deadlines, hesitates to increase training personnel, and provide insufficient and substandard equipment, it creates future problems of increased complexity. By placing deadlines the U.S. raises the risk that the troops they are arming and training could become an army of corruption and a U.S. enemy.

## **OPTIONS**

### ***Current Deadlines and Prioritizations***

1. Adjust target goals and revise current timeline
  - Adjusting target goals and U.S. timetables would allow for flexibility and ensure Afghanistan and surrounding neighbors of U.S. commitment. The CSTC-A and ISAF would need to reevaluate the strength and capability of the ANSF to determine realistic goals and deadlines. While this would increase short-term financial costs and resources, this adjustment would allow for flexibility and long-

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<sup>65</sup> GAO-10-178R Afghanistan's Security Environment 2009, 8

term gains. Al Qaeda and the Taliban rely on outlasting U.S. patience.<sup>66</sup> American failure to commit long term or revise current policy deadlines bolsters enemy combatants and increases U.S. future risks.<sup>67</sup>

2. Adopt an open ended policy

- An open-ended policy would assure the Afghan government and people of U.S. commitment. However, the consequences of an open ended policy may compromise the emphasis on the transfer of power to the Afghan government, and dilute a sense of urgency, further prolonging U.S. involvement.

***Training***

3. Increase training personnel to ANSF to meet 80% of requirements

- This doubles current American commitments. While this will require international assistance and will raise U.S. short-term costs, it will mitigate short-term and long-term risk, expedite training, and hasten successful transfer of power to the ANSF. Increasing training personnel will allow for increased supervision, which will provide the U.S. with a more accurate assessment of ANSF capabilities, allow for appropriate vetting and successful promotion, thus incentivizing good performance and discouraging narcotics use and corruption. This will be done by incentivizing allies to increase their supply of qualified training mentors by allowing them to scale back on other areas of funding. Short-term, this will press allies and the U.S. for resources. However, without increasing personnel it is impossible to mitigate the risk of future unintended consequences.

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<sup>66</sup> Jenkins 2009, 1 Cordesman 2010, 50

<sup>67</sup> Cordesman 2010, 62; risk of insurgent attacks on the global community, American troops, and an incapable ANSF; risk of prolonging U.S. military presence and long-term financial costs

4. Require completion of all training at high CM levels before deployment
  - This will ensure a higher quality of troops and an accurate measure of performance levels and strength. This will be done by performing mandatory external tests and audits to accurately measure strength and capabilities, disallowing deployment without completion of training. To make this option the most effective, training personnel should be incentivized to maintain high CM level expectations by receiving added benefits for units that have a high reenlistment rates and pass successful audits. The consequences of this option may include the reduction of graduation rates short-term and low supply of ANSF personnel assigned to aid security matters.
5. Continue to expand the FDD and increase current commitments
  - The FDD's success, including higher CM levels, professionalism, and lower casualty rates, prove that the FDD's mission works and resonates with U.S. interests. While this will require a temporary increase of international assistance and resources, long-term costs will be mitigated if the FDD is successful.
6. Expand aid in literacy development and education of Afghan troops
  - Increasing literacy is vital to creating competency and professionalism in the ANSF. Without continued education and the ability to think critically, or accurately assess matters of security, Afghanistan and the global community are vulnerable. Long-term development will aid in maintaining the supply of capable Afghan National Security Forces.
7. Maintain the security environment by keeping combat troop levels a priority

- This will aid the quality of ANSF by allowing uninterrupted completion of training. This will be achieved by prioritizing a military strategy that supplies ample combat troops with a flexible timeline.

### ***Equipment***

8. Complete an audit of current payroll accounts and equipment supplied; successful audits will be rewarded with increased supply and benefits

- This is essential to ensuring proper distribution of salary and curbing funds and resources from being funneled into corrupt or insurgent hands. This will be most effective if successful audits are incentivized with bonuses, increased equipment and resource supply or other added benefits. This should be performed by either a U.S. paid contractor or U.S. or allied government department. Logistical discussion is required but essential.

9. Maintain current strategy

- While inertia would temporarily placate the domestic electorate by sticking to announced deadlines, the global consequences are immense and chaos would be inevitable.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is in U.S. interest to redirect policy immediately to focus on long-term goals and coordination with allies in the construction of independent and capable ANSF. To achieve this vital mission, it is essential that U.S. policy immediately perform three of the above options: 1) perform reevaluations of performance measures to set realistic and effective target goals and conditional deadlines; 2) increase training personnel to meet 80% of requirements; 3) provide the equipment necessary to validate and effectively track salaries, weapons, and progress.

Maintaining the current strategy is injudicious and inadvisable. Impressive numbers of ill-equipped, unprofessional, and corrupt recruits will have dangerous global consequences. With target goals high and resources, such as personnel and equipment, dramatically undersupplied, the quality of the troops would suffer and chaos would be inevitable. Without revising policy deadlines, increasing the quality of training, improving equipment, dealing with corruption and transitively the quality of troops, it will be impossible to mitigate this risk.

Success is dependent on the coordination of the U.S. and allies to reevaluate deadlines, goals, performance and strength of the ANSF and then to fully commit required personnel and necessary audits and tracking equipment with understood patience. The stakes are high and a failure to abandon current policy's focus and deadlines will result in increased risks, cost and time. Success can only be achieved by adopting a patient and aggressive policy.



# Accountability: Battling Government Corruption

Kristina Khaleghi

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## Policy Recommendations

- Streamline current agencies into one independent anticorruption agency
  - Implement economic reforms and salary reforms to reduce vulnerability to corruption
  - Educate and inform Afghans about corruption, constitutional rights and role of government
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## Abstract

Corruption in Afghanistan is endemic and undermines U.S. efforts of establishing security and regional stability. It undermines rule of law, threatens quality of life, promotes crime and impedes economic growth. It disproportionately affects those who are impoverished, but affects Afghans from all socioeconomic backgrounds. Corruption in the public sector has destroyed Afghans' trust in government. The public sector continues to be incapable of providing civilians with basic services necessary for a minimal quality of life. Corruption is rampant within the Afghan political system, including the government and electoral process, in the judicial system, within the Afghan National Police, and among low-level officials and administrative workers in the public sector. Anticorruption strategies such as the creation of an independent anticorruption agency, economic and salary reform, and improving education and access to information must be implemented with strong leadership and an unconditional commitment to combating corruption in Afghanistan. Preventing, combating and eradicating corruption must become a national priority for both the Afghan government and the U.S. State Department to ensure that American efforts in Afghanistan are not threatened by corruption.

## **ISSUE**

According to Transparency International, Afghanistan is currently ranked the second most corrupt country in the world.<sup>1</sup> Since the arrival of American troops in Afghanistan in 2001, corruption has increased and has created a more unstable and insecure nation. Corruption in the public sector has left the Afghan government unable to provide basic services to civilians and has become the source of social frustration for nearly all Afghans. Corruption poses a threat to the American mission of establishing security and promoting strong governance because it exacerbates conditions of poverty and breeds distrust of the Afghan government, conditions that can ultimately lead to violence in Afghanistan. Attempts by various agencies to combat corruption over the years have shown little or no progress due to a lack of political commitment to anticorruption efforts and the conflicting agendas of anticorruption agencies. The U.S. Department of State needs to help Afghans combat corruption so that Americans can effectively continue their mission of establishing sustainable peace and security in Afghanistan.

## **BACKGROUND**

In 2009, Afghan President Hamid Karzai stated in his inaugural address that the Government of Afghanistan is committed to ending the culture of corruption<sup>2</sup> and prosecuting those who engage in acts of corruption, yet the majority of Afghans claim that corruption is continuing to increase.<sup>3</sup> According to a survey conducted by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in 2009, 38% of the surveyed population believes that corruption is the norm, a fact indicating the degree to which corruption has become ingrained in Afghan society.<sup>4</sup> Fifty-nine

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<sup>1</sup> Transparency International 2009

<sup>2</sup> Svensson 2005, 20; Corruption is defined as the use of public positions for private gain

<sup>3</sup> UNODC 2010, 13

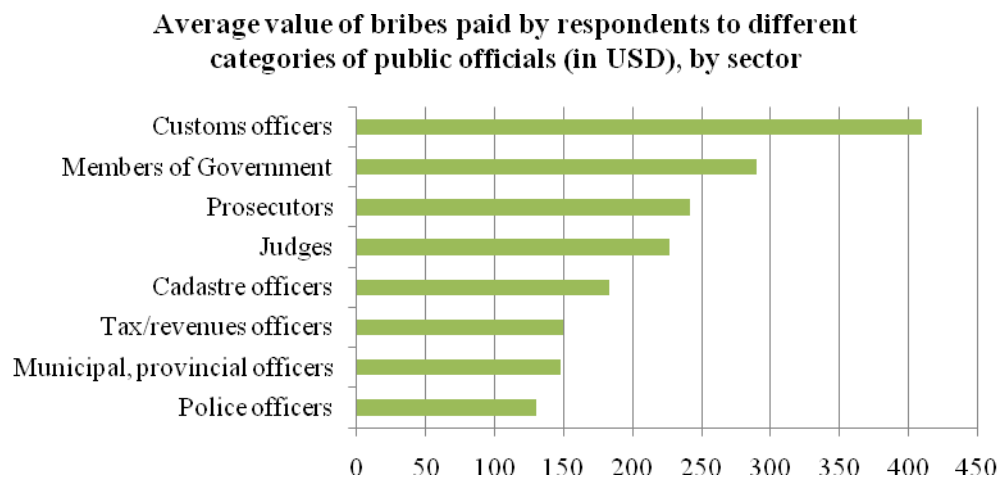
<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 4



percent of the Afghan population cited corruption as the most prominent issue their country currently faces.<sup>5</sup>

Corruption, particularly bribery, comprises one of the largest markets in Afghanistan along with drug trafficking.<sup>6</sup> According to the UNODC, the total amount of money paid out in bribes in 2009 alone was 2.5 billion USD. This amount constitutes nearly a quarter of Afghanistan's national GDP. Most often, an Afghan pays bribes to public officials to accelerate an administrative process, such as obtaining a driver's license or a visa.<sup>7</sup> Bribes are usually paid in money, but can also be paid in food and other goods. Thirty percent of Afghans surveyed by the UN stated that they paid bribes in order to avoid paying fines, while 28% reportedly paid bribes in order to obtain better treatment from public officials.<sup>8</sup> Figure 1 illustrates the average amount of bribes paid to different types of public sector workers.

**Figure 1:**<sup>9</sup>



<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 10

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 4

<sup>7</sup> Asian Development Bank 2007, 8

<sup>8</sup> UNODC 2010, 22

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 26

Corruption in Afghanistan disproportionately affects impoverished civilians, as they are least able to afford the bribes necessary to have basic services provided to them in a timely manner. Many impoverished families are often forced to choose between paying a bribe for a needed service or being able to afford food and clothing.<sup>10</sup> Impoverished Afghans are more vulnerable to corruption because they are often uneducated and lack necessary knowledge about administrative procedures. The financial burdens of bribery are not limited to Afghans living in conditions of poverty. In a study conducted by Integrity Watch Afghanistan, two-thirds of respondents from various socioeconomic backgrounds stated that their families have suffered financially as a direct result of corrupt practices.

Corruption has permeated all sectors of society, but corruption in the public sector will be the focus of this report. Corruption has been reported among politicians in the national government, in the electoral process, within the Afghan National Police (ANP), among low-level administrative officials and within the judiciary. Corrupt acts within these public institutions will be addressed in this report in order to determine the best strategies the U.S. should follow to combat corruption in Afghanistan.

### ***Political Corruption: Government and Elections***

Political and electoral corruption is pervasive in Afghanistan and has long destroyed any confidence that Afghan citizens may have had in their government. Bribery among high-level political officials is common. Senior government officials can make 10 to 12 times their salaries by tapping into the corruption market without fear of reprisal, which is why bribery continues to be a primary source of income for high-level government officials.<sup>11</sup> In 2009, surveyed Afghans

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 15

<sup>11</sup> Filkins 2009

had to pay a bribe 40% of the time in their interactions with a senior politician.<sup>12</sup> Political corruption has allowed dishonest politicians and high-level government employees to enjoy handsome levels of wealth at the expense of Afghan civilians. In the Karzai Administration, many political officials drive luxury cars and live in sprawling “poppy palaces” in Kabul’s most affluent neighborhoods. These luxury lifestyles are impossible to afford based on governmental salaries of a few hundred dollars per month, indicating the pervasiveness of corrupt practices among politicians.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to bribery, many political officials make the majority of their money through Afghanistan’s lucrative drug trade. High-level officials assist drug lords and are in turn paid considerably for their support. Ahmed Wali Karzai, President Karzai’s brother, is linked to drug trafficking and warlords.<sup>14</sup> Other forms of corruption, such as patronage, abuse of power and nepotism are also present within the Afghan political system. Karzai’s multiple attempts to nominate and seat his cabinet members in 2010 is proof of the existence of patronage and nepotism, since many of his nominees supported him in his campaign or have ties to warlords.<sup>15</sup>

In the 2009 presidential election in Afghanistan, incumbent Hamid Karzai ran against rival Abdullah Abdullah in an election that took over two months to declare a winner. Karzai was declared victorious after Abdullah dropped out of the run-off election due to allegations of corruption in the voting process.<sup>16</sup> The Guardian reported that the election was inundated with corruption in nearly every aspect of the electoral process. The newspaper also reported that many citizens were unable to vote for a candidate because of a lack of accessibility to polling states in

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<sup>12</sup> UNODC 2010, 5

<sup>13</sup> Zavis 2009

<sup>14</sup> Michaels 2009

<sup>15</sup> Abawi, Mati 2010

<sup>16</sup> Boone 2009

rural regions of the country. There were also reports of lack of polling stations altogether, voter registration fraud and a thriving black market for voter registration cards. Reports of bribery to affect the election outcome, violence from supporters of rival parties, coercion, low voter turnout, and lack of security were all factors that contributed to the election debacle. The most obvious sign of corruption was the government-mandated media blackout two days before the election, which prevented any news outlets from reporting violence and fraudulent activity in the electoral process.<sup>17</sup> Whether Karzai could have won the election honestly is a question that remains unknown, but it is evident that corruption destroyed the integrity of the election.

### ***Judicial Corruption***

Judicial corruption in Afghanistan is so powerful that it determines the speed, cost and verdict of a trial.<sup>18</sup> Judicial corruption has led to an absence of rule of law in Afghanistan and has allowed criminal activity to flourish. Afghanistan's judicial system is intended to fight corruption, and since the Afghan judicial system is corrupt, other crimes have remained largely undocumented and unprosecuted as a result. It is important to examine corruption within the judicial system from both the view of Afghan citizens and from the view of judges and lawyers.

In 2009, 18% of Afghans surveyed by the UN had to pay a bribe to a judge, while 13 percent had to pay a bribe to an attorney.<sup>19</sup> Many of these bribes were more than 1000 USD, an amount the average Afghan can afford after two years of working.<sup>20</sup> Today, an Afghan who wishes to pursue a legal remedy for some wrong that has been committed against him can more

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Judicial corruption refers to the corruption of officials, such as lawyers and judges, working within the legal system

<sup>19</sup> UNODC 2010, 5

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

easily pay a bribe to a judge rather than pay for the services of a lawyer.<sup>21</sup> The UNODC survey also found that family, social and political ties can have a significant impact on the outcome of court decisions, demonstrating the presence of nepotism within the judicial system.<sup>22</sup>

Judicial workers are also dissatisfied with the current situation. Forty-five percent of attorneys surveyed reported that it was difficult to obtain information from the court regarding their cases. Additionally, nearly 50% of attorneys and 35% of judges and prosecutors cited excessive delays in court proceedings as an issue that causes unreasonably long trials. Ninety percent of judges and prosecutors surveyed reported that they were dissatisfied with their salaries.<sup>23</sup> These statistics reflect the weakness and ineffectiveness of the legal system in prosecuting crimes and enforcing rule of law.

### ***Corruption among Low-Level Administrative Officials***

Afghans view positions of administrative office as jobs with price tags attached to them. Nearly any position can essentially be purchased given the right amount of money. This “for sale” mentality of public positions not only impedes the effectiveness of public institutions, but also leaves those employed in the public sector without dedication to their work, since they view their jobs as exchangeable commodities. According to an article by the Canadian Press, a man who applied for a position at Kabul’s customs office in 2008 was told he could have the job if he paid 100,000 rupees, which is roughly the equivalent of 2,166 USD.<sup>24</sup> The practice of buying public positions still occurs in Afghanistan today.

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<sup>21</sup> UNODC 2010, 7

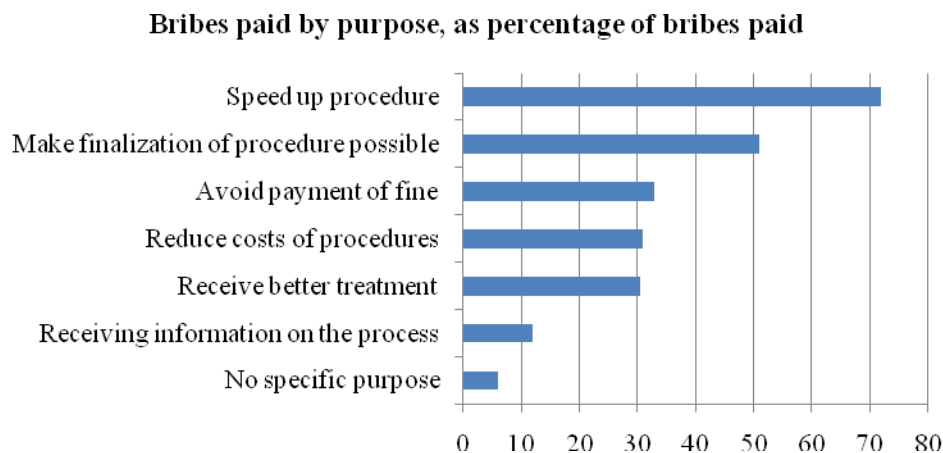
<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 28

<sup>23</sup> UNODC 2010, 27

<sup>24</sup> Rennie 2009

According to the UN, the average bribe paid by an Afghan to a public official was 158 USD. On average, Afghans paid five bribes of this amount in 2009. Most bribes were paid in order to speed up an administrative process, such as obtaining a driver's license or a visa. In Kandahar, a man was asked to pay 12,000 Afghanis, or approximately 253 USD, to have his passport application processed.<sup>25</sup> Seventy-four percent of Afghans surveyed by the UNODC stated they paid a bribe to speed up an administrative procedure.<sup>26</sup> Figure 2 illustrates the percentage of bribes paid for various reasons by Afghans in 2009.

**Figure 2:**<sup>27</sup>



### ***Corruption within the Afghan National Police***

The Afghan National Police (ANP) is notorious for its extremely high levels of corruption in comparison to other public institutions. According to the UNODC survey, law enforcement officials ranked first in receipt of bribes in 2009. Twenty-five percent of Afghans

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> UNODC 2010, 22

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 22

surveyed stated that they had to bribe at least one police officer in the past 12 months.<sup>28</sup> The New York Times reported that the cost to become a provincial police chief runs around \$100,000, while the average cost to become a police officer is approximately \$6,000.<sup>29</sup> A UNODC survey respondent stated that: “Police heads are taking a percentage from each payroll of their subordinates.”<sup>30</sup> Corruption is not limited to interactions between police officers and civilians, but occurs within the ANP as well. Improper training, inadequate equipment and a lack of education also contribute to making the ANP susceptible to corruption.<sup>31</sup>

### ***The Effects of Corruption on Economic Growth***

Corruption makes it unreasonably difficult for an Afghan to participate in legitimate markets and suppresses entrepreneurial activity. Afghanistan currently has an economic environment that discourages the creation of new businesses, which also discourages the creation of new markets in which people can invest. An Afghan attempting to establish a private business usually must pay an expensive bribe to an administrative official. A respondent from the UN corruption survey stated the following about the cost to start a business: “[The] permit office for the municipality is another corrupt department. Officials want about 18,000 dollars from traders when they want to start a new business.”<sup>32</sup> Instances of corruption like this divert operating money away from necessary government ministries and into the pockets of underpaid public officials, which fuels a cycle of debt to public institutions and poverty among ordinary citizens who are forced to overpay for basic services they cannot afford.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 24

<sup>29</sup> Filkins 2009

<sup>30</sup> UNODC 2010, 21

<sup>31</sup> Young 2007, 9

<sup>32</sup> UNODC 2010, 21

<sup>33</sup> Young 2007, 10

In Afghanistan, becoming a bribe-seeking public official is more financially rewarding than working in the private sector.<sup>34</sup> Currently, there is more to gain from accepting a bribe and more to lose from declining a bribe, which fuels the cycle of bribery. This cycle can be broken if the possibility of getting caught committing an act of bribery is high, and if the punishment far exceeds the potential gains reaped from accepting the bribe. Until this occurs, Afghans will continue to engage in bribery because it is logical using a simple cost-benefit analysis. The prevalence of bribery results in an increased number of Afghans who turn to illicit and informal markets to make the majority of their money.

### ***Progress to Date***

Although corruption continues to be a critical obstacle to establishing security in Afghanistan, legal efforts have been made to prevent and reduce current corruption levels. Afghanistan's Penal Code defines and criminalizes various forms of political and administrative corruption, explicitly stating that those who are found guilty of engaging in corrupt acts will either pay fines or be incarcerated.<sup>35</sup> The Constitution of Afghanistan, ratified in 2004, emphasizes the importance of transparency in government.<sup>36</sup> Government transparency is critical to anticorruption efforts because it allows members of government to be held accountable by civilians, reducing the likelihood that government officials will engage in corruption.

Another significant step taken by the Afghan government is the ratification of the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) in 2004.<sup>37</sup> The UNCAC advocates for the prevention, deterrence, and criminalization of acts of bribery in all nations.<sup>38</sup> The ratification of the UNCAC

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<sup>34</sup> Svensson 2005, 37

<sup>35</sup> Afghan Penal Code 1976, 75

<sup>36</sup> Constitution of Afghanistan 2003

<sup>37</sup> Asian Development Bank 2007, 15

<sup>38</sup> Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund 2008, 2



is particularly important because it shows that the Afghan government has the intent to fight corruption, even though progress has been slow and minimal. Additionally, the Afghan Law Against Bribery and Official Corruption, ratified in 2007, provides a strong legal basis for fighting corruption.<sup>39</sup> The National Anti-Corruption Strategy was developed in 2008 and has provided recommendations for eliminating corrupt practices, but the implementation of these strategies has been plagued with confusion and poor leadership.<sup>40</sup>

Anticorruption efforts through the improvement of legal education have also been made. USAID established the Afghanistan Rule of Law Project (ARoLP) to improve the quality of legal education in Afghanistan. At Kabul University, ARoLP adopted a standardized curriculum and created teaching materials for Law and Sharia faculties. These efforts to improve the knowledge and integrity of legal workers contribute to anticorruption efforts by educating judicial workers about their duty to uphold the Constitution of Afghanistan and the laws criminalizing corruption in the Afghan Penal Code.<sup>41</sup>

The adoption of laws dedicated to combating corruption and efforts to improve education for legal officials indicates that corruption in Afghanistan has not been overlooked by the judiciary. The lack of advancement in diminishing corruption levels is not because of a lack of intent, but rather due to the fact that various anticorruption agencies lack the necessary political support and strong leadership to translate intent into actions. The decision to combat corruption is ultimately a political one; without the commitment and support from President Karzai and his administration, little progress will be seen in the fight against corruption. Although publicly Karzai has taken a stance against corruption and has created the High Office of Oversight and

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> UNODC 2010, 13

<sup>41</sup> U.S. Department of Defense 2009, 55

Anti-Corruption in 2008, this agency has failed to reduce corruption because Karzai has not held the agency accountable for its actions. The fact that little progress has been made by this agency as well as others indicates that anticorruption efforts are low on Afghanistan's list of national priorities.

### **U.S. INTERESTS**

The reduction and eradication of corruption in Afghanistan is in the best interest of the U.S. Department of State several reasons. Corruption inhibits U.S. efforts to establish security and promote strong governance in Afghanistan by causing the U.S. to invest more time and money fighting corruption before it can stabilize the country. Acts of corruption in the public sector, particularly in government, intensify poverty and prevent Afghans from receiving the basic services they need. Corruption causes Afghans to become frustrated with the government and can lead to violence and social instability, which counteracts U.S. efforts to secure the region. Corruption also causes public officials to view their positions as commodities instead of roles of leadership and authority, resulting in poor governance. The weak and corrupt Afghan government is incapable of establishing security and threatens American efforts of promoting peace and bringing political stability to Afghanistan. Finally, it is in the interests of the U.S. to combat corruption so that the billions of dollars given to Afghanistan in aid are used effectively, rather than falling into the hands of corrupt public officials and political elites. The eradication of corruption within the public sector should be a high priority for the U.S. Department of State so that the mission of stabilizing and securing Afghanistan can continue.

### **OPTIONS**

1. Require all existing anticorruption agencies to be streamlined into a single, politically independent agency fully committed to fighting corruption. Currently,

the poor implementation of anticorruption strategies is the result of multiple anticorruption agencies trying to accomplish conflicting goals at the same time, which has led to confusion and ineffectiveness in strategy implementation. The existence of multiple anticorruption agencies has bred a relationship of competition rather than collaboration. Streamlining the existing agencies into one independent anticorruption agency can enhance the strength of leadership, improve the execution of policies, and eliminate competition for resources and the existence of conflicting agendas. The independent anticorruption agency should establish short-term goals to be met within an established time frame in order to evaluate its progress. If little progress has been made, the reasons must be explained and new strategies would need to be implemented to adapt to changing conditions. It is crucial that anticorruption policies are fluid and flexible, and can be subject to change from external factors.

The sole anticorruption agency would be politically independent from the national government, yet must abide by Afghan laws. Independence from the Afghan government is crucial to ensure that the agency's efforts do not rely upon the approval or disapproval of politicians in government. Although the agency must be independent from the Afghan government, it must be answerable and held accountable to an external authority, such as the U.S. or the UN. Afghans would be given a central role within the anticorruption agency so that the agency can successfully operate after the U.S. withdraws. Afghans would run the agency and work together to develop and implement anticorruption strategies, with

American and UN officials present to provide ideas and help strengthen leadership within the agency.

Afghans' familiarity with corruption in their country makes them qualified to lead anticorruption efforts. They possess a clear understanding of the causes of corruption and the ways it has permeated the public sector because they have witnessed corrupt acts far too often. Anticorruption strategies developed by Afghans are much more likely to be well-received than strategies developed by an external source and imposed upon the Afghan population. Furthermore, the involvement of Afghans in the anticorruption agency means they will have a personal interest in seeing corruption levels reduced by the strategies they helped to develop and execute.

Complications in creating a single independent anticorruption agency may arise in transitioning employees working in existing anticorruption agencies to working in the new agency and in reaching an agreement on the effective implementation of anticorruption policies, which could lead to fragmentation and division within the agency.

2. Salary and economic reform is a viable long-term option in the fight against corruption. Economic reform should be considered due to the fact that bribery typically occurs because workers are underpaid. This issue could be combated by increasing salaries for public sector workers, particularly judicial workers and low-level administrative officials, and making their salaries merit and performance-based. Implementing salary reform through increased wages requires

a strong domestic economy to accommodate the allocation of increased funds toward the public sector.

For many Afghans, bribery is not an issue of corruption but a question of survival. Afghans often depend on money gained through bribery to help feed their families because their salaries alone cannot provide them with a quality standard of living. Furthermore, insufficient salaries cause public officials to feel as though their work is undervalued and unimportant, making them more vulnerable to accepting bribes.

In addition to increasing salaries for these public sector workers, salary adjustments must also become merit and performance-based to incentive employees to work honestly and efficiently. A critical component of salary reform is salary disclosure. Public officials would be mandated to disclose their salaries and assets to help identify and remove employees who are engaging in corruption or profiting off illicit markets. If the salaries and assets of public officials are disclosed, it will be easier to identify which public officials are tapping into illegal markets to supplement their incomes. These officials must be identified and removed immediately from positions of power, and be held accountable for their actions before the law.

Strengthening Afghanistan's domestic economy necessitates the elimination of illegal opium trade, which is currently one of biggest challenges Afghanistan faces. Afghanistan's economy should also be strengthened through the promotion of entrepreneurship and favorable conditions for starting a business. Due to the fact that Afghanistan currently lacks a strong legal economy,

it will take years, possibly decades to see the effects that economic and salary reform will have on reducing levels of corruption.

3. A short-term option available to the Department of State to combat corruption is to educate Afghans about corruption, good governance and the constitutional rights they are entitled to as citizens. Corruption has become so ingrained in Afghan society that the majority of Afghans not only tolerates corruption, but believes it to be an inescapable norm. This mentality can be corrected with education and increased access to information. Primary education that covers basic rights under the Constitution of Afghanistan, explains the proper role of government, including the police and the judiciary, and explains the basic services to which Afghans are entitled can be made mandatory to all Afghans. Educating Afghans about the ills of corruption from a young age can be one of the most useful ways to prevent acts of corruption from occurring in the future.

This type of education can teach Afghans that bribery is not only unacceptable, but is a criminal offense punishable by law. Education can help teach Afghans that they have a right to be free from corruption in their interactions with public officials. Educating Afghans about the negative consequences of corruption can help them understand that acts of corruption are illegal, and people who engage in such acts are criminals. Furthermore, education can convey the crucial message that Afghans have a right to be treated fairly in their interactions with public officials. Administrative officials who seek bribes can also be educated and informed about the negative consequences and criminality of corruption.

Afghan adults who are unaware of their rights against corruption can be educated as well, and this can be accomplished through increased access to information. Freedom of press can play a vital role in increasing government transparency and educating Afghan civilians on corruption by making this kind of information more accessible to the public. Media outlets must be owned and operated independently of the Afghan government so that the government cannot control the kind of information that is being reported on.

While educating Afghans about the dangers of corruption and their rights as citizens can be effective, access to information and education in Afghanistan, particularly in rural regions, is limited. This means that education and information about corruption, rights as citizens and the proper role of government will be limited to Afghans who are able to attend schools and have access to media outlets, which precludes a significant part of the population.

4. Judicial reform may be achieved by eliminating corruption among judges and lawyers. The majority of judges and lawyers report that they are highly underpaid for their services, which causes them to be vulnerable to bribery. Additionally, administrative workers in the judicial system often intentionally prolong their tasks so that they can be offered bribes to accomplish tasks faster. This is also an issue of salary insufficiency that can be improved with higher salaries. A way to reduce the possibility that judicial workers will engage in bribery is to subsidize their incomes by increasing U.S. aid to Afghanistan. Subsidizing the incomes of workers in the judicial system is a short-term option that can help deter the payment of bribes and incentivize judicial workers to uphold rule of law.

Income subsidies would require an independent authority, such as the United States, to give more aid money to Afghanistan's judicial system. The process of subsidizing incomes for judicial workers can become complex because it is difficult to determine how much money to allocate toward Afghanistan's judicial system, and over what period of time this aid should be administered. A possible negative consequence of providing income subsidies could be that Afghanistan's judicial system becomes dependent on foreign aid, thus creating a situation in which ceasing to subsidize wages could lead to a relapse of the judicial system. Moreover, it will likely be difficult to acquire sufficient political support for subsidizing the incomes of judicial workers, given that the U.S. has already pledged billions of dollars in aid to Afghanistan.

5. The Department of State could help the Afghan government improve the implementation of strategies developed by existing anticorruption agencies. This would likely be a long-term option necessitating prolonged U.S. presence in Afghanistan to ensure that anticorruption strategies are implemented effectively under strong leadership. The U.S. goal in collaborating with Afghan anticorruption agencies is to educate Afghans on the process of combating corruption, so that they will be able to successfully implement anticorruption strategies on their own after the withdrawal of U.S. troops.

While combining U.S. efforts with Afghan anticorruption agencies has potential, this option also has disadvantages. The process of refining strategy execution could be difficult because anticorruption agencies in Afghanistan are not all in agreement on the most effective ways to deter corruption. Even if the



U.S. succeeded in helping anticorruption agencies employ these strategies, the conflicting policies that these agencies endorse and their constant competition for resources would remain obstacles that complicate the fight against corruption.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***Create an Independent Anticorruption Agency***

The Department of State should assist the Afghan government in streamlining existing agencies into one politically independent agency responsible for all anticorruption efforts in Afghanistan (option 1). The creation of an independent agency would remove the possibility of negative political influences interfering with anticorruption efforts. Since President Karzai's commitment to combating corruption thus far has been minimal, an independent anticorruption agency that does not answer to the government is necessary for anticorruption efforts to yield positive results. The fight against corruption will be much more successful if all the current agencies are streamlined to become one Afghan-led independent agency that is fully committed to preventing and reducing corruption in the public sector. The creation of such an agency is in the best interest of the Department of State because it increases the likelihood that corruption levels will be lowered and security established in Afghanistan.

### ***Salary and Economic Reform***

The Department of State should support salary and economic reform in Afghanistan as a long-term goal to eliminate the vulnerability of public sector workers to bribery (option 2). The U.S. should work with the Afghan government to create an economic environment that supports entrepreneurial activity. Illicit markets must be eliminated and replaced with legal markets that Afghans can participate and invest in. This can be accomplished by refining the legal framework that currently constrains the economy. The process an Afghan must go through to create a new

business must not be unreasonably difficult or expensive, and the government must provide a safety net for failed businesses so that Afghans are not deterred from starting a business in the future. Salary reform through merit and performance-based pay will provide incentives for Afghan officials to dedicate themselves to their work and uphold a standard of integrity within public institutions. Moreover, mandating the disclosure of salaries and assets will reduce the number of government officials currently profiting off drug-trafficking and crimes of political corruption. Although economic and salary reform is a long-term goal that will not yield immediate results, it is nonetheless an important recommendation that the Department of State should follow to prevent and deter corruption in the future.

### ***Educate Afghans about Corruption, Constitutional Rights and the Role of Government***

The Department of State should seek to educate and inform Afghans about the negative effects of corruption, their rights under the Afghan Constitution and the proper role of government (option 3). An Afghan who understands his rights as a citizen will demand basic services from the government and will not tolerate crimes of corruption. While including the subjects of corruption, good governance, and constitutional rights in primary education will prevent acts of corruption from occurring in the long-run, benefits from educating and informing Afghan adults about these issues can yield more immediate results. Afghan adults should be informed about corruption and governance through independent media outlets such as television, internet and newspapers to help break the cycle of corruption among the adult population. Although this recommendation may disproportionately affect Afghans living in rural areas who do not have access to media outlets, the process of educating and informing Afghans on their rights against corruption must begin somewhere and with time can hopefully reach Afghans in all regions of the country.

# Creating an Integrated Society: Implementing & Evaluating a Taliban Reintegration Strategy

Tim R Harris

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## Policy Recommendations

- U.S. troops need to be committed to establishing security as the immediate goal. Applying the current strategy in Marja, bringing in Afghan military and police forces to maintain security, to replace Taliban governance in the rest of the region is necessary.
- Promote a “3-R approach” of reintegration, reconciliation, and redress as a short and long-term goal of dismantling the Taliban insurgency. A combination of economic incentives, incorporation into civil society, and opportunities to address grievances.
- Supporting evaluative programs to measure the approach’s success on the ground and to enhance the strategy’s success.
- Train U.S. troops using reintegration strategy to prepare them to negotiate with Taliban defectors.
- Promote a national Afghan identity by supporting Afghan-led initiatives and reconciliation efforts

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## Abstract

The international community has recently provided support for a new strategy in Afghanistan: reintegration. Reintegration provides various incentives for insurgents to defect from the Taliban. The U.S. believes that most Taliban insurgents have no ideological affiliation with al Qaeda, and can be easily convinced to stop fighting. Success against the Taliban comes from dismantling their army. As a new strategy in Afghanistan, it is unclear whether it will be effective. This chapter investigates the various reintegration strategies being currently proposed, who are the actors in these discussions, and how reintegration can support a legitimate, Afghanistan government. This chapter discusses criticisms of the reintegration strategy, as well as mentions of alternative strategies. The U.S. will support reintegration under the conditions of three red lines: support for the Afghanistan constitution, respect of human rights, and not negotiating with al Qaeda. In teasing apart these potential strategies, the U.S. has multiple options to proceed. It is in the interests of the U.S. to pursue a “3-R approach” of reintegration, reconciliation and redress, in addition to providing military security, supporting Afghan-led initiatives, and incorporating reintegration strategies within the military. These recommendations are necessary for the transition of governance to the Karzai administration.

## **ISSUE**

The conflict in Afghanistan dates back to the emergence of the Taliban in the 1990s, and in 2010, the United States is shifting its policy. In addition to the 30,000-troop surge President Obama promised, America is beginning to “support efforts by the Afghan government to open the door to those Taliban who abandon violence and respect the human rights of their fellow citizens.”<sup>1</sup> This new effort is known as reintegration, which provides financial incentives to Taliban defectors. It indicates a willingness to work with, rather than combat against, low and midlevel insurgents. Though the U.S. has considered this strategy beginning in late 2009, Afghanistan President Karzai pushed for dialogue with the Taliban since 2003. In its next steps in Afghanistan, the U.S. needs to implement a reintegration strategy, to enhance security in the region, and to evaluate the program as it is running. A reintegration program represents a new way to interact with the Taliban, but it should not be taken as a solution without faults. The U.S. needs to scrutinize this policy, and look at additional approaches to offer. As the U.S. transitions law and order to the Afghan government, it must set up proper mechanisms that promote security and democracy in the region. The U.S. has already expressed support for this strategy; however, a decision must be made as to how the U.S. executes it.

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Prelude to reintegration: the London Conference***

In January 2010, representatives from 70 countries met in London to discuss the situation in Afghanistan. As insecurity increases, and countries grow weary of military intervention, the London conference met to discuss ways to transition governance to the Karzai administration. Prior to the conference, the United States began discussing alternative methods in Afghanistan,

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<sup>1</sup> Los Angeles Times 2009

including Taliban reintegration. On January 28, 2010, the London Conference released a communiqué, listing a series of outcomes to affect strategy.

Similar to the Bonn conference, the London conference called for a Loya Jirga to convene in the next few weeks. Unlike the Bonn conference, however, this Loya Jirga would include Taliban representatives, as well as women.<sup>2</sup> Human rights activists have pushed that women be at the Loya Jirga, despite Taliban opposition of women in government positions.<sup>3</sup>

The London conference focused on reintegration and reconciliation strategies for the Taliban. This, however, requires taking out the link between al Qaeda and the Taliban.<sup>4</sup> The communiqué cited that “[Afghanistan] can never allow Afghanistan to again be run by the brutal Taliban regime that gave safe haven to al Qaeda.”<sup>5</sup> While the international community has welcomed dialogue with the Taliban, including alleged meetings in January between senior Taliban officials and UN Envoy Kai Eide, the international community continues to classify al Qaeda as a terrorist organization. The United States refuses negotiations with al Qaeda.

Beginning in October 2009, the United States has expressed support of negotiations with the Taliban. ISAF Commander, GEN Stanley McChrystal commented, “as a Soldier, my personal feeling is that there's been enough fighting”.<sup>6</sup> However, he has shown caution when incorporating this strategy into current campaigns. In lieu of unconditional reconciliation, the United States maintains “red lines” that are non-negotiable in discussions with the Taliban.

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<sup>2</sup> Borger 2010

<sup>3</sup> Verveer 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

These absolutes include severing ties with al Qaeda, the acceptance of basic human rights, including women's rights, and the acceptance of the Afghan constitution.<sup>7</sup>

Despite support for reintegration, the U.S. and the Karzai administration disagree on the degree of reintegration that needs to take place. The United States has pushed for reintegration of low-level troops, who have no ideological allegiance to al Qaeda. As a result, the U.S. has pushed for an economic solution, providing ex-Taliban foot soldiers with jobs and money as an incentive. UN representative to Afghanistan, Kai Eide, however, supports an alternate method, political reconciliation, which includes middle-level officials who are willing to defect from al Qaeda. Eide said, "the reintegration process is important, but it has to be accompanied by political reconciliation."<sup>8</sup> This strategy allows for the return of Taliban into civil society. The Karzai administration has favored reconciliation with all Taliban, including top officials, as a long-term strategy.

### ***Promoting a reintegration strategy***

#### **Perquisites**

A reintegration strategy provides an economic incentive to Taliban defectors. The U.S. believes that the majority of low-level and midlevel Taliban have no ideological affiliation with al Qaeda, and can be bought off with money. Similarly, the U.S. has stated that civilians join the Taliban because they are offered money. As GEN McChrystal has noted, "many of the Taliban fight because they are paid to do so, and they are the ones who might be persuaded to stop."<sup>9</sup> Providing economic incentives substantially would reduce the military base of the Taliban.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Vanden Brook 2009

However, economic incentive is only one facet of a reintegration strategy. While U.S. officials including Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke and GEN McChrystal have stated that economic incentives will stop the fighting, academics have argued that these provisions alone are insufficient. This strategy fails to take into account the aforementioned reasons for why the Taliban fight. Michael Semple, regional specialist on Afghanistan and Pakistan, supports economic incentives when paired with political reintegration. “This is just the first step”, he says, “to reincorporate the Taliban into civil society.”<sup>10</sup> Actions, such as the removal of five senior Taliban from international blacklists or the release of Taliban from Bagram Detention Center, are the next step necessary for reintegration into civil society.<sup>11</sup> Support from the international community for political reintegration is necessary for reintegration. Martine van Bijlert, Senior Analyst for the Afghanistan Analysts Network, says “there is the political structure of the Taliban, which has its own environment of relations with the rest of the world and the question of al Qaeda and the terrorist networks. Our neighbors and the international community will be involved in this. That's going to take a lot more effort.”<sup>12</sup> Political reintegration offers long-term support for Taliban defectors.

Political reintegration also includes incorporating former Taliban into the government. Karzai has offered using the Hizb-e-Islam party as a bridge to bring in defecting senior Taliban officials under the rule of law. The party, which now holds 19 of 246 seats in parliament, was founded by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, an Afghan warlord with access to thousands of Taliban. Though the current party denies official links to Hekmatyar, many of its members have openly

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<sup>10</sup> Semple 2010

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> van Bijlert 2010

supported bringing him into the government.<sup>13</sup> Including the Taliban in the Afghan Cabinet is another strategy that some have advocated.<sup>14</sup> In fact, President Karzai has proposed using political reintegration, in conjunction with economic incentives. Such reintegration, ultimately including extending to former Taliban leaders holding elected offices, requires abiding by the Afghan constitution and government.<sup>15</sup>

Other reintegration strategies focus on stronger incentives to entice the Taliban into society. One strategy provides job placement for former Taliban. Job security would bolster the economy and provide a long-term economic incentive. This would include vocational training and job counseling.<sup>16</sup>

Another strategy offers amnesty provisions. Amnesty from former war crimes or violence against the Karzai government will make the hurdle of reintegrating back into society less intimidating for Taliban who have used violence in their past. Karzai has offered this provision to rank-and-file supporters, as well as Taliban leaders. Providing security to protect defecting Taliban from attacks is necessary. For any reintegration strategy, providing security and protection from violence is necessary. Foot soldiers who abandon the Taliban are at a high risk to be killed. Offering protection in addition to economic, political or amnesty provisions is necessary.

### **Reintegrating rank-and-file versus senior Taliban**

The reintegration strategy outlined at the London conference favors negotiation with low-level and midlevel Taliban fighters who do not allege to be al Qaeda.<sup>17</sup> The United States has

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<sup>13</sup> Trofimov 2010

<sup>14</sup> Mottram 2010

<sup>15</sup> Felbab-Brown 2009

<sup>16</sup> UPI News 2009

<sup>17</sup> National Public Radio 2010



expressed support of this plan, arguing that it is possible to only negotiate with Afghans who do not affiliate with al Qaeda. Low-level Taliban do not fight an ideological battle, but rather are fighting an economic battle; they join the Taliban because it provides income.<sup>18</sup> It is easy to sway these foot soldiers with economic incentives. Holbrooke believes that this is the case with the majority of the Taliban, saying, “Based on interviews with prisoners, returnees, experts, there must be at least 70% of these people who are not fighting for anything to do with those causes.”<sup>19</sup> This reintegration policy deliberately excludes senior Taliban and individuals accused of war crimes. Only “small t” Taliban will be embraced.<sup>20</sup> On January 28, 2010, Karzai outlined details for this plan. Holbrooke, Clinton and GEN McChrystal have all expressed support for the January 28 plan.<sup>21</sup>

The U.S. support is not without skepticism. On January 27, 2010, GEN McChrystal commented that “[he didn’t] think the [foot soldiers] have any reason to turn its back on al Qaeda.”<sup>22</sup> Al Qaeda provides funds and security. They also threaten revenge for any defectors, to prevent many Taliban from reneging. Despite this skepticism, however, the United States believes that the lack of allegiance to al Qaeda ideology makes reintegration a viable option for low-level Taliban.

Discussions of the reintegration strategy have asked what to do with the reintegrated individuals. In addition to providing jobs and finances, officials also discuss in what capacity can the Taliban serve. Una Moore of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against

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<sup>18</sup> Vanden Brook 2009

<sup>19</sup> Katz 2010

<sup>20</sup> Subramanian 2010

<sup>21</sup> National Public Radio 2010

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

Women suggests, “What is on offer to them is the chance of a new life.”<sup>23</sup> But what this new life looks like continues to be debated. The first question to examine is whether or not soldiers that denounce the Taliban should be disarmed or mobilized as militias against the rest of the Taliban. The international community may distrust former Taliban, who may turn on the Afghan militia forces. Figuring out how to include Taliban into civil society will be a negotiation that will take place within the Karzai administration as it develops its strategy.

While the United States only wishes to work with low-level Taliban, the Karzai administration has favored negotiations with midlevel and high-level Taliban officials. The West pushes a bottom-up approach to engage the Taliban, while Karzai wants a broader political deal with insurgents. Karzai notes, “We, as Afghans, are trying to reach as high (up the Taliban command) as possible.”<sup>24</sup> He has sought negotiations with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a Mujahideen warlord who has worked with the Taliban and al Qaeda in the past, and has even considered bringing him into the government.<sup>25</sup> Hekmatyar has agreed to accept negotiations, as well as an international peacekeeping force. The United States refuses any negotiations with Hekmatyar because of his affiliation with al Qaeda. Determining who will be the recipients of a reintegration strategy will be vital knowledge for ground troops, who must carry out the policy on the ground.

### **Reintegration institutions**

A reintegration strategy requires both international and institutional support. At the London Conference, the Karzai administration called for a national Peace and Reintegration Programme (PNP), to offer economic reintegration to those who renounce violence.<sup>26</sup> This economic reintegration program includes the promise of jobs, protection against retaliation, and

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<sup>23</sup> Moore 2010

<sup>24</sup> Shah 2010

<sup>25</sup> Trofimov 2010

<sup>26</sup> Borger 2010

the removal of names from U.S. and NATO target lists.<sup>27</sup> Karzai has also committed to strengthening old institutions that promote reintegration, including the Program Takhim-e-Solh (PTS), which grants amnesty to mid- and low-level insurgents who agree to stop fighting. Karzai has promised to strengthen the PTS and support its current head, Sigbhatullah Mojadeddi.<sup>28</sup> The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which in 2007 had expanded PTS, is an opportunity for the international community to support reintegration. Karzai has cited other national and international instruments—Afghanistan’s New Beginnings Program, the Disarmament, Development and Reintegration and Disband Illegally Armed Groups—as institutions to model new efforts after. Following these earlier models will create congruence in how Afghans understand and implement a stronger reintegration strategy.<sup>29</sup>

Programs including UNAMA and PTS will need to train Afghan and international troops on how to use reintegration with Taliban defectors on the ground. Countries who have pledged international troops should similarly pledge resources to train military personnel. Though the international community supports a reintegration strategy, the process needs to be “Afghan-led, and Afghan-owned, and if the Afghan government so desires, [Pakistan] is willing to facilitate,” according to Shah Mahmoud Qureshi.<sup>30</sup> The U.S. has expressed a similar attitude, willing to provide the resources, contingent on the strategy being Afghan-led. The international community’s support must offer training methods for their troops.

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<sup>27</sup> DeYoung 2010

<sup>28</sup> Hubbard, 2010

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Press TV 2010

## **Mechanisms of funding**

The PNP, in its five-year scope, is estimated to cost US\$500 million, US\$140 million in its first year.<sup>31</sup> At the London Conference, Karzai asked for funding from international donors in the program's Trust Fund; Japan and Great Britain have already pledged financial support.<sup>32</sup> The U.S., however, is unclear as to how much the total operations cost will be. Holbrooke declined to say how much the plan would cost, saying, "we don't know enough about the plan."<sup>33</sup> Though Great Britain and Japan have pioneered financial support, the U.S. has not committed further financial effort to the program itself. The U.S. has contributed US\$1.3 billion to a reintegration strategy in October 2009.<sup>34</sup> Secretary Clinton has stated that U.S. additional financial support would continue to finance security and military personnel. Since 2002, the U.S. has provided US\$7.9 billion dollars in development assistance.<sup>35</sup>

## **Factors affecting reintegration**

A successful reintegration strategy needs to take into account broader factors that affect everyday civilian life, one of which is foreign troop presence. Many Taliban refuse to discuss reintegration until international troops withdraw from Afghanistan. Karzai has called this response "unrealistic,"<sup>36</sup> as international troops provide a source of security. Convincing Taliban to defect regardless of international troop presence will shape how reintegration is promoted.

Addressing other development issues is paramount for any reintegration strategy to be successful. One major reason why the Taliban fight is due to the lack of security or basic

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<sup>31</sup> Rubin 2010

<sup>32</sup> Trofimov 2010

<sup>33</sup> National Public Radio 2010

<sup>34</sup> CNN World 2009

<sup>35</sup> van Bijlert 2010

<sup>36</sup> Mount 2008

provisions. Addressing these reasons, from discrimination against particular tribes or land and water disputes, needs to be a strong element in the strategy.<sup>37</sup> Development projects strengthen civil society is important for reintegration to be successful. Development projects in the Chora district of Uruzgan, once a Taliban stronghold, have strengthened reintegration.<sup>38</sup>

A third factor is to incorporate ethnic differences under a national, Afghan identity. Many Taliban are of Pashtun descent, and the conflict has led to the marginalization of Pashtuns. Supporting, not marginalizing, the Pashtuns as equal members of Afghan society is important in convincing Taliban soldiers to defect.

### ***Criticisms of the Reintegration Strategy***

The current reintegration strategies are not without limitations. On January 29, 2010, senior Taliban officials have already rejected the reintegration plan, arguing that the Taliban are not fighting simply for money, and called the London Conference outcomes “impractical.”<sup>39</sup> Again, on February 21, 2010, Mullah Omar has rejected talks with President Karzai. This is because the Taliban do not trust current proposals. Zaeef argues that “there is no clear strategy for negotiations,” and that “the Taliban were deceived so many times.”<sup>40</sup> Creating a practical program and responding to reintegration criticisms, is necessary for successful evaluation of the program.

### **Provision of security**

A fundamental limitation is the provision of security. Taliban leaders have said that defectors will be killed. With this threat, reintegration strategy must ensure sufficient security for all Taliban defectors. Understanding how much and how long security will need to be provided is

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<sup>37</sup> Felbab-Brown 2009

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> The International News 2010

<sup>40</sup> Washington Post 2010

another obstacle in promoting reintegration. In an effort to deter defection, the Taliban has already targeted civilians who have defected.<sup>41</sup> Providing security to Taliban defectors and Afghan civilians alike is necessary to galvanize support for the government.

### **This is an ideological, not financial, cause**

The Taliban leadership rejects the reintegration strategy because they believe that their foot soldiers are not fighting for a financial cause. The Taliban argued, “their fighters were not fighting for money, property and position, but for Islam.”<sup>42</sup> They reject any reintegration strategy offering money as “baseless and futile and have no truth.”<sup>43</sup> According to Martine van Bijlert, co-Director of the Afghan Analyst Network, it “ignores the reasons why people fight.”<sup>44</sup> The U.S. administration stresses that 70% of Taliban soldiers are fighting purely for financial reasons; however, this number has no reliable data to support it.<sup>45</sup> Kai Eide says that these numbers are exaggerated.<sup>46</sup> Understanding other motivations for joining the Taliban is necessary to construct an effective reintegration strategy.

### **Financial Sustainability**

Another limitation in the reintegration strategy is that the current proposal creates the PNP, which exclusively international donors fund. While the Trust Fund has asked for US\$500 million dollars over the next five years, critics ask what happens when the funds run out.<sup>47</sup> International donations are not a sustainable method of receiving funds, especially if the Afghan government

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<sup>41</sup> Felbab-Brown 2009

<sup>42</sup> National Public Radio 2010

<sup>43</sup> van Bijlert 2010

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Katz 2010

<sup>46</sup> Telegraph 2010

<sup>47</sup> Felbab-Brown 2009

is trying to wean its support from dependence on foreign powers. Finding an internal source of revenue must be part of a long-term strategy in promoting reintegration.

### **Institutional stability**

Other skeptics argue that the government is not strong enough to carry out a successful reintegration program. Nazif Shahrani, professor of anthropology at Indiana University, does not believe that the PNP has an effective way to properly reintegrate Taliban into civil society. The only possible formula, Shahrani claims, is to allocate a certain number of ministerial posts to Taliban, a formula prescribed at the Bonn Conference.<sup>48</sup> Setting a quota of Taliban jobs does not smoothly reincorporate Taliban officials, but rather gives them an unfair advantage into civil society, which could spark backlash by non-Taliban. Also, promising jobs is not the same as providing jobs. Given the devastation of the current Afghan economy, job creation is considered the hardest part of the reconstruction process, and promising unavailable jobs will delegitimize the institutions that aim to reintegrate the Taliban. Mariam Nawabi, principal of Afghanistan Market Development International, argues that economic incentives is a quick fix, but does not secure Taliban defectors in civil society. “After short-term donor assistance runs out,” she says, “I think they will likely return to such groups.”<sup>49</sup>

Larry Goodson, author of “Afghanistan’s Endless War,” cites bad governance as a reason why Taliban fight. Linking reintegration strategy to Karzai’s government further promotes bad governance. Many foot soldiers fight for the Taliban because they believe the Taliban has a better governing structure. The Taliban currently provide more security than does the Karzai government for the average citizen; consequently many foot soldiers commit to the Taliban for this reason. In order for these reintegration strategies to be effective, they must be represented

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<sup>48</sup> Trofimov 2010

<sup>49</sup> Felbab-Brown 2009

not by Karzai, but rather by respected organizations, such as UNAMA. Anti-government groups, in addition to the Taliban, believe that the government is weak and supported by international forces that target them.<sup>50</sup>

## **Audience**

The reintegration strategy promises incentives for Taliban defectors, but has yet to describe who has been a member of the Taliban. Focusing on just Taliban excludes fundamentalists who have ideological connection to al Qaeda and pose a danger to Afghan security. Inversely, the strategy includes individuals who use the name “Taliban” to instill fear, yet they have no ideological connection to the group or to al Qaeda. In 2003, Karzai called for a “clear line to be drawn between the ordinary Taliban who are real and honest sons of this country and those who still use the Taliban cover to disturb peace and security in the country.”<sup>51</sup> Also, the Afghan insurgency is not a monolithic network; there are three distinct groups of fighters: the Taliban who follow Mullah Omar of the south, the Haqqani network in the southeast, and warlord Hekmatyar’s resistance movement. While these groups cooperate on the tactical level, they don’t share an allegiance to one another.<sup>52</sup> Hekmatyar, who commands the loyalty of thousands of insurgents,<sup>53</sup> has promised to support the Afghan president, while Mullah Omar has refused to work with President Karzai. Many fissures exist among the groups at the strategic level, as fighting among the Taliban has been recorded in the south.<sup>54</sup> Understanding who the Taliban audiences are will strengthen a reintegration strategy.

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<sup>50</sup> Hubbard 2010

<sup>51</sup> Tarzi 2005

<sup>52</sup> Trofimov 2010

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Felbab-Brown 2009



## **Repeating the past**

In order for the reintegration to be successful, it needs to evaluate past efforts. Earlier reintegration efforts have failed, officials have said, because of poor planning, inadequate security and insufficient financial support.<sup>55</sup> Ensuring that these mistakes do not occur again will build trust with the Taliban that the reintegration programs are legitimate and will deliver on their promises. A significant flaw of past strategies included inefficient financial distribution. Tens of billions of dollars were never supplied to defectors. Rather, they were stashed away in accounts maintained by corrupt members of the Karzai administration. Proper monitoring instruments to ensure that money is distributed were missing in previous reintegration attempts.<sup>56</sup>

## **Talibanization**

Perhaps the biggest concern of a reintegration strategy is that the incentives for Taliban defectors will encourage citizens to join the Taliban. Taliban foot soldiers may simply take the money and return to violence. Sayyid Agha Hussain Fazil Sanjaraki, spokesman for the National Front, believes that “the money will give more power to the Taliban.”<sup>57</sup> The only stipulation in the current strategy is that defectors must renounce violence and support for the Taliban and al Qaeda. There is no mechanism to ensure that defectors abide by this promise. Reintegration also creates perverse incentives for citizens to join the Taliban. If only Taliban defectors receive money, then ordinary civilians may join the Taliban in order to renege and receive funds. Rashid argues that, “funneling millions of dollars into Taliban-held villages unfairly benefits ethnic Pashtuns and reward those who have fought the government.”<sup>58</sup> Economic incentives should be

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<sup>55</sup> DeYoung 2010

<sup>56</sup> Javed Rahman 2010

<sup>57</sup> Washington Post 2010

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

broadened to communities willing to do their part in support of the building of the country, not just the Taliban.<sup>59</sup>

Only funding the Taliban not only endorses the Talibanization of civilians, but also takes away funds from development projects. In a country that lacks roads, a sewage system, canals, garbage collection or job opportunities, paying off Taliban with \$140 million per year is “unacceptable.”<sup>60</sup> A focus on funding former Taliban may incite backlash from civilians. Money spent on reintegration must be in addition to money spent on development projects.

### **Perception of the strategy**

The Taliban have mocked the reintegration strategy as a signal of weakness in the Karzai administration. The Taliban have asked, “why should [they] come and join [the government] now that they are in a much stronger position than they were.”<sup>61</sup> The shift in strategy from military campaigns to negotiations bolsters the perception that NATO is “not winning, or at best in a stalemate in the war against the Taliban.”<sup>62</sup> It similarly indicates a division between NATO and the Afghan government, and critics interpret the strategy as saying that the surge will be ineffective. American military scholars criticized the strategy as “deeply counterproductive and undermining the psychological and military effectiveness of the military surge.”<sup>63</sup> A reintegration strategy is effective only when paired with a momentum in favor of the counterinsurgency.

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<sup>59</sup> O’Hanlon 2010

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Trofimov 2010

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Epatko 2010

## **U.S. conditionalities: the red lines**

Both the Karzai administration and the Taliban have “red lines” that impede negotiations of reintegration. The U.S. and Afghan governments mandate that the Taliban renounce violence, support human rights and abide by the Afghan constitution, while the Taliban will not stop fighting until foreign occupation leaves. For many Taliban, the Karzai administration represents foreign occupation, and until a new government is in power, negotiations will be unsuccessful.<sup>64</sup> The primary demand for many Taliban is the withdrawal of international troops, based on the belief that these troops are the source of instability in Afghanistan.<sup>65</sup> The absolutes for both sides severely limit a successful and mutual strategy.

## **Understanding why the Taliban fight**

To draft an effective reintegration strategy, it is important to understand why the Taliban, from senior officials to low-level foot soldiers, fight. Larry Goodson, author of “Afghanistan’s Endless War,” outlines five factors that explain the rise of the Taliban, including: shared Pashtun ethnicity, an emphasis on religious piety, war-weariness of the civilian population, money, and Pakistani support.<sup>66</sup> These factors reveal the ideological commitments of many senior Taliban leaders, but it does not include why many civilians join the Taliban. For foot soldiers, the Taliban provide financial incentives that failing licit market cannot produce. The Taliban also provide security in a corrupt and dangerous country. Providing these basic services encourages civilians to join the Taliban.

Not everyone believes that low-level and midlevel citizens join the Taliban due to the lack of services. Abdul Salam Zaeef, Afghan ambassador to Pakistan during the Taliban regime,

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<sup>64</sup> Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan 2010

<sup>65</sup> Mottram 2010

<sup>66</sup> Robert Crews and Amin Tarzi, 74.

argues that, “this is an ideological war.”<sup>67</sup> Kai Eide, UN Special Envoy to Afghanistan, argues that the current conflict is in fact ideological, and that current discussions toward reintegration are not “game changers” because it fails to address the motivation for the insurgency.<sup>68</sup>

Similarly, fighting stems from a conviction that the government is corrupt and is unable to provide law and order. Eide believes that the perception of a lack of governance, combined with a lack of cultural respect, contributes to the motivation for all Taliban fighters.<sup>69</sup> Many mid-level Taliban fight to resist the Karzai administration.

### *Alternative strategies:*

#### **Reconciliation**

While reintegration promotes incentives to buy off Taliban foot soldiers, reconciliation is an active process to reincorporate former soldiers as Afghan citizens. As of December 2009, the U.S. current strategy has touted reintegration, while the Karzai administration wants the international community to support reconciliation. News articles have used the terms interchangeably, however, reconciliation and reintegration strategies have distinct outcomes. The following section will outline efforts to promote political reconciliation.

The Karzai administration currently envisions a dual reintegration-reconciliation strategy, and is asking for international support. GEN McChrystal, supportive of the reintegration strategy, commented that “the U.S....oppose[s] using the separate reconciliation track to reach out to Mullah Mohammed Omar and other Taliban leaders who are considered close to al Qaeda (sic) and haven’t accepted the Afghan constitution.”<sup>70</sup> This is because reconciliation implies an

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<sup>67</sup> Washington Post 2010

<sup>68</sup> Telegraph 2010

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> DeYoung 2010

incorporation of all members of the Taliban, including high officials. While the U.S. opposes talks with senior officials, Karzai believes negotiations with senior Taliban is necessary. He says, “Taliban members are welcome to come back to their country and lay down arms and resume life under the constitution of Afghanistan.”<sup>71</sup> The United Nations also supports a dual approach. Kai Eide argues that “plans to use financial incentives would not succeed without negotiations with their leaders.”<sup>72</sup> Eide calls the current U.S. strategy a “carrot and stick” policy.<sup>73</sup> Reports of UN Envoy Kai Eide meeting with senior Taliban leaders in January have surfaced. UN Radio argues that reconciliation is a prerequisite to reintegration. Specifically, reconciliation of past injustices, including war crimes, needs to happen for the Taliban to assimilate into civil society, without fear of punishment or marginalization.<sup>74</sup> UN agencies advocate that reconciliation is a reciprocal process, and requires the Taliban to reconcile their grievances with Afghan society. This includes supporting women’s rights. Developing a dual reintegration-reconciliation strategy, to be effective, requires support from all players.

As with reintegration, the Taliban have rejected reconciliation efforts. Mullah Omar dismisses reconciliation as a “futile effort.”<sup>75</sup> Reconciliation, including the Taliban in political positions, would be assimilating Taliban into the Karzai administration, which is viewed as a puppet regime of foreign occupation. Until Karzai is no longer in power, the Taliban have rejected reconciliation. Another reason the Taliban do not support reconciliation stems from their goals, which include: complete independence of the country; establishment of an Islamic system;

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Telegraph Staff 2010

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> United Nations Radio 2010

<sup>75</sup> Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan 2010

and progress and prosperity of the country.<sup>76</sup> According to senior Taliban, attaining these goals cannot happen with the current government and foreign occupation. Unfortunately, the Taliban mention that they “are determined to carry on the fight until the realization of the said goals.”<sup>77</sup>

Even though the U.S. does not directly support reconciliation, it supports an Afghan-led strategy. Robert Gates said that “reconciliation has to be on the terms of the Afghan government and consistent with the Afghan constitution.”<sup>78</sup> The U.S. does not object reconciliation because it exemplifies a democratic process. Reconciliation is the “most effective way to address relationships” between groups.<sup>79</sup> Empowering the Afghan government to take initiative on projects is a strategy that the U.S. currently supports.

## **Redress**

Though not highlighted in news media, a third strategy is to redress past grievances of the Taliban. Clare Lockhart, CEO for the Institute for State Effectiveness (ISE) argues that redress—providing an opportunity for former insurgents to air their frustrations in a public forum—is fundamental for state reconstruction.<sup>80</sup> Redress allows all Taliban defectors to express their reasons for fighting in the war, and promotes discussions on how change can happen. Listening to Taliban grievances, such as those expressed in Mullah Zaeef’s book “Talking Peace with the Taliban” is necessary for constructive development to occur post-conflict. Redress forums have been successful in reconstructing states, such as South Africa post-apartheid. Including former Taliban in these discussions further incorporates them into civil society, limiting post-conflict marginalization. A redress strategy aligns with the Afghanistan National Development Strategy,

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> ZeeNews 2010

<sup>79</sup> International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2010

<sup>80</sup> Lockhart 2010

which argues for “a mechanism to redress rights abuses.”<sup>81</sup> A long-term-strategy, redress is a mechanism that requires military defeat of the Taliban army.

### ***Regional support for reconciliation***

#### **Saudi Arabia**

The Saudi kingdom was one of three governments to recognize the Taliban as legitimate regime between 1996-2001. However, it rescinded recognition following its failure to send Osama bin Laden to Saudi Arabia.<sup>82</sup> Having a similar style of Islam fundamentalism, Saudi Arabia has been a safe haven for al Qaeda in the past, though the government is actively pursuing terrorists. On 2 February 2010, Karzai visited Saudi Arabia to push negotiations with the Taliban. He urged Saudi Arabia to forgive the Taliban, in order for reconciliation to be successful.<sup>83</sup> Karzai believes that by de-marginalizing the Taliban defectors, reconciliation will be an attainable goal.

#### **Pakistan**

Karzai has expressed assistance from Pakistan to support reconciliation. Karzai has said that Pakistan is in a unique position to influence the process because of its past links with the Taliban, including the harboring of senior officials following the 2001 U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan.<sup>84</sup> Pakistan has supported the three Afghan insurgent leaders: Omar, Haqqani and Hekmatyar, in the past, and is believed to know the whereabouts of many high-level Taliban today. Though Pakistan has the access, it has yet to offer help to reintegrate fighters.<sup>85</sup> Pakistan

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<sup>81</sup> United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, 88

<sup>82</sup> Shah 2010

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Mount 2008

<sup>85</sup> Subramanian 2010

has the potential to serve as a mediator for reconciliation negotiations.

Afghanistan scholar Ahmed Rashid argues that reintegration cannot be successful without facilitation by Pakistan. Karzai, however, is reticent to ask for full-fledged support from Pakistan. This is because attaining Pakistani support would also require closing the Af-Pak border, to prevent funneling of money and personnel from Pakistan Taliban to Afghan insurgents. Closing the border itself would require extensive negotiations. Also, achieving Pakistani support would require Pakistan to reconcile its denials of harbored Taliban leaders.<sup>86</sup> Pakistan can also spoil negotiations to preserve its own interest with the Taliban, which often is not congruent with Afghanistan's interest. Pakistan's foreign minister has welcomed Karzai's request for reconciliation.<sup>87</sup> However, Pakistan has not prompted negotiations, arguing that reconciliation efforts must be Afghan-led.<sup>88</sup>

### **U.S. INTERESTS**

A reintegration or reconciliation strategy attempts to provide security through negotiations, rather than fighting. Reintegration provides short-term incentives to dismantle the Taliban army, which is the source of fighting. Reconciliation attempts to stop fighting by creating peace with Taliban leaders. Both these strategies work towards promoting peace, rather than force, as a means of establishing security.

Using a reintegration or reconciliation strategy also leads to the transition of governance to the Karzai administration. The current proposals require President Karzai to facilitate action, and use the international community to support it. Afghan-led initiatives are essential in creating

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<sup>86</sup> Mount 2008

<sup>87</sup> Rebel News 2010

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.



a perception of legitimacy within the Afghan government. Restoring power to the government will facilitate the U.S. disengagement strategy.

### **OPTIONS**

#### **1. Do not support the reintegration strategy. Continue military offensives.**

Though the U.S. has expressed support for reintegration, it is still possible for the U.S. to continue with exclusively a military offensive. Aforementioned criticisms of the reintegration strategy can be dissuasive. Also, the U.S. holds that any negotiations abide by three “red lines”: recognition of the Afghan constitution, support for basic human rights, and renege all ties to al Qaeda. It may hold that adoption of these three policies is difficult for any Afghan affiliated with the Taliban.

This strategy does not take into account the current level of evidence demonstrated by the U.S. and the international community. Holbrooke has cited that up to 70% of the Taliban have no ideological ties to al Qaeda. The Taliban, in addition, have expressed an interest in discussions with the Karzai administration, despite his support of the red lines. Meetings between senior Taliban and UN representatives demonstrate the Taliban’s interest in negotiations. This strategy does not reflect a change in a U.S. strategy that has not been successful.

#### **2. Support financial reintegration, but not reconciliation.**

A reintegration strategy is provides financial and job incentives for only low-level and midlevel Taliban. Providing these incentives is a way to buy off the majority of Taliban personnel. This is seen as an opportunity to break down the Taliban by taking out their base, leaving only a few Taliban leaders in the party. The international community has already pledged its support for this strategy at the London conference, and has developed a Trust Fund to finance it.

A finance-based reintegration strategy, however, is limited in its scope. While financial incentives are necessary, they are not successful without negotiations with their leaders. It fails to take into account the reasons why the Taliban fight. It also does not provide a sustainable source of income for Taliban defectors. Nor does it provide jobs or security to Taliban defectors, who have a higher risk of marginalization or revenge by current Taliban. It fails to create a unified civil society, and could actually strengthen the Taliban insurgency.

#### 2.a. Support only rank-and-file fighters

Support for only rank-and-file fighters is very dangerous. Low-level Taliban may be more willing to reincorporate into civil society and support the Afghan constitution, and thus easier to work with. However, this strategy excludes other ethnicities and also other Taliban. This may exacerbate marginalization of former Taliban, or support joining the Taliban in order to renege and receive benefits. Also, it does not provide a definition of low-level or midlevel Taliban. Support needs to be more equal across ethnicities.

#### 2.b. Provide training for military on how to use reintegration

In implementing reintegration, military personnel, who interact with Taliban soldiers, need to be aware of the strategy and how to successfully support negotiation. Providing reintegration training will allow for the strategy to reach out to more Taliban soldiers. One limitation is that this strategy requires soldiers to simultaneously become diplomats and demand them to do a task that they have not had previous experience with.

#### 2.c. Invest in the reintegration Trust Fund

The U.S. has previously invested US\$1.3 billion in supporting Taliban reintegration. However, no current investment has been offered. Clinton has stated that U.S. financial interest lies within promoting security efforts. However, the Trust Fund is a short-term solution, and

failing to support it will limit the opportunities for reintegration. Supporting the Fund, however, will limit spending on security measures.

### 3. Use reconciliation to negotiate with senior Taliban officials

The U.S. has yet to support reconciliation, arguing that senior officials are ideologically connected to al Qaeda. Karzai has continued to support this strategy. Recent negotiations have demonstrated willingness for negotiations from senior officials, but on the condition that foreign troops withdraw. Mullah Omar has “pledged that a future Taliban regime would bring peace and pose no threat to neighboring countries—implying that al Qaeda would not be returning to Afghanistan along with the Taliban.”<sup>89</sup> Some Taliban officials, including Mullah Omar, are hesitant to negotiate directly with Karzai, arguing that he represents foreign occupation. Many mid-level Taliban are waiting for Karzai to actively promote a political reconciliation strategy. Any negotiations with midlevel and senior officials would require the acceptance of the red lines.

Reconciliation as an Afghan-led initiative would restore the credibility of Karzai’s governance. With the U.S. support of this strategy, reconciliation promotes the reincorporation of Taliban into a unified civil society. This provides long-term development of Afghanistan.

#### 3.a. Calling for a Loya Jirga to support political reconciliation

A Loya Jirga that includes Taliban officials would support the reincorporation of the Taliban into civil society. This would, however, have to respect U.S. interests, including basic human rights. Including the Taliban in discussions would limit the level of marginalization and build trust between Taliban and non-Taliban officials. One limitation of this is in having the Taliban support offers for negotiations. The Taliban have shown an interest to negotiate with Karzai, on

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<sup>89</sup> Rashid 2010

the conditions of foreign troop withdrawal. Further offers to generate discussion without U.S. withdrawal will be necessary.

3.b. Re-evaluate the current UN blacklist to remove Taliban leaders from a list of terrorists drawn up in 2001.

Contingent on renouncing violence and al Qaeda, Taliban leaders on this blacklist should be removed. This is an opportunity to build trust and show the Taliban that the U.S. is willing to promote negotiations and create peace.

4. Offer opportunities for the public to redress grievances

Redress is a strategy that has been used in the reconstruction in South Africa post-apartheid. Providing a forum for individuals to express their grievances is an opportunity to discuss the causes of the conflict, and propose solutions that include all Afghans, from senior officials to rank-and-file foot soldiers, the opportunity to participate in civil society. Redress also exemplifies democracy by encouraging active civic participation by all.

5. Attain international support to facilitate Afghan-led initiatives

Receiving support from neighboring states, particularly Pakistan, India, and Saudi Arabia, will be necessary in the execution of reintegration strategies. Pakistan's influence on senior Taliban officials will be indispensable in stopping the offensives called upon by these officials. Active pursuits of Taliban and al Qaeda officials will break down the perception that the region supports the Taliban, and not the Karzai administration. The limitation in regional support is that many countries have conditionalities that affect their involvement in the conflict. As the Taliban are not exclusive to Afghanistan, gaining support from regional states is necessary.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***Maintain current military offensives in Taliban strongholds to ensure security***

The U.S. needs to continue its commitment to establishing security (option 1). The current offensive in Marja needs to be replicated in other provinces where Taliban shadow governance is prominent. Any negotiations cannot function without proper security. Additionally, without military troops to change the perception that the Taliban are winning the war, Taliban rank-and-file soldiers will be reluctant to defect.

### ***Adopt a “3-R” strategy of reintegration, reconciliation, and redress***

The U.S. needs to adopt a “3-R” strategy of reintegrate, reconcile, and redress (options 2, 3, 4). The use of financial reintegration needs to be paired with political reconciliation. Financial incentives provide short-term benefits, while political efforts support the reincorporation of Taliban officials into civil society. Additionally, financial incentives cannot be exclusive to low-level Taliban soldiers. Providing these resources, including jobs and vocational training, needs to be offered to all ethnicities and all levels of Taliban. Reconciliation can be accomplished by calling for a Loya Jirga including the Taliban (option 3.a). Also, permitting the Taliban in the political process as a legitimate party will help reincorporate them into society. A redress strategy promotes civic engagement of all members of society, and offers a chance to understand the causes of the conflict, and provide opportunities for reconstruction.

### ***Support Afghan-initiated, “3-R” training of military troops***

International troops need to be trained on how to apply a “3-R” approach to Taliban defectors (option 2.b). These troops reach out to more Taliban, and can be the catalysts for promoting the strategy. Expanding the capacity of the PNP to train military personnel will ensure that troops are prepared for negotiations.

The “3-R” approach needs to be led by the Afghan government, but supported by the international community (option 5). Creating an Afghan-led initiative will increase the legitimacy of the Karzai administration, and support the transfer of power from the U.S. and NATO to the Afghan government. Additionally, support from regional players will broker negotiations with senior Taliban who currently distrust the Karzai administration.

# Section II

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## Infrastructure





# Infrastructure: Rebuilding Afghanistan's Structural Backbone

Stephanie Perrson

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## Policy Recommendations

- Increase irrigation
- Improve access to potable water
- Improve road maintenance programs
- Increase exploitation of natural resources
- Expand and improve the electrical grid
- Continue to improve and expand the ICT sector
- Promote sustainable infrastructure systems

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## Abstract

This chapter provides an overview of current progress made on repairing, improving and expanding infrastructure in Afghanistan. It highlights the crucial role that physical infrastructure plays in promoting and sustaining economic growth in a variety of sectors, thus improving the standard of living, quality of life, and national stability. In addition, roads and customs systems will allow for increased exploitation of natural resources which will be a vital revenue source for the Afghan state and reduce its reliance on U.S. and international aid. The chapter also discusses the current electrical and communication infrastructure projects in the country, before offering recommendations for the forms of further U.S. support of Afghan-led development.

## **ISSUE**

Infrastructure forms the backbone of any nation. It refers to those structures and systems through which people achieve their basic needs, connect with one another and improve their economy. After decades of violent conflict, Afghanistan's infrastructure has been largely destroyed, its road, water and energy systems all in ruins. Recent years have seen tremendous progress in terms of Afghan infrastructure, but there is still significant need for improvement. Large numbers of Afghans still do not have access to safe drinking water or basic electricity. Further development in communications, transportation and irrigation will be needed to sustain future economic growth and national stability. U.S. goals of stability and security in Afghanistan will be impossible without building up its domestic infrastructure. Additionally, Afghan infrastructure will need to become self-sustaining in order to become financially and technically independent from U.S. and international support.

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Water Resources***

#### **Natural Water Supplies**

There is not a shortage of water supply in Afghanistan, but much of it is untapped. The World Bank has estimated that there is 57 billion cubic meters of surface water and 18 billion cubic meters of ground water available as renewable water resources.<sup>1</sup> Current water use is a fraction of this, with irrigation use, which accounts for over 90% of Afghanistan's water use, at around 20 billion cubic meters.<sup>2</sup> There are three major watersheds in Afghanistan: the Helmand River, Kabul River and the Amu Darya.<sup>3</sup> The Amu Darya is the most productive of these regions,

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank "Working Paper #36" 2004, 9

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 9

with the best returns on agriculture, and the most populated, with 25% of the Afghan population.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Importance of Irrigation**

Agriculture is the backbone of the Afghan economy. Over 50% of the national economy is based on agriculture and over 80% of the workforce is employed in agricultural production.<sup>5</sup>

Agriculture is thus the key to developing the Afghan economy and helping to raise large numbers of the population out of poverty. It is also the key to winning the struggle against opium production. Increased irrigation systems will allow for the sustainable switch from poppy crops to other high value licit crops. USAID has shown that the planting of crops such as fruits or nuts typically means a permanent end to the poppy crops in that region, since farmers are highly unlikely to uproot these crops in favor of a return to opium production.<sup>6</sup> An overall increase in agriculture also holds the potential to create large numbers of new jobs within Afghanistan, thus further drawing potential recruits away from the drug industry. Critical to agriculture, however, is the availability of water resources for irrigation. Over 80% of all agriculture in Afghanistan requires irrigation, due to a severe shortage of rainfall in the majority of cultivatable areas.<sup>7</sup> Cultivatable land is mostly limited to lowland river valleys. Areas with abundant rainfall, such as the high mountains, are typically too rocky and the soil unfit for crop production.<sup>8</sup> In the northern valleys of Afghanistan, precipitation averages only 300mm annually. The southeastern regions can get around 800mm annually, concentrated during summer monsoon seasons. Elsewhere in

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 1

<sup>5</sup> Asian Development Bank “Project no. 36252” 2005, ii

<sup>6</sup> USAID 2006

<sup>7</sup> Asian Development Bank “Project no. 36252” 2005, iii

<sup>8</sup> World Bank “Working Paper no. 36” 2004, 6

the south, the annual precipitation averages as low as 170-196mm.<sup>9</sup> Irrigation is thus vital to promoting agriculture in the region. However, most of the infrastructure that was in place to support irrigation systems was largely destroyed or fell out of repair during Afghanistan's multiple decades of conflict, and farmers have cited lack of irrigation as a primary constraint keeping them from improved agricultural output.<sup>10</sup> A primary focus of water resource management then must be on restoring and constructing adequate irrigation and water systems

### **Traditional Water Resource Management**

Water allocations and the maintenance of water systems have historically been closely linked to customs and traditions.<sup>11</sup> Traditionally local water systems were managed by a *mirab*, who was in charge of allocation and insuring maintenance.<sup>12</sup> Various forms of traditional irrigation techniques are used throughout Afghanistan. In one method, streams are diverted through the use of temporary weirs. This method can be used to irrigate up to 100 ha of agricultural land. In another traditional system, the *arhad* system, a large shallow well with a wide circumference is dug and groundwater is lifted from this well with the help of an animal-powered wheel. While this technique is useful because it does not rely on surface water, it is able to irrigate only about 3 ha of land and is labor intensive. Another traditional system is to tap into underwater springs. This method however, relies on the groundwater level. Finally, there is the *karez* system. This irrigation system taps into groundwater in underwater galleries. A series of underground tunnels are then built, in which their slight downward progression allows gravity to do the work of pulling the water downhill and into the nearby settlement.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 1

<sup>10</sup> Asian Development Bank "Project no. 36252" 2005, iii

<sup>11</sup> World Bank "Working Paper #36" 2004, 12

<sup>12</sup> Asian Development Bank "Project no. 36252" 2005, iii

<sup>13</sup> Asian Development Bank "Project no. 36252" 2005, 18

## **Potable Water**

There are relatively few systems in place to deal with water or sewage treatment. Few residential or public buildings have sewer systems and if they do, it is typically released straight into the river systems. A combination of these practices and diminished water resources has led to a high level of water pollution.<sup>14</sup> Waterborne diseases are rampant, with 85,000 children under the age of 5 dying annually from diarrheal diseases.<sup>15</sup> There are currently relatively few systems, however, traditional or otherwise, to deal with water treatment.

The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) has put a significant emphasis on dealing with the problem of potable water. Their goal is to provide 15 million rural people with basic water (defined as 25 liters of safe water per person per day) through the construction of local wells and hand-pumps. They are also putting significant emphasis on education, with a program that they hope will educate up to 2.5 million households about water sanitation and hygiene. However, they are severely limited by funds. In 2008 the MRRD estimated budget needs were US\$65 million, but they were operating on only US\$16.5 million.<sup>16</sup>

## **Water Resources and Neighboring States**

Afghanistan's water systems are linked and closely related to the water systems of their neighboring nations. The Amu Darya Basin, Afghanistan's most prosperous water system for agriculture, also lies in four other countries: the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. High amounts of water use in the system has meant that its water flow has been steadily decreasing since the 1960s, thus here has been concern related to further increasing

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<sup>14</sup> Williams 2005, 183

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Afghanistan, Ministry of Energy and Water 2010

water use and irrigation in the Amu Darya system.<sup>17</sup> The need for increased water use could be largely mitigated, however, by increasing efficiency within Afghanistan itself as well as throughout the water system as a whole. The World Bank has estimated that in the Amu Darya basin, current drainage use is about 5,000 m<sup>3</sup>/ha, which could be brought down to 3,000 m<sup>3</sup>/ha with better water management.<sup>18</sup> Increased water use by Afghanistan and other regional nations must therefore be tempered with increased efficiency in order to remain sustainable.

### ***Roads/Transportation***

#### **Ring Road Construction**

In Afghanistan, a large country with a dispersed population, air and road transport are vital.<sup>19</sup> The high cost associated with air transport in this country means that roads are the main methods of transportation within Afghanistan. When the U.S. first entered Afghanistan in 2001 the road systems were largely destroyed. Those roads that still existed were in such bad condition that they were largely unusable. In 2001, only 16% of Afghanistan's roads were paved.<sup>20</sup> A 2002 study showed that 54% of all national roads were in poor condition, an additional 26% in fair condition and only 20% in good condition.<sup>21</sup> Reconstruction of the roads, particularly the main road system known as the Ring Road, has been a major focus of the new Afghan government however, and one of the greatest successes in the rebuilding of Afghanistan.

The ring road system is 2,300 km and connects all the major regional centers: Herat, Kandahar, Mazar-e-Sharif, Maimana and Sheberghan with Kabul.<sup>22</sup> It is thus the most critical

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<sup>17</sup> World Bank "Working Paper no. 36" 2004, 25-29

<sup>18</sup> World Bank "Working Paper no. 36" 2004, 31

<sup>19</sup> Williams 2005, 182

<sup>20</sup> United States Government Accountability Office 2008, 37

<sup>21</sup> Asian Development Bank "RRP: AFG 37075" 2004, 1

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

transportation system in Afghanistan. In the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, the Afghan government, along with many of its international donors, set the goal of finishing a regional highway network centered on the ring road before the end of 2008.<sup>23</sup> While this goal was not completely met, as of 2009 the Afghan Ministry of Public Works (MPW) reported that 90% of the road system had been completed and that the remaining 10% would be completed within 18 months.<sup>24</sup>

### **Benefits of the Road System**

The improved road system in Afghanistan has helped to reduce transport time and costs for merchants and others throughout Afghanistan. This has helped to bridge the gap between local and more centralized economies.<sup>25</sup> Keeping and maintaining a functioning road system therefore is critical to sustaining economic growth. A functioning road system is also critical to maintaining access to schools and medical clinics as well as employment centers. Because the Afghan road system often lacks “redundancy”, maintaining all sections of the road is of particular importance, since if even one section of the roadways fails, whole areas can be cut off from one another and the entire system largely compromised.<sup>26</sup> Maintaining the road system is also critical for facilitating the exploitation of natural resources, thus it impacts Afghanistan’s energy needs as well as transportation needs.<sup>27</sup>

The Afghan road system is vital not only for stimulating the domestic economy, but also for trade and commerce in the entire region. Afghanistan’s strategic geographical location means

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<sup>23</sup> United States Government Accountability Office 2008, 37

<sup>24</sup> Nasuti 2009

<sup>25</sup> Asian Development Bank “RRP: AFG 37075” 2004, 13

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 3

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 13

that a functioning road system will allow for cross regional trade. It will also give Central Asian countries advantageous access to the Arabian Sea and the Gulf.<sup>28</sup>

As a geographical crossroads, Afghanistan supports considerable through traffic. Customs therefore is a major source of governmental revenue. In 2003/2004 for example, over 40% of Afghanistan's domestic revenue came from customs.<sup>29</sup> Maintaining the roads and creating and maintaining the customs system can therefore play a role in creating financial independence and sustainability for the Afghan government.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the Afghan government and the international community agreed at the 2010 London Conference that tax and customs revenues are of vital importance for enabling Afghanistan to attain fiscal sustainability.<sup>31</sup>

### **Road Maintenance**

The main problem regarding roads and transportation in Afghanistan is not one of constructing or repairing major road systems, but of maintaining them. As of 2008, no road maintenance system had been established in Afghanistan. The United States and the European Union are currently splitting much of the cost, but this practice is unsustainable in the long run.<sup>32</sup> The Afghan government has estimated that the roads will cost between US\$70 and US\$90 million per year for maintenance costs.<sup>33</sup> This is a substantial portion of the Afghan budget. Although the original goal was for the Afghan government to be fiscally and technically responsible for road maintenance by 2007, they are still nowhere near reaching that capability. Indeed, the Afghan ministries in charge of road maintenance, the MPW and MRRD, have an

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 5

<sup>29</sup> Asian Development Bank "RRP: AFG 37075" 2004, 3

<sup>30</sup> Asian Development Bank "RRP: AFG 36231" 2002, 11

<sup>31</sup> London Conference Communique 2010

<sup>32</sup> United States Government Accountability Office 2008, 37

<sup>33</sup> Ibid



overall lack of resources. They have neither the funds nor the human capacity to keep updated information about roadway systems or to perform needed maintenance.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the majority of funds derived from and associated with the customs and the transportation sector are controlled by ministries other than the MPW or the MRRD.<sup>35</sup>

## **Local Roads**

The national road system discussed above is composed of those regional paved roads, which make up or immediately connect to the Ring Road. It is the most important transportation network, with over 60% of the population living within 50 km of this system.<sup>36</sup> In addition to over 6,000 km of national roads, however, there are at least 15,000 km of provincial roads in Afghanistan.<sup>37</sup> The U.S. has funded a large number of these rural roads, with USAID having spent US\$ 1.7 billion on rural road construction (plus additional strategic road construction by the Department of Defense).<sup>38</sup> The World Bank has noted, however, that rural road construction and maintenance is typically not effectively run through a central authority. The report explains, “For every km of major roads there are...about 20 km of rural roads...These roads are (typically) far too dispersed to be dealt with satisfactorily from the center.”<sup>39</sup> As it is unclear who is, or should be, responsible for these rural roads, they will be left out of this discussion of central U.S. and Afghan policy.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 7

<sup>36</sup> USAID 2006

<sup>37</sup> United States Government Accountability Office 2008, 1

<sup>38</sup> United States Government Accountability Office 2008, 14

<sup>39</sup> Pouliquen 1999, 24

## ***Energy***

### **Natural Resources**

Afghanistan is naturally rich in energy resources, including natural gas, coal and hydropower, with the potential for the exploitation of hydrocarbon resources. Hydropower potential has been estimated at more than 20,000 MW.<sup>40</sup> In the 1960s, gas reserves estimated at 250 billion cubic meters (around 8,825 billion cubic feet) were discovered near the city of Sheberghan. Currently only around 1/3 of the fields are being exploited.<sup>41</sup> A 2007 U.S. Geological Survey has also reported that northern Afghanistan contains large quantities of undiscovered resources. There is an estimated 1, 596 million barrels of crude oil, 15,687 billion cubic feet of natural gas and 562 million barrels of natural gas liquids.<sup>42</sup> In addition, this same U.S. Geological Survey has shown that the country has moderate to abundant coal resources; however, exploitation has been limited by deep or inaccessible locations, and is further hampered by inadequate infrastructure and transport capacities. Coal has thus been primarily used for household or small-scale usage.<sup>43</sup> Despite the abundance of natural resources, a largely destroyed or inadequate energy infrastructure has meant that Afghanistan has imported most of its energy resources from Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan.<sup>44</sup> Because of Afghanistan's natural resources, it has the potential to be not only self-sustainable in terms of its domestic energy production, but actually become an energy exporter to the entire region. These exports are a potentially huge revenue source for the Afghan government.

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<sup>40</sup> Asian Development Bank "RRP: AFG 36231" 2005, 1

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 7

<sup>42</sup> U.S. Geological Survey 2009

<sup>43</sup> U.S. Geological Survey 2009

<sup>44</sup> Asian Development Bank "RRP: AFG 37078" 2005, 1; For further discussion of Afghan relations with Central Asian states and U.S. policy towards these relationships, please see chapter 13.

## Electrical Grid

Afghanistan's national electrical use is relatively low, at about one billion kWh annually.<sup>45</sup> Electricity currently is sold through the national power company DABM, or the Afghanistan Electricity Authority, which is overseen by the Ministry of Energy and Water (MEW). There is no national transmission grid in the country and the main electricity systems are primarily centered around large cities or industrial areas.<sup>46</sup> For example, the major Northern Transmission grid serves only Kabul and the northern cities, with Kabul itself comprising 30% of the national power grid.<sup>47</sup> This means that electricity is used by a relatively limited segment of the population. Large numbers of people continue to rely on bio-fuels as their primary source of heat and light. Using biofuels, however, is a serious health risk, causing high rates of respiratory illnesses.<sup>48</sup> Improving the power grid and access to electricity will be vital to improving the standard of living for Afghan citizens. A 2005 survey by the Asian Development Bank showed that 98.3% of people thought that electricity would improve their livelihoods and their children's education. In addition, 95% said that electricity would improve their health.<sup>49</sup> Because the power grid is currently serving mostly the wealthier urban communities, a farther reaching power grid will have an especially positive impact on rural or poorer communities. Because electricity is cheaper than kerosene and diesel lamps, if electricity is available, it will be used, regardless of people's income level.<sup>50</sup> The government is therefore predicting a large increase in demand as

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<sup>45</sup> CIA World Factbook

<sup>46</sup> Asian Development Bank "RRP: AFG 36231" 2002, 7

<sup>47</sup> Asian Development Bank "RRP: AFG 37078" 2005, 1

<sup>48</sup> Williams 2005, 184

<sup>49</sup> Asian Development Bank "RRP: AFG 37078" 2005, 14

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 45

electrical capabilities are increased. The government estimates that maximum demand in Kabul will be 320 MW by 2020 and total national demand at 3,861GwH.<sup>51</sup>

### **Loss Within the System**

Afghanistan also loses much of its energy and natural resources to losses within the system. For example, the electrical grid has technical losses estimated at 20-25%. It also has an additional loss of about 15-20% due to non-technical losses from things such unauthorized consumers or improper meter readings.<sup>52</sup> There is a significant number of unauthorized consumers who free ride off of the national power grid. A large percentage of the non-technical losses are actually in the public or government sectors, where improper meter reading or overdue electrical bills are common.<sup>53</sup>

### ***Communications***

In the last few years, Afghanistan has rapidly grown from having almost no Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure to one that surpasses others in the region.<sup>54</sup> Afghanistan has gone from having only around 500 base stations for telecommunications in 2005 to 2,918 at the end of 2009. The number of phone users has surged from around 1 million in 2005 to over 10 million users at the end of 2009. It is estimated that around 80% of Afghans are now covered by cell service.<sup>55</sup> This dramatic transformation can largely be attributed to the promotion of private investment in the ICT sector by the Ministry for Communication and Information Technology (MCIT). Currently, the MCIT has licensed four major cell service providers: Etisalat Afghanistan, Areeba, Roshan (or Telecom Development Company

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<sup>51</sup> Asian Development Bank “RRP: AFG 37078” 2005, 3, 22

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 2

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 4

<sup>54</sup> Afghanistan Ministry of Communications and Information Technology 2010

<sup>55</sup> Afghanistan Ministry of Communications and Information Technology 2008

Afghanistan Ltd) and Afghan Wireless Communication Group. In addition there is a national cell provider administered directly by the MCIT known as Afghan Telecom.<sup>56</sup> The competition in this market has led to a steady reduction in the cost of SIM cards and calling costs. According to MCIT statistics, calling costs have dropped from US\$ 0.39/min for domestic calls when cell service first became available in Afghanistan to a current cost of around US\$ 0.02/min.<sup>57</sup> This growing ICT sector has been a huge boost to the Afghan economy, directly providing over 10,000 jobs and stimulating an additional 50,000 jobs or so as vendors, contractors etc. The ICT sector is also a growing source of revenue for the national government. It brought in an estimated US\$ 100 million in 2009.<sup>58</sup>

In addition to the rise in telecommunications, there is also growing internet use in Afghanistan. The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency estimates internet users at 500,000 and notes the growing availability of internet use through the rising popularity of internet cafes.<sup>59</sup> The MCIT has given out six licenses to various internet providers. The largest current ICT infrastructure project being implemented is a 3,100 km optical fiber cable which will run along the Ring Road, allowing for fast and reliable access to internet and telephone services throughout large parts of the country.<sup>60</sup>

## **Benefits of ICT**

Improving the ICT sector in Afghanistan will have a variety of positive impacts on the country as a whole, both in terms of production of ICT technology, as well as its implementation and use. ICT production contributes to national output, employment, and export earnings.

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<sup>56</sup> Afghanistan Ministry of Communications and Information Technology 2010

<sup>57</sup> Afghanistan Ministry of Communications and Information Technology 2008; This is made at a conversation rate of 1 Afghani = US\$ 0.02

<sup>58</sup> Ibid

<sup>59</sup> CIA World Factbook

<sup>60</sup> Afghanistan Ministry of Communications and Information Technology 2010

Increased ICT use increases national productivity, competitiveness and growth.<sup>61</sup> It also facilitates linkage between rural areas to urban centers. Both the production and the use of communication technologies therefore, have the potential to play a major role in Afghanistan's developing economy. In addition, increased ICT use is linked with making governments more efficient, transparent and accountable.<sup>62</sup> By increasing communication within Afghanistan, the Afghan government will also be more effective in communicating with its people, increasing dialogue and the spread of information, and decreasing the information monopoly held by fundamentalists in many remote regions.<sup>63</sup>

### **U.S. INTERESTS**

By improving the country's economy, as well as the lives and health of regular Afghans, improved infrastructure is critical to creating a stable Afghanistan. In addition, a growing economy and a strengthened agricultural sector will play an important role in the counternarcotics effort, helping security efforts not only in Afghanistan but around the world.<sup>64</sup> Infrastructure is also the area that most obviously impacts the lives of the largest numbers of ordinary Afghans. It is thus critical to increasing local support for the U.S., as well as being a tremendous source of legitimacy for the Afghan government. However, any infrastructure projects must be self-sufficient and sustainable in the long-run. Projects that are not domestically sustainable will require long-term physical and financial involvement by the U.S. and the international community, which will be both detrimental to long-term stability and security in the region, as well as a long-term drain on U.S. resources. The development of sustainable and

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<sup>61</sup> Qiang 2004

<sup>62</sup> Ibid

<sup>63</sup> Afghanistan Ministry of Communications and Information Technology 2010

<sup>64</sup> These subjects are discussed in further detail in chapters 5-7

successful infrastructure projects, on the other hand, will ultimately aid in creating a stable Afghanistan and a more stable region.

## **OPTIONS**

There are a variety of possible projects or goals through which the U.S. can partner with Afghanistan to improve the Afghan domestic infrastructure. Below are some of the most important steps that could be taken, as well as some of the options available to achieve them.

1. Increased irrigation will help improve the agricultural sector, stimulating the Afghan economy, increasing jobs in agriculture and aiding in the counter-narcotics efforts. It will require repairing and constructing additional irrigation structures as well as greater capabilities within the MEW.
  - a. Repair and maintain traditional irrigation structure - large percentage of Afghanistan's irrigation systems are still based on traditional mechanisms.<sup>65</sup> By repairing these systems rather than installing new systems, it would be possible to achieve greater irrigation coverage without such high initial costs. This option may require greater maintenance costs, however, and limits the possible increase in irrigation.
  - b. Build modern irrigation structures - It may be more effective to replace aging structures with new structures guaranteed to meet health and efficiency standards. The current health risks associated with the water supply, as well as extreme inefficiencies in the older systems, may call for entirely new water systems.<sup>66</sup> New water systems may also require less costly maintenance in the long-term; however, they will require substantial initial investment.

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<sup>65</sup> World Bank "Working Paper #36" 2004, 17-19

<sup>66</sup> Williams 2005, 183

- c. Increase the skill level and knowledge base of MEW personnel - In order to increase efficiency in the water system and maximize potential resources, greater knowledge and skills are needed within the MEW. The World Bank has noted that increased databases and assessments are needed in order to adequately manage water resources.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, increased technical sophistication would enable the efficiency needed to lower total water use and reduce strain on water systems like the Amu Darya. This would, however, require increased financial, educational and technical support for the MEW.
2. Improving access to potable water will bring improve the health concerns of large numbers of Afghans, in particular young children. Because water systems are often linked, this will necessarily involve many of the same options mentioned above regarding irrigation, including repairing traditional structures, building new structures, increasing the knowledge base of the MEW and increasing system efficiency. In addition, however, there must be a focus on water safety and health issues.
- a. Sponsor programs that install hand pumps in areas with unsafe or inadequate surface water - As previously noted, the MRRD is already emphasizing this strategy. It allows access to drinking water for those areas with limited water resources. This option will require increased financial resources within the MRRD.<sup>68</sup>
  - b. Support programs that educate local users on water use sanitation and hygiene - This is potentially one of the cheapest and most far-reaching ways of aiding the

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<sup>67</sup> World Bank, Working Paper #36, 2004, 41

<sup>68</sup> Afghanistan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development 2009



health of ordinary Afghans, but it will require a high number of personnel to carry out.<sup>69</sup>

3. Improving road maintenance systems will insure the continuing viability of U.S. and internationally-constructed road systems, while reducing the long term drain on U.S. resources. It will also be vital to maintaining economic growth as well as economic and social mobility in Afghanistan and the region. Improving road maintenance will depend upon creating and retaining greater revenues for use by the MPW, as well as increasing Afghan capabilities. Options include:
  - a. Allow Afghanistan to continue to rely on foreign capital through grants and loans to fund costly road maintenance. This is an easy solution in the short-term. However, this option is a significant financial burden on the U.S. and continues to enable the existence of an unsustainable system.<sup>70</sup>
  - b. Encourage the Afghan government to overhaul the customs system to run more efficiently and provide better revenues to the transportation sector. A significant part of the customs revenues must be allowed to stay within the transportation sector to fund road maintenance, surveying and rural road construction. This may be politically difficult however, as much of the money currently is used to fund other government projects.<sup>71</sup>
  - c. Institute vocational training programs to improve the skill level and capabilities of workers in the transportation sector so that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively carry out the research and survey work required to

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid

<sup>70</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office 2008, 37

<sup>71</sup> Asian Development Bank “RRP: AFG 37075” 2004, 3

determine road requirements as well as planning and implementing maintenance projects.<sup>72</sup> This again will require increased financial, educational and technical support from the international community to train and improve Afghan capabilities.

4. Encourage increased exploitation of natural energy resources, which will reduce Afghan dependence on energy imports and potentially allow it to become a regional energy exporter. This would be a significant income source for the Afghan government and could help stabilize the government and decrease dependence on U.S. and international support. There are three main options to deal with these national resources: managing them entirely through state owned enterprises, privatizing them or encouraging private investment.

- a. State Owned Enterprise - Under article nine of the Afghan constitution, all natural resources legally belong to the state, creating a legal structure that promotes state-owned enterprises. In addition, this strategy would retain the greatest amount of profit directly within the state. It would ensure that resources of strategic national significance, such as energy resources, remained under state control. However, a completely state-owned and financed enterprise would also require significant sums of initial investment. Within Afghanistan's current budget this is fiscally impossible and would need to be financed through international grants or loans.
- b. Privatization - Because Afghanistan is currently in severe debt, taking on additional national debt to finance these projects is fiscally unsound. Instead, the Afghan government could take advantage of international interest in these

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<sup>72</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office 2008, 37

resources by allowing some of these resources to be sold and developed privately.

This has already occurred in the case of China's purchase of rights to the Arnak copper fields. Privatization will also allow for the exploitation of resources in a more efficient manner than Afghanistan's energy industry is currently capable of matching. By selling off national resources, however, Afghanistan loses state control over valuable and potentially strategic resources.

- c. Private Investment - This strategy would retain the state's legal control and rights over resources while providing the necessary initial capital that would allow for more aggressive and immediate exploitation operations to begin.
5. Expanding and improving the electrical grid will decrease the financial and health burdens caused by biofuels and alternate energy sources, as well as decreasing loss within the system. Afghanistan has the option to privatize its national power company DABM, or allow it to remain under state control. The inefficiency and losses in the system must be addressed through either privatization or increased management and capacity building.
- a. Corporatize DABM - This has been suggested by Afghan officials as well as the international community as a possible solution for the high levels of inefficiency and loss in the electrical system.<sup>73</sup> While it could potentially help solve these problems it also removes government control from this important utility.
  - b. Nationally Retained Control and Capacity building in the MEW - Increasing international grants, civilian experts and educational and technical support would allow the government of Afghanistan to retain control over the electrical system while building up adequate resources to improve and expand the electrical grid.

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<sup>73</sup> Asian Development Bank. RRP: AFG 37078. 2005, 4

This requires a substantial increase in the commitment of international resources, however, and does not guarantee success, as reducing loss in the system is largely tied to the difficult problem of reducing government corruption.

6. Continued expansion of the ICT sector will be critical to economic growth, as well as stabilizing and legitimizing the government through increased transparency and increased domestic communication. Like the above discussion of electrification, the options within the ICT sector are primarily concentrated on the choice of a unified national system or encouragement of private investment and competition.

- a. Use One National System - The creation of a national system would ensure that all areas of the country would receive access to service, regardless of their profitability. Rural regions would also be more likely to receive comparable connection prices. This option could also allow for subsidizing government-related telecommunications. The increasing success of the national phone company, as well as the upcoming state sponsored optical fiber cable, indicates the growing strength of nationally run options.<sup>74</sup>

- b. Encourage Competing Private Companies through Licensing - The current system of licensing has proven to be enormously successful in improving telecommunications coverage and pricing. The problem of private telecommunications markets is the discrepancy in pricing faced by the the most remote, and often poorest, users. Private firms seeking to maximize their profit

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<sup>74</sup> Afghanistan, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology

will either choose not to expand into rural areas or must have a gradient pricing scheme in which rural areas pay higher connection fees.<sup>75</sup>

7. Promoting sustainable infrastructure systems is a vital part of any infrastructure initiatives, as building up the Afghan capacity for sustainable systems is the key to the gradual reduction of dependence on U.S. and international aid. There are two main ways in which the U.S. can support the sustainability of infrastructure projects in Afghanistan. One way is to help build up central Afghan capabilities through its ministries and professionals, ensuring independent and self-reliant administrations that will be able to maintain infrastructure projects long after U.S. withdrawal. The other way is to promote decentralization and involve local stakeholders, so that locals will be empowered to care for and maintain infrastructural systems. There are a variety of ways in which these two strategies could be supported:

a. Build up Afghan Capabilities

- Bring in civilian experts from the U.S. - This has been an increasingly utilized strategy. By putting greater emphasis on a civilian presence in Afghanistan rather than a military presence, the U.S. will be able to build up Afghan capabilities by sharing important professional knowledge.
- Improve and strengthen the education system - The talent pool in Afghanistan is currently too small to sustainably support all of the necessary staff and research positions within the vital governmental ministries. Strengthening the education system therefore is critical. Special focus and

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<sup>75</sup> Dymond. The World Bank. Working Paper no. 27. 2004

assistance should be given to those areas of study which are of critical significance to infrastructure such as water resource management.

- Greater funding for ministry employees is needed if the government is to attract and retain talented young individuals. Currently the pay rate in the private sector is several times that of the public sector.
- Funnel more funds through the ministries rather than using private contractors or directly operating through American organizations. It is critical that the ministries begin to take full responsibility of their duties, and as such must be in charge of the resources aimed at the fulfillment of these duties. However, widespread government corruption requires strict monitoring of U.S. and international funds. The U.S. government has already instituted a plan of vetting Afghan ministries for transparency and this plan would have to be included in any attempts to funnel funds through the Afghan government.

b. Involve Local Stakeholders.

- Devolution - Devolution is a strategy of decentralization in which the local community has the full power to plan, build and operate an infrastructure project. The World Bank has shown that this strategy works well with small projects with a relatively low budget.<sup>76</sup>
- De-concentration - This is a strategy in which local users carry out most functions of a project, but are under the authority of a central agency. This

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<sup>76</sup> Pouliquen 1999, 25

form of decentralization usually works best on larger projects, where more people and/or money are involved<sup>77</sup>.

- Creating feedback channels - Allowing locals to give constant feedback on a project is a form of auditing that ensures project viability and sustainability.<sup>78</sup> Such feedback and participation is critical to long term project success.<sup>79</sup>
- Local financial involvement - Participation can also be effective in the form of local financial involvement. The World Bank has found that a good “acid test” for the viability of rural infrastructure projects is to secure some local financing for the project. This was successfully used in infrastructure projects in Pakistan’s North West Frontier Province, Afghanistan’s cultural and geographical neighbor. In these projects 20% of financing was from beneficiaries and an additional 10% was from local councils.<sup>80</sup>
- Hiring locally - Hiring local residents creates a variety of benefits including job creation, stimulating the economy, building up local capacities, drawing people away from the drug trade and creating a natural feedback method. This option has been emphasized in recent U.S. and international policy but should continue to be strengthened.
- Empowering local traditions and legal structures - Many local resources are still managed and allotted based on traditional customs and rules. Utilizing

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid

<sup>78</sup> Pouliquen, 1999, 3

<sup>79</sup> World Bank & UNESCO 1997

<sup>80</sup> Pouliquen 1999, 33

traditional channels can therefore strengthen the legitimacy and sustainability of infrastructure projects. This is especially true in the case of water management.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

All of the goals listed above will be of critical importance to improving infrastructure as a whole within Afghanistan. The most pressing project is improving access to potable water, as it is such a significant and immediate health risk to the Afghan population. Second in importance is increasing irrigation, because of the widespread stabilizing effect it will have on Afghanistan through improvements in the economy and reduction in the drug trade. Improving road maintenance programs and exploitation of natural resources are tied for third in relative importance, because they both have the ability to be major revenue sources for the Afghan government, reducing dependence on U.S. and international aid and creating funds that can be invested into other critical government projects. Overarching everything is the need for sustainable systems.

### ***Increase Irrigation***

The U.S. should endorse a combined strategy of all three options. In order to most effectively utilize limited resources, Afghanistan should try to repair and rehabilitate existing water systems wherever possible (option 1a). Irrigation increases beyond the capacity of old systems, however, would be of tremendous benefit to the Afghan people and economy. In addition, some older systems will be extremely costly to convert to modern standards of health and efficiency. Therefore, although the focus should be on rehabilitating systems, there must be additional resources devoted to constructing new irrigation systems where needed (option 1b). In order to assess available water resources as well as the viability of traditional systems, far more



knowledge and technical skills are needed within the MEW, with an emphasis on increasing efficiency in the system (option 1c). The impact that irrigation can have on Afghanistan through its improvement of agriculture is substantial and the U.S. should support this critical area through increasing financial, technical and expert civilian support.

### ***Improve Access to Potable Water***

The U.S. should support both of the proposed options. The MRRD is on the right track with their emphasis on constructing local hand pumps where needed and instituting wide spread education programs on sanitation and water use (option 2a and 2b). The U.S. should increase support for this ministry, preferably through direct financial aid if possible, which is doing critical work for the health and well being of the Afghan population.

### ***Improve Road Maintenance***

The U.S. should support a transition away from international aid (option 3a), to focus on a strong customs system and strengthening capabilities with the transportation sector (options 3b and 3c). Road maintenance in Afghanistan is currently relying on the support of international aid. This is unsustainable in the long run. Unlike other infrastructure projects, this is will be an ongoing cost and a long-term, sustainable financial plan must be implemented to deal with it effectively. Luckily Afghanistan has the potential for a fiscally self-sustaining transportation sector through the possibility of strong customs and toll programs. These programs need to be seriously strengthened and reorganized, however, and it is critical that a larger percentage of profits be allowed to stay within the MPW. The U.S. should encourage the Afghan government to institute massive changes in its customs and toll systems and indicate a date for the gradual reduction of U.S. financial support for maintenance programs.

### ***Increase Exploitation of Natural Resources***

Private investment (option 4c) is the key to efficiently increasing exploitation of Afghan natural resources. Because of Afghanistan's substantial national debt, as well as the need for grant money to go to more pressing issues, pursuing a policy of entirely state-run enterprises is unrealistic. Certainly it will take much longer for the government to raise the initial capital to take full advantage of its natural resources and it is likely to be less effective and efficient in exploiting them than would private industry. That being said, however, natural resources in the areas of energy and fuels, as are being discussed here are of critical importance to Afghanistan and of strategic value to the national government. The U.S. should therefore encourage Afghanistan to pursue a strategic and carefully regulated promotion of private investment, while largely retaining state ownership and control.

### ***Expand and Improve the Electrical Grid***

In this case the U.S. should support a state-controlled Electrical Authority (Option 5b). Unlike the area of natural resources, Afghanistan should not pursue a policy of privatization in the energy sector. Corporatizing DABM will do little to increase efficiency or decrease prices since it will still retain a monopoly over the market. By keeping DABM nationalized, Afghanistan retains state control over this vital infrastructural element and can insure its citizens have fair and reasonable access. Technical and non-technical losses in the system, however, are a serious problem that still needs to be addressed and the U.S. should attempt to aid this effort through assisting in technical and educational support as well as strengthening anti-corruption measures.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Please see chapter 6 for policy recommendations on anticorruption efforts in Afghanistan

### ***Continue to Improve and Expand the ICT Sector***

The best strategy is to continue strong support for private investment (Option 6b). The MICT strategy of promoting private investment and competition in telecommunications has so far been highly successful in increasing coverage and decreasing prices. It has also been repeatedly proven that private investment is key to development in the ICT sector.<sup>82</sup> The rising success of the the nationalized telecommunication firm however, as well as its building of the nationally funded fiber optic cable, raises concerns that it is beginning to dominate the market. The U.S. should support Afghanistan's initial trends for strong competition in the market and in particular encourage the Afghan government to insure that this cable is accessible to multiple internet and telecommunications firms and does not become a state run monopoly.

### ***Sustainability***

Creating sustainable systems will require efforts and improvements on many fronts. The U.S. should thus consider all of the options described above in recommendations and planning regarding future infrastructure projects. A combination top-down and bottom-up approach will be important to insure that all aspects of infrastructure systems work effectively. The U.S. should therefore encourage and employ methods which both strengthen the capabilities of Afghan ministries and professionals as well as empowering local users. In order to build up central capabilities, the U.S. should use a combined strategy which implements all of the strategies outlined above, including bringing in international civilian experts, strengthening critical education programs, encouraging larger salaries for ministry employees and channeling more of their funds directly through the Afghan ministries (option 7a). Various methods of decentralization and local empowerment should be used as appropriate to the project. Strategies

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<sup>82</sup> Qiang 2004

of devolution, de-concentration or local financial investment must be gauged based on the size, scope and nature of a particular infrastructure project (option 7b). Building up local voice and capacity through feedback channels and contracting locally should be done whenever possible. Additionally, local traditions and legal structures should be included in the planning and implementation of any infrastructure project.

# Section III

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## Economics



# Agriculture & Rural Development: Reviving Afghanistan's Foundations

Stephanie Adler

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## Policy Recommendations

- Encourage the empowerment of Afghan farmers and rural farming communities through a community-based approach
  - Facilitate international and Afghan efforts to provide accessible microcredit programs
  - Support community-owned resource management systems, especially irrigation
  - Aid communication and cooperation efforts among farming communities to build a sustainable network of support
  - Encourage government support and investment in local and international NGOs that focus on supporting agricultural communities
  - Facilitate agricultural cooperation between Afghan and Pakistani farmers, particularly along the nations' shared border
  - Support the creation and development of a database of Afghan farmer knowledge as well as education programs in rural communities
  - Foster the creation of mechanisms for Afghan farming communities to communicate with one another
  - Provide further support for CARD , particularly the National Solidarity Program and the Horticulture Program
  - Invest in livestock processing structures and facilitate cooperation among Afghan companies and farmers
  - Aid Afghan state programs and initiatives whose purpose is to support agricultural communities
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## Abstract

This chapter will focus on potential plans for supporting the growth and sustainability of Afghanistan's agriculture sector, which is an important component of the country's economy. The agricultural sector includes the livestock industry, food production, farm-to-market access, and rural community sustainability. The agricultural factors to be considered include irrigation systems, land and resource access, seed distribution, necessary equipment, and access to credit and training. This chapter reviews the status of the various aspects of the agricultural sector, U.S. interests in building the sector, and options for a path forward. The most significant recommendation put forth advocates a community-based approach that supports community empowerment, access to resources and a greater sense of ownership over inputs for successful agriculture.

## **ISSUE**

Afghanistan's economy is currently weak, suffering from a lack of exportable products, stable and accessible markets, and a small, unsupported agricultural sector. Afghans currently have few economic options, and many do not have access to the agricultural livelihoods that sustained many families prior to the Soviet invasion in 1979. To provide viable, sustainable livelihood options for more Afghans, especially those living in rural areas, and to strengthen Afghanistan's internal and external economy, the agricultural sector needs to be expanded and strengthened. A strong agricultural sector will provide more domestically-grown food for Afghans, flourishing markets based on sustainable production, strong valuable exports, and rural economic empowerment based on secure income. The U.S. needs to decide how invested it will be in the growth of Afghanistan's agricultural sector, as well as the approach it will adopt in working with the national government and international actors to support Afghan agriculture.

## **BACKGROUND**

Afghanistan had a strong agricultural sector prior to the 1970s, and prospered from the nation's reputable produce exports to Middle Eastern and South Asian countries. The fruits and nuts of Afghanistan were renowned and popular in India, which some consider a “nearly limitless market for Afghan produce.”<sup>1</sup> Major crops included grapes, almonds, apricots, raisins, pistachios, melons, cherries, figs, and pomegranates. It is estimated that 20% of the world's raisins came from Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup> Citrus fruits were also an important crop, more specifically for the domestic market, along with cereal grains. Sheep are also an important high-value product, as lamb coats are highly popular in Afghanistan.

Eighty-five percent of Afghans are dependent on agriculture and agribusiness for

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock 2009, 2

<sup>2</sup> Bruno 2009



survival, meaning that supporting the growth of the sector is important to the economy and the well-being of the Afghan people.<sup>3</sup> Seventy-five percent of Afghanistan's population, or approximately 34 million people, live in rural areas where agriculture is the primary livelihood, and are therefore directly impacted by the health of the agricultural sector. Additionally, the agricultural sector is important in terms of food security, as currently 6 million Afghans lack enough food to eat.<sup>4</sup>

The Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development Program (CARD) of the Afghan government is the primary program focusing on expanding and supporting the abilities of the agricultural sector and its 15 subprograms focus on many of the issues listed as necessary areas of focus.<sup>5</sup> One of the 15 CARD programs is the Capacity Building Program, which focuses on facilitating implementation of the other CARD programs through provision of institutional and organizational capacity at various government levels.<sup>6</sup> CARD therefore has an internal catalyst program for coordinating the efforts of the other 14 programs. These programs all need support from the international actors involved in the empowerment of Afghanistan's agricultural sector, and the international actors themselves need to better coordinate their efforts to be more efficient as a group and to better support the Afghan government entities.

Various countries are interested in supporting the growth of Afghanistan's agricultural sector, and they work through various national and international organizations, including United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The main problem thus

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<sup>3</sup> United States Agency for International Development 2009, 1

<sup>4</sup> Bruno 2009

<sup>5</sup> Zaryab et. al. 2008, 93

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 93

far has been the complete lack of coordination among these various programs and efforts, despite the conferences, meetings, and compacts between international and Afghan agencies over the past 10 years.<sup>7</sup>

The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL) cites three primary needs for Afghanistan's agricultural sector, namely, managing natural resources, increasing agricultural productivity, and improving food processing and marketing, which must be addressed in order to make products more valuable. While the agricultural sector is expanding, as shown from a 10% increase in the sector's contribution to Afghanistan's GDP between 2006 and 2007, the sector is still in great need of resources and support.<sup>8</sup>

## ***Agriculture***

### **Land and Natural Resources**

The total arable land area is estimated at about 7.5 million hectares (Mha), about 4 Mha of which is rain-fed land in the northern provinces of Afghanistan, used for cereal production.<sup>9</sup> Still, many farmers lack sufficient land to be self-sufficient, let alone earn a profit.<sup>10</sup> This is partially due to a lack of credit access for many Afghans, especially in rural areas. The Afghanistan Compact of 2006, an agreement that "established a framework for international cooperation in the country" called for a 30% increase in financial aid to farmers, but the ways in which this aid has been distributed and utilized are unclear.<sup>11</sup> Along with a lack of land, farmers may not have the resources available to cultivate greater areas of land. These resources include labor, equipment, and a guaranteed market for their products.

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<sup>7</sup> Bruno 2009

<sup>8</sup> Zaryab 2008, 90

<sup>9</sup> Kelly 2003, 14

<sup>10</sup> Bruno 2009

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

## *Resources*

There is an urgent need to address deforestation, and to better manage and protect water resources. The ADB estimates that there has been a 30% loss of forest cover from 1996 to 2003.<sup>12</sup> Deforestation has contributed to reduced rangeland, watershed degradation, loss of biodiversity, and a loss of potential livelihoods for Afghans. The Natural Resource Management Program out of MAIL is currently the ministry that is charged with overseeing natural resource use and management, and it is connected to CARD as well. The program focuses on creating committees to address national resource management, as well as strategic plans for management and use of forests, rangeland, wildlife, and addressing desertification.<sup>13</sup> As government initiatives, these programs need funds and support. Thus far, many seem to be lacking concrete plans to achieve their goals. The ADB states the need to create laws to protect forests and prevent logging, and to create an Afghan state agency to protect natural resources. MAIL may have been the outcome of this statement, but the organization seems under-funded and unsupported, and lacks strategic plans to accomplish their objectives.

## **Irrigation**

Water resources in Afghanistan need efficient and sustainable management, as water is scarce in many areas and droughts are common.<sup>14</sup> The CFR estimates that less than 50% of 19.5 million arable acres are currently being cultivated primarily because of the lack of irrigation. Of the estimated 7.5 Mha of cultivatable land, about 5 Mha of that land is irrigable. Approximately 2.6 Mha of this area is currently irrigated, and only 1.4 Mha have enough water to support double cropping, translating to inefficient planting and cultivation, and water use that falls short

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<sup>12</sup> Kelly 2003, 5

<sup>13</sup> Zaryab 2008, 93

<sup>14</sup> Kelly 2003, 8

of its potential.<sup>15</sup>

### *Irrigation Systems*

In pre-Soviet Afghanistan, three types of irrigation systems dominated: informal river diversion structures maintained by their users, natural spring-based systems, and modern formal river diversion operated and owned by the state. The first two systems were communally-owned, operated, and maintained by the communities that utilized them, using farmer-created management systems based on traditions and customs. About 90% of current irrigated areas use traditional, farmer-created management schemes and customs for these irrigation systems. These systems are important for smaller farms or in areas where land is worked by the community.

The third component of irrigation systems is state-owned river diversion structures which in the 1970s composed 15% of all irrigation systems. These types of irrigation systems are important for some farms because of their large scope. Only an estimated 25% of state-operated irrigation systems from the 1970s are still operating now, as the rest have either been destroyed or severely damaged. The systems in operation are not running at full capacity and are only about 25% efficient.<sup>16</sup> All larger irrigation systems, state- and community-owned, are affected by increased salinity and waterlogging. The Irrigation Program of CARD is committed to building irrigation systems on 105,000 ha that are currently not irrigated. The Program aims to accomplish this goal by 2018, and to also improve water use efficiency on farms.<sup>17</sup>

The ADB cites the need for greater state involvement with water resource management, and suggests the creation of management districts in which all the users of the resource would be involved with its management. The Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) points

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 15

<sup>16</sup> Kelly 2003, 8

<sup>17</sup> Zaryab 2008, 93

to the need for snowfall and rainwater catchment systems, which could enable better utilization of Afghanistan's limited water resources. The ANDS report also cites the need for conscious and responsible groundwater extraction that would promote the sustainability of underground water resources and limit degradation of aquifers.<sup>18</sup> Both the ADB and ANDS call for the need for policy that protects water resources, which relate to rural access to clean drinking water and therefore improved public health as well. In case of drought or water shortage, the ADB also believes it is important to support an off-farm rural economy, which requires the development of infrastructure. Such an economy would provide an alternative to agriculture in case of natural disaster or severe droughts.

### *International Water Issues*

An important aspect of sustainable water resource use is identifying cross-border water issues that affect agriculture and both Afghan and Pakistani farmers.<sup>19</sup> As water is scarce in the region as a whole, and Pakistan experiences similar water issues, it is important to create a functioning relationship between Afghan and Pakistani farmers that relies on solid communication and trust. Efforts to improve cooperation and communication across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border should be supported by both governments and international actors who can mediate and bring both governments and farming communities from both countries to the same table.

## **Equipment, Tools, and Financial Resources**

### *Microloans*

Afghan farmers often lack the equipment they need as such supplies are usually expensive and often prove unaffordable for small farmers. Furthermore, accessible credit for

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 84-5

<sup>19</sup> Bruno 2009

rural farming communities is limited. So far, USAID has provided microcredit loans for farm supplies, animal health trainings, and irrigation for an estimated 1.2 million acres. The organization has implemented an “agricultural voucher system” in which “qualified farmers” receive vouchers to purchase seed, fertilizer, and other supplies at reduced prices from stores in their local vicinity. The qualifications the farmers have to fulfill are unclear, as are the terms of the voucher system and whether there is an interest system attached to the vouchers.

The ANDS report expresses the intent to increase public investment in agriculture. Since 2003 an estimated 336,000 households have had greater access to financial resources.<sup>20</sup> The key areas in need of public financial assistance are stated to be perennial horticulture, livestock health, and food security. Specialized government agencies and improved delivery systems for financial assistance are seen as necessary. These institutions would be charged with tasks such as improved communication about weather conditions and price updates, provision of needed research and technical advice, improving water systems and securing farmer access to them, and supporting farmer associations.<sup>21</sup>

### *Agricultural Trainings*

Trainings have been made increasingly available to farmers by USAID, the Army National Guard and other organizations, focusing on increasing agricultural and marketing skills.<sup>22</sup> In 2009, USAID conducted trainings about improving crop yields, financial management, business skills, and produce storage, which were accessed by more than 160,000 Afghan farmers.<sup>23</sup> The content of these trainings is ambiguous, and the extent to which they have worked with farmers to utilize Afghan agricultural knowledge is also uncertain. It seems as

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<sup>20</sup> Zaryab 2008, 90

<sup>21</sup> Zaryab 2008, 90

<sup>22</sup> Bruno 2009

<sup>23</sup> USAID 2009, 1

though many of these trainings focus on the agricultural methods of the countries that run them and do not incorporate local, regional, and traditional agricultural knowledge and methods.

### **Crops, Seeds, and Inputs**

Cereal grains are an important crop in the northern provinces of Afghanistan, and international agricultural entities including the USDA are emphasizing wheat as an important crop for the nation. Other traditional products of Afghanistan's agricultural sector are equally important as exports and domestic goods, including raisins, citrus fruits, nuts, pomegranates, and other fruits. Pre-war Afghanistan also produced cotton and sugar beets, which are considered profitable industrial crops. Unfortunately, these crops must be connected to processing facilities, which have now deteriorated from disuse.<sup>24</sup>

International organizations have made many of the decisions concerning which crops are valuable and important to Afghanistan's agriculture, often determining which seeds are distributed to Afghan farmers. The ICARDA 2004 report states that 3,500 tons of "improved wheat seed" were delivered to 70,000 farmers in April 2002, after the 2002 Future Harvest Consortium to Rebuild Agriculture in Afghanistan. The organization has also focused on improving seed cleaning and distribution, which is a sector in which many widows are employed, and which contributes over \$1 million to the economy.<sup>25</sup>

The source of these seeds is an issue of concern. There is little information concerning where the seeds came from and whether they were genetically modified or patented. Both genetically modified and patented seeds are sources of financial and agricultural issues for farmers. Patented seeds carry with them contracts concerning terms of use and financially-constraining clauses for farmers. Additionally, they are expensive and often difficult for farmers

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<sup>24</sup> Kelly 2003, 16

<sup>25</sup> International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas 2004, 1-2

to continue using. Genetically modified seeds are often patented as well, and carry additional health-related concerns. These seeds also cross-breed with other indigenous and heritage varieties of seed, thereby effectively destroying original varieties of seed and allowing the patent-holders to demand payment for use.<sup>26</sup>

Several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have provided various forms of seed, fertilizer, and agrochemicals, sometimes free of cost. ICARDA distributed cover crop and fertilizing crop seeds such as rice, barley, chickpea, lentil, berseem, clover, alfalfa, flax, sesame, and mung beans to farmers in addition to primary crop seeds. ICARDA also implemented a voucher system for fertilizer purchase, which like the USAID voucher system, is vague as to its requirements and function.<sup>27</sup>

The Horticulture Program of CARD is focused on supporting growth and sustainability of Afghan horticulture. Its efforts include providing farmers with saplings, building pest control systems that increase crop production, and building important export products by establishing public-private sector relationships.<sup>28</sup> A concern in this area is the types of fertilizers and agrochemicals, especially pesticides, which are being used. There is seemingly no available information about which agrochemicals and fertilizers have been supplied by international and Afghan agencies. Both of these substances are frequently connected with health problems for farm workers and consumers, as well as environmental issues such as wildlife health and groundwater contamination.<sup>29</sup> The World Bank Group notes these concerns in their report, and the need for attention and monitoring from Afghan agencies concerning the products being used

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<sup>26</sup> Vandana Shiva 2005, 155-8

<sup>27</sup> ICARDA, 2004, 2

<sup>28</sup> Zaryab, 2008, 93

<sup>29</sup> Shiva, 2005, 101-6



and their effects on people and the environment.<sup>30</sup>

### *Seed Skills Trainings*

ICARDA planned on implementing the Village-based Seed Enterprises, which would produce cost-efficient seeds and provide trainings in seed production and quality control at the village level. This initiative would involve over 20 farmer communities, and include disease management techniques.<sup>31</sup> However, it is uncertain whether ICARDA has implemented this initiative since its 2004 report. ICARDA's action plans and initiatives seem to be implemented by outsiders, and there is a lack of consultation with farmers to gather information and input about the skills and methods they already employ to save and share seed, counteract disease in crops, and fertilize their crops.

### **Farm-to-Market and Agribusiness**

National roads in Afghanistan are severely damaged and underdeveloped. An estimated 58% of rural villages have only seasonal access to roads, with the average distance to the nearest road being 3 miles. Progress has been made since 2003, however, and approximately 20,000 km of rural roads have been built or improved.<sup>32</sup> The lack of adequate means of transportation means that accessibility of markets for farmers is very limited. Farmers find it difficult to access local markets, as well as systems for export or larger urban markets. The inefficiency of transportation of goods because of the faults of Afghanistan's road system negatively impacts the farmers through loss of time and profits from product loss, the costs of transportation, and lost labor time. On the consumer's end, the inefficiency of product transportation means that the product's availability is unreliable, and may mean that farmers have a difficult time finding buyers or

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<sup>30</sup> World Bank Group 2009, 5

<sup>31</sup> ICARDA 2004, 3

<sup>32</sup> Zaryab 2008, 90

exporters for their products. The National Rural Access Program of CARD is committed to establishing all-year-round road access to 65% of Afghan villages by 2013, through repairing and building roads in rural Afghanistan.<sup>33</sup>

### ***Trainings and Government Agricultural Efforts***

The Rural Enterprise Program of CARD is the government program currently focusing on building farm-to-market skills among Afghan farmers. The program is committed to providing trainings and finance for farmers, totaling 70% of the Community Development Councils, which operate out of the National Solidarity Program to provide many of the projects of CARD programs to over two million rural Afghans. The Rural Enterprise Program is also committed to providing approximately 2.1 million jobs to rural Afghans, and to better incorporating the rural economy with the national economy. The multiple objectives of the program will help to reduce poppy cultivation.<sup>34</sup>

### ***Livestock***

Livestock are important to Afghan farmers not only as a source of cash income for by-products, but also as a source of human nutrition, farm labor power, and raw materials such as wool, hides, and fertilizer.<sup>35</sup> Sheep particularly are very important to Afghanistan's economy. Karakul sheep, from Northern Afghanistan are valued highly for the production of lamb coats. Livestock composed about 40% of total export income in pre-conflict Afghanistan, and is now half. Some of the problems experienced by farmers and herders are a loss of livestock due to disease and insufficient resources for herders, decreased productivity due to declining feed and

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 93

<sup>34</sup> Zaryab 2008, 93

<sup>35</sup> Kelly 2003, 18

overgrazing of rangeland.<sup>36</sup> Irrigated land that once supported livestock now lacks water, contributing to the difficulties of herders to maintain the numbers of their flocks.

### **Trainings and Government Livestock Efforts**

Some trainings have been organized by USAID for farmers concerning animal health, and proper harvesting and marketing of animal products.<sup>37</sup> The Livestock Program of CARD focuses on increasing production by “importing purebred sheep, establishing commercial dairy plants and poultry units for women farmers, and by increasing productivity and output.”<sup>38</sup> The program needs support from international actors involved with livestock issues, as well as greater coordination among those efforts, to make this program and others more effective.

### **Needs**

The first focus area is the expansion of livestock production and marketing to facilitate greater domestically-sourced animal products and reduced reliance on imports. This project would create a village-based poultry industry, provide trainings and equipment, evaluate the needs and potential of the dairy sector, and research the potential for a cashmere industry. The third focus area is dedicated to veterinary services through enhanced public-private sector interactions. The goals are to provide trainings for veterinarians, improve their capacity to carry out their work, creating and implementing requirements for sanitation in the sector, and improved vaccine, disease surveillance equipment, and sanitation supply access.<sup>39</sup>

### ***Communities***

#### **Importance and Issues of Rural Communities**

Rural communities have been severely weakened over the course of the past three

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 18

<sup>37</sup> USAID 2009, 1

<sup>38</sup> Zaryab 2008, 93

<sup>39</sup> USAID 2009, 2

decades of armed conflict and abilities to manage natural resources have been diminished. Additionally, only 32.5% of rural communities have access to clean drinking water, and many suffer from lack of healthcare and communication with other rural or urban areas, all of which are important to the well-being and sustainability of rural communities. Rural communities also experience high illiteracy rates and limited access to education. Additionally, many farmers and rural communities face obstacles due to the lack of reliable electricity in rural areas. Regarding agriculture specifically, rural communities experience weak infrastructure for agriculture and lack access to different technologies and credit.<sup>40</sup> These issues are all necessary components of healthy communities and the ability of communities to sustain themselves and grow economically.

Community health and empowerment is crucial to the development of the agricultural sector because strong communities continue to grow alongside their production, generating profits that are then cycled back into the national economy. A strong agricultural sector is the health monitor of the national economy in many ways, as rural farming communities are usually the poorest sector of the population. If the poorest citizens are empowered, becoming more successful and growing in their abilities and production, they are gaining not only profits for themselves but for the whole nation. From a capitalist analysis, greater income for low-income communities translates to increased ability to consume and support the economy from both the producer and consumer sides. Furthermore, the greater ability of rural low-income communities to support themselves through their livelihood contributes to greater food security for the nation as a whole. When a drought or similar food crisis occurs, it is easier to avert widespread hunger and malnutrition, as rural communities are able to provide for the nation as a whole and not only

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<sup>40</sup> Oxfam 2008, 4, 7, 9, 13-18

their families. With increase food storage abilities, the nation would not have to resort to as large an amount of international aid and imported food as in a situation where rural communities still struggled to provide for themselves, let alone others.

A concern about community health and sustainability is support for commercial agriculture, which ANDS and most international actors sustain to some degree. The ANDS report discusses release of government land for private sector purchase and competitive bidding for rights to lease the land. A concern related to community development is that there might not be any restrictions on land leasing rates and that farmers may not be able to pay rent on the land. Also, owning land empowers farmers and in the long term leads to a greater ability to support and sustain rural communities. Additionally, the government commits in the ANDS report to “investigate, implement, and monitor key steps necessary to increase financial and technical support so that private firms are able to expand operations.”<sup>41</sup> The report does not indicate whether private firms are Afghan or international corporations, which raises concern regarding who will benefit from the Afghan government efforts to facilitate private sector involvement in commercial agriculture. Instead of facilitating the increased abilities of private corporations to earn profits, which could then be exported to corporate headquarters in other countries, the government resources dedicated to these objectives could be directed to expanding farmer and community abilities, which would directly benefit Afghan people and input profits into the Afghan national economy. The international companies that will be discussed in the next chapter will not pose the problem multinational agriculture-related corporations do, in that they will serve the purpose of auditing and monitoring changes in opium production. These companies will in fact be training Afghans to run local branches, so the creation of jobs for Afghans will

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<sup>41</sup> Zaryab 2008, 94

create economic opportunities and the amount of Afghan resources exported internationally will be limited.<sup>42</sup>

The ANDS government document also stresses “transforming underutilized state land into commercially viable agro-processing enterprises.”<sup>43</sup> While these facilities are much needed, the private firms that are intended to be actors are not specified. It is important to the health of Afghanistan’s agriculture sector and rural farming communities that as many firms as possible in the sector be Afghan nationals, as these firms are then returning their profits in various ways to the Afghan national economy. If multinational corporations are allowed to enter Afghanistan and take over large sectors of the agricultural economy, there will be a massive loss of capital in the Afghan national economy as that capital is exported to the foreign headquarters of those firms, thereby benefiting other national economies. Afghanistan’s economic growth is heavily dependent on restrictions to the abilities and actions of private international corporations. Also, Afghan firms have the local and regional knowledge necessary to work with Afghan farmers and are therefore less likely to push foreign or unwanted methods on farmers.

### **Government Efforts**

The ANDS report states that “the ANDS long term strategic vision for agriculture and rural development is to ensure the social, economic, and political well-being of rural communities, within the national economy.”<sup>44</sup> The ADB calls for support for skill development programs that focus on participation in communal decision-making and funding mechanisms. The main Afghan government entity that focuses on community well-being and development is the National Solidarity Program, which works to increase access to funding and other resources

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<sup>42</sup> Refer to chapter 7 for further information and clarification.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 94

<sup>44</sup> Zaryab 2008, 89

for community-identified needs.<sup>45</sup>

Other Afghan government agencies are also important to community well-being, and need to be supported in order to be more efficient. The National Food Security Program focuses on increased access to food for low-income households and decreased malnourishment. The National Area Based Development Program focuses on strategies at the district level that support local, rural strategies. The Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program addresses access to clean drinking water for rural communities, and is committed to providing access for 98% of all Afghan villages by 2013, as well as improved sanitation facilities for 50% of all villages. The Rural Electrification Program is committed to providing electricity to more the 4,000 villages in the short term. The Emergency Response System is developing a monitoring and response system for natural disasters that will be able to facilitate humanitarian aid, access to impacted areas, protection of people and assets, and other emergency assistance.<sup>46</sup>

Another program, the National Surveillance System Project, will assist with monitoring rural community well-being through surveillance systems that keep track of national poverty, vulnerability, and food security statistics. This system will empower other government agencies to respond effectively to community needs, to check whether they are doing their work sufficiently, and to better coordinate with non-government agencies.<sup>47</sup>

The Research and Extension System of CARD is committed to creating a research and extension system, thereby providing greater credit access for farmers. This program focuses on farmer cooperatives as a mechanism to enhance farmer cooperation and mutual support, as well

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 92-3

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 93

<sup>47</sup> Zaryab 2008, 93

as private sector market development for farmers, which enhances farm-to-market abilities.<sup>48</sup>

### **U.S. INTERESTS**

Greater security in the Afghanistan and the region is enforced through the economic and physical well-being and happiness of a nation's citizens. If Afghanistan has a healthy agricultural sector, the U.S. will be able to reduce the resources it sends to the country as Afghanistan's economy becomes increasingly self-sustaining. Additionally, aid related to nutrition, food access, microloans, healthcare, and similar necessities of low-income Afghans will decrease in demand as Afghans are able to provide food and resources for themselves. Therefore, the U.S. will be able to reduce the financial and physical aid to the nation greatly within the next decade as the agricultural sector of the country is built and supported.

Supporting agricultural growth and sustainability is important because it will improve many Afghans' ability to survive and their standard of living. A strong agricultural sector translates into a strong economy, as the well-being of the majority of Afghans relies on the agricultural sector of the economy. In the words of the ANDS report, "advancements in the sector will improve the quality of life for rural citizens, increase food security, improve the delivery of basic services, increase incomes and contribute to the establishment of a safe and secure environment."<sup>49</sup> A strong agricultural sector in Afghanistan also supports the economy of the region, as exports will produce a strong trade relationship with neighboring countries and regions such as India, Pakistan, and the Middle East.

Additionally, the U.S. will benefit socially from the decreased opium production that will accompany the expansion of the agricultural sector. As more farmers have access to high-value, sustainable, non-violence-related crops that provide necessary food resources for Afghanistan,

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 93

<sup>49</sup> Zaryab 2008, 89



the rate of opium production will decrease. Combined with other efforts to reduce opium production and promote sustainable, productive agriculture, the Afghan population will become less reliant on U.S. military involvement and aid, thereby allowing the U.S. to save its own resources. Simultaneously, the U.S. and Afghanistan's regional neighbors will greatly benefit from a decreased supply of opium to its domestic market<sup>50</sup>.

## **OPTIONS**

1. The United States adopts a community-oriented approach to agricultural development in Afghanistan. Communities are categorized as the primary element of building the agricultural sector and supported in terms of what they see as their primary needs, utilizing the methods and techniques they find most efficient and beneficial. Older generation farmers are approached to build information about traditional farming methods and technology in Afghanistan, including seed saving and sharing methods, irrigation system management and maintenance, crop rotation, and fertilizing methods. This information is compiled among many farming communities in Afghanistan and then communicated across all farming communities to create a dialogue among farmers about methods and ideas to improve farming. Added information concerning farming communities in other countries and their methods for sustainable and community-based agriculture are also incorporated into this information database.

Communities are thereby supporting each other. Other projects concerning agricultural improvement would also be addressed with a community-oriented approach. For example, farming equipment is supplied to communities through micro-loan programs, in which communities or individuals within communities essentially rent

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<sup>50</sup> Refer to the next chapter for further information on the opium trade. For a discussion of regional actors, please see section titled "Regional Section."

equipment at affordable rates. While they use the equipment, they are able to save money from increased profits and eventually purchase pieces of equipment or tools that they need. Also in this approach, community-based management for irrigation systems would be emphasized and supported. By providing the information and tools for other farming communities to construct and manage their own irrigation systems, there is greater ownership of the project and less demand for the government's resources and outside management.

2. The United States adopts a national government-oriented approach. In this approach, the national government is given the primary responsibility for the agricultural sector, and emphasis is placed on equipping the state with resources to implement what it believes is best for farmers. Resources are put towards developing government departments to oversee the sector and provide infrastructure and the resources for farmers. For example, there would be greater emphasis placed on the large-scale state-operated irrigation systems as the primary sources of irrigation. This emphasis would position the state as the entity responsible for the foundations for the agricultural sector, and could place farmers in a vulnerable position. If the state lacks funds or resources to dedicate to maintaining the irrigation systems, then farmers suffer. Furthermore, if the state simply lacks commitment or concern about the agricultural sector and its actors then farmers suffer from the state's lack of accountability.

This approach would give farmers less ownership over their farms, and push them to depend more and more on the government to provide for them. It would also not build farmer's abilities to react to agricultural problems and disasters, but place the burden on the government to provide solutions for farmers in times of desperation. The state cannot

realistically counteract every negative agricultural dilemma, and there would be a constant drain on state resources and funds for problems that could otherwise be addressed successfully by the farmers and communities themselves. This approach also transfers power not to the Afghan people, but to specific individuals and state departments entrenched in bureaucracy and often inaccessible to rural, low-income farmers and communities. As farmers feel increasingly disempowered, the door would be opened for a national security issue as farmers seek non-government groups who could supply the support they need.

3. The U.S. should adopt an international-oriented approach. In this approach, international organizations decide what is best for Afghan farmers without working with them. Instead, international organizations consult each other and multinational agribusinesses to provide what they decide is necessary for Afghan farmers in terms of crops, seed sources, equipment and tools, resource management, and marketing methods. For example, seeds would be sourced from multinational corporations, without consulting Afghans as to what seeds they have, what methods they use to save and share seed, and whether they are concerned about using genetically modified seed. This approach would also support the enforcement of specific, internationally-promoted farming methods that do not coincide with traditional Afghan farming methods, and that may not work for Afghan farmers, farming communities, or the environmental conditions farmers are working with in Afghanistan.

## **Recommendations**

### ***Farmer and Community Empowerment***

The U.S. should support the empowerment of Afghan farmers and rural farming

communities. A community-based approach to bolstering the agricultural sector empowers farmers and communities, leading to greater independence and a self-sustaining agricultural sector. Farmers and communities are empowered through a greater sense of ownership and control of their means of survival. They are also empowered through their ability to rent and buy equipment and other necessities for their livelihood.

Through supporting an increased sense of ownership of farmers' means of survival, a community-based approach therefore decreases dependency on state support and allows for a sustainable and healthy agricultural sector. This approach is likely to succeed on multiple levels because the farmers, who are directly dependent on the success of their crops and their labor, are the most likely to remain committed to maintaining and improving their land, equipment, resources, and business relationships. They are directly accountable to themselves and their communities for any failure and are therefore better able to manage conflicts and resolve problems directly and quickly. These processes are not as possible or likely when there are multiple levels of accountability, many of which are inaccessible geographically and politically.

Community empowerment will contribute to issues of national security in Afghanistan as a well-supported and empowered rural community will be less likely to turn to insurgency or radical factions to change the society or government, as they see no need to change institutions that support them economically. Community empowerment will contribute to decreased pressure on the U.S. to provide military aid and to engage in counterinsurgency in the long term.

Therefore the U.S. should support international and Afghan efforts to provide accessible microcredit and programs that lead to community ownership of the tools and materials they need to be able to produce. The U.S. should also support Afghan communities taking the lead in deciding what they need most and what direction Afghan organizations should take to better

support farmers. The U.S. should also support community-owned and managed irrigation systems, along with other community-centralized resource management systems, so that farming communities have an increased sense of ownership, responsibility, and pride in their resources and their ability to manage those resources effectively by themselves.

### ***Community Growth through Mutual Support***

The U.S. should support communication and cooperation among farming communities. Farmers and rural farming communities are empowered through communication and assistance across communities, building a broader sense of an agricultural community in Afghanistan and the ability to help and rely on others in times of need, for support, or advice. A sense of community both locally and nationally is above all the most empowering aspect of this approach, as farmers are not isolated, or without resources or support. Despite the myriad ethnicities in Afghanistan, community will be built among farmers and farming communities who experience similar obstacles and difficulties in their work and economic situation. As farmers will be helping each other in skill improvement and reviewing available technologies and farming methods, the sense of mutual aid and benefit will be built also through government support and investment of local and international NGOs who already focus on supporting agricultural communities. This support will extend beyond borders as Afghan and Pakistani farmers communicate about water resource use specifically, and eventually other relevant issues of mutual support.

The U.S. will experience decreased pressure over time to serve as an intermediary between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and farmer communication across borders will help build security along the Af-Pak border. Over time there will also be decreased pressure on U.S. and international agricultural agencies to provide assistance, as farmers and communities gradually

become self-sustaining.

Therefore the U.S. should support the creation and development of a database of Afghan farmer knowledge, as well as education programs that enhance the abilities of farmers to communicate with each other across distances. The U.S. should support the creation of mechanisms for Afghan farming communities to talk with each other, including regional meetings focusing on agricultural info-share, and cross-border meetings between Afghan and Pakistani farming communities.

### ***Community Health and Sustainability***

The U.S. should support systems that contribute to the health and sustainability of farming communities. The community-based approach builds communities, and therefore rural areas and villages more than the individualistic emphasis found in a national- or international-based approach. Instead of supporting individual ventures that reap profits only for the individual and cause conflicts between individuals within low-income communities and villages, the community-based approach supports the growth and empowerment of communities. The community-based approach is focused on increasing communities' abilities to sustain themselves and provide not only for themselves but for the national demand for food. Communities will increasingly be able to provide for themselves through cooperation and greater access to necessary resources, leading to eventual ownership of necessary equipment and strong social and economic capital. Community health and sustainability will in the short and long term create less demand on the U.S. to provide material and financial support to farmers. Additionally, the U.S. will experience decreased demand for food aid as farmers and farming communities are increasingly able to provide the necessary food supply for the nation.

A major component of this option is working closely with the National Solidarity

Program within CARD, as this Program prioritizes monitoring community-identified needs and immediate and long-term community support.<sup>51</sup> The other 13 previously mentioned programs of CARD all focus on important relevant issues for Afghanistan's agricultural sector and would be crucial components of a U.S. community-based approach to supporting Afghanistan's development of its agricultural sector. Option 1 would entail working closely with all 15 programs of CARD to support their efforts and abilities to achieve their objectives, including ensuring that CARD continues to be a community-base approach that requires and utilizes information from rural communities about their needs and obstacles to success. Building these programs to be able to support farming communities and address their needs efficiently and appropriately is important to the long-term health and sustainability of farming communities. The agricultural sector will benefit from decreased damage from droughts and food crises due to the government's ability to respond when and how farmers need assistance. Improving the government's ability to support and assist farming communities at all times and during crises will also decrease demand on the U.S. for resources, and prevent the likelihood of a national security issue from panic or food crisis.

Therefore, the U.S. should support mechanisms and programs that contribute to the health of farming communities, including improved access to education and healthcare, and the development of infrastructure in rural areas. The U.S. should also support building long-term sustainability of communities, through improving access to ownership of agricultural tools and technologies, supporting seed saving and sharing systems, and the many methods of supporting community health that then translate to community sustainability.

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<sup>51</sup> Zaryab 2008, 92-3

### ***National Economic Strength and Growth***

The U.S. should support Afghan national economic growth through supporting the development of the agricultural sector and farming communities. This option leads to the greater well-being, increased income, and sustainability of areas and regions of the nation, in turn leading to the greater well-being and economic viability of the nation itself. As the lowest-income population of Afghan society is increasingly able to provide for itself consistently and earn profits from its products, the Afghan economy as a whole will grow and benefit. Formerly low-income communities will be better able to engage in the consumer aspect of the economy, and improved food security will decrease economic strain in times of natural or economic crisis.

The Horticulture Program of CARD, and other CARD initiatives, needs support from international actors. With support, this program and others can build in their capacity to help Afghan farmers reach their goals, and to create a strong foundation for the Afghan national economy. A well-founded and supported agricultural sector will over time reduce pressure on the U.S. for financial and material support.

Investment is needed to reestablish and rebuild livestock processing structures such as feed mills, poultry and dairy processing plants, and poultry, meat, and dairy production. The World Bank Group divides the needs of the livestock sector into three main areas of focus. The capacity of the General Department of Livestock Production needs to be strengthened so it can better “supervise and regulate animal husbandry services, through the provision of technical advisory services and training to staff at district offices.”<sup>52</sup> Support on livestock programs will overall benefit the Afghan economy as animal products are high-value. Therefore, a strong livestock component of the national economy will help create a solid economic base and

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<sup>52</sup> World Bank Group 2009, 2



decreased dependency on the U.S. for various forms of aid.

Cooperation among Afghan companies and farmers also needs to be emphasized, as national growth will arise when many sectors of the Afghan economy are supported. If multinational corporations are allowed to enter the economy to assist with natural resource management or infrastructural needs, there needs to be policy created to restrict the abilities and actions of those corporations. Therefore, Afghan companies will be able to conduct business healthily and not be out-competed, and Afghan farmers will be able to work with companies that understand their needs and values better, and are accessible to them.

The U.S. should therefore support Afghan state programs and initiatives whose purpose is to support agricultural communities. The U.S. should support these programs and help them build their capacity to carry out their objectives and respond to farmers' needs. The U.S. should also work with international agencies and agricultural actors to coordinate their efforts and programs, and to ensure they are in line with community-cited needs and the direction farming communities have decided on for themselves. The U.S. should also support the national government in developing policy that focuses on resource management, restrictions on privatization of resources, and restrictions on multinational agribusinesses so that they cannot enter the Afghan agricultural sector and endanger the well-being of farming communities.



# Counternarcotics: A Licit Opium Solution

Alejandro Gamboa

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## Policy Recommendations

- Bolster its support of the GIRoA's counternarcotics strategy, especially with regard to providing alternative livelihoods for opium farmers.
  - Establish strong relationships between the GIRoA, its neighbors, and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency to improve the effectiveness of interdiction.
  - Collaborate with the GIRoA and other NATO nations to implement a profitable licit opium program, called the Poppy to Pill Program.
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## Abstract

The following chapter evaluates the results of the counternarcotics strategies the State Department has implemented throughout much of Afghanistan in support of the Afghan government and with the assistance of the international community. The findings presented in this chapter reflect the mixed results of the current strategy and stress the lack of significant improvement in the southern provinces that produce the overwhelming majority of the country's opium. Areas that have seen significant reduction in opium production through government eradication actions have not been adequately supported by other "pillars" of the government's strategy. Such an unbalanced approach is counterproductive and threatens to undermine the Afghan government and jeopardize U.S. interests in the country. This chapter urges the State Department to help the Afghan government to improve its current counternarcotics strategy so that it adopt a comprehensive program to quickly bring opium production under government supervision in an effort to establish a licit opium industry. The licit opium program would serve as a major source of revenue for the government at the federal and provincial level, and would help many of the nation's poorest communities improve their standard of living through their own efforts at the village level. The role of the State Department in this program would be threefold: to pressure the Afghan government to implement all aspects of this program; to establish strong, lasting interagency bonds with the segments of the government that would support this program; and to work closely with domestic and international governments and pharmaceutical corporations to create the incentives necessary to sell Afghan opium through this program.

## **ISSUE**

In recent decades Afghanistan has become the world's top opium producer. Poppy cultivation, as well as the production and trafficking of opium have become a multi-billion dollar economic force in Afghanistan. Since the Karzai administration made the harvesting of opium illegal in 2002, relatively little progress has been made toward significantly decreasing the amount of opium produced. In fact, between 2002 and 2009 opium production has virtually doubled. This illicit trade is one of the largest threats facing the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) mission in Afghanistan. The revenue generated by the trade has led to widespread corruption at all levels of Afghan government, and has become a major source of income for the Taliban and other insurgent groups.

Narco-cartels have played a leading role in expanding the reach of opium outside of Afghanistan and across the borders of its neighboring countries, where it has had similar effects in funding anti-government groups and exacerbating corruption, as well as providing opiates to the millions of addicts in the region. Afghanistan's opium problem not only leads to insecurity and corruption within the country, but also destabilizes the Central and South Asian regions, suggesting that future counternarcotics efforts must address the problem from the village level to the regional level. Considering President Obama's tentative July 2011 deadline to begin the pullout of American military forces, the U.S. Department of State must decide upon a counternarcotics policy with a proper scope and sense of urgency, which implements short and long term goals, and that remains conscious of the interests of the United States in Afghanistan.

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Conflict and the spread of opium in Afghanistan***

Since the fall of the Taliban in 2001 at the hands of the U.S.-backed Northern Alliance, Afghanistan has become the world's top producer of illicit opium, producing about 92% of the

total world supply of opium each year.<sup>1</sup> Most of this opium crosses its borders in the form of heroin and morphine and, in the hands of drug lords and narco-cartels, it reaches markets in all corners of the globe. While farmers harvest the crop virtually all across the country, the vast majority of poppy is grown in the flat arid southern provinces. Indeed, the top four opium producing provinces in Afghanistan are Helmand, Kandahar, Farah, and Uruzgan (in order of most to least hectares of opium contained within the province), with a combined land use in 2009 of 123,000 ha devoted to opium poppy cultivation.<sup>2</sup>

These four provinces account for approximately 90.5% of Afghanistan's opium cultivation and just over 83% of the world's illicit opium.<sup>3</sup> No other provinces or regions come close to these figures, thus an entirely new strategy must be applied solely to these four provinces to deal with the different and exceptionally challenging set of circumstances the United States and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) face there with regards to counternarcotics efforts. In September 2009 the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reported that Afghanistan produces 6,900 metric tons of opium per year - 1,900 tons more than the world consumes.<sup>4</sup> Opium production in 2007 peaked at an estimated 8,200 metric tons.

Afghanistan has not always been such a key player in the illicit global opium trade. The turmoil and conflict of the late twentieth century must be examined in order to appreciate the severe changes to Afghanistan's economy that have led to its reliance on the opium harvest and provide a glimpse into the potential future of Afghanistan's rural areas. Genghis Khan's armies introduced opium in Afghanistan during their incursions into Central Asia during the twelfth and

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<sup>1</sup> Glaze 2007, 1

<sup>2</sup> UNODC 2009, 2

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Olesyn 2010

early thirteenth centuries. Between this time and the Saur Revolution, opium was a very minor crop in Afghanistan, only yielding about 200 metric tons of opium per year by the 1970s.<sup>5</sup>

The Saur Revolution in Afghanistan took place in late April 1978, establishing a weak communist regime that invited Soviet forces to intervene militarily in Afghanistan to protect it from the various mujahideen factions that opposed it. The Soviet occupation lasted nearly a decade and devastated the Afghan economy and infrastructure. The withdrawal of Soviet forces gave way to a civil war between rival mujahideen groups that fought each other amidst a power vacuum. In 1994 a new group of Muslim students primarily from *madrassas* in Pakistan appeared on the scene. This new group of militants, called the Taliban, enjoyed early military victories in the south and east, and in only a few years controlled the majority of the country.

The Taliban regime, which lasted roughly between 1994 and 2001, had few resources and while it was able to bring about a greater degree of stability in the country, it remained incapable and unwilling to achieve much progress in rebuilding the country. From the Soviet invasion until today, Afghanistan has weathered nearly three decades of catastrophic warfare. This warfare has had a profound impact on the country's rural communities. Many families have left their homes for refugee camps, while landmines and the destruction of infrastructure have left fields inaccessible or without irrigation; all of this leading to the disintegration of a once prosperous agricultural sector. Under the miserable circumstances farmers faced, opium emerged as a cash crop that required little investment, was drought resistance, and could be relied upon to bring in sufficient money to feed a family.

The conditions that led to the rapid spread of opium poppy cultivation throughout Afghanistan were exacerbated by the lack of an effective central government to oversee

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<sup>5</sup> Shaista Wahab 2007, 204

counternarcotics operations and by the opportunities presented to Afghan farmers to fill the gaps in global opium supply as countries such as Turkey and Burma began to significantly curb opium production.<sup>6</sup> The modern history of the country, then, explains those factors that created the dependency of many rural communities on opium production.<sup>7</sup> Between cultivating, processing, transporting, and selling, Afghan opium generates \$3 billion (USD) per annum inside the country – making it the single most important sector of the economy and employing about 10% of the population directly.<sup>8</sup> According to the UNODC’s 2009 Afghanistan Opium Survey the value of the illicit Afghan opium trade as percentage of GDP has dropped from 27% in 2002 to 4% in 2009 due in part to a global drop in the price of heroin, as well as rapid growth of the legal economy.<sup>9</sup>

The Taliban has played a significant role in Afghanistan’s illicit opium market, especially in the southern provinces where they maintain a strong presence. Revenues from the cultivation and sale of narcotics, especially in the southern provinces as well as in parts of Pakistan, have provided large sums of money to the current insurgency, plaguing efforts to bring security to the country and to promote economic development. Taliban forces are increasingly reliant on the large margins offered by the illicit sale of opium.<sup>10</sup> The State Department estimates that the Taliban earn \$400 annually from its role played in the opium market, or 40% to 60% of its annual income, according to NATO.<sup>11</sup> The Taliban commonly receive funds from the opium market by collecting protection fee from opium poppy farmers, operating heroin processing labs,

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<sup>6</sup> Letizia Paoli 2009, 13-16.

<sup>7</sup> Shaista Wahab 2007, 196.

<sup>8</sup> John Glaze 2007, 5.

<sup>9</sup> UNODC 2009, 6.

<sup>10</sup> Gretchen Peters, 2009, 23; This report sets the Taliban’s 2008 revenue from narcotics-related activities in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

<sup>11</sup> George Gavrilis 2010; Some of this revenue may also come from opium grown in Pakistan.

or by protecting the operations of drug lords.<sup>12</sup> With these funds the Taliban have managed to purchase weapons and ammunition, supplies, vehicles, and bribe police and government officials to keep them from interfering in opium production and trafficking.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Counternarcotics efforts under the GIRoA***

Starting in 2002, the Karzai administration in Kabul implemented a counternarcotics policy known as the Eight Pillar program, which established a framework for taking action against opium production and trafficking by utilizing a holistic approach. In response, the U.S. State Department implemented a counternarcotics policy which sought to compliment the GIRoA plan, and was called the Five Pillar program. The table below outlines the pillars of both institutions.

Afghan National Drug Control Eight Pillars strategy <sup>14</sup>	State Department Five Pillars strategy <sup>15</sup>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Information</li> <li>• Alternative livelihoods for farmers engaged in opium production.</li> <li>• Eradication.</li> <li>• Interdiction.</li> <li>• Law enforcement/Justice reform.</li> <li>• International and regional cooperation</li> <li>• Reduction in demand</li> <li>• Institution building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Information</li> <li>• Alternative livelihoods for farmers engaged in opium production.</li> <li>• Eradication.</li> <li>• Interdiction.</li> <li>• Law enforcement/Justice reform.</li> </ul>

The pillars approach revealed the limits the GIRoA faces in implementing its policies throughout the country given its lack of trained personnel, insufficient resources and insecurity, as evidenced by the deaths of 99 eradication personnel between 2008 and 2009.<sup>16</sup> The only

<sup>12</sup> Gretchen Peters 2009, 18-21.

<sup>13</sup> George Gavriliis 2010

<sup>14</sup> State Department 2008, 4.

<sup>15</sup> State Department 2007, 17.

<sup>16</sup> UNODC 2009, 18.



“pillar” that remained standing following the marked increase in violence during and after 2006 was the eradication pillar, as eradication efforts largely fell upon U.S., Afghan, and ISAF security forces. Unfortunately, soldiers engaged in eradication usually did not have the knowledge, training, resources, or legal authority to erect the other essential pillars once eradication had been completed, effectively destroying the only cash crop farmers usually had and leaving them with little but resentment for their government and foreign troops.<sup>17</sup> U.S., ISAF, and Afghan forces must attain a higher degree of security in rural areas if counternarcotics policies are to have a hope of adequately addressing the problem without turning the rural population against the U.S. or the GIRoA.

The Taliban’s control over large areas in the south of Afghanistan is being contested by the military and civilian offensive known as Operation Moshtarak, which is a coalition of Afghan, U.S. and UK security and law enforcement personnel that deployed into Helmand province on February 13.<sup>18</sup> If similar offensives can push the Taliban from their strongholds in the southern provinces, namely Kandahar, the resulting security cushion could offer a space within which aggressive counternarcotics policies will have a chance to significantly disrupt the networks used by narco-cartels and insurgents to sell opium and raise money. An improved level of security in the south is quintessential to implementing effective counternarcotics policies that can achieve more than simply eradication of opium poppy fields. Steps like these are necessary for the U.S. and the GIRoA to break the back of the insurgency and create stability in the country.

In the parts of Afghanistan that already enjoy a relative degree of stability, alternative livelihood programs have been successful, such as the AVIPA-Plus voucher program established

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<sup>17</sup> NBR 2009, 8.

<sup>18</sup> BBC 2010.

by the USAID. The purpose of this program is to entice farmers to switch from opium poppy to different crops, such as wheat, through a grant program that artificially lowers the costs associated with switching to licit crops. The Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) has also taken a role in providing alternative livelihoods through its coordination of the numerous NGOs operating in Afghanistan. ACBAR in principle focuses the efforts of the NGO community to bolster the GIRoA's Afghanistan National Development Strategy, but in doing so addresses development needs in rural areas. The role of NGOs in the country has received many criticisms. One of the most prominent criticisms is that NGOs are ineffective because of a lack of accountability, their members often are forced to stay within protected urban areas due to security concerns, and they often fail to incorporate local practices and the knowledge base into consideration when implementing development programs.<sup>1920</sup> Studies have revealed that development projects that work alongside traditional forms of social organization, namely the village *shura*,<sup>21</sup> are more effective at achieving their goals and can help alleviate tensions between rural communities, international development institutions such as NGOs, and the GIRoA.<sup>22</sup> Policies seeking to expand the implementation of alternative livelihoods among opium poppy farmers should take into consideration both the limits of NGOs as well as the opportunities for success that can be found by working with traditional social organizing bodies.

In January 2010 the State Department acknowledged the shortcomings of the “pillars” approach through the *Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy* report, and took a new course of action in counternarcotics policy that focuses more on interdiction of trafficking

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<sup>19</sup> George Arney 2008.

<sup>20</sup> Jennifer Brick, 2.

<sup>21</sup> The village *shura* is a council of elders who lead the community at the village level and administer public goods.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 11.

and creating alternative livelihoods rather than on eradication.<sup>23</sup> This shift in policy was designed by the State Department to create a sense of trust between rural communities, the GIRoA and the U.S., while targeting those criminals most responsible for the trafficking of opium. It also recognizes that until now, the pillars approach has tended to be excessively “eradication heavy,” due in large part to a lack of security and resources on the ground for the other pillars to have a significant effect.<sup>24</sup> The approach is a shift away from the State Department’s proposed plan from 2007 to spray opium poppy fields with herbicides in an attempt to quickly destroy Afghanistan’s opium production, which was rejected by the Karzai administration.<sup>25</sup>

The GIRoA believed an herbicide-based eradication campaign would drastically reduce opium production, but would leave farmers in many areas with no support or other options to earn money, thereby alienating them from the central government; a situation the Taliban could exploit as a recruitment tool and one the Karzai administration hopes to avoid as it already suffers from a severe lack of support in many parts of the country.<sup>26</sup> The new report shifts State Department policy away from eradication and instead prioritizes the interdiction of traffickers, expanding the role of the DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) in the country, providing greater assistance to poppy farmers to be able to switch to other crops, and creating partnerships between the GIRoA, the U.S., and Afghanistan’s neighbors present a more comprehensive and balanced approach to counternarcotics.

Interdiction within Afghanistan has four key aims: first, to dismantle the narco-cartels that traffic opium through the country and prosecute individuals engaging in this crime; second, to combat corruption by placing pressure on public officials to discontinue their support to drug

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<sup>23</sup> State Department 2010, 16.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Kirk Semple 2007.

<sup>26</sup> David Morgan 2007.

traffickers due to fear of being detained themselves by Afghan law enforcement officials; third, to improve security and stability by denying the Taliban and other militants the revenue from the illicit drug trade they rely on to fund their operations; and fourth, to bring drug lords to justice, and by doing so, obtain the support of the communities oppressed by these powerful criminals.<sup>27</sup> The last aim is important, as Clare Lockhart has explained that the GIRoA's willingness to cooperate early on with warlords and criminals undermined its legitimacy among the people,<sup>28</sup> so interdiction can demonstrate a needed reversal of this practice if the government hopes to gain the support of the rural communities, especially those in the south.

The new State Department policy does not adequately address three major challenges to counternarcotics operations, especially in the southern provinces. First the policy does not recognize that interdiction is exceptionally difficult due to the vast, rugged terrain and lack of law enforcement officials needed to find and arrest traffickers. Also the policy does not explicitly seek to reduce the role opium plays in fueling corruption, which impedes counternarcotics efforts at all levels. Finally the policy does not recognize the reality facing many southern farmers: opium is one of the very few crops they can successfully grow under the circumstances, regardless of how appealing other crops may seem.

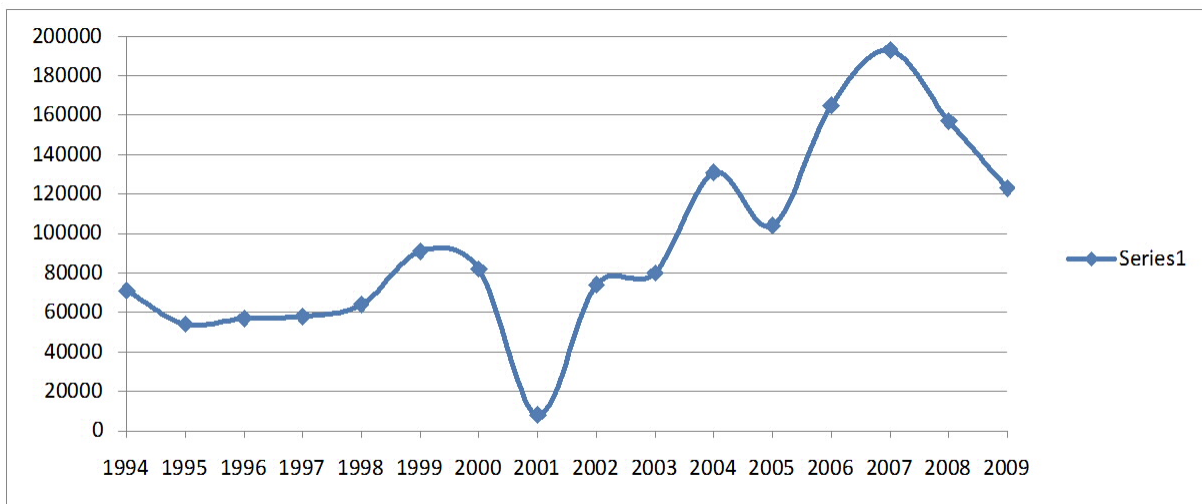
Strengthening the Afghan National Police (ANP) and its ability to interdict drug traffickers will empower the GIRoA with a valuable tool to combat against the threats stemming from the opium trade, but the level of corruption that permeates the ranks of the ANP promises to present daunting challenges in shaping this law enforcement institution into one capable of tackling Afghanistan's opium epidemic. Throughout Afghanistan police officers are bribed by the narco-cartels as well as insurgents to keep them from interfering with the production and sale

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<sup>27</sup> State Department 2010.

<sup>28</sup> Clare Lockhart 2010.

of opium; some police officers even actively support the trade.<sup>29</sup> The U.S. should reform its counternarcotics policy in order to address the full array of pressing challenges facing its efforts to minimize the negative effects of the illicit opium trade in order to secure U.S. interests in Afghanistan.



**Figure 1: Afghan annual opium cultivation in hectares per year.<sup>30</sup>**

Today some of the most accurate and timely information on the status of the illicit opium trade in Afghanistan is available through the 2009 Afghanistan Opium Survey conducted and published by the UNODC. The report presents a surprisingly positive picture of the recent status of opium production in the country and suggests that much of the decrease was due to the Eight Pillar program of the GIRoA and efforts to diversify crops in Helmand province, where cultivation dropped 33% in 2009.<sup>31</sup> However, the report fails to account for how poor weather, the low value of raw opium, and the rising value of cereals may have led farmers to either lose their opium harvest or switch to cultivating other fast-growing crops such as wheat. This trend is

<sup>29</sup> Doug Beattie 2009.

<sup>30</sup> UNODC 2009, 1.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 2.

reflected in the drop in hectares devoted to opium poppy production between 2007 and 2009 shown in Figure 1. The market for opium can be volatile, as evidenced by Figure 1, as well as the tenfold growth in opium cultivation in Badghis province from 587 ha in 2008 to 5,411 ha in 2009, which corresponded with an increase in precipitation levels.<sup>32</sup> The State Department and other U.S. agencies involved in Afghanistan, as well as the GIRoA, must understand that, while the findings of the UNODC report suggest eradication has played a major role in the recent deductions in opium production, the Eight Pillar program has only affected the provinces of the north and central region of the country, and total reductions associated with these eradication efforts can account for only a small dent in total opium output levels, which are subject in a major way to the fluxes within the global illicit opium market.

### ***The role of regional players***

Opium coming from Afghanistan has played a major role, not only within the country, but in the Central Asian region as a whole through organized crime and terrorism. The problems of instability, violence, and corruption that currently plague Afghanistan also create similar, albeit smaller effects on its neighbors and regional players. Furthermore, many of these countries suffer from very high levels of heroin and morphine addiction which weakens their societies and drives the production and trafficking of opium in the region. For these reasons State Department counternarcotics policy should consider the interests of Afghanistan's neighbors with regard to the opium problem and address how these nations can contribute to finding solutions to illicit opium trafficking.

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<sup>32</sup> UNODC, 2009, 7-8.

Iran and Pakistan, for instance, receive over 75% of Afghanistan's opium each year and both countries have large numbers of addicts (1.3 and 0.75 million respectively)<sup>33</sup>. Narco-cartels channel 25% of Afghan produced opium through Pakistan, which also hosts a large number of heroin addicts (750,000), meaning that the government in Islamabad has a vested interest in implementing effective interdiction practices.<sup>34</sup><sup>35</sup> Between 2002 and 2007, Pakistani law enforcement personnel were only able to seize an average of 5% of Afghanistan's opium production, or roughly 20% of opium entering the country, indicating much room for improvement.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the opium trafficked through Pakistan provides direct funding to elements of the Taliban stationed in the western border regions, which presents a threat to U.S. interests there, as the presence of insurgents threatens to destabilize the Pakistani administration and the border areas where they operate could become safe havens for terrorists.

Iran receives double the quantity of illicit opium as Pakistan and has nearly double the number of heroin addicts within its borders, and although its counternarcotics personnel have been more successful than Pakistan's at interdicting traffickers (they seize between 6% and 9% of Afghanistan's total opium output), there remains much room for improvement. High tensions and a lack of trust between the U.S. and Iran make a trilateral relationship with the State Department and the GIRoA unrealistic for improving interdiction. However, the sheer volume of illicit opium trafficked through Iran makes it a key player in regional interdiction, thus U.S. counternarcotics policy should find indirect ways to improve Iran's capacity to interdict drug traffickers. The UNODC has established ties with the government of Iran, and may present a

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<sup>33</sup> Letizia Paoli 2009, 49

<sup>34</sup> Letizia Paoli, 2009, 49.

<sup>35</sup> UNODC, 2009, 8.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 32.

path through the U.S. could take to cut the flow of opium revenues going through Iran to destabilizing groups in Afghanistan.

One of the most promising developments in the arena of counternarcotics in Central Asia has been the much anticipated establishment of the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC). The CARICC brings together law enforcement, intelligence, and counternarcotics professionals from each member nation to strengthen counternarcotics efforts in Central Asia through shared intelligence and collaboration on the ground.<sup>37</sup> The UNODC helps manage and finance the centre,<sup>38</sup> along with its member states: the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Turkmenistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan. The CARICC demonstrates a new level of commitment by the Central Asian republics toward ending the flow of narcotics through the region, and may present a new option for the State Department to improve interdiction within the region.

The CARICC has formally declared its neutrality on political issues and remains open to cooperation with international law enforcement organizations. In 2008, it stated its willingness to foster a strong relationship with the U.S. DEA in helping to train law enforcement officials and improve interdiction in Central Asia.<sup>39</sup> This willingness to work with international players opens the door for the U.S. to collaborate with this new organization to broaden the scope of its counternarcotics policy for Afghanistan. Due to the close ties between the CARICC and the UNODC, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, fills a position that would allow for increased dialogue between the State Department and the former two institutions.

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<sup>37</sup> Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre 2010.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid; The United States has also donated \$3,295,907 according to CARICC donor statistics.

<sup>39</sup> UNODC 2008, 6.



### ***The licit narcotics industry and Afghanistan***

The most pertinent recommendation presented in this chapter, for both Afghan and U.S. interests, is the Poppy to Pill Program (also known as “3P”) which seeks to incorporate Afghanistan’s southern opium production into the licit opiate market for Western pharmaceutical companies. With that in mind, this section aims to examine the status of the licit narcotics industry in the Western world, revealing the challenges and opportunities needed to be addressed by the State Department in order to make the Poppy to Pill Program a viable policy for adoption and implementation by the GIRoA. The 3P program would establish a village-based licensing program along with a state-owned (although eventually self-sufficient) enterprise that would oversee the licensing process, purchasing, transportation, and sale of legally produced opium to Western pharmaceutical companies.

The Senlis Council, a UK-based think tank, first proposed the idea of a licit opium industry for Afghanistan to the attention of the public in 2005 through a report of a proposed program called “Poppy for Medicine” (P4M). The Poppy for Medicine program seeks to create a government program to issue licenses to villages that commit to selling all of its opium to the GIRoA, which would in turn sell the processed opium to Western pharmaceutical companies. Each licensed village would cultivate its opium poppy, process the opium, and manufacture pharmaceutical-grade pills within the framework of traditional village leadership and organizational arrangements.<sup>40</sup> The P4M report has received adamant opposition from GIRoA leaders, foreign governments, and even the pharmaceutical industry. Much of this opposition is deserved, as the report is unrealistic about what it seeks to accomplish, and its misinformed representation of the global licit opium market is misleading.

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<sup>40</sup> Poppy for Medicine.

Criticisms of the Senlis plan start with the management challenges of having potentially hundreds of micro-factories based in villages that would produce ready-to-sale licit narcotics.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, its analysis of the market conditions shows there is a global supply deficit that Afghan opium could fill, a conclusion that has been disproven by pharmaceutical industry leaders such as David Mercer, managing director at UK-based pharmaceutical firm Johnson Matthey PLC. Mercer argues instead that there is a current surplus of 536 metric tons of morphine on the market and the growth of additional demand in the developing world that could consume this surplus takes many years to create,<sup>42</sup> thus the proposition of selling Afghan opium is not as simple as the Senlis report suggests. The recommendations of this chapter will explain how the Poppy to Pill Program will differ from the Poppy for Medicine model and how the recommended program addresses the primary criticisms of the Senlis plan.

A plan aimed at implementing a licit opium program, like the one proposed by the Senlis report, would benefit from the services provided by an international organization such as the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) of the United Nations. This organization operates around the world and assists countries to address domestic and international drug problems in both licit and illicit markets. Two of the INCB's primary functions are to work with governments and the pharmaceutical industry to secure a reliable source of licit drugs for healthcare uses, and also to work with governments to improve mechanisms for the control of licit and illicit drugs.<sup>43</sup> The INCB would be poised to play a vital role in finding access to the global licit narcotics market while reducing corruption if a licit opium program were implemented in Afghanistan.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> David Mercer 2007, 3.

<sup>43</sup> INCB 2010.

Political support for an effective licit opium program in Afghanistan must emerge not only within the GIRoA and the U.S. government, but also within the governments of those ISAF member nations overseeing security and development in the provinces selected to host the program. The ISAF contingent from the United States provides security in Farah province, while the UK maintains a large contingent in Helmand, the Canadians in Kandahar and, until the recent government collapse, the Dutch in Uruzgan. Political will for the 3P program in these countries can be gauged by examining reactions to the controversial proposed licit opium program put forth by the Senlis Council. The report proposes the implementation of a legal opium industry, derived from models used in Turkey and India but which take into consideration Afghanistan's unique cultural norms and economic realities to curb their production of illicit opium.<sup>44</sup> The role the Dutch will play in Uruzgan province in the next few years is difficult to anticipate given the recent breakup of the government over the question of whether Dutch troops should remain in Afghanistan.<sup>45</sup> The State Department will need to closely monitor the status of this ally and what it can contribute to a future 3P program.

Critics of a licit opium industry in Afghanistan point to the large margins made in the illicit market as an insurmountable factor that would deter farmers from wishing to obtain a license and switch to licit farming. Such criticisms are poorly founded. Incentives, per se, are unnecessary for opium farmers. Many already believe that illicit opium cultivation is morally wrong as it supplies more drugs to addicts, including Muslims.<sup>46</sup> Farmers only grow opium because they feel they have no other option to feed their families. It is not lucrative; they receive

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<sup>44</sup> Both Turkey and India implemented government-run programs that issued license to opium poppy farmers that sold their harvest to the government, thereby controlling the flow of a once illicit commodity.

<sup>45</sup> BBC 2010.

<sup>46</sup> BBC 2004.

an extremely low price for their product while the drug lords and narco-cartels earn large margins.

### **U.S. INTERESTS**

The interests of the United States with regard to the status of narcotics in Afghanistan center primarily on the issues of insecurity and corruption. In the southern provinces of Afghanistan that are not under the firm control of either the Taliban or U.S. and ISAF forces, heavily armed narco-cartels and Taliban insurgents create instability and challenge the authority of the GIRoA.<sup>47</sup> These groups receive funding primarily through the illicit opium trade. Thus, combating the opium trade is within U.S. interests to improve the stability of Afghanistan by depriving these groups of their funding.

Afghanistan's southern provinces produce the majority of the country's opium, but many other provinces yield smaller quantities and trafficking routes certainly span throughout the nation and into neighboring countries, making its influence pervasive. The lure of making large sums of money from engaging in or supporting the narcotics trade has made opium a major contributor to the spread of corruption within the country and the region. Currently the United States views the high degree of corruption within all levels of government as a major detriment to the strengthening of the GIRoA and it is within U.S. interests to rectify this problem.

Chapter 2 of this report identifies corruption as the result of a mentality which views government positions as a commodity that can be purchased and exploited for personal benefit.<sup>48</sup> Breaking the link between the illicit opium market and government officials will significantly assist in ending this mentality. This division will decrease corruption and strengthen the GIRoA, which will serve U.S. interests by providing stability in the region, and preventing Afghanistan

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 23-24.

<sup>48</sup> See Chapter 2 for an elaboration of this issue.

from once again becoming a safe haven for terrorist groups like al Qaeda. The State Department can advance U.S. interests by implementing counternarcotics policies which combat drug trafficking, halt the flow of opium revenue to insurgents, and reduce corruption in the GIRoA.

## **OPTIONS**

The five options below provide the U.S. Department of State with a variety of directions in which it may seek to implement reform to the current counternarcotics policy to advance U.S. interests in Afghanistan. These options offer both short and long term strategies, and address what can be done at the international level all the way to the village level. Analysis of each option is provided in order to construct a recommendation after weighing the benefits and potential concerns of each option.

1. Offer opium farmers alternative crops to opium poppy cultivation, which increases support for the alternative livelihoods pillar of the GIRoA's Eight Pillar approach to counternarcotics. Additionally, U.S. forces should no longer engage in eradicating opium poppy fields, but should leave this task solely to GIRoA personnel so that farmers do not perceive that foreigners are intervening in their way of life. With increased aid and guidance from the State Department, an effective implementation of the GIRoA's Eight Pillar program can begin to substantially curtail the production of opium while not threatening the process of building trust between rural communities and coalition partners. Alternative livelihoods could be provided by a focus on: (a) implementing a revised AVIPA-Plus voucher program which is more in tune with local practices and values than the current program;<sup>49</sup> and (b) coordinating larger projects that can provide

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<sup>49</sup> For more information on agricultural development practices that incorporate local institutions and practices, see Chapter 5.

alternative livelihoods for farmers above the individual farm level. The State Department must encourage the GIRoA to adopt these two sections of the option simultaneously with infrastructure development projects, so that entire areas can be endowed with all the necessary factors to diversify crops.<sup>50</sup> In consideration of the unique set of challenges present in the four southern provinces that produce the largest amount of opium, option 1 should only be applied to all other provinces still engaged in opium poppy cultivation.

- a. The State Department and USAID should incentivize opium poppy farmers to begin cultivating alternative crops through an AVIPA-Plus voucher program that respects traditional agricultural practices. In contrast with the current AVIPA-Plus program, the revised version should recognize the important role the village *shura* can play in legitimizing the program through its consent and recommendations.
  - b. Above the farm level, the State Department and USAID can take big steps toward creating alternative livelihoods for opium poppy farmers by financing and helping to organize building projects for community owned facilities that would contribute directly to the viability of growing licit crops. Such facilities could include grain mills, dams, packing facilities, or cold-storage facilities. Again, the village *shura* must be convinced of the importance of this program and included in the decision-making process.
2. The State Department should work closely with Afghanistan's law enforcement officials and those of its neighbors to coordinate interdiction efforts against the trafficking of illicit narcotics within and across Afghanistan's borders. This Option reflects the recent State Department policy shift away from eradication and focusing more on interdiction of drug

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<sup>50</sup> For more information on infrastructure, see Chapter 4.

traffickers.<sup>51</sup> Within Afghanistan, the State Department can promote an increased role of the DEA to better train and equip national law enforcement officials so that interdiction efforts may be expanded throughout the entire country. Outside of Afghanistan, attention needs to be given to the recently founded CARICC to put pressure on anti-trafficking efforts in the Central Asian republics as well as the Russian Federation. Pakistan and Iran must also be engaged in a dialogue centering on the issue of interdiction. This option envisages a close State Department-DEA partnership working to facilitate the creation of relationships with counternarcotics personnel within the region. For countries such as Pakistan or the member nations of the CARICC, the State Department can support coordinated international interdiction efforts via a diplomatic route which seeks closer ties between the DEA and the crime fighting and counternarcotics elements within each country. Due to the tensions between Iran and the United States, pushing for greater interdiction by the Iranian government may be best achieved through using the United Nations as a mediator. The following subsections outline the various components of this interdiction Option:

- a. This Option provides a plan to directly secure U.S. interests related to counternarcotics by supporting efforts by the DEA to better train and equip Afghan police and military forces to interdict the drug traffickers within the country. Arming Afghan law enforcement personnel with the resources and training necessary to combat the most powerful figures within the Afghan opium trade rather than pursuing policies that harm and alienate economically disadvantaged poppy farmers will ameliorate tensions between the GIRoA and

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<sup>51</sup> State Department 2010, 16.

rural communities, thereby leading to a more stable country. Providing effective counternarcotics and interdiction training to Afghan police and law enforcement personnel will also allow Afghanistan to achieve eventual self-sufficiency in this area. However, one serious obstacle threatening the efficiency of interdiction personnel in Afghanistan is the specter of corruption, especially through bribes given to police by the narco-cartels.

- b. The Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre offers the State Department-DEA partnership a new mechanism through which U.S. interests can be met by establishing a dialogue with the organization, which seeks to coordinate counternarcotics and interdiction efforts among these countries, many of whom are host to the narco-cartels that transport illicit Afghan opium through their borders. The CARICC has already formally expressed enthusiasm for forming a relationship with U.S. agencies such as the DEA, and the State Department must approach the institution to initiate a dialogue that results in it and the DEA playing a helpful role in improving interdiction of drug trafficking in Central Asia. This option does risk the State Department committing to a very recently formed organization that may encounter problems associated with lack of resources or political will to keep it running efficiently.
- c. The State Department, partnered with the DEA, must engage Pakistan in a trilateral dialogue with the GIRoA to advance the interests of all three parties through coordinated interdiction of drug traffickers. The primary threat to the success of this proposal would come from corruption within the ranks of Pakistan's police force. Pakistani counternarcotics officials, receiving training and



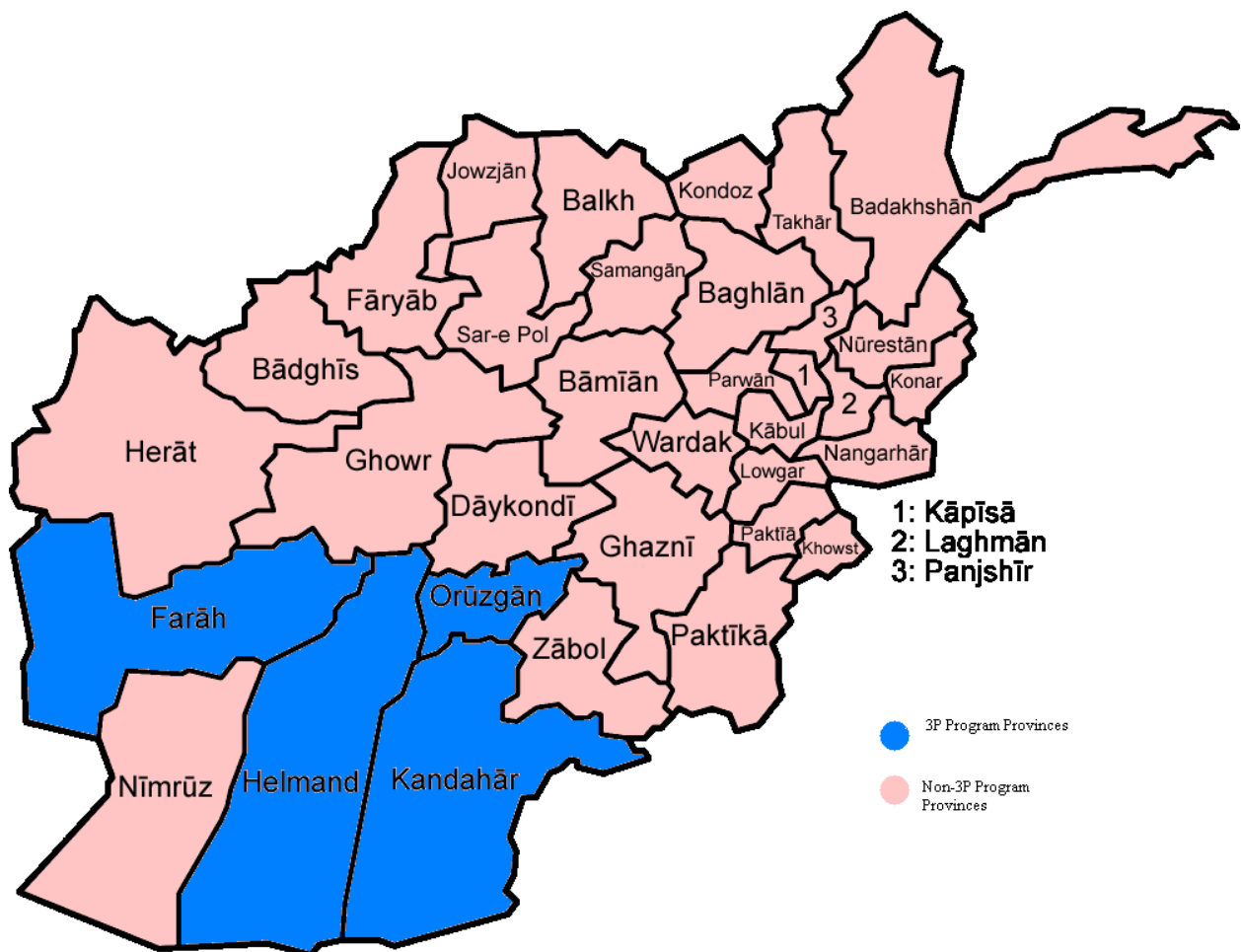
support from the DEA, need to coordinate their efforts with those of their Afghan counterparts to significantly reduce the quantity of opium that crosses the border.

- d. Considering the diplomatic tensions between the U.S. and Iran, a State Department-DEA partnership should attempt to improve Iran's capacity to disrupt narco-cartels by fostering a closer relationship with the UNODC. Corruption within the Iranian police force coupled with the mistrust Iran feels toward the UN present challenges that may be outside the ability of the U.S. to influence in regard to counternarcotics. Because Iran is the primary route for channeling illicit opium out of Central Asia, ways of improving interdiction within the country must be explored by the State Department so that the revenues of Afghan opium stop flowing to narco-cartels or insurgents, which threaten U.S. interests. Luckily there is political will on behalf of the UNODC to increase Iran's interdiction capacity on its border with Afghanistan and recognizes the need for an "integrated border control approach" with Afghan counternarcotics law enforcement personnel.<sup>52</sup>
3. Encourage the GIRA and U.S. allies to support and implement a plan that would add a fundamentally new dimension to the narcotics battle--a transition that incorporates Afghanistan's opium production into a licit and government controlled industry to supply Western pharmaceutical companies with high quality opiates at competitive prices. The Poppy to Pill Program, or 3P, rests on the assumption that control of the domestic opium market in the hands of a government-owned enterprise would inhibit profits from lining

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<sup>52</sup> UNODC 2005, 6.

the pockets of militants, while simultaneously reducing corruption by establishing monitoring systems to ensure accountability among those involved in the trade.



**Figure 2; Provincial map of Afghanistan indicating the four 3P provinces in blue.**

As shown in Figure 2, the Poppy to Pill Program does not suggest a nation-wide licit opium industry, but rather should be implemented only in the four provinces that produce the large majority of Afghanistan's illicit opium: Farah, Helmand, Kandahar, and Uruzgan. Revenues from the sale of Afghan opium through the 3P program would serve to finance the GIRoA as well as provide capital at the village level for rural development in these four resource-poor provinces. In order for the State Department and the GIRoA to carry out this option, a greater degree of security must be provided in the four

provinces that will host the 3P program, such as the recent one into Helmand province, codenamed Operation Moshtarak. The Poppy to Pill Program offers the United States a valuable tool to secure American interests in Afghanistan and the region. Soon after security forces have cleared these provinces of insurgents and Afghan police forces begin interdiction of drug traffickers, the State Department and the GIRoA can then establish the necessary features of the 3P program and take advantage of the void left by narco-cartels by offering opium poppy farmers a way to make money in a fair and legal environment. If the State Department and the GIRoA implement this program swiftly and aggressively then the 3P program can rapidly begin depriving the insurgency and drug lords of opium revenues, which would contribute to the stabilization of southern Afghanistan.

Three challenges may arise in the State Department's efforts to implement this option. First, the State Department must levy political support for the 3P program domestically, with the GIRoA, and with U.S. allies operating in the four southern provinces: the British, the Canadians, and the Dutch. Second, security forces must ensure that the conditions on the ground in the four provinces are adequately stable to begin implementing the program; without security the Poppy for Pill Program cannot succeed. Third, considering the market conditions for licit opium caused by a surplus in production, significant incentives must be presented to pharmaceutical companies to spark interest in buying the licit opium yielded from the program.

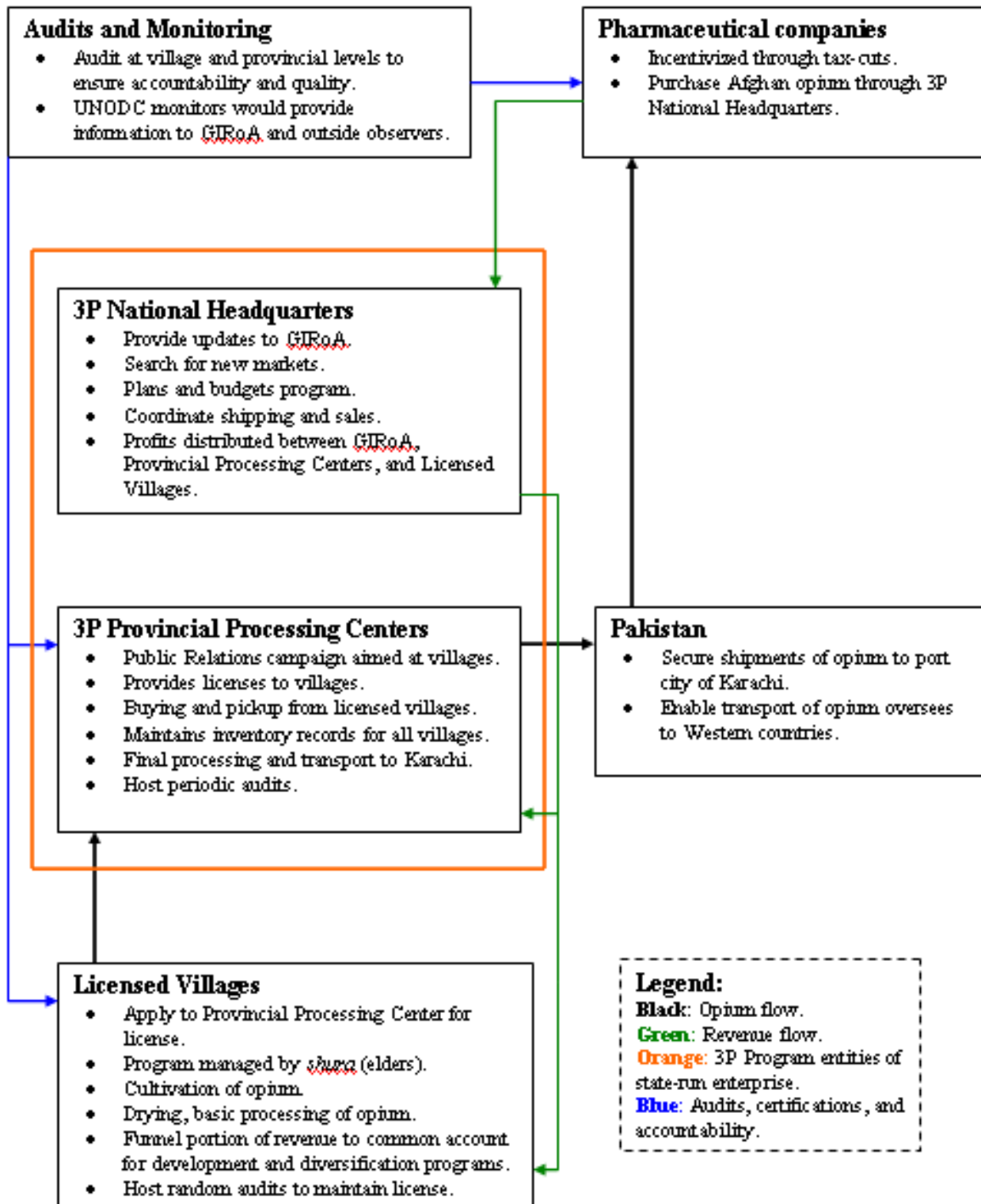
Once established, a GIRoA-owned company would run the Poppy to Pill Program. The company would be administered through a central office in charge of: providing information to the GIRoA, searching for new markets to sell licit opium,

creating a budget, coordinating shipping and sales, and distributing profits between the GIRoA, the company's provincial processing centers, and licensed villages. The four provincial processing centers would be responsible for: implementing a public relations campaign to inform villagers of the program, providing licenses to villages, buying and receiving opium from licensed villages, maintaining inventory records for all villages, processing and shipping the finished product to Karachi, and hosting audits periodically to ensure the legality of operations. The following diagram displays the various institutions involved in the Poppy to Pill Program and the interactions between them.

The villages wishing to participate in the Poppy to Pill Program would first need to acquire a village license through the local Provincial Processing Center. Then the village *shura*, or group of elders, would administer the program within their village and make sure farmers do not sell any opium to drug traffickers or insurgents. If a village is found to be selling opium illicitly, its license will be revoked. Licensed villages would be responsible for the cultivation, drying, and basic processing of the opium. Revenues gained from the sale of the opium to the GIRoA-owned enterprise would go in part to pay farmers, while a portion of the money would go to a village fund, used to pay for programs that benefit the whole community. Random audits would assist the process of ensuring that licensed villages maintain within the terms of the license. The Poppy to Pill Program also contains the following provisions necessary to ensure its success:

## Poppy to Pill Program (3P)

### Processes and Supply Chain Structure



- a. The State Department should attempt to use the Poppy to Pill Program as a fulcrum to leverage the Pakistani government and military into supporting the Afghan licit opium industry. Of all Afghanistan's neighbors, Pakistan must play the most important role: that of allowing processed Afghan opium to be transported via road from the Southern provinces, through southwestern Pakistan, and to the port city of Karachi to be shipped overseas to U.S. and potentially European pharmaceutical companies. While seeming to be a logistically viable point through which to ship the licit product, opium shipments should avoid Quetta due to its affiliation with illicit opium trafficking and the insurgency.<sup>53</sup>
- b. Due in large part to the surplus of licit opium on the market today and to the challenge posed by countries with established licit opium industries like Australia and France, the State Department must work closely with the GIRoA, international allies, participating U.S. agencies, and U.S.-based pharmaceutical companies to establish the incentives necessary for pharmaceutical companies to begin buying large quantities of Afghan opium through the Poppy to Pill Program. Perhaps the most effective and immediate method for creating a strong incentive for domestic pharmaceutical companies to purchase Afghan opium should be pursued through corporate tax cuts for companies that agree to purchase opium from the GIRoA's state-owned licit opium enterprise. If approved by Congress, these corporate tax cuts will effectively reduce the price of Afghan licit opium exported via the Poppy to Pill Program to levels below those of competitor nations.

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<sup>53</sup> Gretchen Peters, 2009, 23-24.

The governments invested militarily or politically in Afghanistan and which host pharmaceutical companies within their borders must be engaged in dialogue with the State Department to encourage a more global pharmaceutical support of the Poppy to Pill Program. If government leaders in allied countries can be convinced of the importance of backing the 3P program through creating incentives for pharmaceutical companies to buy licit Afghan opium, then the program will be strengthened by increased demand.

The state-owned enterprise created by the GIRoA to oversee the 3P can also benefit from the assistance of the State Department to help implement internal reforms that shape the company into a lean enterprise that actively seeks to reduce costs and increase efficiency. Such practices can translate into lower prices for Afghan opium on the global market, thus creating ever more attractive incentives for pharmaceutical companies to purchase it.

If the Poppy to Pill Program were implemented in the four mentioned provinces, it would require a rapid dissemination of information to villages so that farmers and village elders understand and appreciate the moral and economic benefits associated with a switch to licit opium production.

- c. Corruption and mismanagement pose grave concerns for a future licit opium program, thus the U.S. should encourage three crucial aspects of the plan designed explicitly to maintain the legitimacy and efficacy of the program: international auditing firms, logistical monitoring equipment, and the role of international monitoring institutions. The first part of this plan, bringing auditing firms into Afghanistan, would

provide third party monitoring services for the various aspects of the supply chain required to take opium produced at the village level to the point at which it leaves the country. Firms such as Intertek or Specialized Technology Resources, both already present in Pakistan and China, and which also have extensive expertise in the pharmaceutical field, could be brought into the country under the condition that the security of the auditors could be guaranteed. The State Department should also assist in negotiations between the GIRoA and the auditing firms so that the latter agree to train and hire Afghan citizens in an effort to build legitimacy and create jobs. Apart from monitoring the Poppy to Pill Program, these companies will provide essential services to emergent domestic industries attempting to reach global markets as the country's economy develops.

The State Department also must pressure the GIRoA to incorporate effective logistical tracking equipment and practices into the operations of the enterprise responsible for regulating the production and sale of licit opium. The goal of such a move relates to the difficulties of tracking a commodity produced in a decentralized model over a large geographic area that could easily be diverted to support illicit trafficking. An example of technology that could be harnessed to significantly bolster tracking of opium is through the iGPS technologies that are being developed and marketed by Intelligent Global Pooling Systems. iGPS systems have already begun to be incorporated into the global retail sector to track products in all corners of the world based on microchips imbedded in pallets or



potentially other packaging systems that can be traced via satellites. With improvements in infrastructure in southern Afghanistan, these types of logistical tracking systems can be used, and the State Department must convince the GIRoA to adopt them.

Another crucial element of the program that would combat the production and trafficking of illicit opium would be the use of international institutions designed to monitor and control the flow of narcotics and other drugs throughout the world. With regard to both licit and illicit flows of opium and its derivatives, the UN Office of Drugs and Crime and the UN International Narcotics Control Board play a key role in monitoring the opium production and trafficking. To encourage the active support and presence of these two United Nations institutions within Afghanistan, the State Department must inform Ambassador Susan Rice about the nature and importance of the Poppy to Pill Program so that ties can be established between the State Department, the GIRoA's licit opium enterprise, the UNODC, and the INCB. The information gathered by the UNODC and the INCB on the status of the 3P program will the GIRoA and the international community to monitor the progress of the enterprise. Such international institutions will play a key role in maintaining the legitimacy of the Poppy to Pill Program (mainly through the UNODC) while also securing the longevity of the program through the INCB. The INCB is the primary international facilitator for creating new markets for opium-derived pharmaceuticals, and as demand for licit narcotics grows in the developing world, this institution will play a key role in linking the supply of Afghan licit opium to these emerging markets.

4. The Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief should combat narcotics production by ensuring the implementation of desperately needed development programs through the coordination of the numerous NGOs present in Afghanistan, which would allow opium poppy farmers to diversify their crops and eventually stop producing opium.<sup>54</sup> The State Department should serve as a mediator between ACBAR, USAID, and the office of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy to identify areas of concern and channel donor funds to needy projects and communities. Fundamentally, this approach aims to reconstruct rural communities, especially in areas that have had little or no GIRoA contact thus far in the conflict, and to provide families with the opportunity to diversify their mode of income, whether through planting new crops or taking part in other areas of the economy. The premise of this Option is that current eradication efforts are counterproductive because they leave farmers even more desperate, which leads to further instability. Although niche exists within Afghanistan's development efforts for organizations like ACBAR and the NGOs it regulates, counternarcotics strategies must not rest on their efforts. The issue of insufficient security has meant that many NGOs present in the country merely stay in protected urban centers, while opium farmers live often far from these areas. Another serious concern stems from a lack of oversight and accountability related with NGO work in the country. NGOs often do not incorporate the practices and knowledge base already existent in the communities they attempt to serve, and this has been shown to be an ineffective approach to rural development. Thus, Option 4 proves too much of a liability for the State Department to risk American interests by adopting this strategy.

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<sup>54</sup> ACBAR, 2009; ACBAR's purpose in Afghanistan is to "serve and facilitate the work of its NGO members in order to address efficiently and effectively the humanitarian and development needs of Afghans."

5. This option seeks to re-examine the strategy of spraying the country's poppy fields with herbicides to quickly eradicate the bulk of the country's opium production. This policy can be effective in so far as it would drastically curb opium production before Obama's July 2011 date to begin the removal of military force. However, this approach has little regard for the degree of ecological devastation that herbicides could inflict upon rural areas and does not consider whether it would lead to famine in rural communities that already suffer from inadequate access to food and water. An option that leaves thousands of farmers without a means to support their families runs contrary to the interests of the GIRA and the U.S., as this would create an ideal set of circumstances for the Taliban to recruit angered men to swell the ranks of the insurgency and further destabilize Afghanistan. If U.S. counternarcotics policy focuses on reducing instability then widespread use of herbicides would be a detriment to the U.S. mission in Afghanistan.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

To establish a comprehensive counternarcotics policy that provides a short and long-term plan to combat the production of illicit opium in Afghanistan the State Department should adopt Options 1 through 3. These three options provide a framework through which the State Department can best secure U.S. interests in Afghanistan and Central and South Asia. These recommendations are distilled from a careful examination of the issues associated with the illicit opium market, and past counternarcotics policy, maintaining those approaches that worked and replacing those that failed with more viable and creative options. Again, military forces and law enforcement officials must provide a basic level of security in rural areas, and especially in the

south where the situation of illicit opium remains dire, to allow these options a chance to aggressively tackle this issue.<sup>55</sup>

Option 1 urges the State Department to pressure and work closely with the GIRoA to strengthen its Eight Pillar approach throughout the northern and central provinces of Afghanistan where it has a greater chance of success due to the smaller scale of opium production in these provinces and the relatively high degree of security and stability. The State Department should aim to strengthen the GIRoA's counternarcotics strategy by increasing the focus on providing alternative livelihoods for opium poppy farmers through a revised AVIPA-Plus voucher system along with implementing larger community-based programs to help at the village level. The State Department should adopt this option as part of its counternarcotics strategy because it offers farmers a way to sustain their families through the cultivation of legal crops, which keeps them from engaging in the illicit opium market or joining the insurgency to make money. This option can begin immediately and can lead to a reduction in the amount of opium revenues going to finance the Taliban, as well as decreasing the amount of money and influence that narco-cartels can have within the Afghan government, thereby helping to reduce corruption.

Option 2 focuses on interdiction of drug trafficking within Afghanistan and in the Central and South Asian regions. While the most recent State Department counternarcotics policy recognizes the value in pursuing interdiction, this option recommends that the State Department intensify its intentions and broaden its role.<sup>56</sup> Facilitating collaboration between the DEA and Afghan security and law enforcement officials falls within the purview of the State Department, but this option recommends that it expand this role through working with international institutions and foreign governments to implement an interdiction strategy throughout Central

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<sup>55</sup> For further discussion on the development of Afghan security forces, please see Chapter 1.

<sup>56</sup> State Department, 2010, 1.

and South Asia. While this option could have positive short term effects, it is designed to train Afghan officials and give them the knowledge and skills necessary to maintain interdicting drug traffickers in the long term. This option directly impacts two primary U.S. interests in Afghanistan by reducing the amount of corruption in the government through law enforcement, and improving security in the country by preventing the flow of opium money from getting in the hands of the Taliban.

Option 3 recommends that, once the southern provinces in Afghanistan see a marked improvement in the level of security in rural areas, then the State Department, along with the GIRoA and U.S. allies, work quickly to implement the Poppy to Pill Program so that opium poppy farmers can immediately begin engaging in the program and receiving revenue from the sale of legal opium to the GIRoA's state-owned licit opium enterprise. If the 3P program can be implemented quickly and cover a large portion of the four provinces which will host it, then it can start channeling processed opium away from the illicit sector and into the legal, global narcotics market. Not only will this diminish the Taliban's ability to fund its operations through the sale of opium – and thus decrease its ability spread insecurity in Afghanistan – but it will also empower licensed villages to start agricultural diversification, leading to a more economically stable south. The accountability and monitoring mechanisms built into option 3 will also advance the U.S. interest of reducing government corruption, as decreasing the quantity of illicit opium in the hands of drug lords will decrease their ability to bribe and influence government personnel. Additionally, the methods and technologies built into the program will make it difficult for the GIRoA-owned enterprise to become corrupt.

The three options address both short and long-term proposals and comprise a recommendation to change the State Department's counternarcotics strategy in Afghanistan and

the Central and South Asian regions. The recommendation also focuses on safeguarding U.S. interests in Afghanistan by focusing on reducing corruption and improving security.

# Building a Market: Preparing Afghanistan for entrance into the Global Economy

Isabelle Langevin

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## Policy Recommendations

- Encourage private sector-led growth
  - Eliminate economic corruption
  - Encourage poverty reduction
  - Eliminate the narcotics economy
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## Abstract

More than 30 years of conflict has left Afghanistan's economy devastated. The successful transformation of Afghanistan into a secure, economically viable state that can meet the aspirations of the Afghan people, live at peace with itself and its neighbors and contribute to regional and international stability will depend upon programs that are narrowly focused on providing a strong foundation for sustainable economic growth and reduce poverty. The objective in the United States with its partnership with Afghanistan is aimed at rebuilding an investment climate through private sector development (1); improving access to market and financial institutions for the Afghan population (2); increasing the Afghan government's capacity to enforce and deliver security and regulations (3); reinforcing regional economic integration and (4) and; providing effective international aid (5).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> State Department 2010

## **ISSUE**

Afghanistan has made significant progress in achieving macro and micro economic stability since the establishment of the post-Taliban administration in 2002. Gross domestic product (GDP) has been growing rapidly, averaging a 17% increase during the past 4 years.<sup>2</sup> However, Afghanistan remains one of the poorest countries in the world, with a GDP per capita of U.S. \$800, and an unemployment rate of 53% according to a 2008 estimate by the CIA World Fact book.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the country's recent economic growth, it has considerable progress to make before it can provide for its people and cannot develop further without prolonged international assistance. Moreover, the high rates of growth in the last four years have resulted from a combination of special factors such as the end of a drought, overflow from the illegal narcotics trade and opium production economy into the legal economy and high rates of foreign assistance.<sup>4</sup> Economic growth is a requirement for Afghanistan to develop into a modern, stable state. However, the current physical, political, and regulatory economic infrastructure cannot support sustained economic growth. Without further economic development, the country will continue to face high unemployment rates, the growth of a narcotics economy, and corruption, all of which have the potential to disrupt security and encourage the spread of Taliban influence.

It is in U.S. interests to provide support to economic development projects that will establish a strong foundation for a sustainable economic infrastructure. It is upon this foundation that the Afghan population will be able to restore economic stability. It is therefore crucial to decide which economic reforms to push forward that will deliver the best results. The U.S. government, the World Bank (WB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) agree that the

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<sup>2</sup> Kuroda 2006, i

<sup>3</sup> The World Factbook 2010

<sup>4</sup> Rotberg 2007, 101



development of Afghanistan's financial sector requires the creation and support of a favorable environment for private sector led economic growth. Such a favorable investment climate (1) will require an increase in access to markets and industries (2), government capacity (3), regional economic integration (4) and foreign assistance (5).

## **BACKGROUND**

The Soviet occupation, the Afghan civil war and Taliban rule have created structural and administrative problems for Afghanistan's economy. These problems include the control of the economy by the state, the discontinuance of budgeting, the distortion of the composition of public spending, the creation of an informal market economy, the erosion of the tax base and the loss of highly qualified Afghan workers who have fled to Pakistan and Iran. These problems have created a "crowding-out effect" on the resources that were available for private investment and public spending that could have had a strong positive impact on economic growth.<sup>56</sup>

Fortunately, since 2001, Afghan authorities have demonstrated strong interest in recovery and reconstruction efforts. Despite the shaky security situation in the country, President Karzai seems committed to the creation of a free and competitive economic system, and private sector driven growth.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Market and Financial Institutions: The Private Sector***

The development of the private sector is central to the Afghan government's policy and vision for the future. Due to decades of conflict, the private sector is oligopolistic, anti-competitive, and unable to benefit from the capital flows arising from globalization. The private

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<sup>5</sup> Fujimura 2004, 67

<sup>6</sup> Rotberg 2007, 132

<sup>7</sup> Fujimura 2004, 3

sector also works mostly through social and political networks.<sup>8</sup> As a consequence, Afghanistan's private sector is largely informal, undocumented, and involves many illegal and irregular activities (see Table 1). There have been improvements since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, such as the growth of the mobile phone companies but in general, there have been very few foreign investments. Rebuilding the Afghan economy will involve a shift from illegal to legal economic activities as well as from a low-productivity informal economy to a high productivity formal economy.<sup>9</sup>

**Table 1: Economic Activities in Afghanistan<sup>10</sup>**

<i>Formal Activities</i>	Those activities that are registered with the government or pay tax
<i>In kind activities</i>	Where there is no market transaction, more or less legal. Examples: subsistence agriculture output; sharecropping; services such as blacksmith, carpenter, thresher; non-monetized exchange of goods and services between households.
<i>Extralegal Activities</i>	This involves a market transaction. This in fact would become legal if the action was registered. Examples: money exchange dealers; small shops and traders; small manufacturing; agricultural production; construction and registered NGOs that are actually for-profit entities
<i>Irregular Activities</i>	Production and Transactions that break aspects of Afghan law. Examples: trade in illegally exploited resources, such as illegally harvested timber or illegally mined emeralds; illegal use of gravels and construction materials; smuggling; re-export of Pakistani imports back into Pakistan.
<i>Illegal Activities</i>	Output that is universally illegal. Examples: opium; bribe taking by officials; human trafficking; prostitution; forced labor; excavation and theft of archaeological artifacts; arms trafficking; land seizures. Activities encompass "war economy" (financing war and insurgency) and "black economy" (run for profit).

<sup>8</sup> World Bank 2005, 52

<sup>9</sup> Rotberg 2007, 102

<sup>10</sup> World Bank 2005, 7-9

## Enterprises

Throughout Afghanistan, the few large enterprises that employ more than 250 workers are mainly foreign financed. Medium-size enterprises that employ 50 to 250 workers mainly center on construction with a few pertaining to services, and are mainly financed locally. The rest of this sector is comprised of small- and micro-enterprises, as well as businesses that have been registered as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The lack of business investment is due mainly to constraints that inhibit investments and restricts production output (see Table 1-2).<sup>11</sup> There is the potential to raise the level of output and investments by reducing if not eliminating these constraints.

**Table 1-2: Median Output per Worker (US\$ for manufacturing firms with fewer than 100 workers)<sup>12</sup>**

Afghanistan	Pakistan	Uzbekistan	India	China	Tajikistan	Syria
3,333	10,043	567	9,146	20,374	1,859	4,333

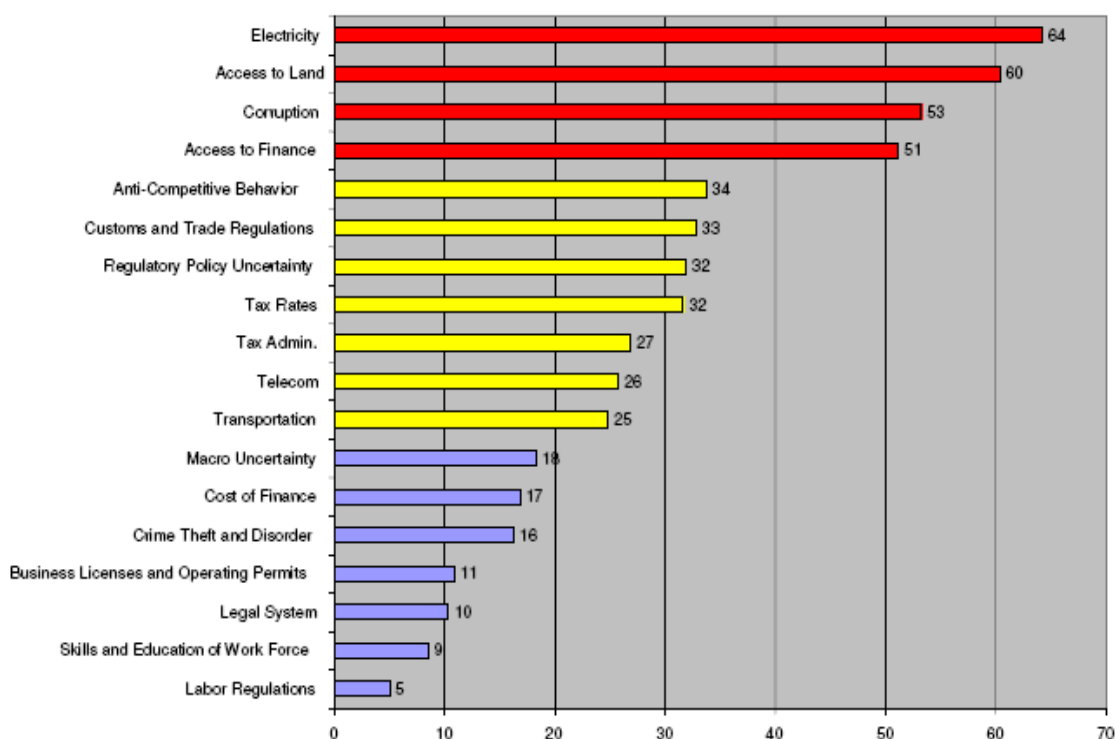
A WB survey, agreed upon by more than 50% managers, indicates that the major severe impediments to successful firms are: electricity shortages, access to land, corruption, and access to finance.

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<sup>11</sup> Rotberg 2007, 107

<sup>12</sup> World Bank 2005, 2

**Table 1-3: Afghanistan: Percentage of Firms Citing Constraint as Major or Severe<sup>13</sup>**



## Electricity

Infrastructure deficiencies, such as inadequate power supply, are some of the most binding constraints for private investors and enterprises. In 4 out of 5 cities surveyed, power was the main business constraint. Most equipment in the power sector is old, and unreliable, and back-up equipment is rare. Only about 76% of established companies in urban areas reported themselves to be connected to the power grid, which only provides power for about 6.5 hours a day.<sup>14</sup> Deprived of power, businesses rely heavily on generators (see Table 1-4).

<sup>13</sup> World Bank 2005, 31

<sup>14</sup> World Bank 2005, 34

**Table 1-4: Percent of Firms Owning Generators<sup>15</sup>**

Afghanistan	Pakistan	Uzbekistan	India	China	Tajikistan	Syria
76	42	2	64	18	0	73

**Access to Land**

Access to land is the most pressing issue for many private firms. It is very difficult to get a clear ownership title to new land, especially service land. The lack of certainty, corruption, insurance, and the overlap of Afghan legal systems discourage potential investors from entering the market as well as existing businesses from making large new investments. In the 2005 Doing Business survey, about 56% of firms that had tried to purchase new land were unsuccessful and for those who were successful, it took an average of 252 days and cost 9.5% of the value to register a property.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, due to government instability, properties have changed hands many times but with few records of these transactions.

Returning refugees and displaced persons have exacerbated the problem and now much of the best land has many claims on it. Even properties that have valid documentation are not free of litigation. Oftentimes, multiple titles are issued under different political regimes, which leads owners to engage in ongoing land disputes. Another complication comes from the different legal foundations that exist in Afghanistan for claiming land tenure.<sup>17</sup> For example, landowners may use *sharia* law, customary law, or evidence from the land register to demonstrate their rights.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Ibid 37

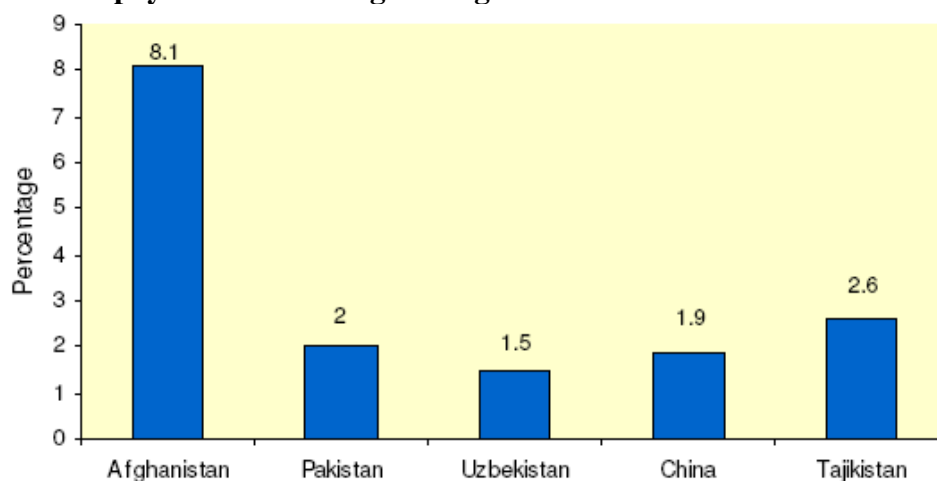
<sup>17</sup> Ibid 38

## Corruption<sup>18</sup>

Corruption is a widespread concern for Afghan business owners as well as for local and foreign investors who do not have powerful patrons or do not understand the system. A 2005 WB survey shows that 8% of the cost of sales in Afghanistan goes toward bribes to get things done compared to an average of 2% for surrounding regions (see Table 1-5).<sup>19</sup> This can be partially attributed to the limited government presence in the rural areas where there is no appropriate apparatus for fiscal management.<sup>20</sup>

**Figure 1-5**

**Average unofficial payments made to get things done as a % of sales<sup>21</sup>**



## Progress Thus Far

The Afghanistan Investment Support Agency (AISA) has been working hard with Afghan entrepreneurs. AISA's investment facilitation activities have helped many investors negotiate the regulatory maze without paying bribes. AISA launched a brand new investment journal in 2006, which featured seven articles translated from English to Dari and Pashto and

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<sup>18</sup> For Corruption

<sup>19</sup> Ibid 39

<sup>20</sup> Fujimura 2004, 68

<sup>21</sup> World Bank 2005, 39

covers case studies about doing business in Afghanistan, featured articles, and pieces on business development and regional integration.<sup>22</sup> However, AISA's scope is still limited.

### **Financial Access**

Afghanistan's financial system is only beginning to recover and businesses have almost no access to bank credit and only limited access to banking services generally. In a 2005 Doing Business rankings for a survey called Getting Credit, Afghanistan ranked 153 out of 155 countries.<sup>23</sup> Afghanistan has Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB), which acts as the Central Bank, as well as twelve commercial banks licensed to operate in the country. However, most of these banks are concentrated around Kabul and primarily provide services to international donors and businesses, foreign NGOs and foreign government agencies.

There is no long-term finance from any commercial banks and the maximum tenure of financing for the average Afghan citizen is up to three years. There are an increasing number of non-bank financial institutions including one credit union and microfinance institutions (MFIs) that provide limited service and small amounts of credit. These MFIs have been successful in Afghanistan. In early October 2005, the number of loans made by microfinance institutions numbered more than 200,000 over 27 provinces and amounted to U.S. \$35.7 million.<sup>24</sup> Fifty eight percent of loans were for trade and services, mostly which supported provision for agricultural inputs while 15% were directly for agriculture and 8% for handicrafts. While microfinance has helped farmers and small scale producers, it is not sufficient to support financial needs in rural areas, being only a fraction of the amount needed. As a consequence,

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid 39

<sup>23</sup> Ibid 40

<sup>24</sup> Afghanistan National Developing Strategy 2008, 3

there are a variety of informal money lenders and other credit sources.<sup>25</sup> Afghan firms rely almost entirely on internal funds and money from friends and family to fund their operation costs (See table 1-6).

**Table 1-6: Average Percent of New Investment Financed by Different Sources<sup>26</sup>**

<b>Internal Funds or Retained Earnings</b>	<b>Family and Friends in Afghanistan</b>	<b>Family and Friends Abroad</b>	<b>Bank Credit</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>New Equity</b>
78	13	3	1	2.5	2.5

Due to the official banking system being new and mainly concentrated in the capital, many businesses rely on informal funds transfer systems known as *hawala*.<sup>27</sup> While the majority of local business transactions are cash based, over 10% of sample surveyed said that customers pay them through money exchange deals also known as *hawala* transfers. For foreign investors, 14% of exporters said that foreign customers usually pay in *hawala* transfers, which appear to be more than or at least as efficient as regular bank transfers. *Hawaladars*, or *hawala* dealers also provide short-term loans to finance working capital needs.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Rotberg 2007, 115

<sup>26</sup> World Bank 2005, 40

<sup>27</sup> *Hawala* is an informal value transfer system that relies on the performance and honor of a network of money brokers.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid



<b>Table 1-7      <i>Hawaladars</i> vs. Banks<sup>29</sup></b>	
% of firms with loan from a <i>Hawaladar</i>	21
% of firms with some form of bank credit	0.9
% of domestic firms that primarily pay by <i>Hawala</i> transfer	10
% of domestic firms that primarily pay by bank transfer check, or bank draft	11
% of foreign firms that primarily pay by <i>Hawala</i> transfer	14
% of foreign firms that primarily pay by bank transfer check, or bank draft	30
Average time to clear <i>Hawala</i> transfer from domestic customer	28 Days
Average time to clear a bank draft from domestic customer	7.3 Days
Average time to clear <i>Hawala</i> transfer from export customer	9.2 Days
Average time to clear a bank draft from export customer	7.2 Days

## Security

Afghan business owners surprisingly consider security as a comparatively low barrier to participation in the private sector. A 2005 WB survey indicates that firms have taken precautions and developed arrangements in order to cope with theft and crime such as hiring private security services and negotiating protection arrangements with local power brokers. However, as seen in Table 1-8, these arrangements are costly, usually about 15% of cost sales per firm, ten times more than in China.<sup>30</sup> This is a discouraging factor for potential investors or new business entrants and also causes anticompetitive arrangements by firms that are supported and protected by local power brokers.<sup>31</sup> The lack of concern over security in the survey could also reflect the fact that the survey covered established firms, most of which have been operating in Afghanistan for some time and have been able to find ways to cope with the lack of security.

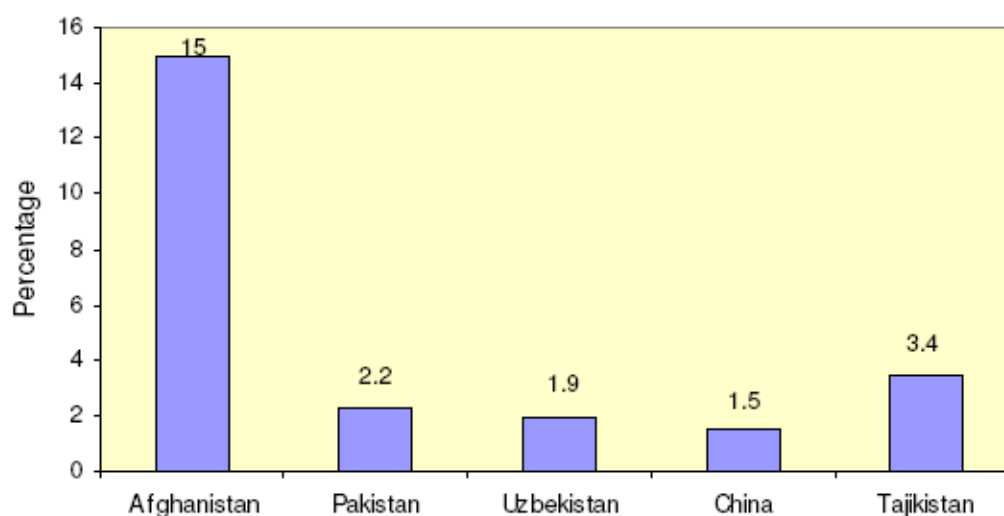
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<sup>29</sup> Ibid 42

<sup>30</sup> Ibid 32

<sup>31</sup> Rotberg 2007, 108

**Table: 1-8: Security Costs as a % of Sales<sup>32</sup>**



### **State Owned Enterprises**

Only about 80 State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) have survived from the 174 that existed 1970s under the communist regime. Only a small number of SOEs are viable; none are self-sufficient, let alone profitable, and for most, employees are paid as ordinary government workers.<sup>33</sup> Most Afghanistan SOEs have limited liabilities, and assets largely in the form of land. However, there has been some progress in the development of privatization. The Afghan government has begun to categorize SOEs into those to be privatized, liquidated, or retained under public ownership. However, preparations for a privatization program are moving slowly, as only a small number of SOEs have been privatized.<sup>34</sup>

### **Markets**

Markets throughout Afghanistan are mostly traditional; sites at which traders meet to make in-person transactions. Most transactions are conducted using currency as well as the practice of bartering, which remains a common form of informal exchange. It is also important to

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<sup>32</sup> World Bank 2005, 31

<sup>33</sup> Fujimura 2004, 96

<sup>34</sup> World Bank 2005, 64

note that market conditions and market functions throughout Afghanistan are not uniform, and in many cases, different market functions are unique to a particular region.

At the moment, there is almost no formal labor market sector in Afghanistan. Labor markets are segmented into family businesses, reconstruction labor markets and donor employment. For example, 55% of typical businesses are family enterprises and 69% of these employ two or fewer workers.<sup>35</sup> At present, residents of rural areas, who make up 80% of the total population in Afghanistan, have no means to either increase technical capacity or expand their access to markets solely on their own.<sup>36</sup>

The Afghan economy is overwhelmingly informal, unrecorded, and untaxed by the central government. This undermines the capacity building and reconstruction process by limiting government revenues results in unreliable and incomplete statistical information. Table 1 shows various economic activities with their potentials for formalization. Non-formal market activities exist across the spectrum of informality and illegality, as defined by the WB, and have the potential for eventual to be brought into the formal economy.

The most pervasive illegal economic activity in Afghanistan is the opium and heroin trade. The economic growth generated by the drug sector, which is enticing for rural farmers and producers, indirectly feeds economic growth in the formal sector. It is also a large stimulus to other economic activities and has linkages to the non-opium economy in areas such as the consumption of commodities, stimulation of domestic production, investment, balance of payments and the value of assets such as real estate.<sup>37</sup> Afghan farmers, producers and merchants who are not involved in the opium production or trade make negligible margins and are trapped

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<sup>35</sup> Fujimura 2004, 26

<sup>36</sup> United States Agency for International Development 2005, 7

<sup>37</sup> Paterson 2006, 7-8

within a micro-level of activity. Other marginalized players include agricultural and craft producers who have limited access to markets due to lack of overall information, tools, income, and ties of personal trust. These factors lock these producers into financial relationships with certain traders and usually results in indebtedness.

### **Producers lacking market access**

Studies on the carpet and raisin markets suggest that producers make meager margins, do not have access to the market supply chain, and are sometimes indebted to intermediary traders. Farmers are often dependent upon traders for access to markets and typically lack materials to sell their products. As a result, many sign contracts with packer/shipper contractors. Farmers will usually negotiate the price and terms of sale with the contractor before the selling process begins, but it is common for the contractor to delay payments, misrepresent the market value of products and attempt to renegotiate on the basis of poor market conditions, knowing that producers have no means of selling their products on the market themselves. This process diminishes the potential development of strategies to increase the value of the end product.



Only when producers know that their products will be valued and paid for by the contractor will producers have the incentive to use quality increasing horticultural techniques.<sup>38</sup>

### **Street Vendors**

The Afghan poor often use small-scale businesses as a survival method, by buying, selling, and reselling a small quantity of goods, often resulting in negligible margins. Street sellers often buy products such as petroleum fuel and medicine from wholesalers or directly from

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<sup>38</sup> Paterson 2006, 21; Shirazi 2010

smugglers. Street sellers therefore offer their customers the convenience of buying such items locally. Street sellers remain a conspicuous presence in markets and are mainly based along main roads on the outskirts of cities. The vendors who own kiosks may, however, have the ability to make larger revenues than the others who simply congregate in the busy street markets. Some of these street vendors do become larger and more profitable market over time but due to the barriers to entry that increase the further “upstream” in the supply chain (as shown in Table 1-3), a vendor is often unable to move up in the market supply chain.<sup>39</sup>

### **Other Industrial Sectors**

According to a 2007 U.S. Geological Survey assessment, Afghanistan has significant amounts of undiscovered non-fuel mineral resources. Mineral resources can become sources of industrial growth and economic wealth for Afghanistan. Copper and iron ore resources, which exist in abundance but have barely been tapped, have the most potential for extraction in Afghanistan. Scientists have also found sizable deposits of precious stones and minerals, including emeralds, rubies, gold, sulfur, copper and mercury.<sup>40</sup>

In August 2009, the United Nations Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan announced that once landmine clearance was completed, mining of mineral resources could begin at the Aynak mining site. Extraction and sale of such resources can provide much needed economic revenue for the Afghan government. Recently, the Afghan Ministry of Mines signed a contract with a Chinese company, Metallurgical Construction Corporation, for the development and extraction of copper at the Aynak mine in the Jalrez Valley, making it the largest investment in Afghanistan’s history.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid 22

<sup>40</sup> U.S. Department of Interior 2007

<sup>41</sup> United Nations Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan 2009

The South Asian News Agency reported on March 8, 2009 that as part of the deal, China must complete an ambitious set of infrastructure projects, including Afghanistan's first national railway line from the country's northern border with Uzbekistan to its southeastern border with Pakistan, a U.S. \$500 million generating station to power the project and augment Kabul's electricity supply, a coal mine to fuel the power station, a groundwater system, roads, new homes, hospitals and schools for mine workers and their families.



The project is structured so that in roughly seven years, the entire work force will be comprised of Afghans. Although employment projections vary, there is general agreement that as many as 10,000 workers could be hired at Aynak, and the coalmine in central Afghanistan, which a road project will link to the copper field. This road project will need thousands of additional workers, so that it is estimated that tens of thousands of indirect jobs will also be

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<sup>42</sup> Landay 2009

created.<sup>43</sup> The project also has the potential to inject hundreds of millions of dollars in royalties and taxes into Afghanistan's economy as well as the creation of jobs.<sup>44</sup>

### ***Economic Governance***

#### **Government Capacity**

Policy reforms in the economic sector have been handicapped by a lack of capacity in the Afghan government to analyze private sector related issues, obtain systematic feedback from the private sector and formulate appropriate policies and programs.<sup>45</sup> In recent years, the Afghan government has set clear policies in favor of a market economy with a regulatory role for the state. It put forward the principle of merit-based civil service. This principle rejects the old spoils system in which political supporters were rewarded with public positions that were not qualified to hold.<sup>46</sup> However, enforcing these changes at the micro level has been difficult. Few provincial ministries have made any consequential changes to meet the new mandates. Although the government has declared the intent to, "close, privatize, or restructure state-owned enterprises," many of the SOEs are too involved with their respective parent ministries. Furthermore, this plan will eliminate government jobs and there are no current provisions made for employees who are laid off.

Many different reform programs' reorganization processes are pragmatic on paper but have been only carried out thoroughly in some ministries while others are hardly involved. A government program appointed NGOs and United Nations (UN) agencies as service providers,

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> World Bank 2005, 66

<sup>46</sup> Rotberg 2007, 117

providing transparency, efficiency, and accountability. However, these consultants and contractors were funded directly by donors not included in the official budget.<sup>47</sup>

### ***Increase in Revenues***

#### **Budget Execution**

Due to the Afghan civil war and the rule of the Taliban regime that followed, traditional revenues steadily declined together with inflows of external assistance and were progressively replaced by illegal off-budget revenues collected by both the central government and local warlords. Actual revenue continually falls short of budget requirements and the central bank often provides the government with unlimited overdraft facilities to cover the resulting budget deficits. The national budget deficits result in high inflation and rapid depreciation of the Afghani currency. The national budget has become a residual instrument of public policies which are conducted and financed mainly by warring local leaders motivated their own factional interests.

Since 2001, Ministry of Finance (MoF) personnel have lacked basic qualifications for their positions and perform their assigned tasks in isolation within different divisions of the agency. The DAB and state-owned banks are also operated outside of the purview of the MOF. Since then, national budget decrees have reiterated the Afghan government's strong commitment to fiscal discipline and no government overdrafts with the central bank. The MoF has been working on revenues centralization and a customs reform package. However, the implementation of these reforms has been a slow process.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Rotberg 2007, 118-119

<sup>48</sup> Fujimura 2004, 33-34



## **Coordinating Roles**

Government regulation of markets in Afghanistan is bureaucratic, confused, contains overlapping functions that are shared within the different ministries, and is often used as a means of extracting rents. Where regulation is needed there is no state capacity to enforce existing rules and regulations.<sup>49</sup> There are persistent conflicts of interest within regulatory agencies. For example, responsibility for licensing and quality testing for private companies and traders is held by departments running SOEs, which themselves import or produce commodities in at least two other ministries, the Ministry of Commerce (MoC) and the Ministry of Public Health.<sup>50</sup>

Government revenues are insufficient to pay salaries, let alone other operating and development costs. As a result, the Afghan government is dependent on the international community for funding its budget. In 2004-2005, 75% of its expenditures were completely off budget and funded directly by donors, with limited interactions with the government. Raising government revenue is a key challenge for Afghanistan.<sup>51</sup>

## ***External Sector***

### **Trade**

Afghanistan is located at the intersection of Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East. Throughout its history, Afghanistan has been a trading nation with strong private sector traditions. The disruption of trade and transit has been due to entry of foreign powers as well as interferences from neighboring countries. Currently, there are large gaps in tariff rates and non-tariff barriers among the different countries in the region as well as border policies such as customs procedures, transshipment requirements and corruption that impede the movement of

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<sup>49</sup> Paterson 2006, 31

<sup>50</sup> Paterson 2006, 31

<sup>51</sup> Rotberg 2007, 119

goods across borders. In the transport sector, visa restrictions, cartels, fees, and capacity constraints limit the transit of goods within countries and generally suppress commerce.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, Afghan transit, customs and logistical procedures inhibit exports, creating a difficult environment for Afghan producer to extend their markets beyond immediate regions.<sup>53</sup> Despite modernization of customs procedures, manufacturing firms report that the customs regime discriminates against them and adds to the burden of trying to set up a new production facility in the country.

Afghanistan has committed to a diversified economy and promotion of labor intensive, export-oriented manufacturing. However, imports far exceed exports in Afghanistan, with an estimated trade deficit of U.S. \$7.604 billion in 2008.<sup>54</sup> Many countries in the region take advantage of Afghanistan's liberal trade regime to flood the Afghan market with cheap products, made cheaper by the relatively high exchange rate for the Afghani. This is a problem given the lack of specified standards for imported commodities into Afghanistan. There is also a lack capacity to remove sub-standard products from the supply chain, which have the potential, in cases such as food and pharmaceutical products, to become public health hazards. In response, the WB has supported a new department within the MoC, the Afghanistan National Standardization Authority (ANSA), to test and regulate consumer products in Afghanistan. It is intended to be the single national standard authority regarding regulations of consumer products.<sup>55</sup>

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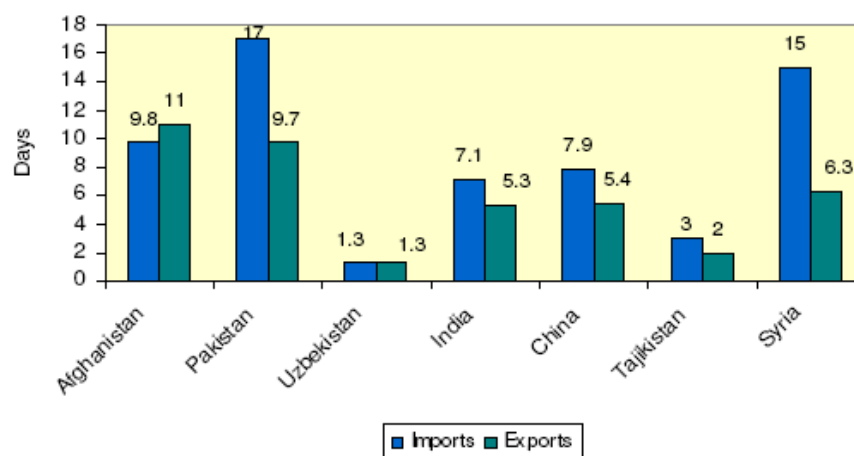
<sup>52</sup> Ibid

<sup>53</sup> Paterson 2006, 35

<sup>54</sup> The World Factbook 2010

<sup>55</sup> Paterson 2006, 10/36

**Table 1-9 Average number of days for goods to clear customs<sup>56</sup>**



Another constraint lies within product certification. Afghan traders are currently unable to certify their products with international food safety bodies such as the Hazard Analysis of Critical Control Points, which is part of the International Standard Organization 9000 and the Euro-Retailer Producer Working Group certification of Good Agricultural Practices.<sup>57</sup> Without certification, many industries also face rent seeking from Afghan customs officials.<sup>58</sup>

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the WB have supported the government of Afghanistan in producing a more effective and transparent system that conforms to international standards regarding custom procedures and other taxes. For example, the new custom code has reduced and simplified the previously large number of customs duty rates to six major categories: 2.5% on essential food and non-food products, 5% on raw materials and capital goods, 8% on the petroleum sector, 10% on semi-manufactured products, 15% on luxury products and 16% for non-priority products. However, a convoluted bureaucracy, the lack of

<sup>56</sup> World Bank 2005, 46

<sup>57</sup> Paterson 2006, 39

<sup>58</sup> World Bank 2005, 46

human and technological capacity at border ports, and lack of enforcement capacity has led to rent-seeking practices by officials, such as unfair tax concessions to favored traders.<sup>59</sup>

### **Progress so far**

Currently holding observer status, Afghanistan has taken steps to apply membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO), but there are numerous institutional hurdles to be overcome before the country is granted WTO accession. Afghanistan already has a liberal trade regime with the lowest tariffs in the region, which will be a contributing factor to possible WTO acceptance.

In November 2005, Afghanistan was admitted to the South Asian

Association for regional Cooperation and has a South Asia Free Trade

Agreement which came into force on



January 1, 2006. Afghanistan also has two trilateral Trade and Transit Agreements: one with Iran and India, and another with Iran and Tajikistan.<sup>60</sup>

### **Domestic Trade**

The majority of products on sale in the urban bazaars of Afghanistan are typically imported: typically, cheap Pakistani and Chinese products. This causes problems for Afghan producers who cannot compete with these low prices due to the high costs of market access. This results in further problems for Afghan producers to compete since production is costly in Afghanistan due to the many market and industry barriers (see Table 1-3). The relatively high

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<sup>59</sup> Paterson 2006, 34; Starr 2009

<sup>60</sup> Paterson 2006, 45

real exchange rate of the Afghani has contributed to higher costs of labor. Other inputs have also limited the competitiveness of Afghan producers in comparison with their foreign counterparts. Due to the fact that buyers often buy products from different traders, traders have developed a system of agreement to agree with each other on pricing. This lack of competitive pricing in bazaars in Afghanistan can be seen in raisin market where the local and provincial raisin wholesale markets, a complex system of price setting, was found to be at work; prices could rise or fall frequently, sometimes within the space of a single trading day.<sup>61</sup>

In local markets, farmers often sell to large wholesale markets, directly to commission agents of exporters, or sit in the market and sell products in small amounts to customers, taking their pricing cues from other products in the market. These pricing systems act sometimes as a disincentive to bulk buying for large orders, since sellers tend to respond to buyers interested in bulk by increasing, rather than decreasing prices so that customers use purchasing agents to buy multiple small lots at irregular intervals. This behavior makes it difficult for traders to procure products opportunistically to meet large overseas orders. Furthermore, exporters cannot negotiate directly with producers and as soon as the economic middlemen are aware that a large order will be placed, particularly from an international company, the price inflates to a level that is beyond the importer's reach.<sup>62</sup>

## **Foreign Aid**

Although the Afghan government has strongly raised domestic revenues to almost 4% of the state's GDP, international assistance funds the majority of the government's recurrent expenses and almost all development programs aimed to rebuild Afghanistan's economy. Under

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<sup>61</sup> Paterson 2006, 28-30

<sup>62</sup> Idib 30

the Afghan government's current plan, the country will be able to fund recurrent expenses in 2016, but development programs would still be entirely dependent upon donor funds.<sup>63</sup>

Foreign aid has a history of bypassing the government budget and taking the form of in-kind support. Foreign aid is particularly aimed at projects and other technical assistance provided through consulting firms. This lack of coordination with the Afghanistan government has not helped its economic development. For example, of the U.S. \$3.058 billion of external finance provided during the FY 2004-2005, U.S. \$2.503 billion was controlled by the economic institutions to which received the economic assistance, over which Afghan authorities had little influence.<sup>64</sup>

In an article published by Afghanistan Online on May 10<sup>th</sup> 2009, Ramazan Bashardost, an Afghan parliament member and former planning minister, explained that when international aid money arrives in Afghanistan, 90% of it is spent on logistics and administration, paying, protecting and accommodating Western aid officials to live in houses that cost U.S. \$15,000 in monthly rent and to own cars that cost on average U.S. \$60,000. These same officials command salaries of U.S. \$250,000 to \$500,000. Outside aid organizations have also spent large amounts of money for buildings with en-suite bathrooms, despite the fact that 77% of Afghans lack access to clean water. Matt Waldman, the head of policy and advocacy for Oxfam in Kabul, estimates that the entire budget of the local Afghan department of agriculture, irrigation and livestock is about \$40,000 USD in Badakhshan. This high degree of aid misuse in Afghanistan through the external budget is not only troubling, but it also reduces much needed resources to aid programs.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Rotberg 2007, 119

<sup>64</sup> Idib 123

<sup>65</sup> Afghanistan Online 2009

Furthermore, foreign assistance that is provided off budget could potentially weaken and undermine the Afghan government's legitimacy in the eyes of citizens who see basic services being provided by foreign organizations and governments instead of their own. Government capacity is often weakened due to staff members leaving for higher paid jobs with contractors or NGOs.<sup>66</sup> The large number of donors and the lack of coordination of all the programs increase the inefficiency of development projects. For example, foreign assistance from one donor is highly fragmented into multiple projects that are designed and executed by consultants and contractors from the donor country without effectively utilizing local knowledge or resources. Oftentimes multiple foreign aid programs work on the same projects without aligning it with government programs and procedures.

### **U.S. INTERESTS**

The United States has two compelling interests in the Afghan conflict. The first is the ongoing, but incomplete effort to reduce and to finally eliminate the threat posed by al Qaeda and related jihadi and insurgent groups, as well as discouraging Taliban rule and reestablishing of normal institutions of government in Afghanistan. The Second is the pursuit of a South and Central Asian region that is stable enough to ensure that Pakistan does not become a failed state or fall under the control of Islamic extremists.<sup>67</sup> There are narrower objectives that should be registered about the "counterterrorism-only" or "counterterrorism-mainly" argument. It is impractical to wage an intelligence-derived counterterrorism campaign along the Pakistan-Afghan border if a cooperating Afghan government is not stable and secure, and thus at risk to

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<sup>66</sup> Rotberg 2007, 124

<sup>67</sup> Coll 2009

fall in the hands of the Taliban.<sup>68</sup> It is therefore in the U.S. interests to actively help create a favorable investment climate for private sector-led growth. This will encourage legal and formal economic activities, which are essential for sustainable economic growth, the elimination of corruption, poverty reduction, and the elimination of a narcotics economy, resulting in the enforcement of Afghanistan's security and stability.<sup>69</sup> As U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack mentioned, security in Afghanistan will give the Afghan people a reason to resist the arguments and activities of the Taliban. It will also reduce trafficking of drugs and the power of warlords, and thus ultimately weaken the Taliban and its hold over people in Afghanistan.<sup>70</sup>

An economically formal and stable Afghan state will gain the trust of the population and the support of the international community.<sup>71</sup> An economically stable Afghanistan will reduce the power of the Taliban and help create conditions to strengthen Pakistan's government in its struggles with the Taliban.<sup>72</sup> It is therefore in U.S. interests to financially provide resources, such as economic establishments, formal trainings and security, which will strengthen the economic infrastructure and improve the investment climate of Afghanistan. The U.S. contribution towards improving security and stability will reinforce its relationship toward Afghanistan and the South Central Asia region.

#### **OPTIONS:**

It is in U.S. interests to pursue options aimed at developing the private sector so that it leads to the formalization and legalization of the current economy in Afghanistan. Options for market development reform will require reforms in five general areas: investment climate, access

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<sup>68</sup> Idib

<sup>69</sup> Kuroda 2006, i

<sup>70</sup> Kaufman 2010

<sup>71</sup> Fujimura 2004, 68

<sup>72</sup> Coll 2009



to market and industry sectors, government capacity, regional economic integration and international aid.

### ***Rebuilding an Investment Climate***

It is the U.S. interests to:

1. Extensively support AISA. This option would promote Afghanistan as an investment destination and to facilitate individual investors. This option would require further employee training by the U.S. in areas such as sales presentation, negotiations, and closing contracts with potential investors as well as basics of accounting and finances.<sup>73</sup>
2. Help improve Afghan institutional mechanisms for delivering credit by providing viable alternative to the informal sector.<sup>74</sup> This option will downside the informal credit lending sector and will provide opportunities for business start-up.
  - a. Support the extension of credit through agricultural input dealers. This option would help small scale entrepreneurs to access credit but often involves chain linked participation of more formal institutions.
  - b. Support the establishment of non-bank institutions such as MFIs. This option has the potential of rapid growth amongst small scale enterprises that lack collateral.
  - c. Encourage strategic alliances between bank and non-bank financial institutions.
  - d. Support integration of traditional credit and fund transfer systems known as *hawala* into the formal credit system.<sup>75</sup> Despite the strong and extensive credit

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<sup>73</sup> World Bank 2005, 67

<sup>74</sup> Ibid 60

and fund transfer networks that are currently in place, more competition is required to ensure that interest rates are appropriate for agricultural purposes.

- e. Support the rehabilitation of state owned banks through implementation of legal and credit information systems. This option would allow the recently arrived banks to provide finance for investment.<sup>76</sup>

3. Help establish and extend banking regulations and supervision practices.<sup>77</sup>

4. Assist in monitoring and addressing anticompetitive practices by larger players.

### ***Supporting Access to the Market and Industrial Sector***

1. Support analysis and alterations of public sector institutions involved in land ownership. Land policies would establish and enforce clear property rights.

- a. Assist in the establishment of industrial parks. Land access would provide a greater possibility of investment from entrepreneurs in the private sector.<sup>78</sup>

- b. Assist Afghan government in adopting a privatization policy to successfully liquidate and privatize SOEs.<sup>79</sup> This option would help restore a level playing field between current enterprises and potential private sector competitors. This option demands highly technical assistance by the employment of outside contractors which would be costly.

2. Provide financial support through MFIs for the enhancement of market structures income through effective linkages between producers, processors, and markets.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Fujimura 2004, 91

<sup>76</sup> Rotberg 2007, 112

<sup>77</sup> Fujimura 2004, 91

<sup>78</sup> World Bank 2005, 56

<sup>79</sup> World Bank 2005, 64

<sup>80</sup> U.S. Trade and Development Agency 2003

- a. Invest in the provision of simple stalls
  - b. Invest in above and below ground storage space
  - c. Invest in the construction of small buildings to safely store pesticides, other inputs, or provide business space for agricultural marketing associations
  - d. Invest in construction of local process factories.<sup>81</sup>
3. Support employment services, public works programs, youth and adult vocational training, enterprise development and social protection.<sup>82</sup> This option would minimize social unrest arising from unemployment and underemployment. However, this option serves is costly and only aimed at short term results.

#### ***U.S. Assistance to Government Capacity***

1. Support a fiscal policy analysis unit as a mean to oversee MoF regulatory practices and responsibilities.
2. Assist Afghan ministries to clearly define and explain their regulatory role and areas of responsibilities.
3. Extend central government's economic authority over the entire country through local leadership. This option induce formal access of revenues in local areas, however, this option is difficult to achieve as local, regional leadership and former commanders remain the main economically influential figure in their home regions. In order to change this order, it will require security force from the U.S.<sup>83</sup>
4. Maintenance of appropriate space between senior politicians and other officials and large business players.

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<sup>81</sup> Paterson 2006, 16

<sup>82</sup> Fujimura 2004, 27

<sup>83</sup> World Bank 2005, 33

5. Assist in enforcement of a transparent budget and bidding process for the rights to the minerals within a transparent system of rights, royalties, and taxes. This option would ensure that natural resource rents are invested to provide a stream of income as the resources become depleted.<sup>84</sup> This option will be enforced in the long term if the options above are followed.

### ***Encouraging Regional Economic Integration***

1. Encourage ANSA to improve regulated customs clearance procedures.<sup>85</sup> This option will lower costs and delays.
  - a. Reduce discretion in valuation and tariff collection
  - b. Establish and enforce Afghan government related shipment inspection sites and fees.
2. Support cooperative border management and transit agreements using “win-win” trade facilitation steps.<sup>86</sup>
3. Enforce specified standards for imported and exported commodities.<sup>87</sup>
  - a. Support department of the Ministry of Agricultural and Animal Husbandry (MAAH) to provide certification service to exporters.
  - b. Raise Afghan authorities’ awareness of international trade requirements.<sup>88</sup>
  - c. Enforce imported products to meet basic standards.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Rotberg 2007, 112

<sup>85</sup> World Bank 2005, 65

<sup>86</sup> Paterson 2006, 40

<sup>87</sup> Ibid 36

<sup>88</sup> Ibid 31

<sup>89</sup> Ibid

4. Support an import heavy program instead of investing in production assets and attempting to manufacture goods on a commercial footing in such a risky market.

This is not recommended since imports already far outstrips exports which create a large deficit that donor aid is currently trying to meet. Donor aid is also not an engine of sustainable economic growth

### ***Increasing Foreign Aid Effectiveness***

1. Support single donor approach to well defined projects executed by both contractors and consultants and local knowledge and resources.<sup>9091</sup> This option will encourage accountability and project completion. This option might adversely affect a project by reducing the foreign aid for each project.
2. Ensure that foreign aid goes through the Afghan government budget and be paid formally by the donor. This will provide accountability and encourage donor coordination system with the Afghan government.<sup>92</sup>
3. Guarantee funding for a period of at least five years, based on the Afghan government taking concrete measures to meet revenue targets.<sup>93</sup> This option provides a safety net for future revenues; however, donor government budgetary processes often do not allow such long term commitments and runs aground as constituencies.

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<sup>90</sup> Fujimura 2004, 66

<sup>91</sup> Rotberg 2007, 124

<sup>92</sup> Ibid 118

<sup>93</sup> Ibid 123

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***Rebuilding an Investment Climate***

The U.S. should extensively financially support AISA (option 1) in using the power of the state to overcome the informal and illegal arrangements and corruption that deter domestic as well as foreign investors.<sup>94</sup>

The U.S. should provide the institutional mechanisms for delivering credit (option 2a-c). This option would promote financing opportunities for small scale to large scale entrepreneurs. Improvements should be pursued in the short term through extending credit to entrepreneurs through agricultural credit dealers (a), supporting the establishment of non-bank institutions (b), and the immediate support of strategic partnerships with bank and non-bank financial institutions (c). In the short term, agricultural input dealer credit to entrepreneurs (a) would have the ability to finance primary inputs for basic farming and manufacturing. In the long run, the U.S. should include their support of the integration of traditional credit and fund transfer systems known as *hawala* into the formal credit system (option 2-d). This would include the self regulation and supervision of *hawala* dealers, drafting written rules and regulations, the registration (without licensing required) of *hawala* dealers, the ability to identify customers and to keep records on their identity and the cooperation in investigation from DAB if need arise.

This option would help in medium to long term countering non-transparent, undocumented, and adverse practices by having the Afghan government partly regulating and supervising this market without pushing it underground.<sup>95</sup> Supporting non-bank financial institutions (b), such as microfinance institutions, private credit bureaus and credit rating agencies in the rural sector for would provide agricultural and small scale entrepreneur lending

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid 112

<sup>95</sup> Fujimura 2004, 91

and offer more reachable services in low population density areas in the short term through partnership enforcement with larger financial institutions and reducing dependency on donor funds. This option will facilitate loan access. Immediate strategic alliances between bank and non-bank financial institutions (c) would help, in the long run, to transfer the non-bank financial institutions' resources to private commercial banks that have a wider array of resources, skills, and capacity to finance long term agricultural development.<sup>96</sup>

The U.S. should financially support the establishment and expansion of banking regulations and supervision practices (option 3) in order to promote activities such as licensing requirements, customer identification, suspicious activity reporting and record keeping. These activities will regular and give capacity to credit lenders.

Credit initiatives created by the U.S. will promote formal investment climate, achieving U.S. interest of lowering level of corruption and rent-seeking and induce private sector led growth.

### ***Supporting Access to the Market and Industry Sector***

The U.S. should provide training toward analysis and alteration of public sector institutions involved in land ownership and registration processes (option 1), in order to eliminate redundancies and inconsistencies amongst formal and informal institutions. Land registration would protect the assets of the poor and allow land assets to be used as collateral for investments. Alterations of land ownership and registration should be pursued through the establishment of industrial parks (a) and the adoption of a privatization policy to liquidate and privatize SOEs (b). An effective industrial park development program (a) would loosen the land and infrastructure constraints faced by private investors. The program would also serve to reduce

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<sup>96</sup> World Bank 2005, 60-61

security related costs discussed in Firms section under Market and Industry Sector. Adoption of a privatization policy would enable SOEs' assets, mainly land assets, to be used productively in the private sector.<sup>97</sup>

The U.S. should be active in providing financial assistance to MFIs to support the enhancement of market structures carried out by Afghans (option 2a-d) that would increase rural income through the effective linkages between producers, processors, and market. An increase in rural income would secure the population's livelihood, lowering the chances for the rural population to become influenced by Taliban activities or involved in opium growth. The enhancement of markets should be pursued through the provision of simple stalls (a), above and below ground storage (b), small market buildings (c), and the construction of local process factories (d). The provision of simple stalls, (a) built and installed in bazaar and market areas by U.S. supported MFIs, would help to clean, sort, and display produce for retail and wholesale sales. U.S. financing of construction of above and below ground storage (b) carried out by Afghans would protect commodities from pests and vermin. U.S. financing of construction of small market buildings (c) carried out by Afghans would provide space for safely storing pesticides and other inputs as well as business space for agricultural marketing associations. This option would also help the integration of farmers by providing market intermediaries and financial services. The U.S.-financed construction of local processing factories by Afghans (d) would maximize the value added to the product at, or near the site of production, bringing greater benefits for downstream players.<sup>98</sup> This option would enhance the food security and income revenues of the rural population through formal activities.

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<sup>97</sup> World Bank 2005, 56/63/64

<sup>98</sup> Paterson 2006, 16



U.S. initiatives to facilitate access to the market and industrial sector will create alternatives to opium poppy growth for agricultural producers, develop formal sustainable markets and create off farm employment through activities that add value to agricultural output, achieving U.S. interest of reducing poverty and the narcotics' economy.

### ***U.S. Assistance to Government Capacity***

#### **Short Term**

The U.S. should send a fiscal policy analysis unit to oversee MoF regulatory practices and responsibilities (option 1). Helping and training MoF employees will, in the short term, strengthen the ability to assume responsibility for policy coordination with international donors such as the IMF, WB and Asian Development Bank. In the long term, this unit will strengthen the ability to project Afghan government revenues, analyze revenue options, coordinate macroeconomic planning with the ADB and other government agencies, recommend fiscal and tax policy and provide input into budgetary process.<sup>99</sup>

The U.S. should assist Afghan ministries to clearly define and explain their regulatory role and areas of responsibility (option 2) in order to remove duplicative or anachronistic practices by local government bodies as well as re-house regulatory roles of SOEs in appropriate ministries when these enterprises are divested.<sup>100</sup> This option would increase overall stability of the Afghan government and lower the possibility of corruption.

The U.S. should promote the extension of the central government's economic authority over the entire country through local leadership (option 3). This option would help increase revenue collection from both direct and indirect sources, including sources such as customs, trade and industry. This option would be favorable for strengthening national economic unity and

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<sup>99</sup> Fujimura 2004, 41

<sup>100</sup> Paterson 2006, 41

lowering corruption occurrences as well as reinforcing formalization of local revenue access and acquirement.<sup>101</sup>

### ***Encouraging Regional Economic Integration***

The U.S. should support ANSA financially to improve regulated customs clearance procedures (option 1), which will lower and enforce formal payments and customs taxes.<sup>102</sup> The improvement of regulated customs clearance procedures should be pursued through reducing discretion in valuation and tariff collection (a) and the establishment as well as the enforcement of government related shipment inspection sites and fees (b). Reducing discretion in valuation and tariff collection (a) would help evenly disperse tariff rates across enterprises to avoid discriminating in favor or against different activities. Establishing and enforcing government regulated sites and fees will lower informal costs and delays.

The U.S. should push for cooperative border management and trade and transit agreements using “win-win” trade facilitation steps (option 2). This option will help the creation and extension of cross-border zones, allowing people and goods to move more easily across Afghanistan’s borders, encouraging informal traders to use formal routes.<sup>103</sup> This will also improve regional stability.

The U.S. should financially support and train the MAAH to enforce specified standards for imported and exported commodities (option 3) in order to reduce delays and potential loss of products. The enforcement of specified standards should be pursued through supporting the MAAH in providing certification services to exporters (a), raising Afghan authorities’ awareness of international trade requirements (b), and enforcing imported products to meet regulated

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<sup>101</sup> Paterson 2006, 31

<sup>102</sup> World Bank 2005, 65

<sup>103</sup> Paterson 2006, 40

standards (c).<sup>104</sup> Enforcing MAAH certification services (a) will help Afghanistan gain access to markets that demand high quality products. Ensuring that trade paperwork and procedures are internationally consistent (b) will improve Afghanistan's competitive value in international trade. Enforcement of regulated standards on imported products will lower the amount of low-cost imported products, improving the ability for domestic producers to compete. It will also lower health issues by regulating low cost and no-brand pharmaceutical products.

Initiatives to support Afghanistan in its path toward regional economic integration will produce regional agreements, and therefore achieve U.S. interest in stability within the South and Central Asian region.

### ***Increasing Foreign Aid Effectiveness***

The U.S. should enforce the single-donor approach to well defined projects (option 1) such as tax administration, expenditure management, or customs administration that are executed by contractors and local population. This option would ensure donor coordination with the Afghan government, ownership and responsibility of the project and leave no question about oversight to ensure the desired outcome.<sup>105</sup>

U.S. economic assistance should go through the Afghan government budget and be paid formally by the donor (option 2) to ensure that NGOs, consultants and contractors are also paid on the Afghan government budget, which will reinforce indigenous capacity building. This option will serve U.S. interest by helping Afghanistan make structural adjustments that will aim to reduce fiscal imbalances and achieve macroeconomic stability and the possibility of private sector growth. Foreign assistance initiatives created by the U.S. will reduce the overall amount of

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid 31

<sup>105</sup> Fujimura 2004, 66

aid while achieving U.S. interest for Afghanistan to meet its revenue requirement, therefore stabilizing the state and reducing its risk to Taliban influence.

# Section IV

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## Public Services



# Education: Turning a New Page

Alyssa Goldberg

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## Policy Recommendations

- Allow the MoE to carry out all projects and initiatives while the U.S. merely provides a supportive role. Give top priority for jobs in education to local qualified Afghans and encourage USAID and American NGOs to coordinate efforts with the MoE. Encourage the MoE to establish shuras as education security councils at the local community level with a system of support at the provincial and national level that will work together to reduce the number of violent attacks of schools. Discourage the visible involvement of armed police or military (foreign or Afghan) in these security efforts.
- Encourage the Afghan government to increase the budget for the recruitment of quality teachers and higher salaries as well as early childhood development programs.
- Encourage and facilitate education for adults particularly those in the ANSF to ensure a successful transfer of responsibility.
- Continue to develop partnerships at the higher education level between U.S. universities and universities in Afghanistan.
- Use statistics and progress in education as a benchmark to determine the success of U.S. and Afghan efforts.

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## Abstract

The importance of education in the development and reconstruction of Afghanistan cannot be underestimated. Eleven million Afghans are illiterate, unable to read the newspaper or write their own name. Since 2001, the United States has invested a significant amount of time and money into defeating the Taliban and al Qaeda, and building a centralized government. These efforts are commendable and extremely important as access to education is impossible without security and government support, but development on the ground cannot succeed at any level without an educated population. In 2007, the National Education Strategic Plan for Afghanistan set a goal that by 2010, 7.7 million children would be enrolled in schools, 60% of which would be girls. Progress has been made, but five million school-aged children still do not have access to education. There are a number of reasons why this goal has not been met. The problems of poor education and illiteracy are often self-sustaining. Without educated parents and teachers, it is very difficult to educate youth. In order to create an educated citizenry with the skills and education to build a functioning government, contribute to the economy, and keep their families healthy, efforts must be made to break the cycle of illiteracy. The U.S. is in a unique position to assist in these efforts and ensure that Afghans of all ages can fulfill their constitutional right to education and realize a brighter future.

## ISSUE

For decades Afghanistan has faced profound devastation due to civil war, foreign invasion and the oppressive rule of the Taliban regime. Not only has this period left Afghanistan with a crumbling infrastructure and rampant poverty, but an education system in ruins.

Afghanistan has one of the highest rates of illiteracy in the world, with 71% of the population over the age of 15, or an estimated 11 million Afghans, unable to read and write in their native language.<sup>1</sup> An educated population is absolutely critical in order for development at all levels to succeed. As a country with one of the youngest populations in the world,<sup>2</sup> now is the time to invest in education for the children that are the future of Afghanistan.

An educated population in Afghanistan will support the social and political development of the country and ensure a quick and safe withdrawal of U.S. troops. As the largest international donor in the rebuilding of Afghanistan,<sup>3</sup> the United States is in a unique position to help develop Afghan education. If used in a productive way, this power can help ensure that Afghans have access to quality education and brighter futures. Afghan citizens want to learn and as one individual expressed, it is “better to fight with knowledge and skills than with guns and bombs”.<sup>4</sup> The Afghan central government is committed to providing free and accessible education for all, but the U.S. and American non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have a significant influence over determining education policy. U.S. assistance for education in Afghanistan during FY2010 is expected to be US\$95 million.<sup>5</sup> A thorough understanding of the education sector is critical for the U.S. to design effective policies to bring sustainable development to Afghanistan.

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<sup>1</sup> Human Rights Watch, 2006, 26

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 25; An estimated 57% of Afghanistan’s population is under the age of 18.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 29

<sup>4</sup> McFarlane, 2009, 2

<sup>5</sup> Katzman, 2010, 77



## **BACKGROUND**

Since Hamid Karzai took leadership of Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban in 2001, a number of changes have occurred at the national level to invest in and improve education. Afghanistan's 2004 constitution requires the government to provide free education up to the secondary level. One of the most important documents in understanding the education system in Afghanistan is the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) which was written in 2007 by the MoE after consulting with Afghan educational representatives, civil society groups, and the international community including UN agencies and NGOs. The NESP provides a review of the state of Afghan education in 2007, examining the priority programs such as primary education, literacy education and Islamic education. Additionally the NESP sets out explicit recommendations and objectives for the Ministry of Education (MoE), one of which is to have 7.4 million children enrolled in grades 1-12 by 2010. While these goals signify a step forward, five million school-aged children remain out of school.<sup>6</sup>

There are four contributing factors to the poor quality and lack of education in Afghanistan: 1) outdated and impractical curriculum, 2) the inability of children to access schools, 3) lack of qualified teachers and 4) gender inequalities. This report will examine these factors as they relate to public education, community based schools, Islamic education, higher education, vocational training and literacy courses.

### ***The Content: Curriculum***

What a student learns in school shapes the choices that the child makes in the future and his or her lifelong beliefs. A solid curriculum is the basis of a strong education system that

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<sup>6</sup> USAID, 2010

provides students with the knowledge needed to participate in the sustainable development of Afghanistan. Because of this, curriculum is an important and widely debated issue.

### **Old Curriculum**

In the past, the U.S. has influenced the curriculum agenda in Afghanistan. During the Soviet occupation of 1979-1989, the U.S. poured funds into Afghanistan in an effort to stop the spread of communism. While the U.S.-funded mujahideen fought the Soviets on the ground, the U.S. and Soviet Union were also waging a war of ideas in Afghan classrooms. The Afghan government, supported by the Soviet Union, forced teachers to teach communism and Marxist ideology. Students were pushed to learn Russian language and, during the course of the school day, teachers were urged to say things in favor of a Soviet friendship with Afghanistan.<sup>7</sup> In response, from 1986-1992 with the help of NGOs, the U.S. developed their own curriculum aimed at countering Soviet influence. The University of Nebraska at Omaha, along with USAID, wrote and distributed educational materials encouraging mujahideen resistance against the Soviets.<sup>8</sup> This explicitly violent curriculum misused the Islamic concept of Jihad as a means of promoting America's political goals in the country. For example:

“alef is for allah, jim is for jihad and shin is for Shakir, who conducts jihad with his sword. God becomes happy with the defeat of the Russians” (First Grade Textbook)

“The speed of a round fired from a Kalashnikov rifle is 800 meters per second. If a Russian is at a distance of 3200 meters from a mujahid [sic] and that mujahid aims at the Russian's head, calculate how many seconds it will take for the bullet to strike the Russian's forehead” (4<sup>th</sup> Grade Math Textbook).<sup>9</sup>

This politicization of the curriculum in Afghanistan's schools bred animosity toward government-provided schooling and resulted in decreased enrollment. Over the course of the

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<sup>7</sup> Jones, 2009, 115

<sup>8</sup> Shirazi, 2008, 214

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 222

program, 15 million copies of the American-developed textbooks were distributed throughout Afghanistan and some remain in use today.<sup>10</sup>

### **Setbacks and Success**

Learning begins very early in a child's development and these critical early years can set the stage for the rest of life. In the article *Invest in the Very Young*, James Heckman argues that, "learning starts in infancy, long before formal education begins, and continues throughout life. Early learning begets later learning and early success breeds later success, just as early failure breeds later failure".<sup>11</sup> Curriculum for very young children in Afghanistan is practically non-existent. Preschools and kindergartens are essentially daycare centers and fail to prepare or excite children for the next stages of schooling.

At the primary and secondary level, curriculum is often outdated and irrelevant to the current realities of Afghanistan. Old textbooks with culturally insensitive, prejudicial references and inaccurate information remain in use in parts of the country that have not received updated materials.<sup>12</sup> In addition to outdated material, a common complaint of students and educators is that curriculum at all levels is more theoretical than practical. Math, science and technical education is minimal because there is limited access to laboratories and necessary equipment. Teachers are unable to demonstrate how lessons translate to practical uses in everyday life and students often graduate without the necessary skills to enter the workforce. Because of this, unemployment rates are high and contribute to widespread poverty and criminal activity.

Efforts to update and write new and relevant curriculum have proven very difficult. There are a lack of competent textbook authors and translators in Afghanistan that are familiar with the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 223

<sup>11</sup> Heckman, 2004

<sup>12</sup> Sigsgaard, 2009, 20

subjects, languages and primary school pedagogy. Textbooks written with assistance from foreign agencies and American universities such as the Teachers College Columbia University have failed to grasp the importance of Afghan history and culture.

Despite setbacks, the development of a new curriculum has been moving forward. Since the fall of the Taliban, the MoE has worked to develop a new standardized curriculum. The hope is that a unified education curriculum will help build national unity, lift education standards and help the MoE regain control of what children are taught in school. The Education Law passed in 2008 now forbids the use of educational institutions for political purposes and addresses the issue of language of instruction.<sup>13</sup> Dari and Pashtu are Afghanistan's two official languages, but 32 different languages are spoken throughout the country.<sup>14</sup> New curriculum will allow students to study a local language in those areas of the country where the majority of the population speaks an unofficially recognized language.

New curriculum has been developed to address the changes that have occurred since the establishment of a new central government and constitution. Efforts have been made to incorporate subjects such as human rights, health and technology. Primary education focuses on basic reading and writing skills with the instruction of English beginning at grade 4.<sup>15</sup> Secondary education for grades 10-12 introduces students to the harmful effects of tobacco, drugs and alcohol as well as the danger of AIDS.<sup>16</sup> Throughout 2008, 61 million textbooks with updated

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<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Education, Education Law, 2008, 11

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Education, The Development of Education, 2008, 3; Languages include Uzbiki, Turkmani, Pashai, Nooristani, Balochi, Pamiry and other languages.

<sup>15</sup> Jones, 2008, 281

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Education, Education Law, 2008, 7

curriculum were printed and distributed by the MoE for grades 1-12 and based on field studies conducted in 2009, a new set of revised textbooks will be introduced countrywide in 2010.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Accessibility***

While many Afghans dream of attending school and learning to read and write, educational facilities are simply inaccessible for a significant part of the population. Both physical and ideological barriers contribute to the inaccessibility of schools.

### **Physical Location and Structure**

There are an estimated 11,264 government-sponsored general education schools across Afghanistan. However, educational facilities are disproportionately located throughout the country. Schools are concentrated in urban areas, but children in rural areas must walk hours to and from the closest schoolhouse. Because 80% of the Afghan population lives in rural areas,<sup>18</sup> the majority of children do not have access to schools within a reasonable distance of their homes.

In Afghanistan's harsh climates, physical buildings that provide a safe and healthy environment for students and teachers are crucial. In 2002, the government estimated that out of 6,000 schools in the country, only 547 had a building that was suitable for teaching children.<sup>19</sup> Some schools do not even have a building and if the weather permits, students sit on the dirt while teachers lecture in the open air. After a flood of foreign aid and development assistance in 2001, many unusable schools were rehabilitated and thousands more were built. Efforts, however, were rushed and uncoordinated, leaving students with school buildings that were constructed without consideration of environmental factors or the needs of children. Foreign

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<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Education, *The Development of Education*, 2008, 31

<sup>18</sup> Jones, 2008, 287

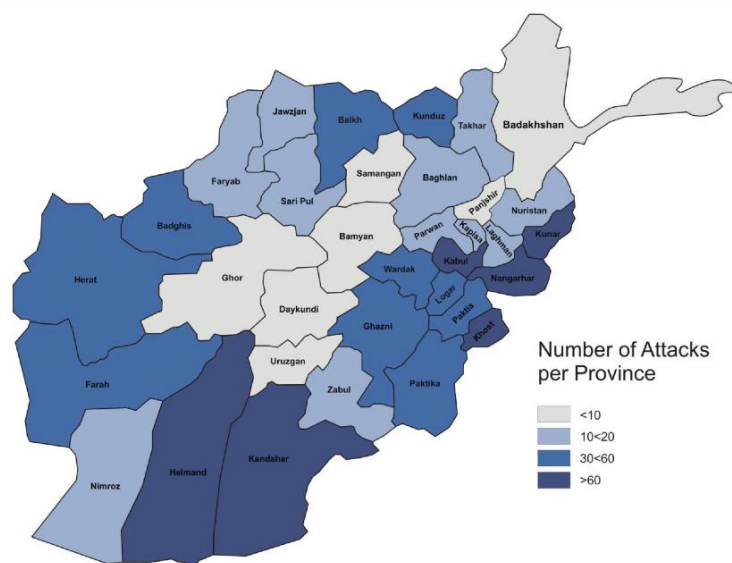
<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Education, *The Development of Education*, 2008, 26

contractors unfamiliar with the harsh winters of Afghanistan built schools with roofs that caved in under the weight of the winter snow. Other buildings lacked access to clean water or hygienic facilities and many restricted access for physically disabled students. It is estimated that despite the reconstruction projects, 44% of schools still lack a proper classroom facility.<sup>20</sup>

## Security

Security is a major concern for parents as well as school administrators. In 2008, the MoE reported that attacks on schools resulted in the deaths of 141 teachers and students. Security concerns have caused hundreds of schools to close and thousands of students to drop out. Rates of violence vary depending on location (Figure 1), but in some southern provinces over 80% of schools are closed due to insecurity.<sup>21</sup> Attacks on education send a strong message from those with grievances against the government. Especially in areas far from Kabul, schools are the easiest and most logical targets because they are physical symbols of the government.

Figure 1: Attacks on Education by Province



Source: Glad<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> International Monetary Fund, 2009, 36

<sup>21</sup> Glad, 2009 p. 7

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 23

Armed insurgent groups carry out attacks commonly at night, launching grenades in windows and burning down school buildings and tents. Attacks during the day target children and teachers on their way to and from school. Insurgents opposed to female education target female students by throwing acid on their faces.<sup>23</sup> Even the threat of violence has been sufficient to close schools. Threatening “night letters” posted on schoolhouse doors warn students and administration of violence if the school does not close or continues to provide education to female students. One “night letter” found in Kapisa reads:

This is to inform all those who have enrolled at boys’ schools to stop going to schools. An explosion might occur inside the school compounds. In case of getting hurt, it is they who bear all the responsibilities. They have no right to claim that they have not been informed.<sup>24</sup>

Polling indicates that the majority of the population sees the protection of schools as the responsibility of communities and local efforts.<sup>25</sup> The presence of the police or military in many cases only increases violence, as police are often primary targets themselves. Local prevention mechanisms do not always work, but some communities have experienced success by negotiating with attackers and using civilian night guards to mitigate violence. The MoE has established community security shuras at 7,195 schools. These shuras consist of 5-7 community members and parents who are unarmed and volunteer to protect local schools by using methods of negotiation to engage opposition groups and maintain peace in and around schools.

### **Family Financial Concerns**

The decision to send or not send a child to school is often a very personal issue for families. In addition to security concerns, financial factors weigh heavily. Although government schools are free, there are many hidden costs associated with sending a child to school. Forty

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<sup>23</sup> Filkins, 2009

<sup>24</sup> Human Rights Watch 2006, 68

<sup>25</sup> Glad, 2009; 85% of respondents indicated that the community is responsible for school security

percent of Afghan children are never enrolled or drop out before completing primary education.<sup>26</sup>

A child in school is unable to contribute to the family income, an opportunity cost that many families are unwilling or unable to make. There are expenses for stationary, books, clothing, shoes and transportation as well. Children who work usually start between the ages of 5-11 and are unable to attend school during these crucial years of educational development.<sup>27</sup> The inability for a child to attend school because of financial reasons is not an issue of physical accessibility, but financial barriers to education are just as important as physical barriers because they both make attending school difficult or impossible for many children.

### **Current Programs and Success**

Recent efforts to increase enrollment and accessibility have been met with limited success. A number of international and local organizations have been involved. One of the most widely recognized programs is UNICEF's "Back to School" campaign in 2002 that helped enroll millions of children in primary education.<sup>28</sup> Another program called "Food for Education" organized by the World Food Program uses food rations distributed to students as a means of encouraging families to send their children to school. Students in the program receive 400 grams of bread a day and girls receive an additional 4.5 liters of cooking oil per month.<sup>29</sup> These rations are meant to provide students with nutrition and energy to keep them engaged throughout the day and to help offset the costs imposed on families by sending their child to school.

The MoE has made further headway in ensuring accessible education for all children in all areas of the country. There are universal design standards for all educational buildings to

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<sup>26</sup> Ministry of Education, *The Development of Education*, 2008, 34

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 38

<sup>28</sup> Human Rights Watch, 2006, 7; Hunte, 2006, 1; Previous to the program, the World Bank estimated that 774,000 children attended school. By 2005 5.2 million children were enrolled in grades 1-12

<sup>29</sup> Creative Associates International Inc., 2002, 14



ensure access for the disabled. A number of mobile schools and dormitories have been built to accommodate Kuchi nomadic children who migrate throughout the year.<sup>30</sup> The government has also invested in methods to provide distance education through television, radios and other information and communication technologies (ICT)<sup>31</sup> for those without access to educational facilities. While internet accessibility is low and currently not a feasible option for distance education, the BBC has reported that 48% of the Afghan population tunes in to radio dramas every week and that this media might be a promising way of delivering educational lessons throughout the country. Currently the BBC's Afghan Education Project (AEP) is involved in producing several weekly educational radio programs that are broadcasted on 40 private FM stations throughout Afghanistan. AEP Programs are tailored to different age groups and bring Afghans information on a variety of subjects including mine awareness, governance and health.<sup>32</sup>

Community Based Education (CBE) programs are schools established with the support of NGOs and based in local homes or mosques. CBE schools have also proved effective for serving children in areas without other educational facilities. In 2007 158,482 students attended CBE schools<sup>33</sup> and USAID has been extensively involved in establishing CBE schools since 1994.<sup>34</sup> These schools involve parents, students and community members in resolving problems, overseeing education and implementing development, which helps increase enrollment and gives communities a greater stake in their children's education.

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<sup>30</sup> Ministry of Education, The Development of Education, 2008, 26

<sup>31</sup> Ministry of Education, Education Law, 2008

<sup>32</sup> BBC World Service Trust, 2008

<sup>33</sup> Ministry of Education, The Development of Education, 2008, 17

<sup>34</sup> Creative Associates International Inc., 2002, 20; Balwanz, 2007

## ***Teachers***

Access to schools alone is not enough unless the quality of education is improved as well. Afghanistan's uneducated population, in many ways, is a self-sustaining epidemic. Because of low literacy rates and the inaccessibility of education, Afghanistan lacks qualified teachers to break the cycle of illiteracy.

The MoE is Afghanistan's largest government employer.<sup>35</sup> According to current standards, in order to be hired as a teacher, a candidate must have graduated grade 12, obtained a teaching diploma and successfully passed a national teaching skills examination administered by the government.<sup>36</sup> In reality, the MoE estimates that only 22% of teachers meet the minimum qualifications required for the profession.<sup>37</sup> Many teachers have little knowledge of the subjects they are teaching. A 2005 MoE survey completed in Northern Afghanistan asked 200 teachers to sit in on the same exams as their students. Results showed that only 5% passed.<sup>38</sup> Unqualified and uneducated teachers make it extremely difficult to teach basic reading, writing and arithmetic, let alone advanced subjects such as foreign languages and science, to schoolchildren.

Meager salaries are one reason why qualified teachers are scarce. The MoE reports that salaries start at US\$32 and the average teacher earns approximately US\$74 per month.<sup>39</sup> In comparison, the Taliban pay insurgents US\$250 to US\$300 a month.<sup>40</sup> With salaries this low, most teachers are unwilling to teach in areas far from city centers and the most qualified individuals are driven to look for more profitable work elsewhere. The MoE budget is minimal,

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<sup>35</sup> Sigsgaard, 2009, 23

<sup>36</sup> Ministry of Education, Education Law, 2008, 14

<sup>37</sup> Ministry of Education, 2007, 11

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 31

<sup>40</sup> Bumiller, 2009

but to increase the numbers of qualified teachers in rural areas, the MoE is experimenting with the use of non-salary incentives such as land lease and housing finance assistance to encourage teachers to relocate to underprivileged provinces<sup>41</sup>.

In an effort to improve the quality of Afghan educators, the Education Law mandates the MoE to “provide and apply effective training programs for teachers, lecturers and Modrasan [Islamic teachers] while in service and prior to admission into the service”.<sup>42</sup> Today, individuals interested in the teaching profession may attend a pre-service education program. Those already employed who do not meet qualifications or are looking to participate in professional development courses have the option of in-service training. Through funds provided by the World Bank, U.S. universities have become involved in training teachers as well. In 2008, a US\$1.3 million grant allowed the University of Hartford to invite and help train 16 students from Heart University training to become professors of engineering.<sup>43</sup>

The MoE has been working to meet its promises to provide quality teachers and training. In 2007 the Ministry of Education hired 12,500 new teachers.<sup>44</sup> There are teacher training centers in every province that will eventually be linked to Teacher Resource Centers in every district. While computer and Internet accessibility remain low, new communication technology has developed to assist teachers. The Global Learning Portal<sup>45</sup> is a website provided by the Ministry of Higher Education that allows teachers to share ideas or lesson plans on discussion boards and access an entire library of teaching materials online.

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<sup>41</sup> Ministry of Education, 2007, 15.

<sup>42</sup> Ministry of Education, Education Law, 2008, 9

<sup>43</sup> Jha, 2008

<sup>44</sup> Ministry of Education, The Development of Education, 2008, 20

<sup>45</sup> Ministry of Higher Education, 2010

## ***Women in Education***

Article 43 of the Afghan Constitution states that education is the right of *all* citizens, therefore making it illegal to refuse access to education on the grounds of gender, faith or ethnicity. However, a combination of religious and cultural beliefs has kept many women from taking advantage of their constitutional right to education. Traditionally, girls were allowed access to schools and a majority of teachers were women,<sup>46</sup> but when the Taliban came to power, girls were completely banned from formal education. The MoE records from this period show formal female enrollment rate at 0%.<sup>47</sup> Some women, despite the ban, risked their lives to attend underground home-based schools organized by groups like the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan.<sup>48</sup>

Female education is particularly important in the sustainable development of Afghanistan. Female education is linked to improved health in women and children, as girls enrolled in school tend to marry and give birth at a later age. Every year of female education can reduce infant mortality by 5% to 10%.<sup>49</sup> Educated mothers are also more likely to encourage their children to pursue an education as well. A more educated base of women has the potential to increase the participation of women in politics, economics and social development in Afghanistan.

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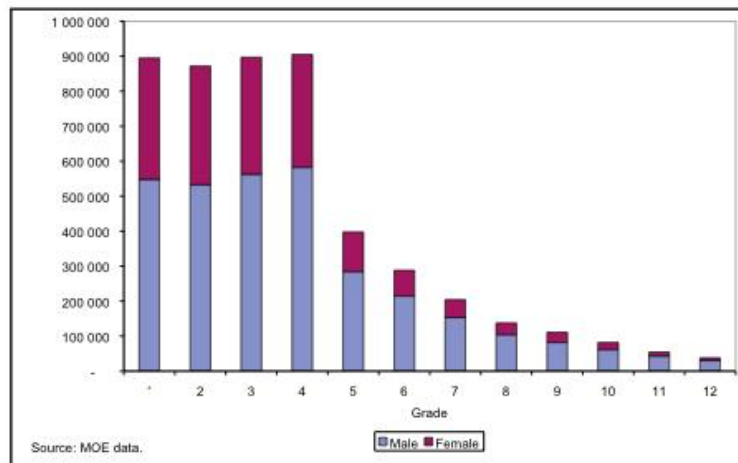
<sup>46</sup> Alvi-Aziz, 2008, 173

<sup>47</sup> Ministry of Education, The Development of Education, 2008, 2

<sup>48</sup> Alvi-Aziz, 2008, 173

<sup>49</sup> Human Rights Watch, 2006, 30

Figure 2: Enrollment by Grade (2005)



Source: Ministry of Education<sup>50</sup>

Since the fall of the Taliban, females have had more and more opportunities to participate in education, but there are barriers that continue to prevent full participation. A fear of shame or harassment as well as the threat of attacks prevents families from sending their daughters to school. Current numbers indicate that at the general education level, only 50% of school-aged girls are enrolled, but this gender disparity increases at every level of schooling (Figure 2).<sup>51</sup> The lack of female-specific facilities is problematic. Many families do not consider it appropriate for young girls and boys to be taught in the same class past the age of 11 or 12, but in 2006 only 29% of Afghanistan's 415 educational districts had schools designated for teaching girls.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Ministry of Education, 2007, 28

<sup>51</sup> Ministry of Education, *The Development of Education*, 2008, 38

<sup>52</sup> Human Rights Watch, 2006, 27

### Female Teachers vs. Students 1385 - 2006

Province	Female Students (Right Axis)	Female Teachers (Left Axis)
Badakhshan	12,000	4,000
Badkhan	1,000	1,000
Baghlan	1,000	1,000
Balkh	12,000	4,000
Bamiyan	14,000	10,000
Daikundi	4,000	1,000
Fareh	2,000	1,000
Faryab	3,000	1,000
Ghazni	10,000	3,000
Ghor	8,000	1,000
Herat	2,000	1,000
Hiwand	10,000	1,000
Jawzan	1,000	2,000
Kabul	5,000	3,000
Kandahar	16,000	14,000
Kapisa	4,000	1,000
Khost	2,000	1,000
Kunar	2,000	1,000
Kunduz	4,000	1,000
Laghman	10,000	2,000
Logar	5,000	1,000
Nangarhar	2,000	1,000
Nirpuz	15,000	1,000
Nuristan	2,000	1,000
Paktia	1,000	1,000
Paktia	2,000	1,000
Panahir	3,000	1,000
Pawan	1,000	1,000
Panangan	6,000	1,000
Sari Pul	2,000	1,000
Takhar	3,000	1,000
Uruzgan	9,000	2,000
Wardak	1,000	1,000
Zabul	2,000	1,000

Source: MoE data

In 2008 over 37% of children in schools were girls,<sup>54</sup> but this number is far from representing the true female population. A factor that families consider when deciding whether to send a daughter to school is that many Afghans consider it culturally inappropriate for a male teacher to teach female students. In 2007, only 28% of teachers were female.<sup>55</sup> Increasing the number of qualified female teachers is one way to increase the enrollment of female students. Studies have shown a direct correlation between number of female teachers at a school and increases in female student enrollment (Figure 3).<sup>56</sup> To address this situation, the MoE has implemented programs to increase these numbers by providing financial scholarships and incentives to female students training to become teachers.

<sup>56</sup> Jones, 2008, 283

## ***Islamic Education***

Religion is an incredibly important part of Afghan society that is deeply interwoven in public and private life. Ninety-nine percent of the population of Afghanistan identifies as Muslim<sup>57</sup> and religion is at the heart of Afghan cultural identity. For most of Afghanistan's history, students were educated in traditional Islamic thought. Students studied the religious text of the Qur'an and religious sharia law in educational institutions called madaris (plural for madrassah). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, academic education that incorporated subjects such as math and science was introduced on a mass scale, but Islamic schools continue to remain an important part of education in Afghanistan.

Islamic education remains under the jurisdiction of the MoE, with similar standards and standardized curriculum as general education. The government currently supports 336 schools, 91,000 students and 3500 teachers in the Islamic education system<sup>58</sup>. There are two cycles of Islamic education: Dar-ul-Huffaz teaches students in grades 1-12 basic reading and writing as well as Quaranic studies, memorization and recitation. Dar-ul-Ulum is a second cycle available for students in grades 13-14 wishing to continue their education in Islamic studies

The image of madaris has changed drastically after the 9/11 attacks. Some madaris in Afghanistan and Pakistan have clear links to militant organizations and have been misused for the political purposes of extremist groups. The Taliban emerged from madaris in Pakistan, and evidence suggests that many suicide bombers in Afghanistan are products of Pakistani madaris.<sup>59</sup> Geopolitical issues and socioeconomic conditions of students and teachers have harbored hatred toward the West. Despite the cultural and historical importance in Afghan society, the image of

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<sup>57</sup> Shirazi, 2008, 212

<sup>58</sup> Ministry of Education, The Development of Education, 2008, 18

<sup>59</sup> Fair, 2008, 70

the madrassah has shifted to a training center for extremists who are taught to kill in the name of Allah. To counter this, the MoE is committed to using education to “strengthen Islamic spirit” in a non-extremist way.<sup>60</sup> By bringing together key political, religious and academic figures, the MoE hopes to collaborate and build a consensus on developing an Islamic curriculum that incorporates modern principals and teaches tolerance rather than hatred.<sup>61</sup>

### ***Lifelong Learning and Literacy***

Many of the 11 million illiterate Afghans are adults. Although many Afghan adults were unable to attend school as children, classes for students of all ages can ensure that adults are not deprived of education for the rest of their lives.

### **Literacy**

Widespread illiteracy in Afghanistan is a concern for development, education and human rights. The implications of illiteracy are far reaching, restricting many citizens from understanding signs in a market or hospital, voting, holding a job and reading the Qur’an. Opportunities for individuals to learn to read and write can have a profound effect on their life. Literacy learning centers are often based in mosques or other community buildings and are organized through partnerships between the MoE, NGOs and Imams. The use of Imams trained by the MoE is significant as these religious leaders often have a great amount of influence in communities and attract enrollment. Since 2002, over 8.1 million illiterate Afghans have benefited from literacy education.<sup>62</sup> After participating in literacy classes, men and women reported finding it easier to shop, read street signs, write letters to relatives and friends, and share an appreciation for reading with their family.

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<sup>60</sup> Ministry of Education, Education Law, 2008, 1

<sup>61</sup> Ministry of Education, 2007, 73

<sup>62</sup> Andersen, 2007, 323



Literacy programs have transformed the lives of Afghans at a fairly low cost. The cost of bringing an illiterate Afghan adult to a 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading and writing level in a single year is estimated at US\$1.25 to US\$1.50 per day.<sup>63</sup> At this rate, the entire adult population of Afghanistan could theoretically be brought to literacy for a donor investment of US\$2 billion.

### **Technical and Vocational Education and Training**

Faced with the task of reconstruction, the Afghan labor market is in need of skilled and semi-skilled labor. Unemployment rates in Afghanistan are high, but technical and vocational training will equip men and women with practical and marketable skills. The NESP affirms the goals of the MoE to reform technical and vocational education curriculum to meet the current needs of the labor market, increase enrollment, and train 12,000 individuals in public administration and finance skills.<sup>64</sup> These programs will develop the human capital of the population and put Afghans back to work in the private and government sectors.

Job training for the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) has been difficult due to high illiteracy rates. Roughly 70% of ANSF personnel are illiterate.<sup>65</sup> Initial training courses teach basic reading and writing, but retention is minimal. A 27-year old member of a ballistics battalion said, “In our basic training we learned a lot... but I’ve forgotten a lot of things, the type of things that might be able to save my life.”<sup>66</sup> Richard Holbrooke, U.S. Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, has expressed the need for Afghanistan to assume responsibility for their own security. However, illiteracy has undermined U.S. efforts to train and prepare forces for this transition. Most individuals cannot read street signs and maps and are unable to take notes or write the serial number of their own weapon. Pulau Electronics, a private company

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 328

<sup>64</sup> Ministry of Education, 2007, 79

<sup>65</sup> Cordesman, 2009, 27

<sup>66</sup> Abrashi, 2009

based in Orlando, Florida, is currently assisting in Afghan military education efforts. Pulau's program aims to make 50% of the ANSF functionally literate within a year.<sup>67</sup> The U.S. government additionally provides International Military Education and Training funding, which helps send Afghan military officers to U.S. military schools for professional development and leadership training.<sup>68</sup>

## **Higher Education**

During the Taliban regime, university campuses were transformed into war zones. Apart from shattered buildings and infrastructure, many professors fled the country or were forced into intellectual isolation. International aid and partnerships have helped rebuild higher education. The opportunity for students to continue into higher education creates professionals with the expertise to teach new generations and contribute to specialized fields of study. In 2007, 9,242 students graduated from Afghan universities and enrollment is increasing every year.<sup>69</sup>

The MoE and the World Bank have worked together to establish academic partnerships between a number of universities in Afghanistan and other universities around the world. These partnerships are meant to provide opportunities for international understanding and cooperation, technical assistance, curriculum development and faculty development for the universities involved. There are currently 11 such partnerships sponsored through this program, 6 of which are in the U.S, including those between San Diego State University and Nangarhar University, and Kansas State University and Kabul University.<sup>70</sup>

The U.S. also helped establish a private university in Kabul. The American University of Afghanistan is advertised as the only not-for-profit, nonpolitical, nongovernmental, private,

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid

<sup>68</sup> Department of Defense, 2008

<sup>69</sup> Ministry of Education, The Development of Education, 2008, 18

<sup>70</sup> McFarlane, 2009, 2

independent, and internationally supported university in Afghanistan.<sup>71</sup> The school opened in 2006 and the first set of students will graduate in 2010.<sup>72</sup>

### **U.S. INTERESTS**

The development of a quality, accessible education system is a key component in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. In 2009 President Barack Obama reiterated the goal for U.S. troops in Afghanistan to “disrupt, dismantle and defeat” extremist groups and their “capacity to threaten America and our allies in the future”.<sup>73</sup> Investments in education in Afghanistan will help the U.S. accomplish this goal. An educated population will mitigate extremism, strengthen the economy and create a safer future for the citizens of Afghanistan and the United States. It is in the interest of the United States to make education a cornerstone of its efforts to keep Americans safe, spur sustainable development in Afghanistan and ultimately withdraw U.S. troops.

Improvements made in the Afghan education sector will create a safer future in U.S. and in Afghanistan by reducing levels of violence. According to Save the Children, every year of formal education an Afghan male receives reduces his risk of joining violent groups such as the Taliban or al Qaeda by 20%.<sup>74</sup> Equipped with education, the Afghan population will not tolerate the violent extremism that threatens America’s national security. Educated citizens with analytical skills will understand that Islamic extremism does not better their lives, but only escalates violence in their communities and around the world. Hatred is unproductive and will not change the state of Afghanistan, but education provides Afghans the power to change their lives without the use of bombs. With better employment prospects, educated Afghans are less

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<sup>71</sup> American University of Afghanistan, 2010

<sup>72</sup> Labi, 2008, 3

<sup>73</sup> Obama, New Strategy, 2009

<sup>74</sup> McFarlane, 2009, 4

likely to turn to the farming of poppy or criminal activities as a means to support their families. Violent groups like the Taliban and al Qaeda will lose their appeal and their ability to recruit members, ultimately reducing the threat of suicide attacks like that of 9/11.

Education will also assist greatly in ensuring that sustainable development takes root in Afghanistan. The U.S. has worked hard with Afghanistan, investing time and money to hold elections in the country and establish a central government. A sustainable government must be legitimate in the eyes of Afghans and have the strength to back up its promises with action. There is a clear link between education and political participation in Afghanistan.<sup>75</sup> Teachers and schools are arms of the government at the most basic, visible and influential level and provide citizens with the assurance that the government is impacting their lives in a positive way. Quality schools will help foster trust in the government and ensure political stability in Afghanistan.

Higher education and literacy levels will allow the U.S. to transition troops back home and begin to lower the proportion of the U.S. national budget that is devoted to U.S. military efforts in Afghanistan. In December 2009, President Obama announced that the U.S. will begin withdrawing military forces in July 2011.<sup>76</sup> An educated and literate population will ensure a smooth and responsible transfer of power. ANSF personnel who know how to read and write are easier to train, increasing the likelihood that they will be able to effectively protect the population without the support of U.S. troops. Educated citizens will also ensure that economic and social development continues. Progress and stability in Afghanistan is dependent on a base of educated citizens who will participate in the political process, work in the public and private sector, and sustain development long after U.S. troops leave.

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<sup>75</sup> The Asia Foundation, 2009

<sup>76</sup> Obama, Way Forward, 2009

## **OPTIONS**

The U.S. options for the next steps forward concerning Afghanistan's education sector are listed below:

### ***Management***

1. Minimize U.S. funds and efforts in Afghanistan's education sector and allow local and international NGOs to take over in assisting the MoE. This option will decrease the need for American funding towards Afghan education, which is currently \$US95 million, and help alleviate the growing U.S. deficit. However, by disengaging in education policy in Afghanistan, the U.S. will abandon an opportunity to create a strong education system and leave a lasting positive impression.
2. Allow the MoE to carry out all projects and initiatives while the U.S. provides a supportive role, and give top priority for jobs in education to local qualified Afghans. This option will help maintain an education system that is culturally relevant, created both by and for the people of Afghanistan. Employing local Afghans will also allow the MoE to invest in the national economy. The drawbacks of this hands-off approach are that the U.S. government will not have a say concerning educational policy in Afghanistan. In addition, any Americans employed by the MoE are likely to lose their jobs to local, possibly less qualified Afghans.
3. Encourage the Afghan government to conduct a skills audit of the country. A thorough audit will assess the current skills base and pinpoint areas in education that are most lacking. Educational funding can then be directed to the areas in most need. An obstacle to this option is that a complete skills audit of Afghanistan is a complicated undertaking. It would be difficult to organize and financially costly.

4. Use statistics in education as a benchmark to determine the success of U.S. and Afghan efforts. This option would give the U.S. government an explicit goal. Increased literacy numbers will provide Americans with a positive way to measure security and development in Afghanistan. However, benchmarks that are dependent on numbers and statistics tend to distract from the bigger picture and the realities of what is happening on the ground.

### *Security*

5. Divert U.S. funds for education in Afghanistan into security. This option prioritizes the immediate short-term goals of the U.S. to secure the country so that U.S. troops can pull out. By increasing security, more children will be able to attend school and less violent attacks on students and education facilities will occur. Eliminating assistance for social development in Afghanistan may create animosity among Afghans and confirm their fears that the U.S. is only interested in its own wellbeing rather than improving the lives of Afghans.
6. Establish U.S.-led military missions to ensure the security of schools as well as children and teachers on their way to and from class. U.S. efforts to protect schools will show that America is invested in helping Afghans and highlight the positive effects of U.S. occupation. Missions such as these however, may increase the violence on schools and detract troops from their immediate goal.
7. Encourage the MoE to establish shuras to act as education security councils at the local community level with a system of support at the provincial and national level. Discourage the visible involvement of armed police or military (foreign or Afghan) in these security efforts. Security shuras and MoE can work together to reduce the number of violent

attacks on schools. Locally led efforts are able to effectively address security threats on a case-by-case basis, but security shuras are typically unarmed and put civilians at risk of attack. The involvement of armed police or military forces allows trained individuals to protect and patrol schools, but most Afghans feel that armed forces put schools in even more danger.

8. Fund moderate Madaris in Afghanistan. Madaris that teach tolerance will counter extremist Islamic ideology and the spread of militant groups. While this could be effective, U.S. involvement in Islamic education may backfire and fuel American opposition. The U.S. and Afghanistan does not want teachers of the Afghan government to be labeled as American puppets and schools may be hesitant to participate in such a controversial program.

### *Quality*

9. Encourage the Afghan government to increase the budget allotted for the recruitment of quality teachers, higher salaries and the development of early childhood education. Higher salaries will attract more qualified individuals to the teaching profession. Investments in Afghan preschools and kindergartens will also start kids early on the path to educational success and future employment. However, an investment of this level is difficult especially when the Afghan government has minimal funds to devote to social development projects.
10. Assist the MoE in order to rewrite the curriculum and reform the education system to support democratic values. Establishing secular education that introduces students to topics such as free-market economics and democracy will allow the U.S. to directly influence the future of Afghanistan. However, any strategic political gain achieved by

modifying curriculum is likely to harm the development of a legitimate and widely accepted education system.

### ***Higher Education***

11. Expand partnerships at the higher education level between U.S. universities and universities in Afghanistan. Educational exchanges will promote the development of academic fields and international understanding. However, study abroad programs may allow individuals with violent intentions easy access to the U.S. and educational institutions.
12. Encourage and facilitate education for adults particularly those in the ANSF. Afghan forces that are literate and educated will make the training process easier for U.S. troops and ensure a successful transfer of responsibility in 2011. Although important, learning to read and write takes time. U.S. efforts to train ANSF may be better spent in other ways.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations below seek the goal of creating a literate and educated citizenry. An educated population will make informed decisions, build a representative government, and participate in the economy of Afghanistan. The application of these recommendations will enhance the likelihood of long-term success in Afghanistan. The benefits are two-fold: Afghans will benefit with increased opportunity to better their own lives, while the reduced threat of terrorism will support a successful withdrawal of U.S troops and ensure America's national security.

It will take decades to restore a sense of normalcy to Afghanistan, but policy that invests in education is one way to ensure long-term success and development. In helping the MoE



provide quality and accessible education, the next steps for U.S. Department of State in Afghanistan should include the implementation of options 2, 4, 7, 9, 11, and 12.

### ***Management***

Allowing and encouraging the MoE to take control of operations, minimize reliance on foreign aid, and coordinate NGO assistance (Option 2) will help the MoE grow into a self-sustaining, legitimate force. This option provides two important benefits. The first is that employing local Afghan teachers, administrators, and textbook writers is efficient and beneficial to the economy of Afghanistan. Foreign contractors are expensive and generally unfamiliar with the culture, language and history of Afghanistan. Secondly, this option discourages projects that are unaligned with national efforts and prevents the misuse of funds. All USAID and American-based NGO efforts must coordinate to best meet current MoE needs. Small fractured projects detract from overarching national efforts and undermine the power of the Afghan government and the MoE. Increased use of coordination organizations like the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief will help in the effective and efficient delivery of aid.<sup>77</sup> A coordinated Afghan led approach will focus efforts in education and decrease the need for U.S. funding over time.

Using education statistics as a benchmark for success (Option 4) provides the American military and public with concrete, comparable data. The U.S. has struggled to define success in Afghanistan. Real success is not only found in the capture of top-level Taliban leaders, but the return of normality to the lives of Afghans. Progress in education and literacy implies improvements in security, health and employment, and are therefore reliable indicators of development at a number of levels. While taking statistics into consideration, the American government and military officials should avoid measuring success simply in terms of numbers.

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<sup>77</sup> Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief, 2010

Statistics must always be placed in context. Numbers do not always provide a complete story, and a benchmark based on statistics that ignores the larger trends of development is ineffective.

### *Security*

The establishment of shuras to assist with education security at the local community level (Option 7) will allow communities to address the issue of security on a case-by-case basis. These shuras will be encouraged to coordinate with provincial and national support centers to develop effective means of decreasing violence associated with education. Some may choose to hire night guards and others may decide to negotiate with attackers, but what is clear is that Afghan communities feel that the provision of protection mechanisms must remain local. Shuras have been an effective means of reducing violence and give communities a greater stake in the safety and education of their own children. Local ownership of these efforts will ensure their continuation and strengthen long-term security. Afghans feel not only that international forces have no role in improving school security,<sup>78</sup> but put schools in even more danger of attack. International donor and military involvement are clear factors that contribute to the increased risk of attacks on a school and should remain minimal.

### *Quality*

Increasing the MoE budget for teacher salaries, recruitment and scholarships (Option 9) will attract more qualified teachers to the profession. If teachers are not paid adequately, educated individuals will likely turn to more lucrative professions. A substantial salary for teachers will increase the quality of educators and discourage corruption. Providing opportunities for employment, as well as incentivizing such occupations with increased pay and non-monetary benefits, will aid in reducing unemployment and building a strong, sustainable, domestic

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<sup>78</sup> Glad, 2009, 53; 0.4% of respondents said that international forces were responsible for school security.

economy. Additionally, the recruitment of teachers and availability of scholarships for those willing to teach in remote underprivileged areas will help alleviate the difference in access between urban and rural communities. With a larger budget the MoE will also be able to invest in early childhood education that will help lay a solid foundation for children to build upon as they grow older. While the Afghan MoE lacks the budget to increase salaries by any significant amount, the U.S. should step in and help financially support this recommendation until the MoE begins receiving revenues.

### ***Higher Education***

Equally critical is investment in higher education. Increasing the number of partnerships at the university level (Option 11) benefits both the U.S. and Afghanistan. Partnerships allow scholars to build international understanding. Communication between students will provide for an exchange of ideas in areas such as math, science and critical languages. Educational exchanges and scholarships will also enable students to experience international travel and build international educational networks. To prevent situations in which professionals are leaving Afghanistan and causing a “brain drain,” the MoE should require students learning abroad to return after a designated period of time to reinvest their knowledge in Afghan society. Security precautions should also be made when hosting Afghan students at American universities to ensure that the individuals’ intentions are sincere and that students do not have any connections to militant groups.

Lastly, the U.S. should encourage and facilitate education for adults, especially for ANSF personnel (Option 12). By providing education for adults, as well as children, the MoE can make progress on closing the education gap between generations and assist in the education of more individuals. Efforts to provide education to ANSF members will greatly facilitate training efforts

by U.S., ISAF and Afghan forces<sup>79</sup> and increase discipline and effectiveness of U.S. efforts to transfer responsibility to the Afghan people. U.S.-led programs to increase literacy among ANSF personnel are in progress and should continue, but classes may be more effective if led by Afghans rather than Americans. The U.S., ISAF, and Afghan forces must seek out the most effective methods of literacy training from around the world and place them in the context of Afghanistan so lessons will be relevant to the ANSF.

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<sup>79</sup> For further details about ANA/ANSF, please see chapter 1.

# Public Health: Reviving a Broken System

Courtney Faal

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## Policy Recommendations

- Implement and continue to support programs to train female health care workers as well as education programs for all levels of health care providers.
  - Support with personnel and monetary aid non-governmental organizations (NGO) and Afghan government projects that currently conform to Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) guidelines.
  - Continue to support the MoPH and its programs to create continuity and basic guidelines for delivery of free basic health care to all Afghan citizens.
  - Fund radio-based public health education programs.
  - Use established health indicators such as maternal mortality rates (MMR), infant mortality rates (IMR), and life expectancy to monitor progress over the next two decades.
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## Abstract

After decades of conflict, Afghanistan's health care system is in a state of disrepair. The U.S. must assist the Afghan government in repairing Afghanistan's health care system in order to reinforce positive trends such as increased security, economic growth, and a better-functioning education system. In partnering with the Afghan government the U.S. must be cognizant of Afghan cultural norms in order to design effective policies that will not only provide immediate relief to the Afghan people, but will take hold and serve as the basis for a better functioning national health care system that persists long after U.S. withdrawal.

## **ISSUE**

After more than thirty years of foreign occupation and civil war Afghanistan's health system is extremely ineffective and unable to provide basic health services to all Afghan citizens. However, from 2000-2004 Afghanistan has seen drastic improvements in its basic health indicators. According to Afghanistan's National Development Strategy (ANDS) published in 2008, IMR and under 5 mortality rates (U5MR) have dropped by 25% since the overthrow of the Taliban and the subsequent influx of foreign and NGO aid.<sup>1</sup>

Prior to 2000, most primary care was handled by a handful of foreign-based NGOs and privately funded providers. Since the U.S. invasion in 2001 many more NGOs and foreign trained doctors have come to Afghanistan to practice in urban and rural areas. The Afghan government Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has recently begun efforts to provide public access to basic health care for its entire population. Given the rural and remote nature of most of Afghanistan's populace however, there are numerous barriers to a uniform system of public health.<sup>2</sup>

For the government of Afghanistan to provide peace and stability for its people it must provide health care to the entire population. These goals can take years or decades to achieve. The United States government must make a sustainable Afghan public health system a priority in its goals for stabilizing Afghanistan into self-sufficiency.

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<sup>1</sup> Afghan National Development Strategy 2008, 13

<sup>2</sup> *ibid* 14

## **BACKGROUND**

According to the Afghan Constitution of 2004 “the state is obliged to provide free means of preventative health care and medical treatment, and proper health facilities to all citizens of Afghanistan in accordance with the law”.<sup>3</sup>

Prior to WWII, Afghanistan was located along the major overland trading route. After the war, air and sea transportation took the forefront of transporting goods between East and Southeast Asia and Europe and the Middle East. As a result, Afghanistan, devastated by poverty and disease, was denied aid from the Allied powers because it had lost its strategic importance. It was not until the Soviet occupation that foreign aid poured into Afghanistan, though this aid was almost exclusively military and political in nature. The Soviet occupation also led many health care providers to flee, thus further worsening the fragile health situation in Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup>

Afghanistan’s MoPH is developing along with the new Afghan government. With years of private, foreign and NGO funded health care in Afghanistan there is a lack of continuity and accountability between providers. Currently most health care in Afghanistan is provided by NGOs who have contracted with the MoPH to provide health care to the Afghan population.<sup>5</sup> Though these NGOs have no obligation to conform to MoPH strategy, their commitment to the new Afghan government is reflective of their support of the Basic Health Care Services (BHCS) guidelines outlined by the MoPH. Since most clinics and hospitals do not rely on the Afghan government there is no motivation to conform to governmental standards regarding services provided or payments required. This lack of government backing undermines the MoPH in its efforts to regulate and control the levels of care provided to the people of Afghanistan.

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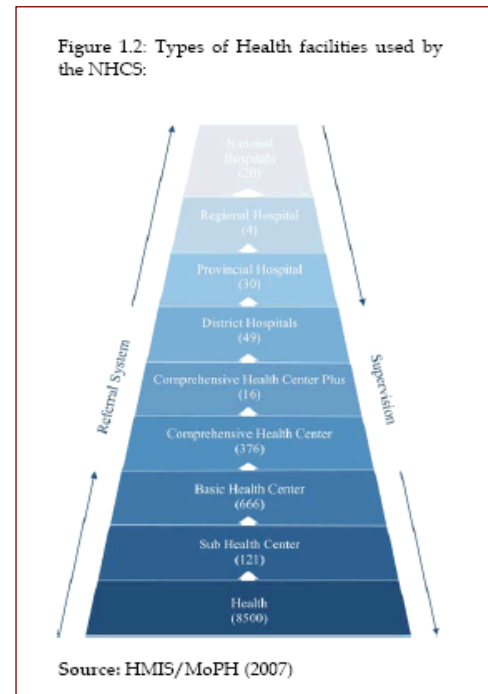
<sup>3</sup> USAID 2008, viii

<sup>4</sup> O’Connor 1994, xxiii-xxvi

<sup>5</sup> ANDS 18

## ***MoPH Structure***

There are five major components of the BHPS within the MoPH as well as four other levels of care that often mirror and compliment the other five components, as illustrated by the figure below, published in the ANDS report in 2008. At the most basic level are the Community Health Workers (CHW) who are non-health professionals. Ideally there are one male and one female available per community working out of a Health Post, likely their own home. Basic Health Centers (BHC) supervise the CHW, as well as providing additional services such as vaccinations. A trained nurse also staffs these facilities.



These centers are minimally required to provide all the services in the Basic Health Plan.

Comprehensive Health Centers provide minor surgeries and additional services not offered at BHC. Each Center will have a male and female physician on staff as well as trained lab technicians.<sup>6</sup>

District Hospitals must make available all the services in the BHSP, as well as providing inpatient care and more complicated and major surgeries. The goal of Regional Hospitals is to reduce IMR, MMR and U5MR and serve as training facilities and specialty referral centers. The

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid 15-16



BPHS is meant to be efficient and cost effective while emphasizing at risk populations such as women and children as well as addressing public health concerns in the population.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Women's Health***

During the Taliban regime male doctors were legally banned from treating female patients and female doctors treating male patients.<sup>8</sup> Combined with a general ban on education from women this period led to a major dearth of female medical providers. Added to this was a 1997 law to separate men and women into different hospital buildings. While men were provided with the more modern buildings women were often put into buildings that had never been used previously as a hospital, and were often unsafe and unsanitary.<sup>9</sup>

Culturally, many women cannot seek a male health provider, especially for prenatal and gynecological care. The majority of health providers are male. Therefore, in 2006 only 34% of women in Afghanistan sought medical help during delivery either from a health facility or a skilled birth attendant.<sup>10</sup>

Women's health is a primary focus for many NGOs working in Afghanistan. Because of the aforementioned devastation caused by the Soviet and Taliban regimes, as well as the years of neglect in between, Afghanistan currently has the second highest maternal mortality rate in the world.<sup>11</sup> However, there are groups committed to improving the health of women and their children. Groups such as Shuhada, which was founded in 1989 at a refugee camp in Pakistan

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid 15-16

<sup>8</sup> Wahab 2007, 218

<sup>9</sup> Rasekh 2002, 177

<sup>10</sup> USAID viii

<sup>11</sup> ANDS 5

now boasts three hospitals, numerous clinics and training programs for nurses, provide hope for women seeking medical care and also provide a means of support for women to become nurses.<sup>12</sup>

Since the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan, foreign governments, including the U.S. have pledged aid towards raising the status of women. However, there has been a severe lack of follow through in the form of funding and personnel to promote women's health and properly train health care workers. Money and supplies pledged to a hospital in Kabul never appeared even after months of urgings and reminders by the supervising physician. This physician, though an American citizen, was born and trained in Afghanistan. It was only after a foreign run NGO took over management of the hospital that the promised funds were finally produced for this hospital.<sup>13</sup> Without funding and assistance, women will not have access to health care without properly trained providers or adequate facilities.

### ***Children's Health***

Children born in Afghanistan this year are projected to live less than 50 years. Additionally up to 25% of all children will die neonatally or before the age of five according to a WHO report released in 2010.<sup>14</sup> This trend, if it is allowed to continue will further reduce Afghanistan's life expectancy. Almost two-thirds of the population is under twenty-five.<sup>15</sup> However, this young population also provides a huge advantage for public health. Given investment in proper education and modern medical training there is an immense pool of potential future health providers who could end Afghanistan's reliance on foreign NGOs and providers within the next 10-20 years. As seen in the image on the next page, according to WHO/UNICEF in 2008, Afghanistan already has nearly double the rates of child and infant

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<sup>12</sup> Shuhada Organization

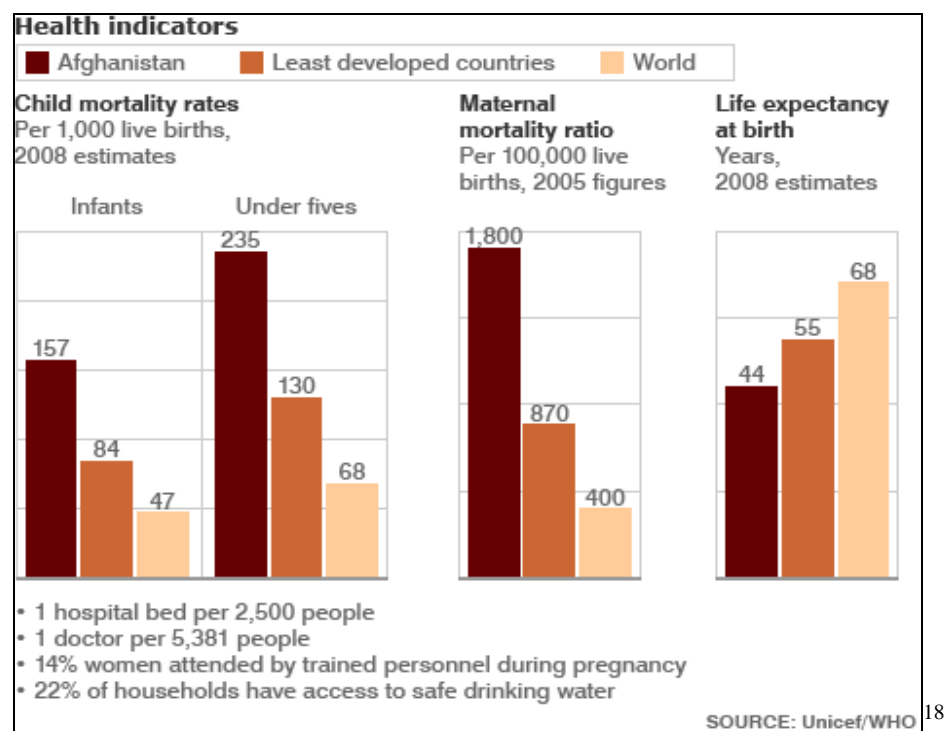
<sup>13</sup> Mojadidi 2005

<sup>14</sup> WHO

<sup>15</sup> USAID 33

mortality rates compared to other underdeveloped countries and an Afghan is expected to live 24 years less than the rest of the world.<sup>16</sup>

Each year thousands of Afghan children are by preventable diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and respiratory infections. Many of these deaths could be prevented with basic health interventions such as vaccines and basic sanitation education. Since a majority of Afghans do not have access to clean water this is a major opportunity for investment to provide a safe, basic health necessity.<sup>17</sup>



### *Health Care Infrastructure*

The destruction of hospitals and clinics since 1978 means there are few suitable buildings where providers can meet with their patients. Programs to build stable and safe buildings for clinics and hospitals have mostly been funded by international donors. Many of these

<sup>16</sup> BBC News

<sup>17</sup> UNICEF

<sup>18</sup> *ibid*

development projects, such as the National Area Based Development Programme, include a wide range of infrastructure improvements such as clean water implements, resurfacing roads for easy passage and safety, and building schools, clinics, and governmental buildings.<sup>19</sup> All these improvements are vital for Afghans to have access to the health care system and contribute in their own health maintenance. However, these improvements are meaningless without properly educated staff to maintain these projects and administer basic health. Having a modern hospital will not improve Afghan health if there are no doctors and nurses to staff these buildings.

Currently the Afghan MoPH offers basic package of health services (BPHS) that are to be provided free of cost to all citizens of Afghanistan. However, implementing these services among the entire population is a difficult task. There are too few clinics and too few providers to ensure people basic services such as family planning, immunizations and nutrition training. In addition, there are too few women who can provide these services to women who require a female health provider.<sup>20</sup> Thus, Afghan and foreign governments have a huge opportunity to train Afghan women to carry out the services outlined in the BPHS.

Most Afghans will typically travel twenty minutes by foot, or longer by car, to reach a healthcare provider. In addition, many of those who do have access to a vehicle often must rely on a family member or a friend within their village who owns a car. In this situation a vehicle may not be available on short notice in the case of an emergency if the owner is using it or has loaned it to someone else. However there is still 47% of the population without access to a car that must travel over an hour on foot or by animal (donkey, camel, horse) to reach a health care facility.<sup>21</sup> This segment has less access to basic health than the rest of the population. This rural

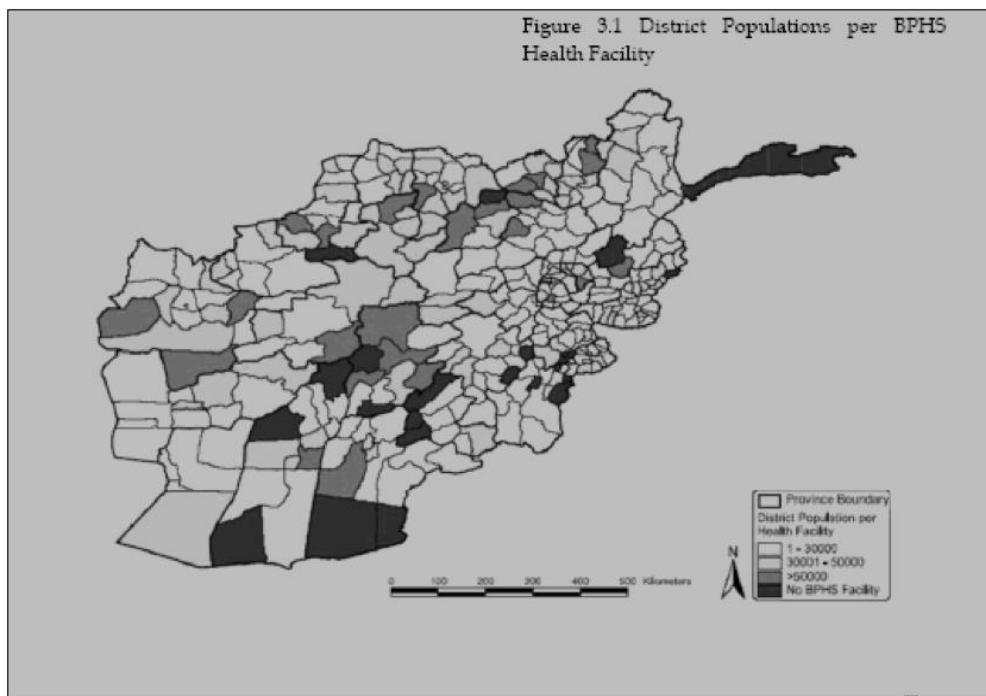
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<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development 2005

<sup>20</sup> USAID, vii

<sup>21</sup> *ibid* 54-55

population has little access to emergency care since traveling over rough, unfinished roads can be dangerous for a pregnant woman or someone suffering from a traumatic injury.



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The majority of Afghanistan's population (77%) lives in rural areas. The map above shows that many rural areas have no BPHS facilities or one for every 50,000 people according to the ANDS report in 2008. They do not necessarily have access to a major city or village within walking distance or by car because of poor infrastructure. Since health services are not evenly distributed, this lack of access becomes exacerbated the further away one lives from a major city.<sup>23</sup>

### ***Health Care Providers***

Three decades of warfare in Afghanistan have left the pool of skilled and properly trained health care workers woefully low. Many doctors who were trained before the Soviet occupation either fled the country or did not have access to current technologies and training. Those that remained received inadequate training and few Afghans were able to train at the proper level to

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<sup>22</sup> ANDS 31

<sup>23</sup> WHO

become doctors. This has resulted in less than 1 doctor per 5,000 Afghans in the country,<sup>24</sup> an unacceptable ratio in a country where health conditions are already extremely poor. Added to the lack of physicians is a huge knowledge gap in medicine at all levels of health care. Some physicians, especially in rural areas, have little training in the medical field. Some have been trained as nurses or physician's assistants while others have "2 years college in Pakistan" towards their degree.<sup>25</sup> Recent training provided by the MoPH has been well received by providers at all levels and increasing the topics and frequency of these programs would only help improve the knowledge of the providers. However, there must be a set of guidelines implemented for all levels of providers so that no matter where an Afghan goes for treatment they are provided the same, high-level care.<sup>26</sup>

Since so many of Afghanistan's health care providers are of non-Afghan descent there is little incentive for them to remain once their contract with an NGO or foreign government expires. This scenario points to an even greater disparity between population and number of health care providers' once foreign interest in Afghanistan wanes.

### ***Public Health Education***

The easiest and most effective way to improve health in Afghanistan is through public education.<sup>27</sup> The most efficient way to reach the largest number of people is through radios since more than half of all households in Afghanistan own a radio (compared to less than 5% owning a television).<sup>28</sup> Written campaigns are highly ineffective in a country with poor literacy rates as few people would be able to read the literature. With only 13% of the Afghan population having

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid*

<sup>25</sup> USAID 11

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid* 11

<sup>27</sup> For more details on the general education outlook in Afghanistan, see the Chapter 8.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid* 39

access to improved water sources knowledge about how to make unsafe water potable is vital to prevent water-borne illnesses and reduce malnutrition. The recent drought has made access to water even more difficult for many Afghans and compounded already alarming malnutrition rates.<sup>29</sup> Without enough safe water for drinking and food, basic health is denied many people before they ever seek help from a provider.

### ***Funding***

Currently the MoPH's annual budget allows about US\$1 per capita to be spent on health care in Afghanistan. As a result of limited funds, most health care facilities in Afghanistan are privately run and funded. Through current contracting the BPHS is provided through various NGO for US\$4 per capita annually.<sup>30</sup> The four major contributors to Afghanistan's BPHS are USAID, European Commission, Asian Development Bank and the World Bank. These four NGOs have worked with the MoPH to fund NGOs working in localized areas to provide the BPHS to Afghan citizens. The map below shows what areas each organization primarily works in according to Action Aid in 2010.

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<sup>29</sup> Action Aid

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

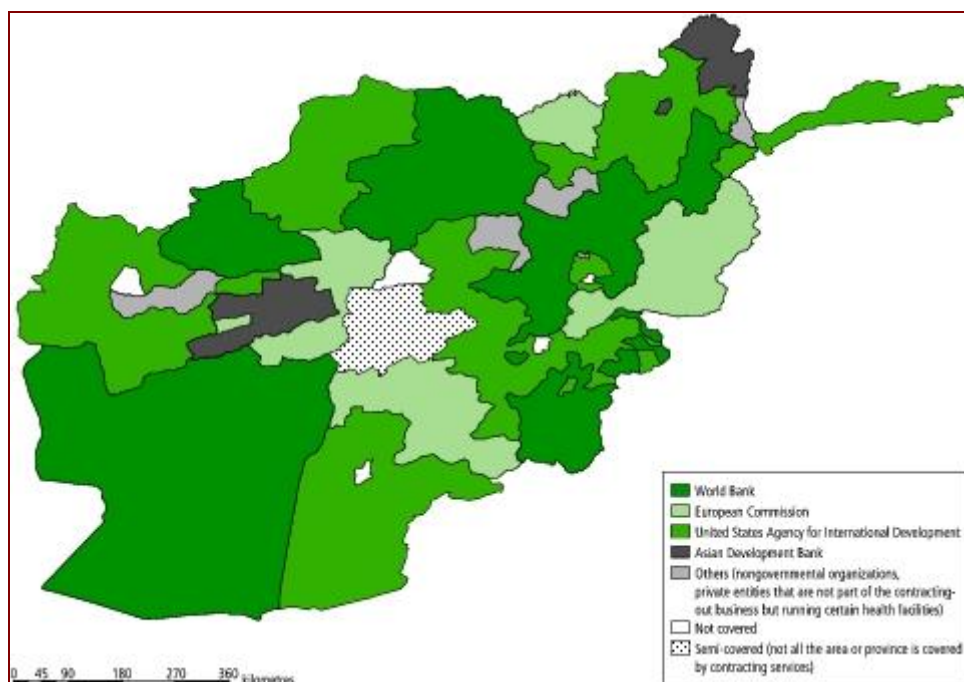


Fig. 1. Geographical coverage by agencies funding delivery of the basic package of health services in Afghanistan<sup>31</sup>

A huge influx of training and infrastructure money is needed for the MoPH to have the resources necessary to provide basic public coverage to all its citizens. The current use of private sector health providers is tenuous because foreign investment and personnel are not guaranteed on a long-term basis in this region of the world. The people of Afghanistan have learned not to rely on foreign support because foreign powers have never stayed in the region.<sup>32</sup> There still is not universal coordination between all NGOs in Afghanistan and the MoPH, leading to discrepancies in the basic health care provided between districts.<sup>33</sup>

### **U.S. INTERESTS**

The United States cannot support security in Afghanistan indefinitely. In order for Afghanistan to survive as a stable nation it needs to end its reliance on U.S. troops to sustain the new Afghan government. Afghan citizens must become active in the security and economic

<sup>31</sup> WHO

<sup>32</sup> Mojadidi

<sup>33</sup> ANDS 8



sectors. For this to happen effectively all people must be guaranteed basic health so they can see a future beyond illness and early death. Without proper access to basic health care the Afghan population will be too ill to participate in the rebuilding of Afghanistan.<sup>34</sup>

One key to this strategy is access to basic health care in all areas of the country. By making health coverage available, the U.S. Department of State will build strong international ties with the Afghan people and foreign health providers. Medical staff will form cultural understanding with their patients while promoting a positive image of the United States. Also, these providers and personnel who help increase access to health will work closely with the Afghan government and more specifically with the MoPH. This interaction will aid in fostering relations between the two governments, which will make collaboration on security and stability more straight forward.

Health outcomes can monitor progress in the rebuilding of Afghanistan. Indicators such as MMR and IMR are already on the decline. With further investment, the overall health of the Afghan population will continue to rise.

### **OPTIONS**

1. Continue to support the MoPH and its programs to create continuity and basic guidelines for delivery of free basic health care to all Afghan citizens. This would give the power of administering health to the MoPH while still allowing for U.S. influence over policies before and during implementation. This influence would allow the U.S Department of State to work with the Afghan government to provide stability to Afghanistan and create a message of trust and cooperation. Although, the U.S. would not have the power to change policies or with

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<sup>34</sup> Rasekh 182

which they disagree. The U.S. government would be forced to accept the judgment of the MoPH and help enforce its guidelines across Afghanistan.

2. Support with personnel and monetary aid NGOs and Afghan government projects that currently comply with MoPH guidelines. This will ensure the level of health currently provided does not diminish in Afghanistan as well as encouraging NGOs and foreign governments to support the Afghan government by conforming to their laws regarding basic health. By providing these services the U.S. government will expend a considerable amount of time and money to support institutions that are not necessarily Afghan-run. These funded NGOs and government projects would not necessarily conform to U.S. policy towards Afghanistan.
3. Implement and continue to support programs to train female health care workers as well as continuing education programs for all levels of health care providers. A large population of properly trained health workers will allow the MoPH to end its reliance on NGOs and foreign governments, like the U.S., to provide basic health to its citizens. The cost for these programs would be large because of the current lack of proper training among many Afghan health workers and the need for thousands of more personnel.
4. Fund radio-based public health education programs. The cost for these programs would be less than television or periodical campaigns, especially when 28.1% of the population is unable to read. However, these programs would only be available to a little over half the population, so the chance of full saturation and implementation would be slight.
5. Use established health indicators such as MMR, IMR, and life expectancy to monitor progress over the next two decades. The United States would not be required to implement a new monitoring system. Instead the U.S. would rely on established groups who monitor

health indicators around the world, like WHO and UNICEF. Though the U.S. Department of State would have to trust these monitors to be accurate. If negative trends began there would have to be an intervention to reverse the trends. If this situation arose the costs would be unpredictable; they would depend upon how well the MoPH has been prepared to deal with potential crisis.

6. Commit to supporting Afghanistan in its health care rebuilding process through 2030.

Twenty years is ample time to rebuild Afghanistan's poor health system. The U.S., because of their full-funding would have more control over how these funds were spent within the MoPH. However, there is no guarantee the funding would be available during this 20 year span and if the U.S. were forced to remove funding before the promised expiration date the image of the U.S. in Afghanistan and the international community would suffer. Also, the MoPH would grow to depend on these funds instead of building their own resources for funding within the Afghan government and international community; this would not be desirable if the MoPH is to become self-sufficient in 2030.

7. Pour all aid into programs and U.S.-run NGOs. By choosing this option the U.S.

Department of State would have more control over health practices within Afghanistan.

However, this option would deny needed funds from established NGOs within Afghanistan that already provide quality health to needy populations. By only promoting U.S. interests our government would be sending the message that it does not trust Afghans to run their own programs within their country.

8. Allow NGOs to find their own funding to support Afghanistan's health care system with the U.S. providing only an advisory role. Little expense or risk would be required by the United States. It would provide health policy advisors to the MoPH and trust the Afghan

government to implement their recommendations, if these recommendations were to fail the fault would lie in implementation and therefore the U.S. could maintain its positive image. However, by only being in the background of the health care system the United States would lose its opportunity to actively improve the lives of the Afghan people. This deficiency would also prevent U.S. personnel and aid groups (like USAID) from monitoring the situation in more rural and poorer areas of Afghanistan.

9. Import foreign physicians and other health care workers to fill the provider gap, ignore the need for Afghan providers. An influx of foreign providers would ease the gap of needed health care workers and allow more Afghans immediate access to BHSP. International collaboration would be high because many Afghans would have the opportunity to interact with international health care workers. However, this would be a temporary fix for Afghanistan's health care needs. These imported providers would be working on a contractual basis and once their contract ended they would return to their home countries leaving the gap of providers still present and even more deeply felt after Afghans enjoyed a few years of access to properly trained medical personnel.

10. Ignore the current health care crisis and put all forms of funding into security issues.

Afghanistan's most pressing need is security and hence all money and personnel should be funneled into enhancing security in and around Afghanistan. This would promote stability and assure Afghan citizens that their safety is the highest priority of the U.S. However, this option does not address the issue of Afghanistan's poor health situation. This policy would also send the message that the United States is only concerned with their goals and has no desire to support the Afghan population and their health concerns.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The United States should support Afghanistan's MoPH in its goals to provide free basic health coverage to all its citizens.

### ***Short Term Policies***

In a country where MMR and IMR are so dramatically high special emphasis should be given to those at risk populations. The United States can have the greatest impact on the future health of Afghanistan by promoting female health workers to enter proper training facilities. Primary importance must be placed on training female health workers at all levels so they can be present at health facilities throughout Afghanistan. To sustain and improve upon the current health care available, investments must be made by foreign governments and NGOs to train Afghan civilians in a variety of health care roles. This training must begin immediately because proper, thorough medical training can take up to 16 years to complete. Also, because many current health workers have little recent training it is imperative the entire health care community becomes properly trained at their level and in their specialty.

The United States should support the MoPH to implement a program of annual continuing education for all levels of health care workers. Each year there would be a minimum requirement to attend a workshop or seminar directly related to a sector of public health. This would ensure workers are given the opportunity to stay current on new techniques and technologies as well as collaboration between different levels and specialties. This program would require the U.S. to allow Afghan students to train at American Universities as well as encouraging other foreign governments to do the same. The Afghan students will interact with their peers and promote further international cooperation.

By funding radio-based education programs focusing on basic health the United States would expend relatively little expense to reach a majority of the rural population, many of whom are illiterate. This program would focus on such basics as sanitation and proper purification of drinking and cooking water. These basic measures have the potential to save thousands of lives and improve the health of millions of Afghans. The added advantage is these programs would empower Afghans to take control of their health without relying on foreign providers. The U.S. Department of State will monitor these programs to ensure the messages delivered are relevant to the Afghan population and any emerging public health threats are addressed in a timely manner. This would mitigate possible negative effects caused by unforeseen events that could impact public health. The United States would gain the trust of the Afghan people and prevent thousands of deaths and millions of illnesses each year simply by encouraging vaccinations for all children and educating the public about proper sanitation and clean water practices. These efforts alone have the potential to reduce U5MR drastically, not to mention benefiting the Afghan population as a whole.

### ***Long-Term Policies***

In a country where almost 40% of the population lives below the poverty line it is imperative that the United States ensures free basic health care to the citizens of Afghanistan.<sup>35</sup> The guidelines set up by the MoPH focus on prevention of basic health issues as well as emphasizing at risk groups. These goals of stability and normalcy are paramount for the United States to ensure long-term security in the region. The government of Afghanistan must provide more funding to the MoPH. The biggest obstacles for the MoPH to provide full coverage is the lack of funding by the Afghan government and the lack of uniformity in provided services. The

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<sup>35</sup> Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan

United States must continue aiding the MoPH to enforce its guidelines in both the public and private sectors. Each segment of health must conform to the same minimum qualifications for certification of personnel and implementation of services and community education. The U.S. government, by assisting and participating in these efforts has a unique ability to reach more isolated sections of Afghanistan.

Programs like the BPHS should be encouraged not only because of their focus on a disadvantaged segment of the population but also because this is a group founded and run by Afghans. For effective U.S. withdrawal, there needs to be long-term support of these programs in order for Afghanistan to take care of its own people. Since NGOs provide the majority of basic health services in Afghanistan the United States should continue to give money and administrative support to these NGOs. However, the State Department should use caution in supporting all operating NGOs in Afghanistan. Only those NGOs that follow MoPH guidelines should be maintained with U.S. support. Other NGOs can receive assistance later if they agree to follow MoPH laws and submit to regular status checks as to their progress towards the goals of BPHS. Along these lines all NGOs must commit to regular monitoring by the MoPH and the Afghan government to ensure continuity throughout the country. The Afghan government, to create cooperation between departments will work with the MoPH with U.S. support and advice to collaborate on projects which have an effect on public health or access.

International aid groups already monitor basic health indicators of most countries, including Afghanistan. Keeping track of positive trends in these numbers would require no increased personnel or infrastructure. The United States would simply set goals for positive changes in indicators such as MMR, IMR, U5MR, poverty rate and life expectancy. Any positive trend would be beneficial to security efforts in Afghanistan. Since it will likely take a minimum

of ten years for Afghanistan's health care system to become independent, monitoring these trends for twenty years will alert the U.S. government of any negative trends and allow prevention strategies to be implemented.



# Refugees & Internally Displaced Persons: Resettlement & Repatriation

Anli Jiao

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## Policy Recommendations

- Support the current community-based projects targeted toward the reintegration of returning refugees. Increase the number of these projects so that employment opportunities and resources will be more available, especially in rural or marginalized communities outside of Kabul.
- Cooperate and actively participate in the mission of the UNHCR, the largest active organization addressing the issue of Afghan refugees and IDPs. Continue to provide funding for projects by the UNHCR and other organization supporting the humanitarian assistance of Afghan refugees and IDPs.
- Be present in the negotiations between the governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran regarding the issue of refugees. Encourage the Tripartite Agreement between the UNHCR, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, and ensure that its objectives are met.
  - Address the lack of education in Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan through funding and cooperation with the UNHCR, the Pakistani government, and the Afghan government.
- Increase the number of exchange programs of Afghans to U.S. institutions, such as that of the Afghan lawyers to the University of Washington School of Law.
- Support the current community-based projects targeted toward current and potential IDPs as a means for providing resources and opportunities to those who are displaced from their home communities or who currently live in unstable areas that need assistance.
- Continue funding the Land Allocation Program, established by the Afghan government. Encourage the Afghan government to revise the program so that its current failures to provide adequate resources and shelter are resolved.

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## Abstract

This chapter examines the issue of refugees and internally displaced persons in Afghanistan. There are currently over 3 million Afghan refugees seeking asylum abroad, and over 200,000 people within the borders of Afghanistan who are displaced from their homes. A successful U.S. mission in Afghanistan requires that the U.S. ensure the sustainable return and reintegration of voluntary repatriates. It must also provide a framework for which the Afghan government can regulate the large number of internally displaced persons. This chapter provides an overview of the context surrounding refugees and internally displaced persons, and offers a number of policy recommendations for the U.S. as it considers its next steps in Afghanistan.

## ISSUE

From December 2001 and into 2002, after the Taliban regime was overthrown and an interim government was put in place, hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees began to return to their homeland, creating one of the largest refugee repatriations in history. By the end of 2003, approximately three million refugees had returned to Afghanistan, mostly from neighboring Pakistan and Iran. The dramatic influx in the population has challenged the process of reconstruction in many ways. Refugees return to their home communities and often find the reintegration process to be quite difficult. A serious lack of employment and resources is the top concern. Ultimately, a strain is placed on the receiving communities as they struggle with limited resources. The constant flow of the voluntary repatriation of refugees—the end goal of many organizations, namely the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)—can no longer be supported.

In addition to the flow of Afghans crossing in and out of Afghanistan, there continues to be an overwhelming movement of people within the country. The UNHCR estimates the current number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to be 230,670.<sup>36</sup> With a range of reasons and motives for leaving their home communities, internally displaced persons and migrants tend to mix as they attempt to resettle in other communities. Those who are part of Afghanistan's internal movement often face the same challenges as the refugees who have repatriated.

In order to continue the reconstruction of Afghanistan and to ensure a successful mission in which the country is secure and power is transferred to Afghans, it is critical for the U.S. to thoroughly understand the issues surrounding these refugees and displaced people. A successful mission will require a cohesive policy that will effectively accommodate and regulate the flow of people within and across the borders of Afghanistan. Specifically, the U.S. must formulate policy

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<sup>36</sup> UNHCR "Country Operations Profile" 2010

that will ensure the sustainable return and reintegration of voluntary repatriates. The policy must also provide a framework for which the Afghan government can regulate the large number of internally displaced persons.

## **BACKGROUND**

One of the difficulties in assessing the situation in Afghanistan is identifying and distinguishing refugees, IDPs, and migrants from one another. The UNHCR defines a refugee as “someone who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country,”<sup>37</sup> a definition agreed upon in the UN General Assembly’s 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Unlike refugees, IDPs remain within the borders of their home country, even if they flee their home for similar reasons. Migrants are fundamentally different from refugees and IDPs in that they leave for different reasons and motives. While refugees and IDPs must leave in order to save their lives, migrants (such as economic migrants) are those who choose to move in order to better their lives.<sup>38</sup>

These differences are important for several reasons. First, many aid organizations only work with some of these groups and not others. For example, the original mandate of the UNHCR covers refugees and not IDPs or migrants, although it has gradually come to provide assistance to both refugees and IDPs. Many of the active international and non-governmental organizations that are partnered with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) serve refugees and IDPs but not necessarily migrants. Understanding which groups are served by these organizations is necessary for the U.S. advise the Afghans government on its

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<sup>37</sup> UNHCR 2008, 4

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 7

refugee and IDP policy. Second, it is important to distinguish these groups for legal reasons. Each group is protected differently under Afghan law and international humanitarian law, and understanding this is critical to the U.S. mission in Afghanistan.

However, the extents to which these definitions can be utilized are limited. In reality, it is often difficult to distinguish between and among refugees, IDPs, and migrants in Afghanistan. These groups of people often co-exist in the same community and receive the same protection and assistance. Although the definitions of these groups need to be recognized and kept in mind, formulating U.S. policy in the narrow framework of these definitions will not lead to the most successful and efficient outcome possible. It is also critical to understand the historical, cultural, political, and economic factors which constitute the Afghan context.

### ***Overview of Refugees and IDPs in Afghanistan***

Afghans have been fleeing from and returning to Afghanistan since 1978 when the Marxist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan overthrew the government. The Soviet intervention of 1979 followed, and there has been a steady flow of Afghans moving both within and across the borders of Afghanistan, with influxes occurring during times of instability. Smaller numbers of Afghans continued to flee during the 1980s until the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 and the capture of Kabul by resistance forces in 1992 when large groups of refugees began to return. Despite these relatively large movements of repatriation, Afghan refugees accounted for nearly half of the refugees under the mandate of the UNHCR in the beginning of the 1990s, and formed the largest refugee group in the world at its peak of 6.22 million.<sup>39</sup>

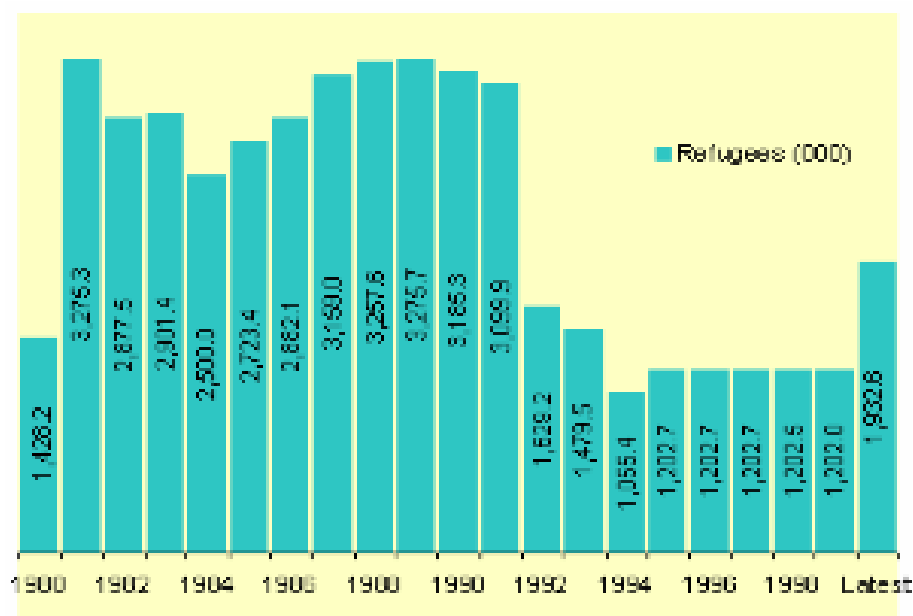
In addition to the large number of refugees who fled Afghanistan, there were also large numbers of people who fled from their home communities to the cities and population centers.

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<sup>39</sup> Monsutti 2008, 60

Following the Soviet withdrawal, the number of IDPs is estimated to have been up to a million people.<sup>40</sup> The number of IDPs and refugees decreased once the Taliban took over Kabul in 1996, though some, particularly the educated, fled the Taliban's severe restrictions on the lives of Afghans. A second wave of refugees left Afghanistan upon the entrance of U.S. force in October 2001. About 200,000 to 300,000 Afghans fled, the majority crossing the border into Pakistan.<sup>41</sup>

*Figure 1: Estimated number of refugees (mainly Afghans) in Pakistan (1980-2000)*



*Source: UNHCR Country Report<sup>42</sup>*

Despite the recent trend of repatriation since 2002, a notable proportion of Afghans who fled to Pakistan have not returned (see Figure 1). According to the UNHCR, the number of refugees in Pakistan during the 1990s averages to be about a third of that in the 1980s, indicating that up to a third of those who fled to Pakistan during the first wave of refugees remain in asylum. Additionally, UNHCR figures estimate that more than half of all Afghan refugees were not born in Afghanistan. Following the end of the Taliban regime in November 2001, a

<sup>40</sup> Margesson 2007, 2

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Groenewold 2006, 17

significant wave of repatriation began. It is estimated that more than five million Afghans have returned to their country, with another half million IDPs returning to their home communities.<sup>43</sup>

The number of returnees has dropped significantly since 2005 due to a worsening security situation; yet, the estimated population of Afghanistan has increased by over 20 percent since 2001, and continues to increase today.

### ***Migratory Trends and the Current Situation***

The government of Afghanistan estimates the current number of refugees living in Iran and Pakistan to be about 3 million, the majority of whom have been residing there since the 1980s.<sup>44</sup> There are an additional 230,670 IDPs,<sup>45</sup> mostly in the provinces of Helmand, Uruzgan, and Kandahar in southern Afghanistan, where security is most unstable. The number of IDPs is notable even when a discussion regards only the refugee problem, as it is an indication of the level of success of the reintegration of returnees. Often, those who return to their home villages after spending time in Pakistan or Iran find it difficult to survive for various reasons and choose or are forced to relocate to another community. It is also important to note that the presence of a large number of IDPs is a clear indication of the living conditions in a given community. IDPs leave one place for another in search of a more promising opportunity than what is available to them at home. This leads to the reasons and motives for leaving one's home.

There are in fact a variety of factors contributing to migration other than conflict. Though the number of Afghans who migrate has undoubtedly peaked during times of instability and conflict in the past two decades, there has always been migration within and from Afghanistan. Families and individuals, particularly men, have always moved from place to place: nomads who

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<sup>43</sup> Monsutti 2008, 60

<sup>44</sup> Afghanistan National Development Strategy 2008, 3

<sup>45</sup> UNHCR "Country Operations Profile" 2010

move with their herds between different pasture lands; people from rural areas who travel to urban centers to find menial work; those who cross the border into Pakistan or Iran to find work. As a result, migration in this region follows long established transnational networks between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran. Through these networks, complex systems of migration and support have continued to thrive and support countless Afghans—both the migrants and the ones who remain at home.

One such system is the *hawâla* system, which is the organized method of sending money from neighboring Pakistan or Iran to their families in Afghanistan without requiring official identification papers or an operating banking system (the latter of which did not exist in Afghanistan during much of the 1990s). This system involves the transfer of money into Afghanistan through a merchant who belongs to the same lineage or comes from the same valley. Through kinship, trust, and time, money is eventually passed on to the recipient family in Afghanistan through the sale of goods purchased with the money.<sup>46</sup> Money transfers have been an integral part of Afghan culture and a necessity for survival, especially during times of conflict. International money transfers such as the *hawâla* system have been essential for many families to be able to feed themselves and otherwise survive during times of war.

These patterns of economic migration that have been in place for a long time are important to keep in mind as one analyzes the current refugee and migration situation in this region. Though war and conflict is a clear cause for displacement—as seen in the influx of the refugee population during times of instability—it also results from poverty and lack of opportunities. For some, such as young Hazara men, movement from Central Afghanistan to Iran

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<sup>46</sup> For more information regarding the *hawâla* system among Afghans see: Monsutti 2008, 58-73

is a rite of passage.<sup>47</sup> Thus, a solution that is focused solely on repatriation as the end to refugees and migration is inevitably too narrow to succeed.

### ***Refugees in Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan: Conditions and Implications***

#### **Conditions in Pakistan**

Pakistan and Iran currently host the most refugees in the world, with the majority being Afghans. UNHCR estimates about 1.3 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and 1 million in Iran.<sup>48</sup> Due to the large number of Afghans who have informally crossed these borders and sought refuge, it is difficult to have a completely accurate assessment of the living conditions of Afghans in these countries, especially of those living outside of formal refugee camps. Furthermore, limited Iranian information sources make the assessment of the conditions in that country more difficult.

Most Afghan refugees since the first wave of refugees in the 1980s have settled in some of the least populated areas of Pakistan, namely Northwest Frontier Province and Baluchistan (Figure 2). In the early years they lived in camps, many of which have turned into villages of permanent settlement over time. There were about 150 refugee camps in Pakistan in 2002, with about 1.1 million Afghan refugees residing in these camps out of a total Afghan population of about 3 million living in Pakistan.<sup>49</sup> The large number of UNHCR refugee camps in these Pakistani provinces bordering Afghanistan indicates the large number of Afghans who have escaped across the Durand Line. The UNHCR conducted a survey of approximately 97% of the Afghan refugee population living in Pakistan in 2002, giving a detailed account of the demographics, education level, and employment rates at this time. Due to the large number of

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<sup>47</sup> For more information, see: Monsutti 2007

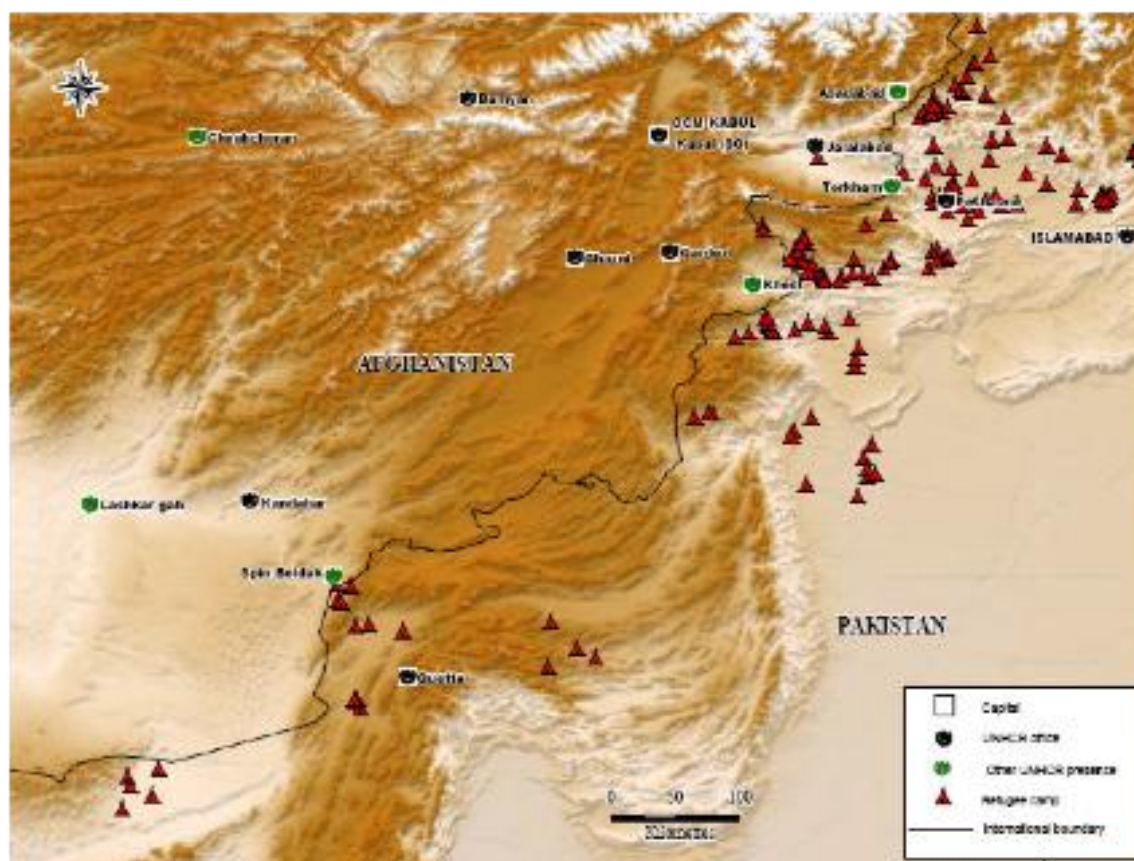
<sup>48</sup> Groenewold 2006, 11

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 17



Afghans who returned to Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban in 2001, current conditions may differ slightly from some of the analysis provided by this survey. Nonetheless, it is a valuable source of information on the lives of Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

*Figure 2: Location of Afghan Refugee Camps in Pakistan (2002)*



Source:

*UNHCR Country Report*<sup>50</sup>

Overall, the Afghan refugee population was found to be young, with two out of three refugees below the age of 25. Interestingly, different ethnic groups fled during different periods, indicating the diversity and complexity of ethnic and religious issues in the region. For example, the majority of Hazaras (about 93%) fled during the Taliban regime, which was composed mostly of Pashtuns. This is important for the U.S. to note as it attempts to build the Afghan

<sup>50</sup> Groenewold 2006, 16

government, as it must recognize the country's complex ethnic and religious interactions and how these may trigger migration of one group or another while the other is in power.

The UNHCR survey also assessed the level of education and employment of Afghan refugees in Pakistan (Figure 3). The findings indicate that enrollment in primary education of Afghan children in camps are only slightly lower than those in urban areas, with about 1 in 8 males and 1 in 10 females enrolled. This is very low, especially considering that school attendance in Pakistan is compulsory from age 6 to 17. High unemployment rates among refugees in both camps and urban areas imply that many are likely supported through other means, such as networks with family or relatives and humanitarian assistance through various organizations.

*Figure 3: Education and Employment Indicators among Afghan Refugees in Pakistan*<sup>51</sup>

Indicators	Camps	Urban Areas
<b>Net enrollment ratio in primary education</b>	12% (M), 10% (F)	13% (M), 11% (F)
<b>Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5</b>	52% (M), 30% (F)	46% (M), 35% (F)
<b>Literacy rate of 15-24 year olds</b>	39%	47%
<b>Unemployment rate of 15-24 year olds</b>	51.8% (M), 93.8% (F), 70.2% (M+F)	39.4% (M), 89.6% (F), 61.3% (M+F)

## Conditions in Iran

Currently, there are about 935,500 Afghan refugees out of a total 993,600 refugees and asylum seekers in Iran.<sup>52</sup> While the majority of these refugees live outside of camps, living

<sup>51</sup> Groenewold 2006, 9

<sup>52</sup> World Refugee Survey 2009

conditions tend to be difficult due to provisions and restrictions that are placed on them by the Iranian government. Foreigners are banned from 19 areas with no exception for refugees, and as a result large populations of Afghan and Iraqi refugees live in highly concentrated areas. A leniency toward Iraqis does exist, however. Further, individuals with Special Identity Cards (SIDs) issued by the government of Iran have greater privileges than those who do not. For example, Afghan children enrolled in Iranian primary and secondary schools must pay tuition (families of Iraqi children do not) unless their parents hold SIDs, and self-run Afghan primary schools are restricted by the Ministry of Education and Training. Parents of Afghan children enrolled in school must also pay special municipal taxes, with the exception of women heads of households.

In addition, those who wish to engage in business in Iran must obtain appropriate visas and work permits, which require registered refugees to abandon their refugee status in order to return to Afghanistan and obtain the necessary documents. This is often unfavorable to those who wish to work, as there is no guarantee of being able to obtain these documents in exchange for asylum in Iran. Because Iran is party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the government is bound to adhere to its provisions. However, its reservations on certain provisions, including the right to work, mean that refugees in Iran are not wholly protected by the 1951 Convention. The government allows recognized refugees “employment in the fields authorized for foreign nationals and in those fields deemed appropriate, including animal husbandry and brick making.”<sup>53</sup>

Many Afghans have accused the Iranian government of discrimination. There have been a number of reports by Afghan officials of wrongful killings of Afghans by Iranian border

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

security authorities at the Iran-Afghanistan border, including 15 to 20 people in 2008 that were thought to be terrorists or smugglers, and 5 in the beginning of 2010. In January 2009, Iranian soldiers reportedly deported about 9,000 Afghans in two weeks and evicted entire refugee settlements without checking their refugee status.<sup>54</sup> Despite the tension between the two countries, many Afghan refugees consider the employment opportunities and security conditions in Iran to be superior to those at home.

### **Implications**

The large number of Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan has led to various political agreements between the governments. The Tripartite Agreement between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the UNHCR was first signed in 2003 and has been extended multiple times, most recently in March 2009. The principle objective of the Tripartite Commission that was established by the agreement is to “facilitate the voluntary repatriation in conditions of safety and dignity of Afghan citizens, and their reintegration in Afghanistan.”<sup>55</sup> The most recent extension of the Agreement means that Afghan refugees will be allowed to remain in Pakistan until the end of 2012, as the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions took measures to extend the validity of the Proof of Registration cards granted to current refugees.<sup>56</sup>

A similar agreement was first signed between the governments of Afghanistan, Iran, and the UNHCR in 2002, and was extended annually until 2008. This Tripartite Agreement coordinated the efforts of those parties to the agreement to assist the return and transition of

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> *Agreement Between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Governing the Repatriation of Afghan Citizens Living in Pakistan*. 2 August 2007

<sup>56</sup> UNHCR “UNHCR and Pakistan Sign New Agreement” 2009

voluntary returnees through transportation and basic supplies. However, it also extends the hosting of Afghan refugees in Iran, as it recognizes the following:

The repatriation of Afghan refugees and displaced persons in Iran shall take place at their freely expressed wish based on their knowledge of the conditions...and the situation in intended places of return...the status of those Afghan refugees and displaced persons who decide not to avail themselves of voluntary repatriation...shall continue to be governed by the relevant international protection principals and standards.<sup>57</sup>

The government of Iran chose not to extend this agreement past its duration in 2008. The effects of this termination were evident soon after, with the deportation of Afghan refugees in large numbers since the beginning of 2009. One source estimates that the Iranian government repatriated an average of 500 Afghans per day in the beginning of 2009.<sup>58</sup> There have also been a number of events and accusations regarding the treatment of Afghan asylum seekers in Iran, indicating a harsh environment of discrimination.

There is a notable difference in policy between the government of Pakistan and the government of Iran. While Pakistan has continued to extend its Tripartite Agreement into 2012, Iran terminated its own agreement by not extending it past 2008. The decision of these governments to extend their respective Tripartite Agreements is a reflection of each country's willingness to integrate Afghan refugees into their societies. This can be learned through studying the experience of Afghan refugees in their host country. The evolving perceptions of Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan and the policies of these governments are critical to take into consideration as the U.S. assists the Afghan government in formulating regarding refugees and migrants in the region.

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<sup>57</sup> *Joint Programme Between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and UNHCR for Voluntary Repatriation of Afghan Refugees and Displaced Persons*. 8 March 2006.

<sup>58</sup> Chomuik 2009

### ***Past and Present Refugee and IDP Policy***

Numerous policies and programs have been implemented by a number of international and non-governmental organizations (NGO), the governments of Afghanistan, the U.S., and of the host countries to address the issues of refugee repatriation and IDPs. There has been notable success in agricultural programs that have been implemented in rural communities. One such program, in which modern agricultural practices and equipment are introduced to Afghan farmers, government staff, and students, has been supported by USAID. A variation of this program was implemented in a tent-city comprising of approximately 1,100 displaced families in Helmand province. It created the Badam Bagh Demonstration Farm, in which produce was grown with sophisticated agricultural practices and equipment. In 2009, USAID reported that the Badam Bagh Demonstration Farm was able to distribute 12.5 metric tons of fruits and vegetables grown on the farm to all 1,100 families.<sup>59</sup> This particular program was extended through a partnership with the National Organization of Women and its network of NGOs, increasing the number of potential beneficiaries of such a program.

In 2005, the government of Afghanistan launched a Land Allocation Scheme to assist IDPs and returnees without land. Land distribution of this sort is complex and difficult, especially in a post-conflict country such as Afghanistan; however, the program has led to some success and is an important first step toward post-war reconstruction. To qualify, applicants must show proof of national identity from their province of origin, and must not possess any land or property in their name or that of a spouse or child. Priority is given to women heads of households as well as the disabled and widowed. According to a 2008 report by the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), the Land Allocation Scheme had 523,744 registered

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<sup>59</sup> USAID 2009.

applicants, 97,994 beneficiaries selected, 23,246 plots of distributed land, and 5,512 families living on the sites.<sup>60</sup> Further improvements can still be made to this program, which has been funded by the U.S. government. As a leader from northern Baghlan province said, “there should be a real difference between a shelter project and a housing project...there is still no drinking water, no schools, no clinics, and few jobs...we also need income-generating activities.”<sup>61</sup>

The UNHCR has had a large presence in Afghanistan and has implemented many programs to encourage the repatriation of refugees. Though success has come from some of these programs, there have been instances of unforeseen negative outcomes from a lack of coordination and miscommunication. In 2002, the UNHCR provided support to returnees from Pakistan and Iran to assist the “voluntary return” of refugees without officially encouraging their repatriation. Around the same time, the governments of Pakistan and Iran began to pressure Afghan refugees to return home, and though the Taliban regime had ended by this time, the security and conditions were not always clear for refugees living abroad to return home. The combination of these events caused a large number of Afghan refugees to return under the impression that if they did not return while UNHCR support was available, they would be missing out on an opportunity.<sup>62</sup> Many also returned with an overly optimistic understanding of what was taking place in their home country. As expressed by a returnee in the north of Kabul, “The whole world told us they were rebuilding Afghanistan.”<sup>63</sup> As a result, about two million refugees returned home, many to be disappointed in living conditions that were often worse than what they experienced abroad.

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<sup>60</sup> ANDS 2008, 4.

<sup>61</sup> Tan 2006.

<sup>62</sup> Rashid 2004, 204.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

Certain U.S. institutions and universities have also implemented successful programs involving the hosting of Afghans. For example, the Asian Law Center at the University of Washington Law School has hosted more than 40 Afghan legal educators from major law schools in Afghanistan. This program covers modern civil, criminal, and commercial law, as well as comparative customary law and comparative *sharia*.<sup>64</sup> This project is an opportunity for Afghans and Americans to exchange ideas and cultures, and for the Afghan participants to return to their legal educator positions in Afghanistan with enriched knowledge and skills.

The programs with the most success have been those with a focus on implementing a long-term, self-sustaining solution. As reflected by sentiments regarding the Land Allocation Scheme, a solution is not achieved by simply building shelter or allocating rural, uncultivable land to a displaced family. There must be congruent policies to build and improve infrastructure, as well as employment opportunities. Recognizing this will help to eliminate any policies that narrowly focus on repatriation alone, which have proven to be largely unsuccessful. If there are sustainable projects providing opportunities for returnees, refugees and IDPs will be more likely to voluntarily return to their homes.

### **U.S. INTERESTS**

As the U.S. advises Afghan policy for refugees and IDPs, it is necessary to keep in mind the complexities surrounding the issue without deviating from key U.S. interests. In his December speech, President Obama stated his overarching goal of the continued U.S. occupation in Afghanistan is “to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda...and to prevent its capacity to threaten America and our allies in the future.”<sup>65</sup> One way in which the President plans to meet this goal is to pursue a civilian strategy in which the Afghan people are held accountable for

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<sup>64</sup> University of Washington.

<sup>65</sup> New York Times 2009.



governing themselves. With strict standards for accountability in place, the U.S. will be much closer to meeting its objectives and Afghanistan will be closer to self-rule.

First and foremost it is in the interest of the U.S. to improve the economy of Afghanistan. As refugees often acquire educational and vocational experiences abroad, creating an environment to which they can easily return and smoothly reintegrate would tremendously benefit the Afghan economy. While the Afghan education system continues to be reformed and developed, the country should utilize the knowledge and skills that many refugees have acquired. The economy can also benefit with a closer monitoring of the flow of currency and goods across Afghan borders. Specifically, it is in the interest of the U.S. to create opportunities for refugees and migrants to return to. At this time, the most important opportunity is employment. The U.S. would benefit by creating more employment opportunities so that Afghans are able to not only make a living but also able to contribute to the development of their country. The agricultural sector is critical at this time, especially in rural areas. Increasing the number of vocational opportunities in this sector, especially for returning refugees, would bring the U.S. closer to realizing the overarching goal of accountability and self-rule. Fostering an environment that encourages repatriation would decrease the number of Afghans seeking asylum, which is necessary to call the mission in Afghanistan a success. The U.S. cannot be constituted as a success without repatriating a significant proportion of the current 3 million refugees living in Pakistan and Iran and the over 200,000 Afghans displaced from their homes.

Additionally, the U.S. should formulate policy around the issue of refugees and IDPs because it directly affects its relations with the governments of host countries, most critically Pakistan. As the President stated in his speech, the U.S. must “act with the full recognition that

our success in Afghanistan is inextricably linked to our partnership with Pakistan.”<sup>66</sup> In order to foster this partnership, it is in the interest of the U.S. to create a partnership with Pakistan that recognizes it as the host country of millions of Afghan refugees.

Finally, it is in the interest of the U.S. to foster the development of democratic ideals in Afghanistan. Progress has been made with the recent election, however flawed. There is a multitude of ways in which democracy and various humanitarian ideals may be developed, especially while benefiting the Afghan people. There must be a forum for which Afghans, Americans, and people of other countries can learn about one another’s cultures. This would not only develop a diverse set of ideals, but holds the possibility of positively influencing public opinion on the U.S. engagement in Afghanistan. It may also present opportunities for critical educational and vocational training for Afghans, which would ultimately benefit the development of Afghanistan. This would allow for the long-term goal of fostering democratic ideals while also fulfilling short-term goals pertaining to the development of Afghanistan.

### **OPTIONS**

1. The United States minimizes its involvement in the issue of Afghan refugees and IDPs, and allows for organizations such as the UNHCR and other NGOs to continue to provide assistance according to the objectives of each respective organization. Gradually decreasing the amount of U.S. funds devoted to the issue of refugees and IDPs and beginning to divert them towards financing the troop surge and additional security forces will potentially have a positive impact on improving the security in Afghanistan and could allow the U.S. to move toward the President’s stated goal of “defeating and dismantling al Qaeda.” However, because the U.S. contributes the most money to

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

organizations serving refugees and IDPs, this option could also severely deplete available assistance and resources.

2. The United States plays an active role in efforts to encourage Afghan refugees to return to Afghanistan and encourages IDPs to return to their home community. This option could possibly benefit the development of Afghanistan, as many refugees have acquired valuable educational and vocational experiences from abroad. It could also be a step toward a solution for the crowded spaces and encampments where IDPs and migrants reside, particularly in Kabul. However, the large influx of returnees to a society that continues to be unstable could possibly deteriorate the current state of Afghanistan.
3. The United States supports current community-based projects targeted toward the reintegration of returning refugees, increasing the number of these projects so that employment opportunities and resources will be more available, especially in rural or marginalized communities outside of Kabul. This option could potentially increase repatriation with the success of these projects, which would decrease the number of stateless Afghans living abroad. However, the success of these projects is not guaranteed, which could lead to wasted funds that could instead be diverted toward other important objectives, such as security or training Afghan forces.
4. The United States cooperates and actively participates in the mission of the UNHCR, the largest active organization addressing the issue of Afghan refugees and IDPs, and continues to provide funding for projects by the UNHCR and other organizations supporting humanitarian assistance to Afghan refugees and IDPs. This option allows for current projects to be sustained while also giving the U.S. some leverage in shaping the outcome of refugees and IDPs. However, it would require the commitment of millions of

taxpayer dollars to the potentially unsuccessful mission of international and non-governmental organizations.

5. The United States participates in the negotiations between the governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran regarding the issue of refugees, encourages the Tripartite Agreement between the UNHCR, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, and ensures that its objectives are met. This option gives the U.S. a degree of influence over the issue of Afghan refugees in these host countries while establishing dialogue and partnership. However, exerting influence in the issue of refugees between these countries could possibly hinder or hurt other U.S. interests in this region. Regarding this option, the U.S. could:
  - a. Address the lack of education in Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan through funding and cooperation with the UNHCR, the Pakistani government, and the Afghan government and ensure that the Afghan children living in these camps are receiving an education during the ages of 6 to 17 years (compulsory in Pakistan). This option would benefit the future of Afghanistan by educating children who are most likely going to return to Afghanistan during their lifetime. However, it requires funding, teachers, and facilities in order to develop an education system, which is a struggle in Afghanistan, let alone in refugee camps abroad.
6. The United States increases the number of exchange programs of Afghans to U.S. institutions, such as that of the Afghan lawyers to the University of Washington School of Law. This option would serve as an opportunity for educational and cultural exchange, which would benefit the future of Afghanistan. However, at the moment, there is no guarantee that Afghans participating in these programs will return to Afghanistan. This

defeats the purpose of utilizing Afghan educational, cultural, and vocational skills for the development of Afghanistan.

7. The United States supports current community-based projects targeted toward current and potential IDPs as a means for providing resources and opportunities to those who are displaced from their home communities or who currently live in unstable areas that need assistance. This option could reduce the number of IDPs by addressing the needs of those in unstable situations in their home communities, while also providing for the IDPs living outside of their home communities. However, funding and support for these projects in unstable areas could be dangerous and lead to an increase in troop and civilian casualties.
8. The United States continues funding the Land Allocation Program, established by the Afghan government and revises the program so that its current failures to provide adequate resources and shelter are resolved. This program would continue the successful first steps toward land distribution, while also handing over responsibility to the Afghan government and civilians who receive land through the program. Some may argue that the flaws of the program are too great and cannot be solved until the security of the country is achieved.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***Short-Term***

First, it is essential that the U.S. supports the current community-based projects targeted toward the reintegration of returning refugees, such as the previously mentioned USAID project in Helmand province (option 3). It should also increase the number of these projects so that employment opportunities and resources would be more available, especially in rural or marginalized communities outside of Kabul. This assistance in reintegration, especially in rural

areas, will indirectly encourage the voluntary repatriation of refugees, which would decrease the number of stateless Afghans living abroad.

Second, the U.S. should cooperate and actively participate in the mission of the UNHCR, the largest active organization addressing the issue of Afghan refugees and IDPs (option 4). American support would not only help the UNHCR's mission, but it would also give the U.S. a degree of influence over their operations. The U.S. should also continue to provide funding for projects by the UNHCR and other organizations supporting the humanitarian assistance of Afghan refugees and IDPs (option 4). The U.S. State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration estimates that it provided over \$500 million in humanitarian assistance to Afghan and Pakistani refugees, conflict victims, and IDPs, including \$51 million between October 1, 2007 and September 30, 2008.<sup>67</sup> Such funding allows current projects to sustain while also giving the U.S. some leverage in shaping the outcome of refugees and IDPs. Throughout this process, it is critical to ensure that there is open communication among all parties involved, such as the UNHCR, the government of Afghanistan, the governments of host countries, and the media. It was due to a lack of open communication of intent and the reality of the situation that led to the large wave of repatriation in 2002, which Afghanistan could not handle at the time.

Third, the U.S. should support the current community-based projects targeted toward current and potential IDPs as a means for providing resources and opportunities to those who are displaced from their home communities or who currently live in unstable areas that need assistance (option 7). This type of support will reduce the number of IDPs by addressing the needs of those in unstable situations in their home communities, while also providing for the IDPs living outside of their home communities.

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<sup>67</sup> Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration

### ***Long-Term***

While the above policies should be the top priority, the U.S. should also begin to work toward a long-term solution to the issue of refugees and IDPs. First, the U.S. should participate in the negotiations between the governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran regarding the issue of refugees (option 5). By encouraging the Tripartite Agreement between the UNHCR, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, and ensuring that its objectives are met, the U.S. will have a degree of influence over the issue of Afghan refugees in these host countries, as well as establish a dialogue and partnership. Addressing the lack of education in Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan through funding and cooperation with the UNHCR, the Pakistani government, and the Afghan government should also be a long-term goal for the U.S. as it develops its partnership with Pakistan. Ensuring that the Afghan children living in these camps are receiving an education during the ages of 6 to 17 years (compulsory in Pakistan) would benefit the future of Afghanistan by educating the younger generation of Afghans who will most likely return to Afghanistan during their lifetime.

Second, the U.S. should increase the number of exchange programs of Afghans to U.S. institutions, such as that of the Afghan lawyers to the University of Washington School of Law (option 6). This will serve as an opportunity for educational and cultural exchange, and hosting the future leaders of Afghanistan at our institutions is a critical step in the process of rebuilding Afghanistan. In order to ensure that the skills and experiences gained from these programs benefit the development of Afghanistan, the U.S. should formulate a policy that involves a required return to Afghanistan upon completion of an exchange program for a specified period of time.

Finally, the U.S. should continue to fund the Land Allocation Program, which was established by the Afghan government (option 8). This program would continue the successful first steps toward land distribution, while also handing over responsibility to the Afghan government and civilians who receive land through the program. Further, the Afghan government, with U.S. support, should revise the program so that its current failures to provide adequate resources and shelter are resolved.

Given the history and culture of Afghanistan, efforts to improve the situation regarding refugees and IDPs cannot operate under the narrow framework of simply curtailing mobility. Instead, they must build an environment for the successful return and reintegration of voluntary refugees and IDPs in order to provide a long-term incentive to return home, while accommodating and regulating the current internal and cross-border movements. Policies for refugees and for IDPs will be distinct from one another, but they must be coordinated to integrate all movements of the Afghan people.



# Section V

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## Regional Actors



# U.S. Policy toward Pakistan: No Elegant Solutions

Jeffrey Lupo

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## Policy Recommendations

- The U.S. must condition its military aid to Pakistan upon the meeting of benchmarks in dismantling militant groups within Pakistan's borders.
  - The U.S. must structure its military assistance packages to Pakistan in such a way that ensures the Pakistani military embraces counterinsurgency doctrine and has the tools with which it can carry out counterinsurgency operations.
  - The U.S. must encourage civilian control of the Pakistani military and intelligence agencies and design U.S. non-military assistance to Pakistan in such a way that discourages corruption.
  - The U.S. must encourage and facilitate dialogue between Islamabad and New Delhi in order to ensure long-term stability in South Asia.
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## Abstract

The U.S. must take into consideration two mutually enforcing groups of policies when designing its policy toward Pakistan. The first group of policies must address Pakistan's role in Afghanistan. These policies must address Pakistan's support of militant groups as a tool of foreign policy and counterinsurgency operations in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border areas. The second set of policies must address the stability of the Pakistani state itself. These policies must address Pakistani civilian institutions, Pakistani public opinion, and Pakistan-India relations. The U.S. must address these issues in order to dismantle networks of international terrorism, and ensure long-term stability in Afghanistan and the region.

*“There are no elegant or even probable solutions for the myriad problems riddling Pakistan. Indeed, the path for the United States is very narrow but must be pursued, given the far more harrowing alternatives. This will require a significant change in policy from what has been pursued over the last seven years.”*<sup>1</sup>

## **ISSUE**

The U.S. must take into consideration two mutually enforcing groups of policies when designing its policy toward Pakistan.<sup>2</sup> The first group of policies must address Pakistan’s role in Afghanistan. The fate of Afghanistan is inherently tied to the actions of the Pakistani state. The most important aspects of this group of policies are inducing Pakistan to stop supporting militant groups as a tool of foreign policy, ensuring the Pakistani army conducts counterinsurgency operations against militant groups in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border regions, and ensuring that the Pakistani army has the capabilities to carry out such operations.

The second group of policies must consider the stability of the Pakistani state itself as a means to reinforce the policies already mentioned and to ensure long-term stability in the region. These policies drive toward building the governance capacities of Pakistani civilian institutions, garnering the support of the Pakistani people for counterinsurgency operations, and improving Pakistani-Indian relations. The U.S. must address these issues in order to eradicate terrorist networks in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border regions and ensure long-term stability in the region.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Fair *Sober Realism* 2009, 150

<sup>2</sup> This subject matter breakdown is modeled after the Obama Administration’s strategic review of Afghanistan and the region: “The Obama administration’s strategic review on Afghanistan and the region in April 2009 focuses on destroying al Qaeda and underscores the close linkage of developments in Pakistan and Afghanistan. *But it also leaves no doubt that the United States considers a secure, politically stable, moderate Pakistan a goal in itself. This is reflected in U.S. military policy that has shifted toward better equipping and training of Pakistan’s army and its paramilitary for counterinsurgency*” (emphasis added) Weinbaum 2009,84

<sup>3</sup> Pakistan expert C. Christine Fair characterizes the most important issues for the U.S. in dealing with Pakistan as the following: “How, if at all, can the United States cajole, persuade, or compel Pakistan to cease and desist from engaging in policies, such as supporting some forms of militancy, that are inimical to U.S. interests? Can the

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Pakistan's Role in Afghanistan***

#### **Pakistan's Interests**

In designing its policy toward Pakistan, the U.S. must be aware of Pakistan's perceived interests in Afghanistan. Since its founding, one of Pakistan's long-term goals in Afghanistan has been to prevent any chance of the formation of a new, independent state by Pakistan's Pashtun population.<sup>4</sup> Pakistan is opposed to the creation of so-called "Pashtunistan" because it would likely carve out a significant portion of Pakistan's northwest territory. Pakistan has also sought, and continues to seek, to prevent any measure of Indian influence in Afghanistan. Pakistan views any Indian influence in Afghanistan as a possible threat and an attempt to encircle and destabilize Pakistan.<sup>5</sup>

Pakistan has sought to use Afghanistan as a means of strategic depth in case of a large-scale military conflict with India. In this mode of thought, Pakistan would use Afghanistan as a safe haven for its forces and would presumably be able to defend itself more easily if a large-scale conflict were to break out between Pakistan and India.<sup>6</sup> All of these goals have contributed to Pakistani efforts to install subservient, or at least friendly, regimes in Afghanistan. Pakistan has supported militant groups, such as the Taliban, in attempting to achieve this goal.<sup>7</sup> Lastly, Pakistan has used instability in Afghanistan as a means to attract foreign assistance, especially

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United States help Islamabad pursue policies that will secure Pakistan's future as a successful democratic state at peace with itself and with its neighbors, capable of providing for its citizenry?" Fair *Sober Realism* 2009, 150

<sup>4</sup> Weinbaum and Harder 2008, 26

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

from the U.S., in order to strengthen its military and improve its chances in prevailing in its disputes with India.<sup>8</sup>

In order to design effective policies toward Pakistan, the U.S. must take into consideration Pakistan's strategic decision-making culture. Former U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Robert B. Oakley argues that five issues have shaped Pakistan's strategic culture.<sup>9</sup> First and foremost, Pakistan's ever-present tensions with India have shaped its foreign policy framework. At the heart of these tensions are Pakistan's territorial disputes with India over Kashmir.<sup>10</sup> Second, the dictatorship of General Zia ul-Haq shaped Pakistan's strategic culture by the institutionalization of Islamization in the military. Third, the 1980s war in Afghanistan increased the power of the ISI significantly in executing foreign policy. Fourth, the perceived U.S. abandonment of Pakistan in the 1990s, exemplified by U.S. sanctions, instilled in Pakistan the sentiment that the U.S. believed Pakistan to be a disposable ally. Lastly, the decision by the Musharraf regime to side with the U.S. after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks affected Pakistan's strategic culture in that the military was forced to walk a fine line in supporting the U.S. war on terror while not completely abandoning its use of militant groups as a tool of foreign policy.<sup>11</sup>

### **Support for Militant Groups**

Elements within Pakistan's military and intelligence service, the Directorate of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), have supported, and to some degree continue to support, militant groups, including elements of the Taliban, as a means to execute its foreign policy goals in Afghanistan and the South Asian region. Pakistan's support of militant groups dilutes the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Oakley and Gady 2009, 2

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

effectiveness of U.S. aid in Pakistan and undermines U.S. strategic goals in dealing with Pakistan.<sup>12</sup>

Pakistan decides which militant groups it will support according to its regional strategic goals. The militant groups supported by elements in Pakistan's military, Frontier Corps and the ISI, operate largely in the Federally-Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) areas of Pakistan, which run along Pakistan's border with Afghanistan.<sup>13</sup> Pakistan's support for any of these groups is in direct opposition to U.S. strategic goals in the region:

Islamabad's current attempt to differentiate between al Qaeda, components of the Taliban, and domestic jihadist groups is a grave mistake; many of these groups are integrated at the level of membership and ideology, share the same mosques and *madaris*, and continue to enjoy at least some measure of ISI support.<sup>14</sup>

Pakistan's support for these groups has, "created an environment conducive to militancy and has undermined the ability of the government to maintain law and order."<sup>15</sup>

### **Directorate of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)**

In order to understand Pakistan's support of militant groups as a tool of foreign policy, one must examine Pakistan's intelligence service, the Directorate of Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) and its role within the Pakistani army and state. The ISI was created in 1948, and since the late 1950s has, "viewed its raison d'être first and foremost in terms of the Pakistan military rather than in relation to any broader concept of the defense and security of the nation-state or the people of Pakistan."<sup>16</sup> Due to the fact that the ISI is responsible for both internal and external intelligence gathering, it is by far the most powerful intelligence agency in Pakistan. In designing

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<sup>12</sup> Fair *Fortifying Pakistan* 2006, 74

<sup>13</sup> Far *Pakistan's War Within* 2009, 181

<sup>14</sup> Fair *Fortifying Pakistan* 2006, 74-75

<sup>15</sup> Fair and Jones 2009-2010, 181

<sup>16</sup> Gregory 2007, 1014

its policies toward Pakistan the U.S. must take into consideration the influence of the ISI, which, according to Shaun Gregory, Director of the Pakistan Security Research Unit at University of Bradford, is currently the most important intelligence agency for the U.S. and its allies.<sup>17</sup>

Elements within the ISI hinder or altogether undermine U.S. interests in attempting to eradicate militant groups in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border area. According to Gregory,<sup>18</sup> there are four areas in which the ISI is an untrustworthy U.S. ally:

1. The ISI acts on Western intelligence, but oftentimes does not bring its own intelligence to the U.S. or its allies.
2. The ISI does not always wholeheartedly contribute to specific investigations.
3. The ISI has either denied or restricted the U.S. and its ISAF allies access to many of its assets and operatives.
4. The ISI has misdirected the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and manipulated intelligence to serve its own geopolitical goals.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to these four areas, the ISI has aided militant groups and has facilitated five trends in Pakistan that are currently aiding al Qaeda.<sup>20</sup> These include the expansion of madaris in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border area, the radicalization of Pakistan's youth population, a radicalization within certain elements of the Pakistani military and intelligence services, support of relationships with al Qaeda and separatist/terrorist groups, such as Laskhar-e-Taiba, and the reestablishment of the drugs trade and the illegal taxation of goods moving across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Ibid



In its attempt to achieve its regional goals of supporting the Taliban and separatist groups operating in Kashmir, the ISI colluded with Osama bin Laden to establish training camps in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border regions.<sup>22</sup> The ISI has created multiple militant groups in order to serve Pakistan's foreign policy goals, the majority of which are intended to serve Pakistan's goals in winning its territorial disputes with India over Kashmir.<sup>23</sup>

Many have argued that the ISI is a largely autonomous actor and constitutes a state within a state. However, in recent years that notion is less likely to be true:

Given the regular posting and rotation of army officers from its ranks and the provision of a tight budget for its operations, it seems no longer likely to operate outside the government's direct control. This is a change from the days of the Afghan war when it had direct access to covert US and Saudi financing and therefore some financial independence from the army headquarters.<sup>24</sup>

## **U.S. Assistance and Counterinsurgency Operations**

In order to analyze Pakistan's counterinsurgency efforts against militant groups in its border regions with Afghanistan, one must examine the Pakistani Army and its views towards counterinsurgency operations, the role of the U.S. in providing assistance to the Pakistani military, and the influence of Pakistani civilians.

### **The Pakistani Army and Counterinsurgency Operations**

The strategic focus of the Pakistani army on India and its negative views of counterinsurgency military doctrine severely hinders counterinsurgency operations in Pakistan: "Pakistan prefers to retain its conventional focus against India and hesitates to adopt a counter-insurgency orientation, viewing operations against internal threats as residing at the lower end of

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> Gregory 2007, 1018: Specific militant groups created by the ISI to serve Pakistan's foreign policy goals are Lashkar-e-Toiba (formed in 1990), Harakat ul-Ansar (formed in 1993), and Jaish-e-Mohammed (formed in 1994). These groups are all comprised mostly of "fighters drawn from Afghanistan and Pakistan as well as Arabs and other Muslims radicals."

<sup>24</sup> Nawaz 2008, 578-579

a conventional-conflict spectrum.”<sup>25</sup> The Pakistani military’s reluctance to embrace counterinsurgency doctrine results in its inability to clear and hold areas and garner the support of local populations,<sup>26</sup> which are the most important elements successful of counterinsurgency operations.<sup>27</sup>

Pakistan has used a variety of military forces to conduct counterinsurgency operations in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border areas, including its army, the Frontier Corps, the Frontier Constabulary and Frontier Police.<sup>28</sup> However, due to ethnic divisions within Pakistan, the military has been forced to be over-dependent upon the incompetent Frontier Corps:

The sensitivity of Pashtuns toward the deployment of the regular troops from the predominantly ethnic Punjabi army has forced the generals to rely heavily on the less capable and often poorly motivated, locally recruited 60,000-man Frontier Corps for military operations.<sup>29</sup>

The Frontier Corps is not a trustworthy fighting force. Allegations of it helping the Taliban have been commonplace since 2004. Perhaps most importantly the Frontier Corps is not a trained or competent counterinsurgency force:

The Frontier Corps has generally not been trained and equipped to be a serious counter-insurgency force. It lacks emergency medical-evacuation capabilities and other logistical capacities, and has a long history of distrusting the army to provide this sort of support.<sup>30</sup>

## **U.S. Assistance: Intentions and Effects**

After the September 11 terrorist attacks and the following U.S.-led offensive into Afghanistan, the U.S. began to encourage Pakistan to, “conduct operations against militants by

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid 162

<sup>26</sup> Fair and Jones 2009-2010, 162

<sup>27</sup> Panetta 2009, 38

<sup>28</sup> Fair and Jones 2009-2010 163

<sup>29</sup> Weinbaum 2009, 76

<sup>30</sup> Fair and Jones 2009-2010, 164

offering massive financial assistance (over \$2 billion per year). US security assistance included reimbursements through coalition support funds, military aid... and counter-narcotics programmes.”<sup>31</sup> The main U.S. agencies involved in providing assistance to Pakistan are the Department of State, the CIA, and the Department of Justice, along with “other government agencies to support counter-terrorism, internal security and development programmes.”<sup>32</sup>

The U.S. Department of State’s key initiatives in providing assistance to Pakistan to enhance counterinsurgency capabilities are the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and the Pakistan Counterinsurgency Fund/Pakistan Counterinsurgency Capabilities Fund (PCF/PCCF), the International Military Education and Training (IMET), the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement funds (INCLE), the Anti-Terrorism Assistance program (ATA), and the Coalition Support Funds (CSF).<sup>33</sup>

The goals of these programs are to double “the number of Pakistani police trained with U.S. funded assistance” by December 2012, to ensure the Pakistani military sustains operations against extremists within its borders, and to deepen the U.S.-Pakistan military to military relationship through expanded training opportunities.<sup>34</sup> The resources available to the Department of State for these programs for FY 2010 are approximately \$455 million in addition to \$700 million appropriated by Congress in the FY 2009 Supplemental for the Pakistan Counterinsurgency Capability Fund. This figure “does not include Coalition Support Funds,

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<sup>31</sup> Fair and Jones 2009, 162

<sup>32</sup> Ibid 162

<sup>33</sup> Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, U.S. Dept. of State, “Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy.” 2010, 23

<sup>34</sup> Ibid 24

which are administered by the Department of Defense and determined based on actual costs incurred throughout the year by the Pakistani military.”<sup>35</sup>

One of the main critiques of U.S. assistance to Pakistan is the fact that the bulk of U.S. funding, approximately 70%, goes to the Pakistani military.<sup>36</sup> The U.S. must examine the effectiveness of its assistance programs to Pakistan in order to capitalize on success by enhancing effective programs, minimizing wasteful spending and canceling ineffective programs. South Asia expert C. Christine Fair, Assistant Professor at the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, notes that the U.S. should reevaluate the structure of its military assistance programs directed toward Pakistan:

The United States has disproportionately funded the army and Frontier Corps, while paying scant regard to the police and civilian investigatory institutions. *Yet the counter-insurgency literature consistently finds that civilian-led rather than army-led approaches ultimately prevail.*<sup>37</sup>

The 2009 Kerry-Lugar legislation is a positive development in the effort to focus assistance on the Pakistani people:

Congressional passage of the 2009 Kerry-Lugar legislation that authorizes nonmilitary States cares as much about the needs of Pakistan’s people as it does about its military.<sup>38</sup>

Since early 2008 the U.S. has demonstrated unyielding support for the civilian government of President Zardari.<sup>39</sup> President Zardari is at present deeply unpopular with the Pakistani people and has an uncertain political future. In designing its policies toward Pakistan the U.S. must be cognizant of how the Pakistani people view cooperation between Washington and Islamabad.

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<sup>35</sup> Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, U.S. Dept. of State, “Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy.” 2010, 24

<sup>36</sup> Marvin G. Weinbaum, “Hard Choices in Countering Insurgency and Terrorism along Pakistan’s North-West Frontier.” 2009, 83

<sup>37</sup> Fair and Jones 2009-2010, 181 (emphasis added)

<sup>38</sup> Weinbaum 2009, 84

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

## **Pakistani Civilians and Counterinsurgency Operations**

Many Pakistani civilians are suspicious of U.S. intentions in the region, as many believe that the United States is “responsible for militancy in the frontier” and that the United States, “together with India, seeks to break up Pakistan by secretly supporting its domestic insurgents.”<sup>40</sup> The issue of whether U.S. funding does more harm than good in fueling Pakistanis’ suspicions about U.S. intentions is a serious one. As Fair argues:

It is important to assess whether the benefits of USAID interventions in mitigating violence and anti-Americanism are sufficiently significant in size and scope relative to the public relations problems such securitized aid appears to pose.<sup>41</sup>

The majority of Pakistanis do not support their country’s alignment with the U.S. Although Pakistanis acknowledge the threat that militant groups pose to the Pakistani state, “they remain generally opposed to cooperation with the United States and even to their own army acting against such groups.”<sup>42</sup> Domestic Pakistani politics affect army decision-making in carrying out counterinsurgency operations in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border regions.<sup>43</sup> Pakistanis oftentimes are not in favor of counterinsurgency operations against fellow citizens and perceive the Pakistani army as acting solely due to pressure from the U.S.<sup>44</sup> The Pakistani army’s refusal to embrace counterinsurgency doctrine has resulted in its failure to integrate social, economic and political tactics in their operations. The unpopularity of counterinsurgency operations in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border regions is partly due to this failure.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid 83

<sup>41</sup> Fair Testimony presented before the House Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs. 2009, 18

<sup>42</sup> Fair and Jones 2009-2010, 180

<sup>43</sup> Ibid 162-163

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> Ibid

## **Aerial Drone Strikes**

Although drone strikes are “the only game in town” in disrupting the al Qaeda leadership in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border regions,<sup>46</sup> the negative image of the U.S. they instill in the minds of ordinary Pakistanis threatens to nullify their successes. Priya Satia, Assistant Professor of Modern British History at Stanford University, argues that the drone strikes are unpopular with the Pakistani people because they perceive them to be a neocolonial counterinsurgency strategy. Professor Satia notes that the British invented aerial counterinsurgency in Iraq and the Pakistani-Afghani borderland in the 1920s and that, “the memory of that colonial past crucially shapes the military and political dynamics of *any* aerial strategy in the region.”<sup>47</sup>

## **Pakistan’s Nuclear Weapons**

The prospect of the Taliban or other militant groups obtaining one or more of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons haunts South Asia specialists and U.S. policy-makers. At present, however, Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal is secure.<sup>48</sup> The officer cadre of the Pakistani military, unlike other elements within the military and the ISI, is generally pro-West, professional, and is not linked to the Taliban or other militant organizations.<sup>49</sup> The only scenario in which one or more of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons could fall into the hands of militants is if Pakistan’s military command structure were to breakdown, which according to Shafqat, “seems unlikely.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Panetta 2009, 38

<sup>47</sup> Satia 2009, 34

<sup>48</sup> U.S. Central Intelligence Agency Director Leon Panetta has said he is “confident that the Pakistanis have a pretty secure approach to try to protect those weapons,” and that Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal is “something we will continue to watch very closely.” Panetta 2009, 38

<sup>49</sup> Shafqat 2009, 102

<sup>50</sup> Ibid 103

## *Stabilizing Pakistan: A Goal in Itself*

### **Pakistani Civilian Institutions**

Professionalized civilian institutions are integral to a stable Pakistani state and hence to stability in Afghanistan and the region. In order to understand the current inadequacies of Pakistani civilian institutions one must examine the Pakistani military's dominance of civilian institutions, current trends indicating a possible moving away from this dominance, and historical factors that have led to a weak Pakistani civil service.

### **Military Dominance of Civilian Institutions**

There are two important legacies of colonial rule in Pakistan that shape its civilian institutions up to the present day. Firstly, Pakistan inherited "very strong bureaucratic institutions" from colonial India and has a legacy of "rule by a powerful bureaucracy."<sup>51</sup> Second, a patron-client system of political relationships "between the bureaucracy and local elites" was institutionalized and resulted in "the image of the bureaucracy as the providers of patronage, influence and security."<sup>52</sup> However, the most important change since the mid-twentieth century is that, "the power and influence of the civilian bureaucracy has increasingly been replaced by the power and influence of the military."<sup>53</sup>

To communicate the extent to which the military dominates civilian institutions in Pakistan, Wilder quotes a senior Pakistani political party leader:

Twenty years ago the Army was a state within a state. Today the Army is the state- everything else is appendages. The Army controls all state institutions- civil service, foreign policy, economic policy, intelligence agencies, judiciary and the legislature. They've monopolized policymaking.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Wilder 2009, 20

<sup>52</sup> Ibid 20-21

<sup>53</sup> Ibid 20

<sup>54</sup> Ibid 24

Military dominance of Pakistan's civilian bureaucracy has diminished these institutions' capacity to govern. The U.S. must be aware of its potential role in exacerbating this problem as it considers how to distribute assistance programs across Pakistan's military and civilian institutions and which conditions, if any, it will attach to funding programs.<sup>55</sup>

The Pakistani army trains its high level officers to be competent in handling nonmilitary issues, and is confident that it has the capacity to carry out civilian administration. Shuja Nawaz, an expert on Pakistani civil-military relations, identifies the army's self-confidence as one of the most important factors in Pakistani civil-military relations and is one of the main reasons why "the army dominates the landscape."<sup>56</sup> Retired army officers often serve in important civil sector positions and dominate "all the major civil service training establishments."<sup>57</sup> While the recurrence of military rule throughout Pakistan's history has contributed to the military dominance of civilian institutions the role of civilian rulers "cannot be downplayed," in that they oftentimes have allowed the military to encroach upon its areas of operations.<sup>58</sup>

### **Trends Toward Demilitarization**

There are two factors endogenous to Pakistan that could lead the Pakistani military to play a smaller role in Pakistani civilian institutions. Firstly, anti-military sentiment throughout the Pakistani public has had a major effect in framing the Pakistani military's perceptions as, "anti-military sentiment seems to have convinced the current military leadership that its interests would be better served by a role behind the scenes rather than by taking the brunt of public criticism in a front and center role."<sup>59</sup> Secondly, a growing acknowledgment of the Taliban

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid 25

<sup>56</sup> Nawaz 2008, 573

<sup>57</sup> Ibid 577

<sup>58</sup> Ibid

<sup>59</sup> Wilder 2009, 33



insurgency threat in Pakistan's FATA and NWFP could convince the military "to focus more on security issues and may lead to a greater recognition of the security benefits of having a more effective civil service and public administration."<sup>60</sup>

Since General Pervez Musharraf's November 2007 resignation as army chief, there have been signs that the new military leadership is less interested in governing the Pakistani state.<sup>61</sup>

The current army chief, General Ashfaq Kayani, has removed around 3,000 "active or retired military personnel from government posts," and has pledged that the military will participate in Pakistani elections only insofar as it is responsible for the "maintenance of security."<sup>62</sup> Through implementing these policies, Gen. Kayani is most likely trying to repair the bruised image of the Pakistani military, after "a serious erosion of its status under Musharraf."<sup>63</sup>

### **Factors Leading to Weak Pakistani Civilian Institutions**

One of the most powerful factors draining Pakistani civilian institutions of their ability to govern is their difficulty in recruiting well-trained employees. Since the early 1970s, the main incentives for joining the Pakistani civil service, namely, "power, prestige and job security," have diminished considerably.<sup>64</sup> Adding to the unattractiveness of Pakistani public service is the non-competitive salaries of officer grade civil servants when compared to opportunities in the Pakistani private sector.<sup>65</sup>

Another factor leading to weak Pakistani civilian institutions is the inefficacy of foreign aid. Whereas foreign assistance in the past has focused on building the technical capacities of

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid

<sup>61</sup> Kronstadt 2009, 41

<sup>62</sup> Ibid

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

<sup>64</sup> Wilder 2009, 25

<sup>65</sup> Ibid 26

civilian institutions, Wilder notes that the majority of high-level civil servants with whom he has spoken have argued for a greater focus on recognizing the political and social designs and implications of foreign assistance:

Several interviewees...criticized donors for overly technocratic approaches and for pushing changes without investing sufficiently in understanding the social, cultural and political contexts within which the civil service functions.<sup>66</sup>

Other factors impeding civil service reform are Pakistan's chronic political instability, the ever-present issue of ethnic politics within the Pakistani state bureaucracy, opposition from within the civil service itself as well as from Pakistani political parties.<sup>67</sup>

### **U.S. INTERESTS**

Terrorist networks that operate in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border regions, such as al Qaeda, pose a direct threat to U.S. national security, as evidenced by the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 attacks. Pakistan is an integral, if not perfect, partner in the fight against these militant groups.<sup>68</sup> In order to prevent any future terrorist attack on American soil, it is in direct U.S. national security interests to seek a stable Afghanistan. This goal is preconditioned on a stable Pakistani state that willingly, and competently, carries out counterinsurgency operations against militant groups in its border regions with Afghanistan.

The U.S. must partner with and provide assistance to Pakistan in order to ensure long-term stability in Afghanistan and the region. In order to achieve this goal, the U.S. must design policies that ensure the legitimacy of the Pakistani civilian leadership:

Popular frustrations could lead to domestic agitation and violence. A deeply disillusioned public creates opportunities for a widening appeal of extremist groups and

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid 25

<sup>67</sup> Wilder 2009, 28-32

<sup>68</sup> U.S. Department of State 2010, 20

the possible ascendance of jihadi elements. If political fragmentation sparks divisions within the military, Pakistan's nuclear arsenal could fall into unfriendly hands.<sup>69</sup>

The possibility, though currently unlikely, of terrorist groups obtaining nuclear weapons from Pakistan or Iran, the ever-present tensions between the Pakistani and Indian governments, or the creation of a power-vacuum caused by the collapse of the Afghanistan government all loom as potential major threats to long-term stability in the region and must be addressed when designing U.S. policy toward Pakistan.

Afghanistan-centered issues such as migration,<sup>70</sup> reintegration of the Taliban into the Afghan government,<sup>71</sup> and counternarcotics operations,<sup>72</sup> are all intricately connected to events in Pakistan. In order to achieve U.S. goals in Afghanistan the U.S. must consider the immense influence of Pakistan at every step of the policy-making process.<sup>73</sup>

#### **OPTIONS**

In designing its policy toward Pakistan the U.S. must decide which options best serve U.S. interests in eradicating Pakistani support for militant groups as a tool of foreign policy, helping the Pakistani army conduct counterinsurgency operations, the use of drone strikes as a military tactic in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border regions, and how to most effectively improve the capacity of Pakistani civilian government institutions.

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid 11

<sup>70</sup> See Chapter 10

<sup>71</sup> See Chapter 3

<sup>72</sup> See Chapter 6

<sup>73</sup> A report by bipartisan American experts on U.S.-Pakistan relations outlines what the U.S. seeks to gain through an effective partnership with Pakistan: "A stable government enjoying the support of the Pakistani people and responsive to their needs, unstinting support in the effort to track down those responsible for the 2001 attack on the United States, a common effort in the struggle to defeat the forces of extremism and terrorism, including Kashmir, a safeguards system that makes virtually impossible the unauthorized use, transfer, or theft of Pakistan's most dangerous weapons and technologies" and "a state that lives in peace with its neighbors, most notably India and Afghanistan. Working Group 2008, 7

### ***Eradicating Support for Militant Groups***

1. Condition the most important aspects of military assistance packages on the achievement of specific benchmarks in ceasing to support militant groups as a tool of foreign policy and cracking down on militant groups within Pakistan. Although the implementation of this option would likely spark a certain degree of resentment within elements of the Pakistani military establishment, it would signal a new era of more nuanced and goal-oriented U.S. assistance.
2. Declare Pakistan a state that supports terrorism and push for sanctions in the United Nations. Although the implementation of this option would convey the seriousness with which the U.S. regards Pakistan's support for militant groups, it runs the risk of provoking a political crisis in Pakistan that could prove more destabilizing than the effects caused by the actions of Pakistani-supported militant groups.
3. Work with Afghanistan and India to create an environment in which Pakistan assesses that is in its national interest to stop supporting militant groups as a tool of foreign policy. The implementation of this policy would not bring about sudden increases in stability in Afghanistan or the region; however, amicable relations between these three nations are a sine qua non of any strategy for long-term stability in Afghanistan.

### ***U.S. Assistance and Counterinsurgency Operations***

1. Structure military assistance packages in such a way that encourages the Pakistani army to endorse counterinsurgency doctrine and equips them with the necessary weaponry in order to carry out such operations. Although the implementation of this option would likely provoke resentment from elements of the Pakistani army, it would ensure increased cooperation in carrying out counterinsurgency operations.

2. Decrease military assistance to Pakistan while encouraging the Pakistani government to make peace deals with the Taliban and other militant organizations. Although Pakistan has expressed a willingness to facilitate peace talks between the U.S. and the Taliban,<sup>74</sup> peace deals between the Pakistani state and the Taliban have failed in the past.

### ***Drone Strikes***

1. Cease drone strikes altogether. Although the implementation of this policy would restrict the ability of the U.S. to target high-level members of the Taliban and other militant groups, it would significantly decrease Pakistani suspicions about U.S. intentions in the region.
2. Reduce the amount of drone strikes, and, when possible, coordinate with local tribal leaders to mitigate the negative effects of this tactic on Pakistani public perception of the U.S. The implementation of this option would decrease U.S. capacity to target high-level members of militant groups, but it would improve the image of the U.S. in the minds of Pakistani civilians.

### ***U.S. Assistance and Pakistani Civilian Institutions***

1. Structure nonmilitary assistance programs in such a way that requires better governance and greater transparency in the allocation of U.S. funds. Although the implementation of this option would not immediately solve the problems riddling Pakistan's civilian institutions, it could serve as the basis for a more stable, and democratic Pakistani state.
2. Expand current direct assistance programs to the Pakistani people in the critical areas of assistance to displaced Pakistanis, health and education, agriculture and energy.

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<sup>74</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/10/world/asia/10pstan.html>

Although the implementation of this option would not immediately aid the U.S. in its fight against militant groups in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border areas, it could positively affect the image of the U.S. in the minds of Pakistani civilians for years to come.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### ***Strategic Framework for U.S. Policy***

The U.S. must redefine its relationship with Pakistan. Even though the international community is reticent to isolate Pakistan over its support for militant groups, including the Taliban, the U.S. must not shy away from employing necessary negative inducements while attempting to influence Pakistani behavior.<sup>75</sup> This strategic framework allows for progress in achieving U.S. interests to not be hindered by the foreign policy goals of Pakistan and should inform all U.S. policy decisions toward Pakistan.

### ***Eradicating Support for Militant Groups***

The U.S. should condition critical aspects of military aid to the Pakistani army on the achievement of specific benchmarks in cracking down on support for militant groups within its ranks (option 1). Although the U.S. should not cease military assistance or declare Pakistan to be a supporter of terrorism (option 2), it should reserve these options as possible future courses of action if conditions merit.<sup>76</sup>

The U.S. must coordinate with India<sup>77</sup> and Afghanistan to create an environment in which Pakistan assesses it no longer needs to support militant groups to serve its foreign policy goals (option 3). This does not require that Pakistan immediately solve its territorial disputes with India or Afghanistan, a goal that is not achievable in the policy-relevant future, but instead

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<sup>75</sup> Fair *Sober Realism* 2009, 163

<sup>76</sup> Declaring Pakistan a state that supports terrorism is addressed in multiple UN resolutions as well as in U.S. law. Fair *Sober Realism* 2009, 166-167

<sup>77</sup> Please refer to the next chapter for further information.

emphasizes the gradual building of trust between these nations in pursuit of long-term stability. The U.S. has a significant amount to gain by acting as an “honest broker” in facilitating dialogue between India and Pakistan. Not only would this ensure long-term stability in the region, but it would also improve the image of the U.S. in the minds of the Pakistani people, who “know that they need (the U.S.) vis-à-vis India just to keep that part of the world stable, as no one else can.”<sup>78</sup>

### ***U.S. Assistance and Counterinsurgency Operations***

The U.S. should shape its military assistance packages with incentives to encourage the Pakistani army to embrace counterinsurgency doctrine and become a capable counterterrorism force (option 1).<sup>79</sup> The U.S. should include provisions within its military assistance packages that make explicit that the Pakistani army’s refusal to embrace such changes will result in significant reductions in or the cessation of U.S. assistance. Implementing this policy will assure the U.S. has a competent partner in the fight against insurgents in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border regions, and will signal to the Pakistani army that U.S. assistance is not open-ended.

### ***Drone Strikes***

The U.S. should reduce, though not all together cease, the use of drone strikes as a military tactic in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border regions (option 2). While drone strikes are useful in targeting high-level Taliban and al Qaeda leaders,<sup>80</sup> the negative image of the U.S. these strikes cause threatens to nullify any progress the U.S. must make in reaching out to the Pakistani people. The U.S. should coordinate with tribal leaders whenever possible in order to

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<sup>78</sup> Zakheim 2009, 188

<sup>79</sup> This recommendation is informed by C. Christine Fair, *Sober Realism* 165

<sup>80</sup> The efficacy of drone strikes are exemplified by the killing of Baitullah Mehsud last year: [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/08/world/asia/08pstan.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/08/world/asia/08pstan.html?_r=1)

provide for greater understanding between the U.S. and local populations if drone strikes result in civilian casualties.<sup>81</sup>

### ***U.S. Assistance and Pakistani Civilian Institutions***

The U.S. should structure nonmilitary assistance programs to the Pakistani government in such a way that requires more effective governance and accountability in the distribution of funds (option 1). The implementation of this policy ensures a more stable Pakistani state and a more effective allocation of U.S. funds. Discouraging government corruption will ensure the Pakistani people's confidence in their government<sup>82</sup> and will prevent political instability<sup>83</sup> and military intervention.<sup>84</sup> This policy, however, is only effective if the U.S. coordinates with other providers of foreign assistance to the Pakistani government in order to prevent Pakistan from seeking out only those funds with little or no conditions of governance reform.

The U.S. should increase direct assistance programs to the Pakistani people (option 2). The implementation of this policy will decrease Pakistani civilians' suspicions of U.S. intentions in Pakistan and as a result will make the Pakistani military more willing to carry out counterinsurgency operations against insurgents in its border regions with Afghanistan.

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<sup>81</sup> Zakheim 2009 184

<sup>82</sup> Fair *U.S. Aid to Pakistan* 2009, 7: "Pakistan is still considered to be a corrupt country. According to Transparency International's most recent 2009 Corruption Perception Index, Pakistan ranks 139 among 180 countries evaluated... While corruption may have deep roots in Pakistan, corruption matters to Pakistanis deeply and thus should focus the attention of U.S. policy makers because of the potential impact it has upon the ways in which Pakistanis view the United States and their own institutions."

<sup>83</sup> Shafqat 2009, 107: If Pakistan's civilian government were to come to face a "crisis of legitimacy," due to high levels of corruption and ineffective governance, militant groups and religious parties such as Jamaat-e-Islami and Lashkar-e-Taiba would almost assuredly gain in popularity.

<sup>84</sup> Working Group 2008, 11



# U.S. Policy towards China, India & Russia: Choosing the Middle Way

Charmila Ajmera

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## Policy Recommendations

- The U.S. should publicly and explicitly reaffirm its intentions to maintain long-term civilian and diplomatic presence in Afghanistan and the region, despite its gradual military withdrawal, in order to reaffirm to the Afghans, as well as to China and Russia, that the United States will not abandon its mission.
- Encourage and facilitate aid from China, India and Russia and push for cooperation and organization from these states by advocating that all aid be channeled into Afghanistan through the Afghan government and the United Nations.
- Discourage an active troop presence from China, India and Russia, while encouraging military support in the form of training, supplies and spare parts to U.S., Allied and Afghan forces.
- Discourage and attempt to stem the rampant arms support from China to Pakistan through diplomatic means and bilateral relations.
- Encourage and facilitate dialogue and economic relations between India and Pakistan to foster interdependence, communication, transparency and a coordinated effort in Afghanistan.
- Provide support for the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline to funnel resources to South Asia and counter the Russian and Chinese dominance over energy in the region.
- Encourage increased military training and supplies from Russia and work with the Russian Federation to open multiple supply lines and dependable alternate routes to deliver supplies to Afghanistan.

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## Abstract

Given the important geopolitical and geostrategic nature of its location at the heart of Central Asia between the Middle East and South Asia, the stability of the entire region is dependent upon peace in Afghanistan. Throughout the last eight years of war, there have been repeated calls for regional collaboration and support of Afghanistan as it has made strides to rebuild after the fall of the Taliban regime. While support from its neighbors and other regional actors has been forthcoming, more will be necessary to maintain stability throughout the entire region, increase ties between nations, and complete the successful transfer of responsibility to the Afghan people. The participation of China, India and Russia is imperative in securing these objectives. Each of these nations is a powerful player on the world stage, both politically and economically, and their support for Afghanistan is vital. While encouraging humanitarian aid, political and economic assistance from these nations, the U.S. must also be aware of preserving its own interests in the energy-rich, geostrategic Central Asian region and balancing the influence of powerful allies.

## **ISSUE**

As a land-locked nation at the core of Central Asia, Afghanistan's future stability and prosperity will be profoundly impacted by its regional neighbors, China, India and Russia. Each of these nations has particular interests in Afghanistan that sometimes coincide and sometimes conflict with U.S. interests in the country, and the region as a whole. It is imperative that the United States recognize these interests, acknowledge and evaluate the efforts of China, India and Russia in Afghanistan from 2001 to present, and design policies that will help to bridge differences and encourage further support from these nations.

Current challenges with China, India and Russia regarding Afghanistan must be addressed in order for the United States to achieve its objectives in the region. These challenges include issues of alternate supply routes to Afghanistan through Russian territory and airspace, Russia's lack of response to U.S. and Afghan requests for military training assistance, Chinese arms support to Pakistan, the enmity between Pakistan and India, competition among all three nations for influence and access to energy in Afghanistan and the region, and problems concerning drug trafficking. These challenges must be addressed to ensure cooperation while safeguarding U.S. interests and achieving political, energy and human security throughout Central Asia and the Middle East.

## **BACKGROUND**

China, India and Russia each have particular histories, relations with, and interests in Afghanistan. Since its historic role as a crossroads along the Silk Road, Afghanistan has been vital in connecting these countries with one another, as well as to the region as a whole.<sup>1</sup> Since the establishment of a centralized government in 2002 after the overthrow of the Taliban,

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<sup>1</sup> Dupree 1973, 296

Afghanistan's relations with these neighboring countries have changed. Even so, Chinese, Indian and Russian historical relationships with Afghanistan continue to play an important role in determining their course of action towards the nation and must be taken into account when designing U.S. policy in the region.

## ***China***

### **Securing a Sphere of Influence**

At the January 2010 Istanbul Summit on Friendship and Cooperation in the Heart of Asia, the special envoy of Chinese President Hu Jintao and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yang Jiechi, reaffirmed China's commitment to Afghanistan and to promoting stability in the region.<sup>2</sup>

Recognizing that Afghanistan is at a "critical juncture," the Minister reiterated the necessity of regional cooperation towards Afghanistan and put forth four specific goals that regional actors should focus on. These objectives included active involvement in the reconstruction process, focused assistance efforts and enhanced coordination, improved efficiency and communication to avoid overlapping, and openness and inclusivity, all of which should be enacted while respecting the leading role of the United Nations (UN) in coordinating international efforts in Afghanistan.<sup>3</sup>

While the U.S. also supports these initiatives, the Minister's remarks at the conference revealed the perceived threat China feels concerning a sustained U.S. presence in the region and their interests in seeing an Afghanistan with "inviolable sovereign independence,"<sup>4</sup> without such heavy U.S. and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) involvement.<sup>5</sup> China has consistently supported U.S. military withdrawal from Afghanistan, promoted reconciliation

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<sup>2</sup> Sina 2010

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Bhadrakumar 2010

efforts “among the Afghan government, the Taliban and the country’s major warlords,”<sup>6</sup> and reiterated the need for more support from regional nations, rather than countries with no geographic proximity to Afghanistan.<sup>7</sup> These assurances of aid and the push for U.S. withdrawal have been augmented by China’s voice within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which made headlines in 2005 when Beijing called for Washington to “set a timeline for withdrawing from military bases in Central Asia.”<sup>8</sup>

The SCO’s member nations include China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and, as of 2001, Uzbekistan. Pakistan, India, Mongolia and Iran are observer states at the SCO.<sup>9</sup> The organization was created partly as an effort to counter the growing American presence, but also to combat terrorism, separatism and extremism in the region and to coordinate counternarcotics initiatives.<sup>10</sup> China also hoped that such an alliance might further its “nascent but conspicuous political, economic and strategic role in neighboring Central Asia,” and secure its energy interests within the Central Asian states.<sup>11</sup>

## **Security Concerns**

Given the close proximity of the conflict in Afghanistan, China has increasingly pursued a more active role in gaining influence and maintaining security in the region. The Chinese government spearheaded the creation of the SCO in the hopes that strong ties with Central Asian states would help to mitigate their concerns over the increasingly militant Uighur Muslims in the northwest Xianjiang province of China, bordering Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and

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<sup>6</sup> Qinggong 2009

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> USA Today Staff 2005

<sup>9</sup> The Shanghai Cooperation Organization 2010

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.; All member nations of the SCO have problems with drug trafficking and narcotics abuse within and across their borders. The focus of the SCO’s recent meeting on Afghanistan in March of 2009 was counternarcotics. Refer to Chapters 6 and 13 for more information.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

prevent the Uighurs from using these Central Asian nations as “a base for separatist activities.”<sup>12</sup> China has experienced multiple issues with Xianjiang’s Uighur Muslim population, a Turkic ethnic minority largely concentrated in northwest China, which has been challenging the Chinese government’s authority and attempting to gain independence for decades.<sup>13</sup> The Uighurs’ efforts toward this goal are exemplified by attempts in 1933 to establish the Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan in the southern oasis of Khotan, renewed ambitions in 1944 to set up the independent state in Ili called the East Turkestan Republic,<sup>14</sup> and more recently with violent “separatist” actions that have grown with the frequency of “insults to Islam” enacted by the Chinese government.<sup>15</sup>

As a consequence of these “separatist” activities and rebellions, for the last fifteen years the Uighurs have been persecuted by the Chinese government, which has pinpointed Islam and “Islamic militants from abroad,” as primary factors for Uighur unrest.<sup>16</sup> This conclusion has spurred the government to criminalize “a great deal of the Islamic education and practice that it believes fill Uighur hearts and minds with reactionary and ‘separatist’ thoughts”, to ban courses in the Qur’an for elementary and middle school students, ban informal religious schools for young children all together, and to maintain tight controls on the construction of mosques.<sup>17</sup> Such acts of suppression and “insults to Islam” have only incited Uighurs to further anti-government

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<sup>12</sup> Chung 2003

<sup>13</sup> Hastings 2005, 1

<sup>14</sup> Rudelson 2000

<sup>15</sup> Hastings 2005, 4; The introduction of communism to China after the end of WWII brought with it, “tremendous change suppressing religious worship,” efforts to collectivize labor and a large influx of Han Chinese pouring into the region to “develop Xianjiang,” all of which encouraged dissent among the Uighur population against the Chinese government.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

activities and “complicated Chinese efforts to crack down on resistance.”<sup>18</sup> This has created more problems on the Chinese border with Pakistan and Afghanistan, which is commonly used for trade and increasingly for trans-national interactions. The fact that the Uighurs have provided support for Afghan and Pakistani insurgent operations and contributed to the Taliban’s strength is deeply unsettling for the Chinese government, as it increases the possibility that the Uighurs might seek allies in Afghanistan and Pakistan and bring the conflicts within these nations directly to China’s doorstep.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, Beijing’s efforts within the SCO to secure assurances from member nations that they will not provide assistance to their “religious and ethnic brethren engaged in militant separatist activities,” in Xianjiang originates from the fear inspired by the threat of Muslim separatists in the region.<sup>20</sup> The government is wary of the “violent Islamic rebellion in Central Asia affecting the Uighurs,” and has displayed heightened concern over being branded an “anti-Muslim” country by Central Asian Republics and Middles Eastern states.<sup>21</sup> Clerics’ criticisms of the government of Iran for failing to respond or speak out against the deaths of Chinese Muslims in the northwest Xianjiang-Uighur region and the pressure from religious leaders on the Iranian government to take action is an apt illustration of the reality of this possibility.<sup>22</sup> Such concerns demonstrate China’s stake in achieving security and stability in Afghanistan and could serve as a platform for the U.S. to promote further support and cooperation from the Chinese government.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 9

<sup>19</sup> Rashid 2009, 17

<sup>20</sup> Chung 2003

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Davet 2009

## **China and Pakistan**

Despite its strong political and financial ties to Pakistan for the last century, a reaction by Pakistani Muslims similar to that of Iranians is a further source of worry for the Chinese government.<sup>23</sup> The copious amount of arms and military support that continues to pour into Pakistan from China is a major U.S. concern, as much of it fuels Pakistani Army and the Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) operations, ultimately enforcing their dominance over civilian institutions and hindering U.S. efforts to encourage effective Pakistani assistance in Afghanistan.<sup>24</sup> This bilateral relationship has also exacerbated relations between Pakistan and India, as well as between India and China. Nuclear threats further contribute to these animosities, as China also supplied Pakistan with copious amounts of technological support for developing its nuclear program during the Cold War.<sup>25</sup>

## **Economic Assistance & Energy Interests**

As a veritable economic hegemon in the region, China is currently the largest investor in Afghanistan. It has tremendous capacity to build up the Afghan economy and facilitate a decreased reliance on foreign aid. To date, China has contributed over US\$131.8 million in grant assistance, as well as cancelled all “mature” debts owed by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA).<sup>26</sup> Chinese support and investment in Afghanistan has spanned from assisting in the construction of the Jomhuri Hospital and Parwan irrigation project to

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<sup>23</sup> Haider 2005

<sup>24</sup> Refer to previous chapter for more information.

<sup>25</sup> Rashid 2009, 39

<sup>26</sup> Sina 2010

bureaucratic training for Afghan government officials to assistance in vocational and human resources development.<sup>27</sup>

China has also funded infrastructure projects and provided cheap grants and loans to the Afghan government. Chinese firms have been hired by the European Union for multiple construction projects, including road restoration activities, and have been active in creating partnerships with the Afghan government. China and Afghanistan have also signed multiple agreements to establish bilateral business councils and “other similar institutions devoted to the development of bilateral ties,” in addition to constructing a US\$500 million electrical plant and railways from Tajikistan to Pakistan for purposes of supporting exploration of the Aynak copper mining fields.<sup>28</sup>

This particular venture illustrates the substantial benefits that foreign investment can contribute to Afghan development. The US\$3 billion contract to develop the Aynak copper mine in the province of Logar, south of Kabul, was signed in 2007 by the China Metallurgic Group and constitutes the greatest foreign investment in Afghan history.<sup>29</sup> The project is expected to generate up to US\$400 million per annum in royalties to the Afghan government, millions of dollars in taxes, US\$200 million in annual shareholder revenues and the direct employment of up to 10,000 Afghans.<sup>30</sup> It is estimated that as much as 13 million tons of copper are in the region.<sup>31</sup> Deposits of coal, iron, gas and oil have also been found.<sup>32</sup> According to recent updates by a U.S. geological survey, Afghanistan has 18 times the amount of oil reserves than originally estimated,

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<sup>27</sup> Norling 2008; The Parwan irrigation project is an effort to restore a water supply to the Parwan province in northern Afghanistan.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> MacWilliam 2007

<sup>30</sup> Norling 2008

<sup>31</sup> MacWilliam 2007

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.



standing at a mean of 1,596 million barrels, and approximately 15,687 trillion cubic feet (TcF) of natural gas reserves.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, large iron ore deposits exist between Herat and the Panjsher Valley and gold reserves can be found in the northern provinces of Badakshan, Takhar, and Ghazni.<sup>34</sup> All of these resources hold the potential for making Afghanistan a highly lucrative target for foreign investment.

Indeed, with China's "good standing in Afghanistan, ability to distort the market, and fiscal wherewithal to outbid its competitors," Beijing is already well positioned to expand and capitalize on its investments in the country.<sup>35</sup> The increasing demand in China for natural gas is likely to motivate it towards further economic activity and contribute to the nation's growing sphere of influence in the region as it "desperately [looks] for overland energy supply diversification in the neighboring states in Central Asia, and potentially also in Afghanistan."<sup>36</sup> Already, much of China's investments in the region have been made "in return for preferential access to natural resources,"<sup>37</sup> as demonstrated by their partnership with the energy-rich nations of the SCO and their increased economic activity in Afghanistan. China's efforts to secure its energy interests, and to counter the Russian, Indian and American presence in the region for the same reasons, has spurred international competition for active involvement in Afghanistan and efforts to secure as large a share of its natural resources as possible.

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<sup>33</sup> Norling 2008

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Norling 2008

<sup>37</sup> Roughneen 2010

## ***India***

### **Aid & Energy**

Like China, India has strong cultural and ethnic ties to Afghanistan. Historic interaction between India and Afghanistan, established through frequent interactions on the Silk Road as well as migration back and forth through now designated Pakistani territory,<sup>38</sup> has helped to strengthen this relationship. Substantial contributions to reconstruction efforts in recent years have also helped to build ties between the nations. India has committed over US\$1.2 billion to reconstruction since 2001<sup>39</sup> and is currently one of the largest donors to Afghanistan.<sup>40</sup> India's greatest investments are in development and infrastructure projects, particularly in the construction of overland roads.<sup>41</sup> The country has also actively pursued the construction of the TAPI energy pipeline which would funnel natural resources and fuel from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan and Pakistan to India.<sup>42</sup> As illustrated in Figure 1, this pipeline will transport 33 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year from the Dauletabad gas field in Southeast Turkmenistan through southern Afghanistan, to Pakistan, terminating in India.<sup>43</sup>

Transit revenue from the project is estimated to generate up to US\$160 million per year,<sup>44</sup> as well as create construction jobs and support funding for further development and infrastructure projects. The Gas Pipeline Framework Agreement was signed by the TAPI nations in April of 2008 and is largely sponsored by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Construction is due to begin in 2010, with a projected completion date by 2015. However, progress has been

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<sup>38</sup> Hanif 2009, 17

<sup>39</sup> Shahid 2009

<sup>40</sup> Hanif 2009, 20

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Foster 2008, 4

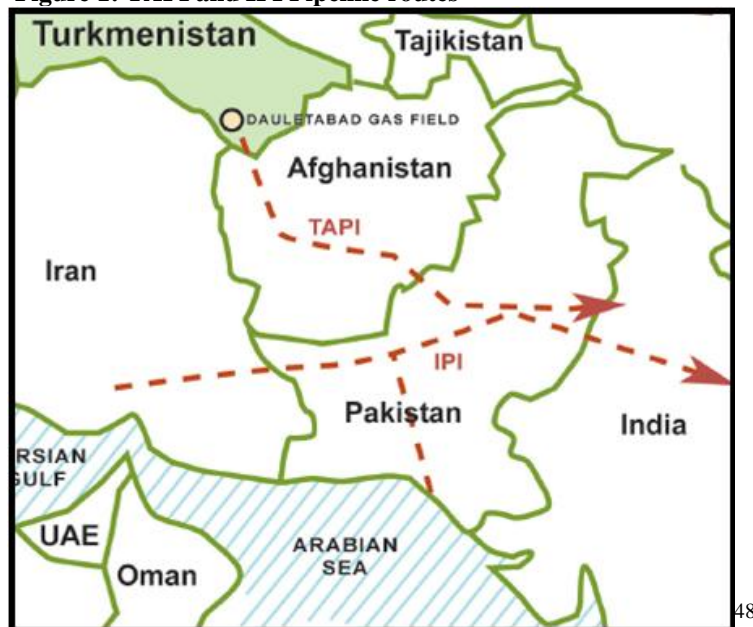
<sup>43</sup> Foster 2008, 1

<sup>44</sup> Foster 2008, 6

hindered due to the war in Afghanistan, especially since part of the pipeline goes through the conflict-ridden southern provinces, including Helmand and Kandahar. As a result, construction costs have doubled.<sup>45</sup>

Cooperation between the Afghan, Indian and Pakistani governments on the TAPI pipeline provides promise for improving relations and creating interdependence and sustained economic ties between the nations.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, the TAPI pipeline serves as a viable alternative to the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) pipeline, which the U.S. does not support<sup>47</sup>. By supporting the TAPI pipeline project, the U.S. can keep China and Russia, who both support the IPI pipeline over the TAPI pipeline, at bay. Doing so would also counter Iran's energy interests in the region, a positive side effect given the fragile state of current U.S.-Iran relations, which will be detailed further in the following chapter.

**Figure 1: TAPI and IPI Pipeline routes**



<sup>45</sup> Daily Times Staff 2008

<sup>46</sup> Alexander's Gas and Oil Connections 2002

<sup>47</sup> Please see following chapter for further discussion.

<sup>48</sup> Foster 2008, 3

As a nation that is largely energy deficient and relies on importing oil and natural gas from the Central Asian states, direct access to energy in Afghanistan is of the utmost concern. This concern is heightened by India's rapid economic growth, increasing population, energy demands and its rivalry with China for economic dominance in the region. The threat of China and Russia gaining control over many of the energy projects being funded in Central Asia is worrisome to both India and the United States. Thus, the opportunity for the energy rich Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to channel their energy resources away from these nations to other states in the region is a positive development and a healthy step towards economic diversification. The U.S. supports such diversity, since this type of economy is driven by multiple sectors and thus, is very difficult to disrupt or destroy. By funneling this energy through multiple nations, "each country becomes a stakeholder [and] the countries are bonded physically, economically, and diplomatically," fostering greater interdependence, communication and support with each other.<sup>49</sup>

### **Security Concerns**

India is highly invested in maintaining peace and security in the region as any instability in Afghanistan would certainly fuel pre-existing conflicts in Pakistan,<sup>50</sup> which would ultimately spill over into India. Thus, New Delhi largely supports a sustained U.S. and international presence in the region. Another shared Indian-American security concern is China's continued support to Pakistan, especially given the historic rivalries between India and Pakistan,<sup>51</sup> as well as between India and China over border territories.

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<sup>49</sup> Foster 2008, 10

<sup>50</sup> Particularly in the shared Pashtun territory on the border between the two nations.

<sup>51</sup> Refer to the previous chapter for more information on the Kashmir conflict.

China's shared border with India is a serious point of contention between the two nations, often fueling their mutual enmity towards one another. Since confrontations in 1962 over the Sino-Indian Himalayan border shared by the two nations, India has remained wary of the Chinese.<sup>52</sup> The undemarcated border between the two nations runs along the fringes of the disputed Kashmir region in the west to Arunchal Pradesh in the east.<sup>53</sup> Tenuous relations between India and China are severely strained due to China's strong relationship with Pakistan, a nation to whom the Chinese have provided substantial financial and diplomatic support.<sup>54</sup> Beijing has also continued to funnel military support to Pakistan, which poses an even greater threat to India and has served only to exacerbate the historic conflict between the two nations.<sup>55</sup>

Both India and Pakistan remain deeply concerned over the others' high troop concentration on the countries' shared borderlands and continue to view each other's activities in Afghanistan with suspicion, making the country into a veritable "arena of security competition." This bilateral rivalry has severely undermined U.S. efforts to stabilize Afghanistan, as virtually all regional cooperation is mired in historical mistrust.<sup>56</sup> Conflict over the disputed Kashmir territory is a serious and dangerous point of contention between the two nations, one that is likely to ignite should either country act rashly. Such an event would be disastrous for India, as both Pakistan and China border the area, and would cause tremendous problems in Afghanistan. The military operations incited by these threats has continued to drain India's resources and has kept them engaged in conflicts with Pakistan, effectively diverting both nations' attention from, and potential contributions to, Afghanistan.

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<sup>52</sup> Dupree 1973, 510

<sup>53</sup> Reuters Staff "Brezezinski on U.S.-India..." 2010

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.; Refer to previous section "China and Pakistan"

<sup>55</sup> Kronstadt 2006, 3

<sup>56</sup> Kronstadt and Katzman 2008, 13

Given these circumstances, India has repeatedly advocated sustained involvement of the international community in Afghanistan, warning that a premature exit could “embolden terrorists and destabilize the region.”<sup>57</sup> Further worries are inspired by the deterioration of the Pakistani government and the threat posed to India by the withering nuclear state.<sup>58</sup> These concerns are continually heightened with terrorist attacks in the region, such as the 26/11 attacks in 2008 as well as the more recent attacks in Lahore and Kohat in October 2009.<sup>59</sup> Concerns about future attacks are serious, as the return of the Taliban to power would pose a major security threat to India, as well as the region as a whole.<sup>60</sup>

Despite the tension between the two nations, some progress has been made toward improving relations, encouraging their cooperation in efforts towards Afghanistan and facilitating relations between all three countries. A positive step in this direction occurred in April 2007 when Afghanistan joined the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, an economic and political organization of South Asian countries including both India and Pakistan, in an effort to identify itself more with South Asia.<sup>61</sup> The Afghanistan-India-Pakistan Trilogue that took place in June 2009 was also promising, as the three nations discussed security cooperation, humanitarian and confidence building measures, promotion of democratic values and institutions and energy concerns.<sup>62</sup> India and Pakistan also discussed the formation of a parallel India-Pakistan dialogue regarding Afghanistan, for addressing mutual fears and

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<sup>57</sup> Chand 2009

<sup>58</sup> TNN 2009

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Pant 2009

<sup>61</sup> Hanif 2009, 17

<sup>62</sup> Delhi Policy Group 2009

coordinating efforts.<sup>63</sup> While concrete decisions have yet to be reached, all three nations agreed that the trialogue format was important for building trust and encouraging transparency.<sup>64</sup>

Coordination in counternarcotics efforts was also emphasized in the Trialogue, as drug trafficking is a serious issue for all three nations and has been a point of concern for the entire Central and South Asian region. Organizations such as the SCO, Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC)<sup>65</sup> and earlier, the “6+2” group,<sup>66</sup> have all been active in battling the flow of drugs from Afghanistan throughout Eurasia. Recent calls by the Uzbek President, Islam Karimov, for a revival of the 6+2 illustrate the desire for further regional cooperation in efforts against terrorism, extremism, and drug trafficking and promoting “sustainable social and economic development,” for the entire region.<sup>67</sup> President Karimov’s motion to expand the 6+2, and India’s status as an observer state for the SCO, present opportunities for India to increase its participation in regional initiatives to combat these issues as well as encourage further interaction, dialogue and cooperation with Pakistan, which is a member of both of these organizations.

The United States has strongly encouraged improved relations and cooperation between India and Pakistan in the region as both countries have high stakes in, and will strongly influence, the future of Afghanistan. U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates stated on his visit to India in January 2010 that it is “critical that both countries maintain full transparency to allay each other’s suspicions,” reemphasizing the need for India and Pakistan to be open to cooperation

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<sup>63</sup> Delhi Policy Group 2009, 1

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> The CARICC was formed in March 2009 to counter the problem of drug trafficking from Afghanistan. Member nations include Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

<sup>66</sup> The 6+2 is an informal coalition of the six nations bordering Afghanistan, namely, China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, in addition to the U.S. and Russia.

<sup>67</sup> Press Service of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan 2008

with one another in order to maintain security along their borderlands and within the region as a whole.<sup>68</sup> India has repeatedly offered to contribute troops to Afghanistan, but the anticipated negative reaction to this from Pakistan has deterred the United States from supporting India's suggestion.

Suspicious between India and Pakistan over the other's actions in Afghanistan are distracting from more constructive contributions to the country. Both nations should refocus their efforts on "development, humanitarian assistance, perhaps some limited areas of training—but with full transparency for each other in what they are doing" in order to "create opportunities to provide bigger help for the Afghan government."<sup>69</sup> Despite positive signs of improving relations at the Trialogue, cooperative efforts have been stalled, especially since the recent terrorist attack in Pune, which is suspected to have been orchestrated by Pakistani militants.<sup>70</sup>

## ***Russia***

### **Historic Relations**

Russia has long-standing interests in Afghanistan and the surrounding region. Vying with the British throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century for spheres of influence in Central Asia, Russia has been a major actor in Afghanistan's history.<sup>71</sup> Following WWII, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) provided substantial economic and political support to the country, a move that was spurred by Afghanistan's growing unease with the Pakistan-United States alliance to its east.<sup>72</sup> The USSR supplied millions of dollars in economic and military aid.<sup>73</sup> However, its occupation

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<sup>68</sup> Miles 2010

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Bhowmik 2010

<sup>71</sup> Hassan 1995, 3

<sup>72</sup> Payind 1989, 110

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 112



of Afghanistan, which began in 1979 and was the “first territorial expansion by direct use of military power since WWII,” caused massive resistance movements throughout Afghanistan. By the time the last Soviet troops left in 1989, the country was devastated and divided after a decade of civil war, conditions that proved to be fertile ground for the rise of the Taliban.<sup>74</sup>

### **Aid & Assistance**

In the past two decades, relations between Afghanistan and Russia have substantially improved, particularly with the establishment of a centralized government in Afghanistan. However, aid from the Kremlin has been slow and is often contingent upon Western policy changes, such as with Russia’s recent call for reduced NATO presence in Central and South Asia.<sup>75</sup> Despite U.S. and NATO efforts to convince Russia that, “it is in Moscow's interest to keep the country from falling into the hands of [Taliban] extremists,”<sup>76</sup> Russian officials and diplomats have criticized allied conduct of the war and expressed continued suspicion of U.S. and NATO goals in Afghanistan.<sup>77</sup> Another example of this conditionality was the offer made by Russia’s ambassador to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin, to send Russian engineers to Afghanistan to repair infrastructure, including Soviet-built power plants, highways, electricity lines and oil pipeline networks, and to reconstruct buildings that were built between 1952 and 1988, but only on the condition that Western states fund these efforts.<sup>78</sup>

Despite the provisional nature of its assistance, the Russian government has offered valuable military support in maintaining Soviet-built military equipment currently being used by the alliance, as well as by the Afghan army and police, and providing some limited arms

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 107

<sup>75</sup> The Straits Times Staff 2009

<sup>76</sup> The Associated Press Staff, “Russia offers to Help...” 2010

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> The Associated Press Staff, “Russia offers to Help...” 2010

support.<sup>79</sup> Further assistance has been encouraged by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who has repeatedly requested that Russia provide helicopters, spare parts, and especially military trainers for Afghan troops.<sup>80</sup> While Rasmussen acknowledges the vested interest Russia has in a stable Afghanistan and is confident that Russian authorities are considering these proposals,<sup>81</sup> difficulties abound concerning U.S. and NATO efforts to accrue further aid from Russia, especially over the transport of military cargo through Russian territory.<sup>82</sup>

### **Supply Routes**

As of January 20, 2009, following a visit to the region by General David Petraeus of U.S. Central Command, the U.S. received permission to transport non-lethal troop supplies through Russia and Central Asia.<sup>83</sup> These routes, as well as others that go through the Northern Distribution Network (NDN)<sup>84</sup>, serve as valuable alternatives to the attack-prone Khyber Pass in Pakistan that is usually used.<sup>85</sup> However, securing Russian cooperation for overland and air transport has proved to be incredibly difficult and has produced few significant results.<sup>86</sup>

In the summer of 2009, the U.S. signed an agreement with Russia to allow flights of troops and weapons through Russian airspace to Afghanistan.<sup>87</sup> While this was a positive sign of progress, further improvements since then have remained slow going as “bureaucratic wrangling

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<sup>79</sup> The Associated Press Staff, “NATO, Russia...” 2010

<sup>80</sup> BBC Staff 2009; NPR 2010

<sup>81</sup> NPR 2010

<sup>82</sup> Tynan 2010

<sup>83</sup> Oppel 2009

<sup>84</sup> The NDN is network of transportation routes through Russia and several Central Asian republics for commercial purposes as for the transport of supplies to NATO, U.S. and allied troops in Afghanistan.

<sup>85</sup> Schwirtz 2010

<sup>86</sup> Coalson 2009

<sup>87</sup> Schwirtz 2010

has so far prevented all but a few shipments” from actually being made.<sup>88</sup> Thus it is hoped that the signed agreement between NATO and Kazakhstan in January 2010 will facilitate greater opportunities for transport along the NDN. Military logistics experts believe that the network “has the capacity to carry at least 500 containers per week, up from the roughly 300 per week it currently carries, and hope that, eventually, 30 percent of the supplies bound for Afghanistan will travel via the NDN, with an even split between the southern and northern spurs.”<sup>89</sup>

The NDN holds great potential for Washington to “further long-term strategic goals,” in the region, as routes connect Baltic and Caspian ports with Afghanistan, Russia, the energy-rich Central Asian states and the Caucuses.<sup>90</sup> Thus, American engagement could potentially increase, “constructive U.S. interaction with transit states...while expanding logistical throughput capacity to Afghanistan.”<sup>91</sup> Such an expansion will be vital in the coming months with the increased U.S. and NATO troop presence in Afghanistan, as demand for non-military supplies in 2010-2011 is projected to be 200-300% more than the 2008 baseline.<sup>92</sup> Whether Russia will facilitate in the fulfillment of these needs has yet to be seen.

Russia’s lack of cooperation is both frustrating and puzzling, as both the U.S. and Russia have a strong strategic interest in securing stability in Afghanistan. Analysts speculate that “Moscow sees the air-transit agreement as more beneficial to the United States than to Russia, and therefore may be seeking additional advantages.”<sup>93</sup> Russian Federation Council member Viktor Ozerov conceded in January 2009 that “Moscow has tied implementation of the transit

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<sup>88</sup> Especially considering that it was the beginning of resumed dialogue between the U.S. and Russia after a breakdown in relations following Russia’s war with Georgia in August of 2008; Schwartz 2010

<sup>89</sup> Kucera 2010

<sup>90</sup> CSIS 2010

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Cooper and Stolberg 2009; CSIS 2010

<sup>93</sup> Coalson 2009

agreement to [a] broader range of contentious issues.”<sup>94</sup> It is likely that, should Russia continue to stall on its promises of supply transport, the U.S. will pursue other options in the region, including the offer by Georgia to use its territory to supply arms to international forces in Afghanistan, despite Russia’s sensitivity to such a proposal.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, the U.S. may decide to use this offer as leverage to secure increased aid and further cooperation for the transit of goods through Russian airspace and land routes.

### **Security Concerns**

Despite Russia’s reluctance to supply more substantial aid to U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and their insistence that NATO reduce its presence in the region, the Kremlin does acknowledge that a complete withdrawal of U.S. and allied forces from Afghanistan would be against its best interests as it is likely that such an abrupt action could potentially collapse both Central Asian and Western security structures.<sup>96</sup> Indeed, worries over “rising Islamic extremism” and terrorism in the region are apparent within the Russian government, as any spillover from Afghanistan or Pakistan could destabilize all of the Central Asian states and jeopardize Russia’s energy interests and its own strategic security.<sup>97</sup>

Russia, much like China, joined the SCO in the hopes of securing these interests and facilitating bilateral and multilateral agreements between itself and the energy-rich Central Asian states to the south. In a March 2009 conference on Afghanistan, the SCO reaffirmed its commitment to Afghanistan.<sup>98</sup> However, a heightened role by the organization may prove unlikely as Russia still “emphatically includes Afghanistan within the zone it proposes as an

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Robinson 2010

<sup>96</sup> Gromov and Rogozin 2010

<sup>97</sup> Reuters Staff “Powder Keg in Central Asia...” 2010

<sup>98</sup> Russia’s Presidency of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization 2009

exclusive sphere of influence,”<sup>99</sup> according to S. Frederick Starr, Chairman of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. Indeed, as illustrated above, Russia has been taking steps (however stalled and inconsistent) to increase its activity in Afghanistan and make itself, “more essential to the success of the Afghan conflict” by opening supply lines across its borders while encouraging the closing of supply lines over other nations in the region, such as Kyrgyzstan’s air base in Manas, in return for financial assistance.<sup>100</sup>

The opium trade is another issue at the fore of Russian concerns and was the main focus of the SCO conference on Afghanistan. Labeled as “a national problem for Russia,” it is estimated that there are over 2.5 million drug users in the country, with approximately 90% of them addicted to heroin.<sup>101</sup> As former leader of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev commented in a recent *New York Times* Op-Ed, large amounts of opium continue to flow out of Afghanistan, hindering U.S. efforts in the region,<sup>102</sup> and into Russia “through its neighbors’ porous borders,”<sup>103</sup> serving as, “a major threat to Russia’s security [that has] has sickened millions.”<sup>104</sup> At the SCO conference, members expressed concern about the “continued cultivation and production of narcotics drugs as a source of financing [for] terrorist activities in Afghanistan, the region and abroad,” and called for “a full operationalization” of the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre, in addition to increased coordination with its member nations, other states of the region as well as the UN and other international organizations.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Scheineson 2009

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> The Moscow Times Staff 2010

<sup>102</sup> See Chapter 6 on counternarcotics.

<sup>103</sup> Gorbachev 2010

<sup>104</sup> The Associated Press Staff “US Russia to Step up Drug Fight” 2010

<sup>105</sup> Russia’s Presidency of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization 2009

Drug trafficking poses a serious threat to Afghanistan and the surrounding region as it “empower[s] criminal groups and anti-government forces [and] undermines development by creating instability and widening corruption,”<sup>106</sup> ultimately threatening U.S. and international efforts to combat terrorism and extremism, and achieve security in Afghanistan. These shared anxieties by the U.S. and Russia could prove an important opportunity for the United States to collaborate with the Russian Federation and the CARICC and to expand on cooperative efforts to combat drug trade. The recent deal signed by U.S. Office of National Drug Control Policy director Gil Kerlikowske and Russian Federal Drug Control Service chief Viktor Ivanov is a step in this direction. The U.S. also has the opportunity to expand partnerships between other organizations it is a part of, such as the UN and NATO, with the CARICC and advocate for the inclusion of other nations into the body, such as India, to increase its strength and regional span.

Energy is another shared interest of the U.S. and Russia, along with China and India, as these four nations struggle to gain an advantage over the energy-rich states of Central Asia. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, Eurasia (excluding Iran) holds an estimated 30.7 billion barrels of crude oil and 1219.39 Tcf in natural gas.<sup>107</sup> Russia has already consolidated control over some of its energy-rich neighbors, including Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, making it even more crucial that the U.S. maintain a presence in the region and strong ties to the Central Asian States. U.S. support for the TAPI pipeline could prove an imperative counter to Russian and Chinese energy initiatives in the region, delivering resources

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<sup>106</sup> UNODC 2008; Statement by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon delivered by his Special Representative Miroslav Jenca, who is also Head of the UN Regional Centre for preventative Diplomacy for Central Asia.

<sup>107</sup> Cheema 2010

to U.S. allies in South Asia and diverting India from an alliance with Iran through the Russian and Chinese supported IPI pipeline project.<sup>108</sup>

### **U.S. INTEREST**

Since entering Afghanistan in 2001, the United States has made it clear that American intentions in the region are to expel repressive, authoritarian, and terrorist groups from the area, secure the country for the safety of its civilians and rebuild the war-torn nation so that Afghanistan can join the global community as an active participant. However, the United States cannot accomplish this alone. Regional investment and support of Afghanistan and Pakistan is vital to the success of the U.S. mission in the region as well as to the successful transfer of power to the Afghan government. Stability, security, and independence from reliance on international aid cannot be accomplished in Afghanistan without substantial support from China, India and Russia. Thus, it is in the U.S.'s best interests to pursue amicable relations with each of these countries and to encourage them all to contribute economic and political support to the GIRoA as well as to U.S. efforts in Pakistan.

Furthermore, Afghanistan is located at a strategically valuable crossroads of Asia, connecting nations of South Asia, East Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe, and sitting squarely between China and Russia. By maintaining positive relations with the GIRoA, establishing the United States as a stable presence in the region and working in conjunction with neighboring powers, the United States can increase participation, communication and cooperation with the nations of this region to drive out terrorism and extremism and foster stability, development and strong global ties. Maintaining U.S. presence in the region will also secure valuable ties to the energy rich Central Asian states, as well as

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<sup>108</sup> Foster 2008, 3

facilitate access to Afghanistan's emerging energy and natural resource markets. Securing alternative transit routes through this region by way of the NDN is also vital, given the continued unreliability of the Khyber Pass and increased need for a safe transit route as the Afghanistan military surge occurs over the next few months.

Given the current state of relations with Iran, it is in America's best interest to promote the TAPI pipeline as it serves as an alternative for India and Pakistan to the Russian and Chinese supported IPI pipeline that would run through Iran. The TAPI project could be used to foster better cooperation between India and Pakistan, tie all four nations together and create economic interdependence, funnel more natural resources from the Central Asian states to America's South Asian allies and challenge the spheres of influence China and Russia are attempting to solidify in the region.

The ever-present threats of these two nations, in particular, are a clear illustration of the reasoning for mediation. China's historic rivalry with India and their arms support to Pakistan pose a clear threat and must be dealt with accordingly. Any fanning of the flames already present between India and Pakistan, especially over long-standing border and territorial disputes such as Kashmir, could ignite the entire region and demolish the progress that has been made in the last several years. A strong relationship with India holds the potential for sustained, allied support in the region as well as a check on China's hegemonic aspirations. The same can be said of Russia, which is attempting to expand its sphere of influence and gain more economic control of the region. Discouraging competition and encouraging cooperation is in the United States', and the region's, long-term best interests.



## **OPTIONS**

To secure U.S. interests in maintaining stability and pursuing long-term relations with Afghanistan, Pakistan and their neighboring countries, there are many options to consider. Sustained economic support from India, China and Russia for development and infrastructure projects will be crucial to achieving stability and promoting Afghan integration into the global market system. Thus, U.S. should promote bilateral and multilateral trade agreements between Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, Russia and India. It also should encourage increased ties between Afghanistan and the Central Asian nations as such partnerships will be beneficial in securing energy interests, for both the U.S. and Afghanistan, and countering Russia and China's strongholds over these states.

### ***China, India & Russia***

1. The United States restates its commitment to Afghanistan and the region and reaffirms that while military troops will be withdrawn in the coming months, the U.S. intends to maintain and promote civilian and diplomatic presence in the region for a long time to come. Such an action would reassure Afghanistan and Pakistan of our commitment to the region as well as reaffirm that the United States intends to fulfill its commitment and will not be pushed out. However, it might also serve to exacerbate tensions and heighten pressure from nations such as China and Russia for a complete U.S. withdrawal from the region.
2. The United States supports China's call at the London Conference for increased regional assistance and cooperation, with aid channeled through the UN and the GIRoA in order to coordinate efforts and avoid overlap. While this could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of aid distribution, application of this option could send mixed signals that

the United States is attempting to evade its responsibilities to the region and transfer them to other nations.

3. The United States pursues stronger relations with the SCO in order to facilitate dialogue between member nations and the United States. Such action has the potential to increase cooperative efforts to combat terrorism and extremism as well as opium trade and drug smuggling. This option does run the risk of straining ties between China, Russia and the U.S., as the other two nations could interpret such an advance as a further attempt by the U.S. to interfere in their perceived spheres of influence.
4. The United States encourages China and Russia to consider India's membership into the SCO. The admittance of India into the SCO as a full member could increase coordination between member nations in the region and bolster their capabilities in Afghanistan. Such an action might also increase ties between China, Russia and India and could potentially diminish U.S.-India relations.
5. The United States initiates efforts to revive the 6+2, encourages China and Russia to support this endeavor and proposes India's membership into this organization once reestablished. The revival of the 6+2 could present new opportunities for collaboration between regional actors and the United States in Afghanistan. This option does run the risk of rejection by member nations and wasted U.S. efforts and political resources that could be used elsewhere.
6. The United States relies more heavily on China, India and Russia and transfers rebuilding efforts completely to Afghanistan's neighbors as the U.S. withdraws combat forces over the next 18 months. While this option would aid in the transference of responsibility to Afghanistan and its regional neighbors, its application might also diminish ties between

the U.S. and Afghanistan and threaten American promises of commitment to the region. Furthermore, since Russia and China's influences are largely uncertain and these nations do not have the same vested interests in Afghanistan as the U.S. does, this could result in state failure, putting American security at risk.

### *China*

1. The United States continues to promote and encourage further Chinese economic investment and monetary aid. Chinese participation in Afghanistan's markets is invaluable in building the Afghan economy. However, increased participation by China could increase its influence in Afghanistan and challenge U.S. interests, particularly where it pertains to energy and natural resources.
2. The United States discourages and attempts to stem the rampant arms support being funneled into the Pakistani army and the ISI. Such actions increase Pakistani military capabilities, which cause unease to both Afghanistan and India, thus increasing regional tensions. Options include:
  - a. Encouraging this through diplomatic actions and rhetoric surrounding U.S.-China bilateral agreements. Sustained diplomatic efforts could divert brash actions from either party and avoid heightened tensions that could be potentially damaging to U.S. efforts in Afghanistan. However, pursuing dialogue alone does carry the risk of inaction and minimal progress. The Washington-Beijing relationship is highly complex and requires careful handling. Dialogue alone may not be sufficient in advancing U.S. interests in Afghanistan and countering China's growing economic influence in the region.

- b. Applying political pressure to China by emphasizing its human rights violations against the Uighur Muslim population in Xianjiang and speaking out against its suppression of religious freedom. This might be accomplished through:
  - i. Publicizing the issue and encouraging reform in the Chinese government's behavior towards Uighur Muslims. This may cause China to pursue more humane treatment of its citizens and respect more fully their rights to practice religion, as well as discourage Pakistan from accepting arms support from such an 'anti-Muslim' regime. This could yield potential benefits for the U.S., as a reduced Chinese presence within Pakistan, especially where it pertains to military support, could be beneficial in tempering the strength of the ISI and the Pakistani army. However, such an action might also damage relations between the U.S. and China by incorporating fringe issues into an already fragile dialogue. It might also incite a violent reaction from extremist insurgent groups in the region and potentially cause further disruption.
  - ii. Encouraging India to speak out against the violent Uighur persecutions by Beijing. This might divert direct conflict between the U.S. and China, yet also runs the risk of straining ties between China and India and exacerbating preexisting conflicts over their shared border.
- 3. To counter China's growing presence and dominance over energy supplies, the United States:
  - a. Maintains a presence in the region and pursues closer ties to energy-rich Central Asian states. Cooperating with these nations individually as opposed to through

an organization, such as the SCO, could decrease interference from Russia and China, yet also risks increasing tensions between the U.S. and these nations as they vie for strategic influence over these energy-rich nations. Central Asian states will likely not want to antagonize their two powerful neighbors, and this may make them unreceptive to American overtures.

- b. Promotes the TAPI pipeline and increases engagement in the project. Doing so would help to channel resources to South Asia and accrue benefits for Afghanistan, yet may also incur opposition from China, Russia and Iran, all of whom support the IPI pipeline alternative.

### *India*

1. The United States continues to encourage aid and assistance from the Indian government to Afghanistan. India's contributions have been substantial in supporting the Afghan government and building the nation's economy. However, India's involvement does incite anger and suspicion from Pakistan and has served to divert both nations' efforts from Afghanistan.
2. The United States encourages and facilitates Indian offers to supply military assistance to U.S. and NATO military efforts in Afghanistan, and to supply much needed training to Afghan security forces. This option risks the escalation of tensions between India and Pakistan and may hinder further dialogue and cooperation between the two nations.
3. The United States discourages active military and troop contributions from India to Afghanistan but encourages military supplies, technical aid, and officers to train Afghan troops. Further support for Afghan security forces will be necessary to stabilize the region

and successfully transfer operations to the Afghan government. Even so, military support, even in this smaller capacity, could incite conflict with Pakistan.

4. The United States provides more technical, economic and logistical support for the construction of the TAPI pipeline, as such an endeavor holds the potential for substantially improving the relationships of all nations involved. This option does risk antagonizing Russia and China, who both support the IPI pipeline, and could cause problems in bilateral relationships with both of these nations.
5. The United States ceases attempts to facilitate dialogue between India and Pakistan and allows the nations to cooperate without U.S. participation. American disengagement from the India-Pakistan rivalry would allow the U.S. to focus its attention on other international concerns and conserve American diplomatic power. This option, however, does risk a rapid escalation of tensions into open warfare between India and Pakistan, which may occur without the presence of a neutral third-party mediator.
6. The United States encourages and facilitates diplomatic relations between Pakistan and India by:
  - a. Focusing on bilateral negotiations and dialogue in general, and especially on coordinating efforts from both nations towards Afghanistan. Mediation and cooperation between these nations could greatly facilitate in deescalating tensions in the entire region. Dialogue between India and Pakistan may also raise mutual antagonism over unrelated issues and could exacerbate the situation in South and Central Asia.
  - b. Focusing specifically on resolving the Kashmir dispute, an issue that is highly sensitive and the main cause of antagonism between India and Pakistan. Working

to resolve this issue could greatly ease tensions in the region. However, focusing specifically on this issue also carries the possibility of fueling the enmity between India and Pakistan even further.

- c. Encouraging economic ties, such as the TAPI pipeline, in order to facilitate interdependence between the two nations and foster positive relations between them. This could help to mitigate tensions over Russia and China's dominance over energy supplies in the region, but might also incense these nations further.
- d. Negotiating and encouraging membership of India into international organizations involved in Afghanistan, in which Pakistan is also a member. This could encourage dialogue and cooperation between regional and international actors. Naturally, the United States does not always have the ability to influence membership of these organizations, and this option may antagonize neutral organizations that want to remain independent of superpower control.

### ***Russia***

1. The United States encourages further economic support and aid from the Russian Federation by:
  - a. Agreeing to Russian suggestions that Western nations provide the funding for Russian engineers to repair buildings and infrastructure in Afghanistan. While such contributions would be beneficial to the Afghans, agreeing to the conditional nature of Russian support may promote further caveats for aid. This option may also be seen as concession to Russia; which could then be seen as a sign of U.S. weakness and thus jeopardize America's position in future negotiations.

- b. Encouraging these projects but insisting that Russia fund them with money from own treasury rather than Western nations', as they proposed. This could either deter Russian contributions all together or conversely, promote assistance without conditions.
- 2. The United States encourages increased military support and training forces from the Russian army to assist in efforts to build Afghan security forces, and request helicopters, spare parts and other supplies to support U.S., NATO and Afghan forces. Such support would be invaluable to Afghanistan's security forces, yet carries the risk of reviving tensions between Russia and Afghanistan, given their past history.
- 3. The United States encourages better coordination and cooperation for overland and air transport of supplies to Afghanistan by:
  - a. Applying political pressure to Russia to increase transit and aid by leveraging further consideration of the Georgian supply route, which is an area of great sensitivity. This could incite an angry response from Russia and hinder U.S. efforts. It also holds the possibility of vastly improving relations and securing increased transportation through Russian territory.
  - b. Expanding upon the NDN and working with the Russian Federation, and especially the Central Asian states, to increase transit through dialogue. The NDN offers an opportunity for Washington to further relations with the Central Asian states along the network, establish U.S. presence in the region and increase economic activity, ultimately furthering U.S. geopolitical objectives. Increased relations with Central Asian states will also be important in countering Russian energy interests in the region.



4. To counter Russian energy interests in the region the United States:
  - a. Pursues better relations with Central Asian states on an individual basis to establish ties and secure energy interests.
  - b. Increases participation and coordination with these states through communication with the SCO, CARICC and other organizations.
  - c. Promotes the TAPI pipeline in order to funnel energy from Central Asia to South Asia, thus countering the Russian stronghold over its southern neighbors.
5. The United States collaborates further with Russia's counternarcotics efforts. As a serious concern for the Russian government, increased collaboration with the U.S. and Afghanistan towards tightening border controls and cutting opium supply lines could prove to be a valuable means of increasing communication and cooperation between all three nations. The United States could pursue this by:
  - a. Increasing bilateral negotiations between U.S. and Russian anti-drug organizations to battle drug trafficking. To do so may increase Russia's commitment to supporting U.S. efforts in Afghanistan.
  - b. Pursuing further partnerships with SCO drug control cooperation mechanisms and the CARICC. By working with the many nations within these organizations, the U.S. could increase cooperation and effectiveness in its counternarcotics efforts.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***China, India and Russia***

Regarding policy towards all three nations, it is imperative that the United States continually restate its commitment to Afghanistan (option 1) and reaffirm that while American troops will be withdrawing within the coming year, the U.S. will maintain an active civilian and

diplomatic presence in the region. In conjunction with this, the U.S. should also voice its full support for the initiatives presented by Yang Jiechi at the 2010 London Conference regarding increased cooperation and involvement of regional actors in reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan (option 2). The U.S. should encourage that aid from international and regional bodies be funneled through the UN and the GIRoA in order to centralize and coordinate aid efforts, prevent overlap and mismanagement of funds, increase effectiveness and strengthen the Afghan government. Doing so will ultimately help to stabilize the nation, prevent reentry of Taliban and insurgent forces and allow for a successful withdrawal of American troops.

Discouraging an active military and troop presence from China, India and Russia (option 3 from India's section) would mitigate concerns from all three nations. Given Russia's historic relationship with Afghanistan, deploying Russian troops could heighten tensions between the two nations and considering China's already strong military involvement in Pakistan, it would be best to avoid direct troop presence that might threaten India. Furthermore, given the Pakistan-India rivalry, the presence of Indian troops on both sides of Pakistan's border could create conflict and possibly incite violence. However, although an active troop presence from any of these countries should be discouraged, military aid, supplies and especially training personnel would be highly beneficial in building up the capabilities and the resources of the Afghan troops so that they can take over security operations from international forces and ultimately aid in U.S. military withdrawal.

### ***China***

As previously stated, economic and monetary aid to Afghanistan from regional actors is extremely beneficial, thus the U.S. should continue to encourage China to support Afghanistan (option 1). The United States should also encourage China to cease assistance to the Pakistani

military and the ISI, as strengthening these institutions is counter to U.S. efforts in the region, though diplomatic actions and rhetoric for the time being (option 2.a). Utilizing the alternative options presented above could further exacerbate tensions between the U.S. and China and ultimately hinder U.S. efforts in Afghanistan. To counter China's growing presence in Central Asia, especially in regards to energy supplies, the United States should sustain civilian and diplomatic presence in the region (option 3.a). Increased efforts to establish solid, relationships with the individual states of Central Asia, as opposed to through an organization such as the SCO since Russia and China are members and contenders for energy as well, could go a long way in securing U.S. energy interests in the regions. Along these same lines, the U.S. should continue to support and provide financial and logistical assistance to the building of the TAPI pipeline (option 4.c), which will funnel energy from Central to South Asia through Afghanistan, accruing benefits for many of our allies and effectively countering China and Russia's energy dominance.

### ***India***

As with all regional actors, aid to Afghanistan is highly beneficial and aids in job creation and stability, thus the United State should continue to encourage support from India in these areas (option 1). The U.S. should encourage military aid and training support from China, India and Russia, while discouraging an active troop presence from any of these countries, as discussed above (option 3). The presence of Russian, Indian or Chinese military in Afghanistan would be more detrimental than beneficial to the stability of the region. It is also imperative that the United States support the construction of the TAPI pipeline (option 4). The pipeline would generate jobs and income, as well as supply much-needed energy and resources to Afghanistan, India and Pakistan. By promoting the TAPI, especially over the alternative IPI pipeline, which would involve cooperation with Iran, the U.S. will facilitate the supply of energy to its allies as

well as counter the growing influences of China and Russia over the energy rich nations of Central Asia. Such a venture could also provide the opportunity for further dialogue between India and Pakistan as they cooperate on the venture, and increase interdependence between the two nations (option 6.c). Acting as an “honest broker” by facilitating and encouraging dialogue between India and Pakistan (option 6.a) will be crucial to achieving stability in Afghanistan. Tensions between India and Pakistan have only served to hinder U.S. and allied efforts in Afghanistan, thus a better relationship between the two nations could go a long way in securing the region. As both nations are in close proximity to Afghanistan, conflicts on the India-Pakistan border, especially Kashmir, could potentially spill over into Afghanistan and ignite conflict and instability in the region. However, it is advisable that the U.S. defer from addressing this particular issue specifically in dialogue between the two nations as, for the policy-relevant future, it would be best to focus on broader issues of cooperation, especially relating to both nations’ active role in Afghanistan.

### ***Russia***

As with China and India, the United States should continue to encourage aid from Russia to Afghanistan. However, this aid should be from Russia itself and should not be funneled through Western nations, despite Russia’s proposal to do so (option 1.b). Direct aid from Russia would better facilitate bilateral relations between the two nations and discourage the conditional nature of Russian pledges of aid. The U.S. should also encourage the Russian government to provide more military support and supplies, specifically helicopters, spare parts and officers to train Afghan troops (option 2). Further support for Afghan Security forces will be absolutely essential for the U.S. to help stabilize Afghanistan and eventually withdraw American military troops from the region.

The establishment of more overland and air transport agreements with Russia is also essential for achieving U.S. objectives. Given the dangers associated with the Khyber Pass in Afghanistan, which was the only supply route into the country until recently, it would be extremely beneficial to U.S. efforts to have an alternative route for delivering supplies to Afghan, American and ISAF troops. Expanding routes along the NDN to deliver supplies to Afghanistan will become increasingly important as more U.S. troops are deployed, so securing cooperation from Russia is absolutely essential in ensuring that these networks will be able to deliver their full capacity of supplies (option 3.b). The U.S. should pursue increased coordination with Central Asian nations not only help to establish routes along the NDN, but also to strengthen ties and secure American energy interests in the region (option 4.a). Promotion of the TAPI pipeline will also facilitate the transport of energy from Central Asian nations in all directions, and will effectively loosen the stronghold that Russia has claimed on the region (option 4.c).

Finally, facilitating further collaboration between the U.S., Russia and Afghanistan towards counternarcotics efforts could greatly help to secure the region as drug trafficking, and the income generated from it in supporting insurgent activities, further destabilizes the region. Such efforts could also help mitigate Russian concerns over drug transport from Afghanistan and encourage cooperation in securing borderlands, cutting opium supply lines and ultimately strengthening ties between Russia, the U.S. and Afghanistan. Doing this through partnerships with the SCO, which has repeatedly stated its concern over drug trafficking in the region, the CARICC and other regional organizations would aid in efforts to coordinate and organize these efforts, hopefully increasing their effectiveness (option 5.b).



# U.S. Policy toward Central Asia & Iran: Coordination & Communication

Daphne Hazlehurst

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## Policy Recommendations

- Intensified communications amongst regional countries.
  - Encourage expansion of regional organizations.
  - Emphasis towards regional nations on the United State's long term plans in the region
  - Encourage further energy and infrastructural development within neighboring nations in relation to Afghanistan.
  - Trans-regional cooperation on border security for the purpose of counternarcotics.
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## Abstract

The relationships between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran, Turkmenistan, the Republic of Uzbekistan, and the Republic of Tajikistan have a direct effect on Afghanistan's security as well as American security. Relations between the United States and Iran are negatively impacting U.S. potential for ensuring security in the region. It is imperative that the U.S. to focus on its relationship with Iran in order to achieve success in its missions and goals in the region. Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have the potential to extensively serve as major sources of energy and transportation networks for Afghanistan. These networks provide Afghanistan with the necessary means for development and therefore also provide the U.S. with the necessary means for ensuring security.

## ISSUES

Afghanistan's relationship with its neighboring countries is essential to the well being of the United States. With a GDP per capita of US\$1,000, Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world. According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Afghanistan is ranked 181<sup>st</sup> out of 182 countries in the 2009 Human Development Report.<sup>109</sup> Its landlocked terrain, consisting of mostly mountains and deserts, has diminished its ability to produce substantial crops and build infrastructure. Following the fall of the Taliban in 2001, regional aid has become an intrinsic aspect of Afghan development.<sup>110</sup>

Drug trafficking is one of the major issues in Afghanistan. As stated in previous chapters, Afghanistan produces approximately 90% of the world's opium, most of which is cultivated in the southern and western regions bordering Iran and Pakistan. According to the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime's (UNODC), "Afghanistan Opium Survey in 2009", the potential export value of opium, morphine and heroin to the bordering countries of Afghanistan in 2009 was worth approximately US\$3.4 billion. Although most of the drug trafficking crosses the Afghan-Iranian border, a significant amount of Afghanistan's opium exports travel through the northern states as well: Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.<sup>111</sup> Drug trafficking promotes the illicit opium market, harming Afghanistan's ability to stabilize itself and interfering with US national security.

Afghanistan and its surrounding countries have immense potential in energy trade. Natural gas and oil are abundant in Afghanistan; however, the country has yet to regulate exploration and development of its oil and gas fields.<sup>112</sup> In the Central Asian countries, poverty

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<sup>109</sup>United Nations Development Program. 2009

<sup>110</sup> U.S. Department of State "Afghanistan"

<sup>111</sup> UNODC "Opium Survey" 2009

<sup>112</sup> U.S. Department of State "Afghanistan"



and corruption are pervasive, hindering the energy potential in that region. The potential amount of energy production in the region could serve Afghanistan's well being as well as U.S. efforts.<sup>113</sup> However, neighboring oil powers have been planning the construction of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline and the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) pipeline. Conflicting interests regarding these two pipelines have resulted in disagreements between the United States and Iran, hindering significant energy development.

The tense relationship between the United States and Iran has begun to interfere with relationships within the international community and their mutual interests in Afghanistan. Iran's current goal is to pressure the Afghan government to distance itself from the US government.<sup>114</sup> Relations between the U.S. and Iran have become increasingly strained as the United Nations and the United States impose new sanctions on Iran for its nuclear development program. The United States, United Nations and Iran are currently still engaged in debates over Iran's plans to enhance nuclear development. The United States and Iran's inability to come to a resolution will have a direct impact on Afghanistan. Due to the proximity of the Central Asian states to Afghanistan and the shared interests, the U.S. must find the best way to encourage and facilitate relations between those nations while ensuring U.S. security, energy and diplomatic interests in the region.

## **BACKGROUND**

Since the U.S.-led offensive into Afghanistan, the U.S. has largely been dependent upon Pakistan's Khyber Pass as a supply route into Afghanistan. However, insecurity at the border and attacks on these supply lines have caused the United States to turn to Afghanistan's other bordering nations for alternative supply routes. As of February 2009, 80% of all U.S. supplies

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<sup>113</sup> Martin McCauley 2002

<sup>114</sup> Milani Mohsen 2006, 235

were crossing the border from Pakistan to Afghanistan and attacks on convoys have been increasing.<sup>115</sup> The United States must therefore rely on the aid of other bordering nations for new supply routes, energy contributions and border security to encourage the stability and reconstruction of Afghanistan. The U.S. will need to push for improved relations for Iran's support of the United States' presence in the region. Many of the Central Asian countries have supported the U.S. led efforts in Afghanistan since 2001. Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have allowed US and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) forces to use Soviet-era military bases in support of operations against the Taliban.

### ***Iran***

The Islamic Republic of Iran has played a major role in the development of Afghanistan. However, tensions over U.S. presence in the region have negatively impacted U.S. efforts in Afghanistan. As stated by Mohsen Milani, a professor of politics who focuses on the Persian Gulf and Iran's foreign and security policies, "one of the main objectives of Iran is to create an 'economic sphere of influence' in Afghanistan, with the ultimate goal of becoming the hub for transit of goods and services between the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, Central Asia, China and India".<sup>116</sup> Therefore, as soon as the international community involved itself in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, Iran began to pour in its contribution. At the January 2002 International Pledging Conference in Tokyo, Iran pledged US\$560 million toward the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Four years later, at the London Conference on Afghanistan Reconstruction, Iran pledged another US\$100 million. The majority of the funding went toward the Iran-bordering Herat region.

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<sup>115</sup> Reuters India 2010

<sup>116</sup> Mohsen Milani 2006. 251; Milani is the Chair of the Department of Government and International Affairs at the University of South Florida in Tampa.

Projects included road and bridge construction, education, agriculture, power generation, as well as telecommunications projects.<sup>117</sup>

One of Iran's current projects is a 176 kilometer railroad from Iran to the city of Herat, located in Afghanistan's northwest province of Herat. A 5 kilometer Iranian built Anzab tunnel has also been constructed in Tajikistan so that eventually a transit road will be built to connect Iran, Herat, Mazar-eSharif, and Tajikistan, to China.<sup>118</sup> Iran is also building a road that would shorten the distance from Afghanistan to the Persian Gulf by 700 kilometers or about 450 miles, which will allow Afghanistan to expand its connection to international markets.<sup>119</sup>

In the most recent of a series of tri-lateral summit conferences, which originally began in Tehran in May 2009, Iran met with Afghanistan and Pakistan on January 16, 2010 to discuss further cooperation between the three countries. The primary resolutions that emerged as a result of this meeting were:

- Exchange of views: sharing best practices and project-based cooperation in the areas of energy, transportation, industry, mining, agriculture, livestock and environment.
- Safe, voluntary, gradual return and reintegration of Afghan refugees with support of [the] international community.
- Commit to further deepen cooperation to interdict trafficking of narcotics and precursors, arrest cross boarder illegal flows of weapons and check transnational organized crime<sup>120</sup>.

Most of Afghanistan's poppy cultivation is located in its southern and western provinces, bordering Pakistan and Iran. The majority of this cultivation, more than 20,000 ha, is located in Helmand province, which borders Pakistan.<sup>121</sup> Ten thousand to twenty thousand ha of opium

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid

<sup>118</sup> Central Asia Caucasus Institute 2006

<sup>119</sup> Milani Mohsen 2006, 252

<sup>120</sup> Islamic Republic News Agency 2010

<sup>121</sup> 20,000 ha=2.471 acres.

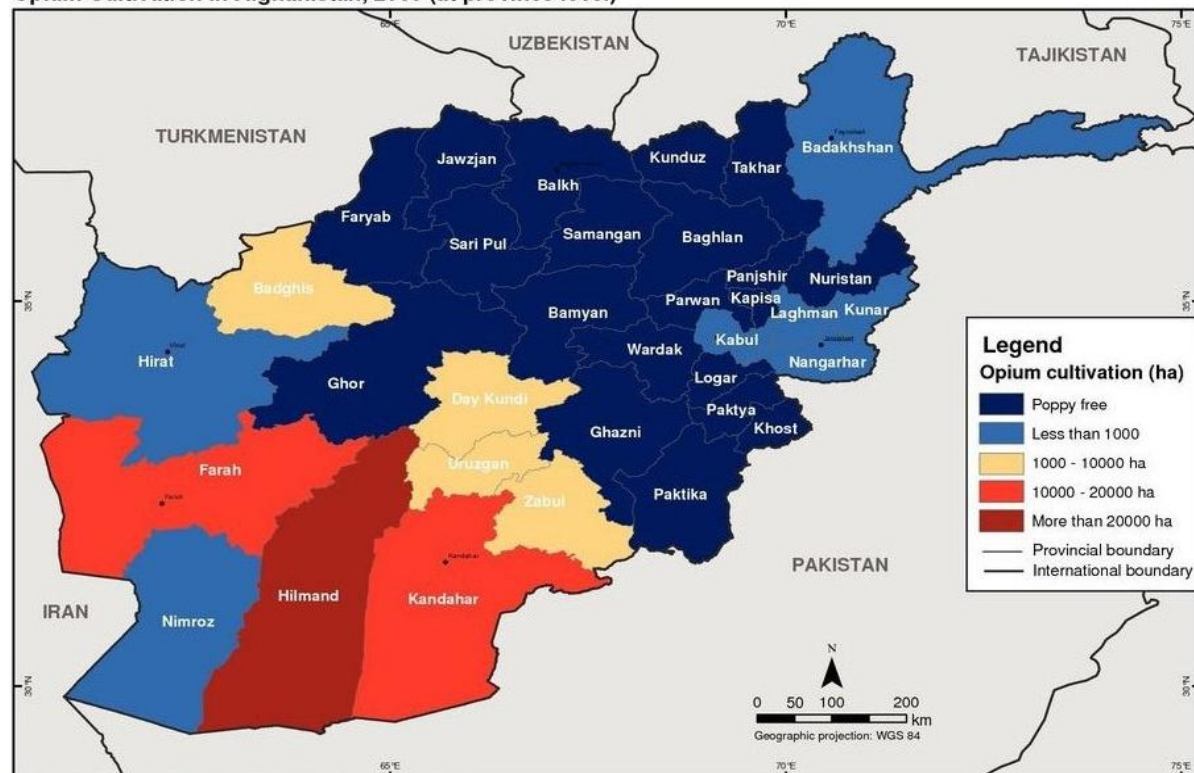
production is located in Kandahar and about the same amount in Farah, the latter borders Iran.

Figure 1 gives a more detailed description of the opium cultivation in the provinces of

Afghanistan:<sup>122</sup>

**Figure 3**

**Opium Cultivation in Afghanistan, 2009 (at province level)**



Source: Government of Afghanistan - National monitoring system implemented by UNODC  
Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

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In 2006, approximately 331,300 kg of opium was seized while crossing the border into Iran, an amount that surpasses the number of opium seizures within Afghanistan itself by more than 250,000 kg. To date, the UNODC has implemented intensive training and mentoring programs with the Afghan border police stationed along the 582 miles of Iranian-Afghan border in order to decrease the amount of drug trafficking.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>122</sup> UNODC "Opium Survey" 2009, 5

<sup>123</sup> Ibid

<sup>124</sup> UNODC "Opium Seizures" 2006

Iran's position as an oil power has created tensions with the broader international community. Its potential as a supplier of oil and natural gas to the rest of the Central and South Asian countries has created disagreements in pipeline production negotiations. Iran has proposed and planned the building of a pipeline from Iran to Pakistan to India. This pipeline, also known as the IPI pipeline, was originally thought to be a "peace pipeline," to further boost relations between Pakistan and India. However, relations between India and Pakistan remain tenuous and the IPI pipeline proposal is not supported by the U.S.<sup>125</sup> Pakistan has told Iran that it is not ready to agree to India's participation in the IPI pipeline agreement. After India's failure to appear at some of the tri-nation pipeline meetings, Islamabad and Tehran linked the Gas Sales Purchase Agreement earlier this year to the newly dubbed IP (Iran-Pakistan) pipeline project.<sup>126</sup>

The United States has argued that the TAPI pipeline would be in the best interests of Afghanistan, who still has yet to extensively explore its natural oil and gas resources. Support for this project would exclude Iran and harm Pakistan's desire to promote further ties with Iran. In a recent analysis on the trilateral relationship between Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, Pakistan's former Secretary General of Foreign Affairs, Akram Zaki, stated, "Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran must take up their common issues without worrying about what the U.S. wants...[Afghanistan] should come up with their own agenda instead of some others' agenda". He stated that even though the U.S. was very much against the IP pipeline project, Pakistan should still endorse it and "promote [its] relationship with Iran," which would be counter to U.S. interests.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> John Foster 2008

<sup>126</sup> BBC Monitoring South Asia-Political "Pakistan" 2010

<sup>127</sup> BBC Monitoring Trans Caucasus Unit "Analyst Urges" 2010

On the other hand, Iran's opposition to the TAPI pipeline and proposal of the IP pipeline has angered many Afghans, who "accuse Iran of undermining their country's economic well-being".<sup>128</sup> The U.S. has been pressuring India out of the IPI agreement through bilateral talks. For example, "the 2008 US-India nuclear deal exchanging nuclear technologies and materials between the two countries was seen as a way to pressurize India to abandon the Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline".<sup>129</sup>

What is potentially even more detrimental to U.S. interests in the region is the newly announced completion of the Dauletabad-Sarakhs-Khangiran pipeline. As of January 2010, the pipeline connects Turkmenistan's natural gas resources to Khangiran, Iran where it joins with the Iran Gas Trunkline. This project links two of the world's largest energy powerhouses creating fear in the U.S. that this will boost Iran's attractiveness to India and China and therefore increase support for the U.S.-opposed IPI pipeline.<sup>130</sup>

With both countries having significant roles in the development of Afghanistan, the relationship between the two have hindered rather than benefited their mutual interests in the region. Iran's disagreements with the United States have been exacerbated by the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. On January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2002 Israeli Defense Forces captured a Palestinian Authority-owned freighter filled with Iranian made weapons. This event, along with the declaration of Iran as part of the "Axis of Evil", led to the rapid deterioration of U.S.-Iranian relations.<sup>131</sup> With the continued U.S. pledge to aid Israel and Iran's unwavering pledge to back the Palestinians, U.S.-Iranian relations remain at a standstill. According to Milani, Iran is hopeful for peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan and the region surrounding it. However, as long as the U.S. has

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<sup>128</sup> Milani Mohsen 2006, 250

<sup>129</sup> Zainab Cheema 2010.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid

<sup>131</sup> Milani Mohsen 2006, 248

influence in the region, Iran is reluctant to participate in U.S. efforts. In 2006, Iran even reformulated its Afghan policy in order to “avoid direct confrontation with the U.S. while pressuring Kabul gradually to reduce U.S. influence”.<sup>132</sup>

Iran’s nuclear development program is a particular point of contention with the United Nations and the United States, both of whom are key players in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Iran has a long history of disregarding the International Atomic Energy Agency’s policies in reporting its various aspects of nuclear development. By November 2004, Iran had:

- Six failures to report the import of nuclear material, activities to process/use this material, testing of centrifuges, lasers enrichment activities, production of specific nuclear materials, and the irradiation of nuclear materials and subsequent separation of plutonium.
- Two failures to declare nuclear facilities, including a pilot centrifuge enrichment facility at Kalaye Electric Company, the laser enrichment plant at the Tehran Nuclear Research Center, and a pilot uranium laser enrichment plant at Lashkar Ab’ad.
- Six failures to provide design information or updated design information for facilities in which nuclear material processing and storage took place.
- Frequent failure to cooperate to facilitate the implementation of safeguards as evidenced by the extensive concealment activities.<sup>133</sup>

Due to Iran’s failure to follow international protocol on nuclear development, the United States has become stricter with Iran. Iran’s intensifying disagreements with the U.S. has therefore become a hindrance to progress in Afghanistan.

The UN has imposed a series of sanctions on Iran since 2004. Sanctions on Iran have been made on the grounds of Iran stepping up its uranium enrichment program. Iran’s invitation to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)<sup>134</sup> has heightened U.S. concern over further cooperation between China and Iran, as well as between Iran and several other Central Asian states. Membership would allow states to increase dialogue and cooperation with each

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<sup>132</sup> Milani Mohsen 2006 , 249

<sup>133</sup> U.S. Department of State “Iran”

<sup>134</sup> The Shanghai Cooperation Organization

other and other international organizations in areas such as economy, trade, science, and culture. As stated in the previous chapter, the SCO has devoted much of its efforts to developing a solution to terrorism in Afghanistan and has provided economic and humanitarian aid.<sup>135</sup>

The United States, United Nations, and Iran are all some of the biggest players in Afghanistan's reconstruction. Their inability to come a resolution over nuclear energy has significant negative effects on Afghanistan and the region. As will be discussed later in this chapter, further cooperation will be necessary to achieve success and stability.

### ***Turkmenistan***

Before 2006, Turkmenistan was under a monopoly of political power by its first president Saparmyrat Niyazov. Corruption ensued and poverty was extensive. Drug trafficking was so prevalent that the amount of opium seizures in the region was extremely high. The amount of opium seizures across the border of Turkmenistan and Afghanistan was 2655.7 kg. In 2007, numbers decreased slightly to 2283.895 kg.<sup>136</sup> In 1995, Turkmenistan formally declared itself as in a state of "permanent neutrality" and was recognized as such by the United Nations.<sup>137</sup> U.S. relations with Turkmenistan were on a trade only basis. Turkmenistan's aid to and relations in Afghanistan were virtually non-existent until its authoritarian leader, Niyazov's death in December 2006.

Niyazov was replaced by Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov in early 2007. In February 2007, the United States and Turkmenistan agreed to "turn a new page" in their bilateral relationship and find a way to cooperate with each other on mutual interests. Currently, Turkmenistan is interested in collaborating with the United States on several issues, including security and

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<sup>135</sup> Cheng Guangjin and Yang Xue 2010

<sup>136</sup> UNODC "Opium Seizures" 2006

<sup>137</sup> Martin McCauley 2002



energy. In order to do so, Turkmenistan has taken steps towards democratic reform, such as lifting exit visas and allowing the registration of religious minorities.<sup>138</sup> With this cooperation, the United States has been focusing more of its attention on its relations with Turkmenistan and Afghanistan through energy opportunities.

As stated in the previous chapter, Eurasia, not including Iran, is estimated to have approximately 30.7 billion barrels of crude oil and approximately 1219.39 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Turkmenistan holds an incredibly large amount of reserves within its region. Currently, Turkmenistan is one of the largest suppliers of natural gas and oil in Central Asia, just behind Russia and Iran. In 2007, Turkmenistan's oil production increased by almost one million tons, totaling its production for that year to 9.8 million tons. As stated previously, it is currently involved in the planning and construction of the TAPI pipeline. Eleven high level planning meetings have been held during the past seven years and construction is due to begin sometime in 2010.<sup>139</sup>

The United States has increasingly taken an interest in the oil sector of the country and region, and especially in the construction of the TAPI pipeline. In November 2009, Chevron, an American multinational energy cooperation, held discussions with Turkmen officials regarding its involvement in the country's giant South Yolotan/Osman gas field. The area is about the fifth-largest gas deposit in the world and contains natural gas reserves ranging from 4 trillion to 14 trillion cubic meters. As of February 2010, Chevron has signed a contract with Turkmenistan opening up U.S. access to the gas field. The U.S. is urging Turkmenistan to allow further American firms access to onshore licenses in order to promote its interests in the Nabucco Gas pipeline project, transporting Turkmen gas across the Caspian Sea, and through the more

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<sup>138</sup> U.S. Department of State "Turkmenistan"

<sup>139</sup> John Foster 2008

relevant TAPI pipeline involving Afghanistan.<sup>140</sup> The U.S. is pushing hard for the construction of TAPI, not only to increase energy flows into Afghanistan, but also to improve its relations with Pakistan while also keeping ties with India. TAPI will also deliver oil from Turkmenistan to outside of Central and South Asia, via Pakistan's Arabian Sea ports, Surat and Karachi as shown in figure 2.<sup>141</sup>

**Figure 4**  
**Two Proposed Pipelines in South Asia**



Map 1 • B 2139 heritage.org<sup>142</sup>

## *Uzbekistan*

Despite continual difficulties in its transition from a Soviet Republic to an independent republic, Uzbekistan has been unwavering in its efforts in Afghanistan. With the help of United States Agency for International Development (USAID), NATO, SCO, and other organizations,

<sup>140</sup> Zawya 2009

<sup>141</sup> Zainab Cheema 2010

<sup>142</sup> Daniel Simpson 2009

Uzbekistan has supported the United States' efforts in Afghanistan.<sup>143</sup> According to Robert O. Blake, Jr., Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, "the U.S. and Uzbekistan can build [their] partnership across a wide range of areas. These include trade and development, border security, cooperation on narcotics, the development of civil society, and individual rights".<sup>144</sup>

Uzbekistan has been a key player in aiding the rehabilitation of the Afghan economy. With funding from the Asian Development Bank, Uzbekistan contributed to the reconstruction of the Termez-Hairatan railroad line, the only functioning railroad in Afghanistan. Construction has also begun on the Termez-Hairatan-Mazar-e-Sharif railroad. One of the most important contributions from Uzbekistan to the transit system in Afghanistan is NATO's Northern Distribution Network (NDN), which became operational in February 2009. Since increased difficulties in transmitting supplies across the Afghan-Pakistani border, the NDN has become a vital route for the transit of cargo and supplies for NATO's International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.<sup>145</sup> The NDN begins in Riga, Latvia and spans 5,169 kilometers through Russia and Kazakhstan, ending in Termez, Uzbekistan on the Afghan border. U.S. Transportation Command head General Duncan McNabb said that, "738 [20 foot] containers shipped through Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan had reached Afghanistan, with 90 containers delivered to Kabul, adding that the Pentagon planned to ship about 100 containers per day to Afghanistan via the NDN."<sup>146</sup>

Uzbekistan has also committed electrical and engineering companies and civilian aid to construct eleven bridges in the Mazar-e-Sharif area and the construction of voltage lines. They

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<sup>143</sup> U.S. Department of State "Uzbekistan"

<sup>144</sup> U.S. Department of State "Uzbekistan-U.S. Relations" 2009

<sup>145</sup> John CK Daly "Outside View" 2009

<sup>146</sup> John CK Daly "Second-Chance" 2009

have recently finished a 275 mile high-voltage line capable of carrying 150 megawatts of electricity from the Uzbekistan border city of Termez to Kabul.<sup>147</sup> As stated by Richard Norland, U.S. Ambassador to Uzbekistan:

Everyone understands that the role of neighboring countries is very important both in economic and political terms. Uzbekistan's role in economic terms needs to be noted specifically. There is electric light in Kabul thanks to electricity supplies from Uzbekistan. Non-military cargoes for our troops also come via Uzbekistan. This is not only of military importance, but it is also increasingly acquiring trade and economic importance.<sup>148</sup>

Recently, Uzbek President Islam Karimov proposed to reinstate a revised version of the "6+2" group. The group was created in 1999 to aid the resolution of the conflict in Taliban-led Afghanistan. The group consisted of six of Afghanistan's surrounding nations: China, Iran, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan plus two other influential nations: the United States and Russia. The "6+2" lasted until 2001 after the fall of the Taliban regime.<sup>149</sup> In April 2008, President Karimov emphasized the success of the "6+2" and the benefits that would come with bringing back a reformed version of the contact group.<sup>150</sup>

The newly dubbed "6+3" would consist of the previously stated eight nations with the addition of NATO. The "6+3" has yet to be fully implemented however in November 2009, the U.S. ambassador to Uzbekistan, Richard Norland, stated that the group is slowly becoming a reality, "Uzbekistan's proposal on the contact group with participation of neighboring countries is important because it allows [arrangement of] dialogue and to combine efforts of neighboring countries in resolving problems there...the main point is that all neighboring countries are trying to help with [Afghanistan]. We are engaged in a dialogue on how to tackle this issue and "6+3"

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<sup>147</sup> John CK Daly "Outside View" 2009

<sup>148</sup> BBC Monitoring Central Asia Unit "US diplomat" 2009

<sup>149</sup> John CK Daly 2009 "Outside View"

<sup>150</sup> Jahon 2008

group therefore is acting”.<sup>151</sup> This group will be vital in the mutual efforts in the region.

However, recent developments and disagreements between the major powers of the group may potentially interfere. The current relations between Iran and the U.S. and the growing tensions amongst Russia, China, Iran and the U.S. may lead to unproductive disagreement.

### ***Tajikistan***

Tajikistan is one of the poorest nations in the world and is the poorest country in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). It has considerable mineral resources and has the potential to become the largest exporter of hydro-electricity. However, current political instability prevents it from reaching this potential. Corruption within the government is extensive and power is held in the hands only a few. Afghanistan, however, is Tajikistan’s main security concern.<sup>152</sup> With U.S. presence in the northeastern provinces of Afghanistan, the U.S. must take into consideration factors that involve Tajikistan.

Tajikistan shares one of the main waterways in Central Asia with Afghanistan, the Amu Darya. Closely following the majority of the Afghan-Tajik border, it is part of the extensive river system in Tajikistan. Having greater hydroelectric power capacity than any other Central Asian country, Tajikistan can potentially produce more than 300 billion kilowatt hours of electricity. However, it currently only produces 16.5 billion kilowatt hours. In comparison, Afghanistan currently only produces a small fraction of what Tajikistan produces, about 754,000 kilowatt hours annually. Tajikistan recently committed to finish construction on the Roghun Dam on the Vakhsh River, which is recorded as the tallest dam in the world contributing to the majority of

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<sup>151</sup> BBC Monitoring Central Asia Unit “US diplomat” 2009

<sup>152</sup> U.S. Department of State “Tajikistan”

the country's electric production. An even larger hydroelectric facility is in the planning stages on the Danj River along the Afghan Border.<sup>153</sup>

Illicit drug trafficking across the Afghan-Tajik border has also been an issue, as it is on almost all bordering countries of Afghanistan. The northeastern province of Badakhshan is one of the last provinces in the northeastern parts of Afghanistan that is still producing opium<sup>154</sup>. This province borders southern Tajikistan, contributing to the continual trafficking of drugs into the country. In 2006 opium seizures on the Afghan-Tajik border reached 1386.76 kilograms.<sup>155</sup> Although the UNODC is implementing an intensive training program for border police along the Afghan-Iranian border, such aid has hardly been given to the borders of the northern states such as in Tajikistan. The UNODC did implement a cross-border cooperation project between Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, which was successful but occurred back in 1997. Since then the UNODC has done little to aid in border control in the northern region.<sup>156</sup>

At the London Conference on Afghanistan in January 2010, Tajik foreign minister Hamrokehan Zarifi met with British Parliamentary Undersecretary of State, Chris Byrant, and emphasized, "the importance of funding construction of hydroelectric power plants on rivers between Tajikistan and Afghanistan, the construction of a railway between Turkmenistan and Tajikistan through Afghanistan, a highway and a gas pipeline between Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan as well as power transmission lines".<sup>157</sup> Energy and natural resources are largely available in the states bordering northern Afghanistan and would be beneficial to the

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<sup>153</sup> Globalsecurity.org "Tajikistan"

<sup>154</sup> UNODC "Opium Survey" 2009, 7

<sup>155</sup> UNODC "Opium Seizures" 2006

<sup>156</sup> UNODC "Opium Seizures" 2006

<sup>157</sup> BBC Monitoring Central Asia Unit "Tajik Minister" 2010

development and security of Afghanistan, a project that the U.S. and the international community has pledged to support until stability is ensured.

### **U.S. INTERESTS**

The cooperation of Afghanistan's regional neighbors has become essential in ensuring the stability of the region since U.S. and ISAF supply routes from Pakistan into the southern regions of Afghanistan have become insecure. There is now a need for support, both in agreements and in physical aid, from regional countries for the long-term success of the United States' mission in Afghanistan. The United States' involvement in the region requires improved relations between the U.S. and the countries surrounding Afghanistan in order to promote stability.

The United States' relation with Iran is critical in the stabilization of Afghanistan. It is one of the most resourceful of Afghanistan's neighbors. It is the wealthiest of the countries discussed in this chapter. The country itself has already provided vast amounts of physical aid in the building and improvement of infrastructure in the western provinces as well as pledged millions of dollars to the cause. Next to Pakistan, Iran shares a significant amount of Afghanistan's border making it a prime possibility for the United States and the International community to use for supply and travel routes. Iran's border is also the closest to the Helmand and Kandahar provinces, both of which are key locations for U.S. presence.

In recent years, relations between the United States and Turkmenistan have only just begun to pick up. It has only been four years since authoritarian Turkmen President Saparmyrat Niyazov passed away, therefore discussion on international affairs between the two countries are still in early stages; however they are building quickly. As noted earlier, Chevron has recently been granted permission to explore large gas deposits in Turkmenistan. This gives the United

States a tie to the country that will benefit its goals in the region. Turkmenistan is also essential to the construction of the United States-backed TAPI pipeline. With the support of Turkmenistan, the TAPI pipeline will be closer to construction and completion, transporting much needed energy into Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. As relations between Iran and the United States deteriorate with those between Iran and Turkmenistan improving, it is even more essential for the United States to strengthen ties with Turkmenistan in order to secure cooperation vis-à-vis Afghanistan. It is in the best interests of both the U.S. and Afghanistan for the U.S. to promote its relations with Turkmenistan as much as possible.

Uzbekistan has historically been the most supportive in the efforts of the United States in the region. It has become extremely important as it serves as the alternate route for supplies and troops into Afghanistan. Uzbekistan is responsible for the construction of the Northern Distribution Network, which, as discussed before, serves as the primary route for U.S. and ISAF supplies into Afghanistan. It is also responsible for a large amount of the infrastructure construction in northern Afghanistan. The construction and improvements in highways and the railway system has allowed for more efficient transportation of U.S. goods. Uzbekistan is also responsible for the proposal and implementation of the “6+3” group. Despite having been only recently approved, the cooperation of Afghanistan’s neighbors and the United States, Russia and NATO is essential in the further improvement of regional relations and conditions in Afghanistan.

Sharing the northeast border of Afghanistan, Tajikistan could also be another transit route for U.S. supplies into Kabul and the western and southern provinces in Afghanistan. As Tajikistan holds the potential for the largest amount of hydroelectric power, the United States



would benefit from its potential contribution of energy to Afghanistan. Tajikistan could be a large energy source for Afghanistan, which would facilitate development.

Drug trafficking is an issue for Afghanistan's neighboring countries. Necessary steps must be taken in order for it to prevent it from increasing. U.S. military as well as civilian forces have been taking actions to decrease production and therefore smuggling. However, the U.S. must seek cooperation from bordering countries in order to fully implement border security. Without the collaboration of Afghanistan's surrounding nations, smuggling will continue, encouraging further opium growth. Drug trafficking harms U.S. efforts in agriculture and alternative economic development strategies. Further U.S. cooperation with each country will allow for coordination and stronger enforcement of border security.

### **OPTIONS**

1. The United States should foster further communication and coordination between the governments of these countries and the United States. It is in the interest of the United States to encourage dialogue between the countries bordering Afghanistan. This will allow the region to collaborate on the provision of economic aid and long-term security for Afghanistan. The faster that security is established in the country, the more secure U.S. interests are in the region. The cons associated with further communication and collaboration would be an increase in tensions between nations through heightened disagreements. The following sub-options discuss how communication can be implemented:

- a. The United States should encourage Uzbek President Karimov's idea to implement the original "6+2" that was coordinated in 1999 to aid in the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.<sup>158</sup> This will enhance dialogue between these nations and promote

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<sup>158</sup> John CK Daly "Outside View" 2009

coordination and cooperation within the region. All nations involved are important to the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Coordination within this group will become essential to the security of Afghanistan and the security of American presence in the region. As stated before, a con to the implementation of the “6+2” would be the disagreements of the involved nations and the tensions that could result.

- b. The second sub-option for the United States is to encourage the expansion of the “6+2” to include the NATO. This would be in agreement to Uzbek President Islam Karimov proposal of the “6+3”. NATO’s involvement in the region has been extensive, therefore inclusion of the organization would enhance dialogue between the members of NATO as well as members within the central and south Asian region.
- c. The third sub-option is the expansion of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The U.S. should encourage the acceptance of Iran and Pakistan into the SCO. This would encourage dialogue between Iran and Central Asia in areas such as, trade, science, and culture, all of which would aid in the stabilization of Afghanistan. If the U.S. were to advocate for Iran’s acceptance into the SCO it could potentially improve U.S.-Iranian relations. However, it could also promote agreements between China and Iran, which may contradict U.S. goals in Afghanistan.

2. The second option the United States should take into consideration is further bilateral communication with Iran. The current relationship between the United States and Iran is strained; therefore further communication is a must. The following sub-options must be taken into consideration:

- a. The United States has the option of discontinuing its current policies with Iran in order to improve relations. The U.S. can hold off on the implementation of sanctions on Iran for

its nuclear development program. This will improve Iran's position on the United States and therefore relations will improve. The downside will be the advancement of Iran's nuclear capabilities.

- b. The United States should also consider the option of continuing its policy and continue to impose strict sanctions on Iran. Along with this option, the United States must ensure Iran of U.S. long-term goals in the region. The U.S. must emphasize its plan for long term civilian presence and quick removal of its military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan. It also must communicate with Iran to emphasize the need to keep the issues and debates over nuclear enhancement separate from their mutual goals in Afghanistan.

3. The third option the United States needs to take into consideration is the energy and infrastructural development in Afghanistan's surrounding nations. Energy development will increase Afghanistan's access to energy and facilitate economic development. Infrastructural development will aid United States interests through the transportation of supplies and troops. The enhancement of both energy and infrastructure in the region will ensure the security of American troops and civilians. The following are sub-options related to regional energy development:

- a. The United States should advocate the development of the TAPI pipeline. This will ensure energy flows into Afghanistan and encourage developing relations between Pakistan and India. However, the TAPI pipeline will go against the Iran-advocated IPI pipeline. Therefore, the con to this option is the negative effects on the United States' relations with Iran.
- b. Option 3b is to promote the construction of the IPI pipeline. This will encourage much needed positive relations with Iran and still link Pakistan with India. A negative result to

this option is the lack of energy contributions into Afghanistan. This will also obstruct Turkmenistan's contributions into Afghanistan and the rest of the region.

- c. The United States should encourage the further development of infrastructure and hydroelectric systems in the three Central Asian states bordering Afghanistan. Such development will aid in Afghanistan's energy sources and will provide the United States with more reliable transportation and supply routes into the country.

4. The final option that needs to be taken into consideration is trans-national cooperation on border control to secure the issue of narcotics trafficking out of Afghanistan. The United States should encourage the implementation of coordinated border control across the borders of Afghanistan and the four countries discussed in this chapter.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is imperative that the United State takes into consideration all of the above options. However, the following recommendations need to be implemented immediately in order to best serve U.S. interests. The over arching theme on all recommendations presented is the importance of communication and coordination. Communication and coordination are crucial on all issues in Afghanistan for its development and security.

### ***Communication***

Communication between the regional states and the United States is the most crucial in ensuring the region's security. While all the options presented on trans-regional communication are beneficial, it is in the best interests of the United States to immediately implement options 1a and 1c. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the formation of the "6+2" will commence much needed dialogue amongst the states most directly involved with the issues in Afghanistan. Coordination and mutual agreement amongst these countries is imperative for quick and efficient

security in the region. The United States must support President Karimov's idea and push for the formation of the organization.

Communication with Iran is essential for the security in the region. However, this must be done without risking the development of nuclear capabilities. Therefore, option 2b is the most effective. The United States must stress to Iran the importance of keeping the issues of nuclear development separate from their mutual goals in securing Afghanistan. The U.S. must also emphasize the United States' plan for sustained civilian presence and not military presence.

With better relations and the support of Iran, the United States would have much easier access into Helmand and Kandahar for the shipment of supplies and troops. There would be less conflict of the building of energy pipelines such as the TAPI pipeline and the IPI pipeline and therefore construction would be well underway. With Iran's cooperation with the United States, Pakistan, who is now improving relations with Iran, could potentially improve cooperation with U.S. efforts along the Afghan-Pakistani border.

### ***Energy and Infrastructure***

For the security of the United States, options 3a and 3c must be implemented. The U.S. must advocate for the construction of the TAPI pipeline. The TAPI pipeline will bring much needed energy through Afghanistan and will also promote continual communication between the U.S., Turkmenistan and Afghanistan. This will aid development in the country and promote much needed dialogue within the region. The United States must also encourage the further development of infrastructure and energy in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. Development will provide energy aid to Afghanistan and will provide expansion of the NDN. The expansion of the NDN will provide more efficient access of supplies and troops through the northern border of Afghanistan.

### ***Counternarcotics***

Lastly, the United States must encourage option 4 and promote coordination with all states on border control. Drug trafficking needs to be reduced for the United States' overall goal of security. Emphasis must be made on coordination in this regard.

# Section VI

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## Multilateral Organizations





# Coordination within the International Security Assistance Force: Learning from Past Mistakes

Michael Truong

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## Policy Recommendations

- Conduct bilateral meetings with national governments of ISAF countries that are experiencing tremendous political pressure.
- Impose limits on the degree to which ISAF countries can use caveats on the use of their troop contributions.
- Change the composition of PRTs to separate military and civilian personnel.
- Increase the combat firepower capability in order to support PRTs in critical situations.
- Increase the number of civilians in each PRT to train local administration and security forces in order to effectively strengthen state authority.
- Provide more expertise in the fields of development, agriculture and legal sectors.
- Change specific policies in the rules of engagement while maintaining the integrity of its intent to protect innocent civilians.

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## Abstract

This chapter examines the working relationship between the U.S. and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) at the tactical command level. ISAF is the lead organization for conducting stabilization operations in Afghanistan and leads Provincial Reconstruction Teams operations. Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are a vital component of the U.S. Army "clear, hold, build" counterinsurgency strategy. This chapter analyses the use of PRTs to identify options that the U.S. and ISAF countries will be able to sustain until the Government of Afghanistan can function in a self-sustaining manner.

## **ISSUE**

The limited number of personnel and resources committed to stabilization compromises International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operations in Afghanistan. Restrictive or ambiguous directives prevent military commanders from acting decisively against insurgent forces. The ISAF commander is traditionally a U.S. military officer; therefore the United States must evaluate its policies in regard to ISAF to determine how to work with ISAF allies to find an effective model for international coordination in Afghanistan.

The war in Afghanistan is growing increasingly more unpopular among ISAF countries. The Dutch Labor Party withdrew from the three-party alliance that led the Dutch national government because the party disagreed on whether to extend the Dutch commitment to ISAF.<sup>1</sup> This withdrawal left the Netherlands' ruling coalition with an unworkable majority.<sup>2</sup> The Afghan people and international community do not distinguish the difference between ISAF and the U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom missions; therefore any failure in Afghanistan is interpreted as a U.S. failure. Decisions must be made to identify options that will be palatable to European governments under domestic pressure to withdraw from Afghanistan, while improving the ISAF ability to stabilize the country, and eventually allow the Government of Afghanistan to gain full sovereignty.

## **BACKGROUND**

There are two simultaneous military operations in Afghanistan: Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and ISAF. OEF is a U.S.-led combat operation against insurgents, primarily in the eastern and southern parts of the country along the Pakistan border.<sup>3</sup> The North Atlantic

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<sup>1</sup> The New York Times 2010

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> King 2008

Treaty Organization (NATO) currently leads the ISAF in Afghanistan. ISAF is a multi-national force that conducts military operations against the insurgency, trains the Afghan National Security Forces, and rebuilds Afghanistan's social and economic infrastructure.<sup>4</sup> The subordinate commands of ISAF are called Regional Commands (RC). One ISAF country is designated as the lead nation in each regional command. The Regional Commands are primarily responsible for commanding Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), joint civilian/military teams that provide security and infrastructure reconstruction support to local areas. There are five regional commands; known as RC North, RC West, RS South, RC East, and RC Capital.<sup>5</sup>

### ***The International Security Assistance Force***

NATO was originally created as an alliance to counter Soviet influence in Europe. The ISAF involvement in Afghanistan led critics to question the NATO justification for taking part in a military operation outside of Europe. Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty dictates that if one NATO country is attacked, all NATO countries will respond in defense of the attacked nation.<sup>6</sup> NATO countries assisted the U.S. in removing the Taliban government from power after the U.S. determined the Taliban government was providing safe haven to al Qaeda, the Sunni extremist terrorist group that carried out the September 11th attacks. ISAF originally conducted operations in Kabul, however expanded to cover the entire country in 2007.

### ***ISAF Criticisms***

ISAF adopted risk adverse policies restricting their Rules of Engagement in order to protect their troops.<sup>7</sup> These policies undermine the ISAF ability to maintain security stability in Afghanistan. European allies have contributed significantly fewer troops than the U.S. to ISAF.

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<sup>4</sup> International Security Assistance Force 2010

<sup>5</sup> King 2008

<sup>6</sup> International Security Assistance Force 2010

<sup>7</sup> Institute for the Study of War 2009

The small troop commitment was initially based on a United Nations approach called the *light footprint* strategy.<sup>8</sup> The international community committed a small number of lightly armed military forces because NATO feared the Afghan population would perceive a large international military presence as occupiers. Political opposition to military operations in Afghanistan pressures European national governments to maintain risk adverse policies and keep troop numbers low, despite the worsening situation in key provinces designated as European areas of responsibility. Despite these intentions, ISAF is criticized for not taking the geography of Afghanistan into consideration during the planning stages because ISAF did not deploy enough troops to saturate the rural nature of the country.<sup>9</sup>

Article 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty states NATO will promote economic and social interests in addition to a military intervention in order to provide conditions of stability and wellbeing.<sup>10</sup> These responsibilities create ambiguous or contradictory policies that hinder ISAF effectiveness in Afghanistan. Many NATO countries committed troops to ISAF with restrictions, known as national caveats, which dictate how their troops can be deployed and utilized. GEN Dan McNeil, GEN David McKiernan, and GEN Stanley McChrystal, two former ISAF Commanders and the current ISAF Commander respectively, criticized European governments for deploying troops with restrictive caveats because the caveats prevent military commanders in the field from responding to threats.<sup>11</sup> Insurgent forces had the freedom to continue destabilizing the country in the absence of an authoritative military presence.

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<sup>8</sup> Gauster 2007

<sup>9</sup> Institute for the Study of War 2009

<sup>10</sup> International Security Assistance Force 2010

<sup>11</sup> The Telegraph 2008

### ***Fighting a Counterinsurgency***

The Army counterinsurgency strategy is described as "clear, hold, then build".<sup>12</sup> This implies the U.S. military will clear an area, establish a firm government, and build up its economic and social structure to win the hearts and minds of the local population before leaving. ISAF Commanders recognize that eliminating the insurgency in Afghanistan depends on the ability of ISAF to eliminate the social and economic conditions that generate support for insurgents among the general population because insurgencies are defeated socially, not militarily. The U.S. military addressed this strategy by combining civilian aid teams with military forces into combined team to protect the civilians in unstable regions. These civilian/military teams are called Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). The PRT nomenclature generated criticism as "reconstruction teams" because Afghanistan did not have before the Taliban government was overthrown and many of the reconstruction teams are constructing infrastructure projects that did not exist previously.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Provincial Reconstruction Teams***

PRTs are units consisting of military officers, diplomats, and civilian reconstruction specialists that work to rebuild the social and economic infrastructure in unstable areas.<sup>14</sup> Lead nations in charge of Regional Commands control PRTs. Germany commands five PRTs in RC North, Italy commands four PRTs in RC West, the United Kingdom commands four PRTs in RC South, and the U.S. commands twelve PRTs in RC East.<sup>15</sup> U.S., German, and British PRTs follow distinct and differing models. U.S. PRTs have larger military elements because the provinces in its areas of responsibility are less stable than the provinces controlled by the

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<sup>12</sup> Army Field Manual 3-24 2006

<sup>13</sup> Yon 2009

<sup>14</sup> Gauster 2007

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

Germans and British. The German and British PRTs have stronger civilian involvement, however are less suited to defend against insurgent attacks.

### PRT distribution within Regional Commands<sup>16</sup>



<sup>16</sup> ISAF 2010

American PRTs were formed to counteract the main factors for instability: unemployment, poverty, terrorism and local warlords. American PRTs have approximately 100 personnel, divided into three elements: a Civil-Military Operations Center, embedded military trainers, and a force protection element.<sup>17</sup> The U.S. PRT concept focuses on the simultaneous execution of combat and stabilization/reconstruction operations.

The conflicting security/reconstruction mission is the most significant problem the American PRTs face in Afghanistan. American PRTs supported corrupt regional warlords in order to provide stability to meet its military objectives, which subsequently undermined its infrastructure development efforts by weakening the influence of the national government in those areas.<sup>18</sup> American PRTs are criticized for being too focused on military operations and not performing enough projects to develop local infrastructure.<sup>19</sup> American PRTs display a visible presence in an attempt to increase the publicity for American good will.<sup>20</sup> The U.S. adopted this approach to project its humanitarian efforts to the Afghan population and international community to offset its highly publicized military operations. This approach is generally less popular among the Afghan people than the more discreet approaches taken by British and German PRTs.<sup>21</sup>

U.S. PRTs in high-risk provinces in eastern Afghanistan focused much of their energy on building roads, which has generated more support among the Afghan people than PRT progress in more secure provinces in the West because the roads have a more tangible effect than strengthening the legitimacy of mentoring government officials, which is taking place more

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<sup>17</sup> Gauster 2007

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Malkasian 2008, 13

<sup>21</sup> Gauster 2007

prominently in the West.<sup>22</sup> This metric of progress in the East may be deceptive when the emphasis shifts from high-visibility projects to developing the local government officials. U.S. military officers in charge of PRTs are under heavy pressure to achieve "measureable metrics" to verify signs of progress in developing their areas of responsibility, such as number of drinking wells dug, miles of roads constructed, and number of schools built.<sup>23</sup> This creates a problem for PRTs engaged in important operations without tangible metrics such as improving the occupational competency of Afghan officials or eliminating corrupt officials.

British PRTs focus on a policy called "the Afghan ownership principle" that shifts credit for developmental successes to the Afghan people and attempt to project a less visible presence than American PRTs.<sup>24</sup> This approach is more popular among the Afghan people than the American model, however, reduces the amount of credit extended to the British for the work they perform. The British PRTs focus less on military operations than American PRTs and provinces under British responsibility have experienced increases in poppy production because of the lack of British military presence among the PRTs.<sup>25</sup>

German PRTs have an equal balance of civilian and military personnel, similar to British PRTs. Provinces under German responsibility are generally among the most stable in the entire country, and therefore require less of a military capacity than U.S. PRTs that operate in non-permissive environments. German PRTs also experience difficulty in balancing the goals of each ministry (civilian and military) in a way that is mutually supportive of one another. British PRTs differ from German PRTs in this regard because the British place a higher emphasis on promoting Afghan ownership of the project and operating on the Afghan time schedule, which is

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Center for Army Lessons Learned 2007

<sup>24</sup> Her Majesty's Government (United Kingdom) 2010

<sup>25</sup> Gauster 2007



often delayed.<sup>26</sup> The pressure American leaders place on measureable or quantifiable progress prevent U.S. PRTs from adopting the British approach of working at a slower pace according to Afghan culture.

PRTs are often tasked with counternarcotic missions; however do not possess the resources or personnel to adequately fight drug lords. PRTs are designed to assist in training the Afghan police force and Afghan National Army, who then enforce Afghan constitutional laws. PRTs were not intended to be offensive forces that destroy poppy fields or combat regional drug lords.<sup>27</sup> PRTs also struggle in their ability to train the Afghan National Police because PRTs do not have enough law enforcement trainers to train the Afghans.<sup>28</sup> ISAF PRT personnel serve three to six month tours, which create an additional problem for PRT trainers. ISAF personnel begin to build meaningful relationships and gain the trust of their Afghan counterparts at the time in which they return to their home countries.<sup>29</sup> The U.S. conventional force model of twelve and fifteen-month deployment cycles enables PRT trainers to continue training their Afghan counterparts after gaining their trust. PRTs face a challenge of being too focused on security in RC East and RC South because of the high level of insurgent attacks in those provinces.<sup>30</sup>

The security level in each region dictates PRT composition and goals. There is a high degree of variance between provinces; therefore there can be no single recommendation for PRT courses of action. PRTs in non-permissive environments will resemble combat units with attached civil affairs assets, and be restricted from making any significant progress in their regions. Conversely, PRTs in more stable areas can afford to minimize their military presence

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Malkasian 2008, 13

<sup>29</sup> Gauster 2007

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

and execute more substantial infrastructure projects. This disparity will cause problems for the Afghan government after U.S. and ISAF permanently withdraw from Afghanistan because the Northern and Western regions of the country will be more developed than the Eastern and Southern part of the country. Afghanistan will need to address this discrepancy on its own once the international forces withdraw their personnel, materials, and funding.

### Levels of Instability in Afghanistan, by Province<sup>31</sup>

<u>Level</u>	<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Province</u>
<b>10</b>	<b>‘Open War’</b> — Evacuation of PRT personnel	
<b>9</b>	<b>‘War Zone’ (A)</b> — Situation similar to civil war; daily guerrilla attacks on local civilians, police and internationals; combat operations of OEF/ ISAF against insurgent forces on a daily basis; provision of humanitarian aid impossible	Helmand, Kandahar
<b>8</b>	<b>‘War Zone’ (B)</b> — Civil war tendencies; systematic attacks on local civilians, local police and internationals; increased combat operations of ISAF and OEF against insurgent forces; political motivated violence; massive alienation between local population and Afghan Government; security in the PRT complex only guaranteed by outside support; ordinary PRT-patrolling not possible; population in rural areas depends on the opium crop; PRT or NGO induced development cooperation not feasible	Uruzgan, Zabul, Khowst
<b>7</b>	<b>‘Transition from Post-Conflict into War Zone’</b> — Areas of high risk; increased attacks on local officials, police stations, international forces including PRTs; population consult Taliban Shuras for legal advice; reconstruction projects cannot be carried out without protection element; very few NGOs operating; ordinary PRT-patrols (“showing the flag”) with light armament very restricted	Kunar, Paktya, Paktika, Ghazni, Nuristan
<b>6</b>	<b>‘Instability’</b> — Targeted violence and threats of violence against civilians and members of the military; illegal road blocks; danger of hijackings; cross-country trips without a convoy very dangerous; some NGOs operating; realization of aid projects very difficult; attacks on PRTs e.g. during violent demonstrations	Nangarhar, Laghman, Farah, Faryab, Ghor, Badghis, Wardak
<b>5</b>	<b>‘Not Calm and Not Stable’</b> — Scattered attacks and threats of violence against government representatives and international forces; attacks on election candidates; increase of violent crimes; organized anti-government demonstrations can turn violent; movement only advisable in convoy; Roadside Bombs and suicide attacks possible	Parwan, Kunduz, Takhar, Badakhshan, Heart, Balkh*
<b>4</b>	<b>‘Calm, but Not Stable’</b> — Hidden threats against, and intimidation of, local population; anti-Afghan Government / anti-Western propaganda; cultivation of opium regarded as a generally tolerated source of income for the population; massive corruption	Bamyan, Jowzjan, Sar-e Pol, Samangan, Baghlan, Takhar

<sup>31</sup> Gauster 2007

### *National Caveats*

There are currently 69 caveats placed on the use of ISAF troops by their home governments.<sup>32</sup> These caveats prevent commanders from countering insurgent treats. German troops are heavily restricted by their national government. German troops are not allowed to perform missions at night, and are required to return to base once the sun begins to set, regardless of whether the mission is near completion.<sup>33</sup> Members of a civilian aid organization were severely wounded in an improvised explosive device attack in 2005, and the local German units refused to provide rescue forces for the aid workers despite their calls for urgent medical attention because dusk was approaching.<sup>34</sup> All of the victims in the roadside bombing died from treatable wounds. German troops are also restricted from being more than two hours away from a well-equipped hospital and are not allowed to exit their armored vehicles.<sup>35</sup> This is especially problematic in a counterinsurgency environment where ISAF success depends on engaging and being immersed in the local population.

One ISAF country restricts its personnel from flying in the aircraft of any other country. This hurts ISAF because NATO utilizes multi-national flight crews on its Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft.<sup>36</sup> These aircraft can be used to scan large distances for enemy combatants and limit the number of ground patrols that are exposed to ambushes and improvised explosive device attacks. More ISAF troops are exposed to hostile fire because the caveat restricting some countries from participating in multi-national flight crews keeps NATO-operated AWACS aircraft from being utilized.

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<sup>32</sup> Dressler 2009

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Foust 2009

<sup>35</sup> McNamara 2009

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

## ***Rules of Engagement***

GEN Stanley McChrystal implemented a restrictive Rules of Engagement policy that takes risk-averse positions in order to prevent civilian deaths. However, in many cases these restrictions are so strict they endanger the lives of troops engaged in combat. ISAF troops are no longer allowed to pursue an insurgent once the insurgent enters a populated area.<sup>37</sup> ISAF troops are also not allowed to shoot at an insurgent if they are not holding a weapon. Many of the insurgent forces are aware of the ISAF rules of engagement and use them as part of their attack strategy when facing ISAF troops. Insurgents are increasingly executing hit and run style attacks in which they flee to urban areas after shooting at ISAF units.<sup>38</sup> This allows the insurgents to fire shots while restricting ISAF troops from returning fire, despite the insurgents being in clear line of sight. Insurgents are also firing at ISAF troops and immediately standing up and dropping their weapons because they know the ISAF forces can not return fire if they are not physically holding a weapon, despite having previously fired at ISAF troops.<sup>39</sup>

ISAF also has restrictive rules on intelligence collection. After capturing individuals designated as "High Value Targets," ISAF interrogators are restricted to having only one session to interrogate the detainee and ISAF can only hold the detainee for up to 72 hours before ISAF is forced to turn the High Value Target over to Afghan forces, who often release the detainee.<sup>40</sup> Many of the legitimate, approved interrogation approaches approved in the Army Field Manual require multiple interrogation sessions. Often times, a follow up session is needed to clarify information retrieved in the first interrogation session. These opportunities are forfeited under the ISAF rules of engagement. ISAF units often request that U.S. forces under OEF to execute

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<sup>37</sup> Poon 2010

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

High Value Target captures, however, OEF forces are not always available to ISAF in order to gain the favorable advantage for interrogations. Detainee interrogations are a time-sensitive task because detainees often reveal information openly when they experience "shock of capture" immediately after being apprehended. ISAF interrogators are often discouraged from conducting interrogations immediately because commanders want interrogators to take their time to be thorough because the interrogator will not have a second chance to question the detainee if a question is overlooked or forgotten during the questioning session.

### **U.S. INTERESTS**

The U.S. invaded Afghanistan because the Taliban government harbored the Islamic extremist group that executed the September 11th attacks. NATO intervened in Afghanistan based on Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. U.S. national security depends on the ISAF ability to provide adequate support to the Afghan government so the new Afghan government can become self-sustaining and prevent the country from regressing to a safe haven for religious extremist groups again in the future. The U.S. is committed to eliminating terrorist safe havens to prevent American civilians from being killed or injured in future terrorist attacks.

The U.S. has an interest in Afghanistan maintaining its own national security because the success or failure of the Afghan government in the future will reflect most directly on the U.S. despite the deep involvement of other ISAF nations. Future international public opinion of U.S. foreign policy depends on the success or failure of Afghanistan because countries will evaluate the outcome of the Afghanistan conflict when deciding whether to commit to future military alliances with the U.S. in the future should another crisis arise.

The ability for PRTs to smooth the transference of power to the Afghan people will determine how soon the U.S. and ISAF can withdraw from Afghanistan. The U.S. will

experience heightened diplomatic tensions with many of its NATO allies the longer ISAF is forced to stay in Afghanistan because many NATO countries are under a tremendous amount of domestic political pressure due to their commitments to ISAF. A drawn out commitment to ISAF could cause political parties lose their elected positions in many countries. Changes in national governments will alter the U.S. Department of State relationship with countries worldwide and potentially compromise U.S. strategic interests not directly affected by the Afghanistan conflict.

### **OPTIONS**

The expansive and complex relationship between the United States and ISAF dictates that policy options should be examined individually by topics.

#### ***Diplomacy with other ISAF countries***

1. Maintain the status quo. The United States depends on international support for the stability operations in Afghanistan and does not have the financial, material, or personnel resources to fully handle the reconstruction independently. NATO and ISAF are multilateral institutions and the U.S. cannot dominate their course of action. International consensus must be derived from all participants, not determined by one nation.
2. Conduct bilateral meetings with representatives of ISAF countries who are experiencing tremendous political pressure. This will help the U.S. utilize a synergetic relationship where both countries can identify compromises that allow the U.S. to maintain the cohesion of ISAF while allowing the individual country to handle its domestic pressures.
3. Minimize the responsibility of ISAF. The lack of willingness by ISAF countries to take on the risk associated with stabilizing Afghanistan indicates its presence is more symbolic than pragmatic. The U.S. cannot change or influence domestic politics in other

countries, and should examine ways in which the U.S. will be able to carry the entire burden of transferring authority to the Afghan government.

### ***National Contributions***

1. Eliminate all national caveats. Caveats are intended to protect ISAF troops, however they do more harm than good and expose innocent victims to increased danger. The U.S. Department of State and ISAF commanders should appeal to national government desires to withdraw from Afghanistan as soon as possible. Increasing efficiency and taking on short-term risk will decrease the number of combat deaths in the long-term.
2. Impose limits on the degree to which ISAF countries can use caveats on the use of their troop contributions. Eliminating all national caveats may drive ISAF countries to withdraw their troop commitment completely and fracture the NATO unity. ISAF should eliminate caveats that ground multinational aircrews because of specific countries that do not allow their personnel from flying on the military aircraft of another country. ISAF should also eliminate caveats restricting units from conducting nighttime operations. This option may backfire against U.S. interests if limiting caveats results in a withdrawal of troop commitments from nations that will not deploy troops without caveats.
3. Make no changes to the ISAF caveat policy. ISAF and the U.S. Department of State have no authority to dictate the use of personnel from another sovereign country. The United States should be prepared to take on an increased burden to compensate for the lack of commitment from ISAF allies.

### ***Provincial Reconstruction Teams***

1. Change the composition of PRTs to separate military and civilian personnel. Civilian personnel often complain about the military leadership of their PRTs, while military

leaders are not trained for the development aspect of the PRT. Dedicating a military unit to provide security for PRTs would provide the same functional security, but increase the flexibility of the civilian development specialists. Military units will be responsible for planning the security for the PRT. The civilian specialists will be responsible for all of the construction projects. This separation will allow the military to cycle units between operations to reduce fatigue, while allowing civilians to maximize time spent on projects.

2. Increase the combat firepower capability in order to support PRTs in critical situations.

Though PRTs are lightly armed and primarily focused on development, this structure makes them vulnerable and insurgents specifically target PRTs for their vulnerability. An escalation of firepower or supporting fire through close air support assets will help civilian-heavy PRTs perform their functions without worrying about personal safety.

3. Increase the number of PRTs including outposts ("PRT satellites") to expand country-wide presence. This "increase" of PRTs does not equate to an increase in the total number of troops each country contributes, however most nations will be able to identify ways in which non-mission essential troops can be redeployed to their home country and replaced with vital PRT relevant personnel.

4. Increase the number of civilians in each PRT to train local administration and security forces in order to effectively strengthen state authority. Civilian increases are more palatable to ISAF countries than troop increases. Civilian contractors in Afghanistan are generally compensated more for the risk they accept when working in Afghanistan. This has positive effects for ISAF countries because it allows them to contribute more efficiently to the success of PRTs while avoiding the connotations associated with a



military presence. The highly compensated civilians will also contribute to their home country's economy when they return from their tour with a higher disposable income.

5. Provide more expertise in the fields of development, agriculture and legal sectors.

Afghanistan is struggling from a lack of professionals and desperately needs experts in the development sector in order to create the economy it desires to sustain itself and reduce conditions of poverty.

### ***Rules of Engagement***

1. Maintain the Rules of Engagement introduced in 2009 by GEN McChrystal. The restrictive ROE will be frustrating for many troops, however prevent unnecessary civilian casualties. ISAF troops will be able to target wanted individuals at a later time when the chances of harming innocent civilians is decreased. The objective of counterinsurgency warfare is to win the hearts and minds of the general population. Credibility among the general population is forfeited when innocent civilians are killed.
2. Change specific policies in the rules of engagement while maintaining the integrity of its intent to protect innocent civilians. ISAF troops for example, should be trusted to judge between armed and unarmed combatants and should not be restricted from engaging a target just because the aggressor dropped their weapon.
3. Remove all of the 2009 changes to the rules of engagement. These restrictive policies, like national caveats at the strategic level, do more harm than good. ISAF troops are unable to neutralize targets that regroup and endanger innocent civilians and ISAF troops at a later date. More lives will be saved if the insurgents are neutralized immediately.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***Diplomacy with other ISAF countries***

The U.S. should conduct bilateral meetings with representatives of ISAF countries who are experiencing tremendous political pressure (option 2). This will help the U.S. utilize a synergetic relationship where both countries can identify compromises that allow the U.S. to maintain the cohesion of ISAF while allowing the individual country to handle its domestic pressures.

### ***National Contributions***

The U.S. should impose limits on the degree to which ISAF countries can use caveats on the use of their troop contributions (option 2). Eliminating all national caveats may drive ISAF countries to withdraw their troop commitment completely and fracture the NATO unity. ISAF should eliminate caveats that ground multinational aircrews because of specific countries that do not allow their personnel from flying on the military aircraft of another country. ISAF should also eliminate caveats restricting units from conducting nighttime operations.

### ***Provincial Reconstruction Teams***

The U.S. should change the composition of PRTs to separate military and civilian personnel (option 1). Civilian personnel often complain about the military leadership of their PRTs, while military leaders are not trained for the development aspect of the PRT. Dedicating a military unit to provide security for PRTs would provide the same functional security, but increase the flexibility of the civilian development specialists. Military units will be responsible for planning the security for the PRT. The civilian specialists will be responsible for all of the construction projects. This separation will allow the military to cycle units between operations to reduce fatigue, while allowing civilians to maximize time spent on projects.

The U.S. should increase the combat firepower capability in order to support PRTs in critical situations (option 2). Though PRTs are lightly armed and primarily focused on development, this structure makes them vulnerable and insurgents specifically target PRTs for their vulnerability. An escalation of firepower or supporting fire through close air support assets will help civilian-heavy PRTs perform their functions without worrying about personal safety.

The U.S. should increase the number of civilians in each PRT to train local administration and security forces in order to effectively strengthen state authority (option 4). Civilian increases are more palatable to ISAF countries than troop increases. Civilian contractors in Afghanistan are generally compensated more for the risk they accept when working in Afghanistan. This has positive effects for ISAF countries because it allows them to contribute more efficiently to the success of PRTs while avoiding the connotations associated with a military presence. The highly compensated civilians will also contribute to their home country's economy when they return from their tour with a higher disposable income.

The U.S. should provide more expertise in the fields of development, agriculture and legal sectors (option 5). Afghanistan is struggling from a lack of professionals and desperately needs experts in the development sector in order to create the economy it desires to sustain itself and reduce conditions of poverty.

### ***Rules of Engagement***

The U.S. Department of Defense should change specific policies in its of engagement while maintaining the integrity of its intent to protect innocent civilians (option 2). ISAF troops for example, should be trusted to judge between armed and unarmed combatants and should not be restricted from engaging a target just because the aggressor dropped their weapon.



# **The International Community: Coalition Building within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, European Union & the United Nations**

Melody Chang

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## **Policy Recommendations**

- The State Department, specifically, the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (OCR/S) should advocate for extensive communication, coordination and collaboration with the international community.
- The O/CRS should serve as lead coordinator of American humanitarian aid with the UNAMA, EU High Representative to Afghanistan, and NATO's Senior Representative to Afghanistan to ensure unity of effort in civilian matters.
- To strengthen international support for the Afghanistan mission, the State Department should launch a public relations campaign that serves a two-fold purpose: 1) to demonstrate the developmental progress made to date in Afghanistan and 2) to present a convincing and honest argument about American/Western motivations in Afghanistan.
- The State Department needs to urge the political leadership of NATO, the Atlantic Council, to shape their current mandate in Afghanistan into a counterinsurgency mission, and to provide the necessary military and civilian resources to do so.

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## **Abstract**

This chapter examines the foreign policy of the United States towards the three main international organizations in Afghanistan: the United Nations, the European Union, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The international coalition in Afghanistan is currently in a state of crisis, with wavering military commitments, high domestic unpopularity in coalition nations, and a lack of unity of effort. This chapter recommends that the United States use its moral and political capital in the global community to 1) secure enduring international commitments to Afghanistan's security and prosperity, 2) ensure the continued existence of the ISAF/NATO coalition, and 3) strengthen the capacity of the Afghan government through the responsible distribution of development and humanitarian aid. This chapter provides a brief overview of current American ties with the three multilateral organizations, and provides policy recommendations for improving and strengthening future relations with the international community.

## **ISSUE**

The Afghan government and society require consistent aid and support in order to achieve social, political and economic stability. Realistically, the United States cannot be the sole provider of this support. While general security is an immediate concern, U.S. assistance to Afghanistan over the long-term will be predominantly financial and economic in nature, requiring that the Afghan people have a reliable and sufficient base of investment and support to shape their own futures. A decision must be made to take swift and decisive action to preserve international participation in the current counterinsurgency mission. The U.S. must encourage international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU) and other members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to take an active and effective role in stabilization and reconstruction projects in Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup>

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***The United Nations***

The United Nations' primary function is to serve as the world's political forum to handle international issues. The organization's charter unequivocally states that one of the main purposes of the organization is:

To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion<sup>2</sup>

The charter further states that its members have an explicit commitment “to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples” through cooperation with other international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on regional actors, such as Pakistan, Iran, Russia, China and other Central Asian states, please see chapters 11-13 in the previous section.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations 1945, Chapter 1

World Bank.<sup>3</sup> Its programs are heavily geared toward humanitarian relief and economic development efforts. As the United Nations (UN) tends to be reactionary to humanitarian crises rather than proactive, the organization's agencies have little to no experience with the long-term state-building process. This hampers their reliability as a lead actor in the reconstruction process in Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) created the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to support the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) in establishing a stable and prosperous society for the Afghan people.<sup>4</sup> The UNAMA serves as the principle agency in charge of all UN civilian reconstruction and development projects with Afghanistan and has over twenty distinct UN agencies underneath its umbrella.<sup>5</sup> As a political mission, the UNAMA works closely with its peace-enforcement counterpart ISAF and the host GIROA on various governance and social justice issues, spanning from anticorruption to counternarcotics to women's rights.<sup>6</sup> In the past year alone, the lead agency has overseen the distribution of over US\$600 million in humanitarian aid to the Afghan people.<sup>7</sup> However, past observers have noted that the UNAMA is insufficiently equipped to handle coordination between its subordinate agencies, and that there are insufficient transparency and accountability measures in place for UN-funded projects.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations 1945, Preamble; United Kingdom Government's Afghanistan Communications Team 2010, International Framework; For further discussion of economic development, please see chapter 7.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan 2010, Mandate

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan 2010, Background; United Nations Security Council 2002, Resolution 1401

<sup>6</sup> For detailed coverage regarding governance and public services issues, please refer to chapters 1-3 and 8-10.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan 2010, 2

<sup>8</sup> Lockhart 2010; United States Mission to the United Nations 2010, UN Reform; Ibid, Management and Reform Section

The issue of rampant corruption in Afghanistan is a major concern for all organizations involved in the stabilization, reconstruction and development process of the nation-state.<sup>9</sup> For the UN and other international donors, the temptation to bypass national ministries and local authorities in Afghanistan is strong and understandable. The high-level corruption and nepotism within the Karzai administration and the sheer prevalence of official corruption at provincial and local levels have been widely reported by the international media.<sup>10</sup> However, this urge to provide direct aid to ordinary citizens also originates in the way modern humanitarian aid has been conceptualized. Generally, international donors to a particular country, like Afghanistan, want to develop the local government's capacity to provide a particular service to its populace *and* to actually provide those services to the same populace in the form of direct aid.<sup>11</sup> When direct aid is the main form of international financial support for a nation, the end result is that while governance functions are performed, government capacity does not increase, often resulting in state failure when international donors pull out of the area.<sup>12</sup> This cannot be allowed to happen in Afghanistan; a collapse of the GIRoA would have a devastating impact on the moral legitimacy of all organizations and actors involved in the current Afghanistan mission and would be a humanitarian disaster for Afghans on a nearly unimaginable scale. It is vital that the UN and all other international donors engage with trustworthy GIRoA officials to increase state capacity and provide essential government services to Afghans. While direct aid will remain a component of international aid to the state, the United States must advocate that it is not the main form of assistance to the GIRoA.

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<sup>9</sup> For further discussion of corruption in Afghanistan, please refer to chapter 2.

<sup>10</sup> Partlow 2010

<sup>11</sup> Direct aid is defined as the provision of services by international organizations directly to the recipients of those services. This type of aid usually has minimal government involvement in the entire process of preparation and distribution. [Definition inferred from Fukuyama 2004, 40]

<sup>12</sup> Fukuyama 2004, 40; Ibid 103



For the majority of the world, the authority of a UNSC resolution has become an essential domestic political requirement for engaging in military operations abroad, acting as, “the political validator *nonpareil*.”<sup>13</sup> Military operations that occur under a UN mandate or resolution gain a degree of international legitimacy and an assumption of multinational support in the arena of international public opinion. In Afghanistan, ISAF is under a UN Chapter VII authorization as a peace-enforcement presence. This is the broadest authorization that can be granted to any military operation by the UNSC, granting ISAF the permission to “take any measures necessary to carry out its tasks.”<sup>14</sup> However, a peace-enforcement mission is not the equivalent of a counterinsurgency mission.<sup>15</sup> In reality, ISAF troops adhere to the classical UN peacekeeping standards of using force only in self-defense, as their mandate does not explicitly authorize any offensive operations. This increases the risk of injury or death among ISAF troops since they are constrained from the use of armed force unless fired upon first by hostile forces.<sup>16</sup> The fact that allied-ISAF troops are often unable to secure and hold areas that have been cleared of hostile forces also hampers the ability of American Operation *Enduring Freedom* (OEF) troops to conduct an effective counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan. Clarification of ISAF’s rules

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<sup>13</sup> Hunter 2008, 45

<sup>14</sup> United Nations Security Council 2001, Resolution 1386; North Atlantic Treaty Alliance 2010, ISAF Mandate; Government of the Netherlands 2010, Afghanistan

<sup>15</sup> United Nations 2008, 18; Ibid, 35; North Atlantic Treaty Alliance 2010, Topic: Afghanistan; United States Department of the Army 2007, Foreword; Peace enforcement operations involve “the application, with the authorization of the Security Council, of a range of coercive measures, including the use of military force.” While ISAF is not a proper UN peacekeeping force, the majority of ISAF troops use force only as a measure of last resort and do not conduct offensive operations. In contrast, a counterinsurgency mission is defined as “a mix of offensive, defensive, and stability operations conducted along multiple lines of operations.” Military troops under a counterinsurgency mandate are expected to offensively use armed force when necessary and not only in situations of direct self-defense.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations 2008, 31; Ibid, 34-35; North Atlantic Treaty Alliance 2010, ISAF Mandate

of engagement and its mandate is needed.<sup>17</sup> Regardless, in Afghanistan, it is vital that the United States and its allies work to maintain the legitimacy of the United Nations' mandate.

### ***The European Union***

The European Union is an economic and political entity that represents twenty-seven nation-states on the European continent.<sup>18</sup> While the regional organization intends to create a unified foreign security policy following the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon, many of EU nations are also members of NATO.<sup>19</sup> As a result, it is difficult to discuss the EU and NATO as two discrete entities vis-à-vis Afghanistan.

The EU is currently in a transition period as it seeks to absorb the fairly recent addition of ten Eastern European countries into its existing governance, economic and cultural structure. European electorates are far more concerned with their difficulties at home—"a sluggish economy, the crisis of the welfare state, and immigration and the assimilation of immigrants" into their societies—than the possibility that Afghanistan could become a future Somalia.<sup>20</sup> The recent economic recession has exposed the clear lack of consensus among EU politicians on the future of the organization. This has strained relations between EU member-states, and has severely reduced the ability of national governments to justify attention to any non-domestic affairs.<sup>21</sup> Given these domestic preoccupations, European politicians have been reluctant to divert political attention to Afghanistan.

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<sup>17</sup> Rice 2010

<sup>18</sup> European Union 2010, The History of the European Union

<sup>19</sup> European Union 2010, Glossary: Common Foreign and Security Policy; European Union 2010, Member States; North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2010, Member Countries

<sup>20</sup> Kramer 2008, 3; Somalia has become a classical model of the failed state in the international community. It is the point of origin for instability in the Horn of Africa region, serving as a safe haven for pirates and al Qaeda affiliate the al Shabab network. Failure to strengthen the capacity of the Afghan government to effectively perform its duties after the complete withdrawal of U.S. and ISAF troops could result in a similar institutional collapse in Afghanistan, further destabilizing a highly volatile region.

<sup>21</sup> Alderman 2010; Kulish 2010

Europeans have also displayed a tendency to prefer the usage of soft power—diplomacy, negotiation, and cultural influence—over the deployment of hard power. Dr. Stephan Kramar, a specialist on European politics and culture, has noted that EU members “are unwilling to accept that in some situations [such as Afghanistan] soft power alone is not sufficient.”<sup>22</sup> This preference underpins the general European disinclination to use armed force in Afghanistan. Public opinion polls taken from May through June 2009 show that over half of those surveyed in Germany (63%), France (62%), Poland (57%), Great Britain (51%) and Spain (50%) opposed sending additional troops to Afghanistan.<sup>23</sup> Informal television polls taken in late 2009 reported that 80% of those surveyed in France opposed the proposed ISAF troop surge; furthermore, a reported 70% of Germans wanted an immediate withdrawal of German troops.<sup>24</sup> This general public sentiment has rendered European politicians reluctant to commit military strength to the ISAF/NATO mission.

EU member governments appear far more comfortable with the non-military aspects of the reconstruction and stabilization process. Since 2002, the European Union and its member states have spent nearly US\$1.36 billion per year on civilian, political and development programs in Afghanistan.<sup>25</sup> The European Commission Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) has been active in Afghanistan since its creation in 1992 and has been generous in funding emergency crisis responses in the area.<sup>26</sup> Europeans have served as election monitors, supervised governance reforms and restructuring, contributed to rural development, and increased the healthcare

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<sup>22</sup> Kramer 2008, 2

<sup>23</sup> Auxier 2009

<sup>24</sup> AFP “Reinforcements” 2009; The Guardian Staff 2009

<sup>25</sup> Council of the European Union 2009; Europe provides reconstruction funds of nearly €1 billion/year to Afghanistan, converted at a rate of 1€ = U.S.\$1.3607

<sup>26</sup> European Commission Humanitarian Aid 2010

infrastructure in Afghanistan.<sup>27</sup> One of the EU's main contributions to the stabilization effort is the European Union Police Mission to Afghanistan (EUPOL).

EUPOL is comprised of police trainers from 21 EU states, Norway, Croatia, New Zealand and Canada who monitor, mentor, train, and advise local law enforcement personnel in implementing sustainable and effective rule of law in the Afghanistan.<sup>28</sup> This mission, regrettably, has suffered heavily from understaffing, underfunding, and a general lack of attention from its participating governments. In November 2009, a Dutch observer noted that “there is a lack of political will among [EU] member states and a lack of security on the ground for the EU to do the job properly.”<sup>29</sup> Other observers attribute the situation to a lack of shared vision and strategy by EU members in Afghanistan, a reflection of a wider debate that is currently raging in the EU.<sup>30</sup> Current voluntary commitments made at the 2010 London Conference will raise the total number of EUPOL staff to 471 trainers (309 international and 162 local personnel).<sup>31</sup> It remains to be seen if these trainers will be an effective force alongside ISAF/NATO, American and other bilateral training operations in creating a respectable and effective civilian police force in Afghanistan.

The EU established the Office of the Special Representative of the European Union for Afghanistan (EUSRA) in December 2001 to aid in the reconstruction and development of Afghan civil and political society. At the 2010 London Conference, the EU announced plans to centralize its presence in Kabul under the control of the EU Special Representative (EUSR)

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<sup>27</sup> Mock 2009; European Commission 2007, 3

<sup>28</sup> European Union Police Mission to Afghanistan 2010, 1 ; For further discussion of ANA/ANSF expansion, please see chapter 1.

<sup>29</sup> Dempsey 2009

<sup>30</sup> Mock 2009

<sup>31</sup> European Union Police Mission to Afghanistan 2010, 1; United Kingdom Government's Afghanistan Communications Team 2010, Contributions

though the consequences of such centralization remain to be seen.<sup>32</sup> Ideally, the EUSR in his expanded role will effectively oversee the coordination and execution of all EU-supported projects, liaise with his relevant local, regional, and international counterparts, and hold the EU mission accountable for quality results. If this centralization can be completed efficiently, it will allow the U.S. to count on the EU as a reliable international partner.

### ***North Atlantic Treaty Organization/International Security Assistance Force***

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is a military alliance based on the concept of mutual defense that draws its members primarily from the European continent. As a result, three-fourths of the twenty-eight members of the military alliance also belong to the European Union, including the three major nation-states that dominate the European continent—France, Germany and the United Kingdom.<sup>33</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup>, the treaty organization's political leadership, Atlantic Council, unanimously invoked Article 5 on behalf of the United States against al-Qaeda and its affiliates.<sup>34</sup> A central component of the mutual defense treaty organization's agreement, Article 5 states:

The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, Communiqué; Delegation of the European Union to Afghanistan 2010, Office of the Special Representative of the European Union for Afghanistan; European Union 2010, European Union Special Representatives; The current EUSR, Ambassador Ettore Francesco Sequi, ends his term of office on February 28, 2010. As of February 26, 2010, Mr. Sequi's successor has not yet been named.

<sup>33</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2010, Member Countries; Kramer 2008, 4

<sup>34</sup> Clinton 2010; The Atlantic Council is the political leadership of NATO, and was formerly known as the North Atlantic Council.

Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall immediately be reported to the Security Council. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.<sup>35</sup>

Under Article 5, NATO members are required to contribute troops to the mutual defense of the country attacked, and it was under this authorization that NATO began its U.S.-led offensive against the Taliban government in Afghanistan in October 2001.<sup>36</sup> In early August 2003, the UN authorized NATO to take operational command of ISAF in Afghanistan.<sup>37</sup> As of February 2010, ISAF has nearly 86,000 troops from 41 contributing countries.<sup>38</sup>

Out of the European members, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy and Poland have the highest troop contributions in Afghanistan.<sup>39</sup> Disturbingly, the most recent Pew Global Attitudes polls taken in mid-2009 found that less than half of those surveyed in France (50%), Germany (48%), the United Kingdom (46%), and Poland (30%) supported keeping troops in Afghanistan.<sup>40</sup> As a result, these governments have become reluctant to openly and fully support an unpopular conflict with military ISAF contributions. This was clear in December 2009 when President Sarkozy and Chancellor Merkel announced they would make their troop commitments to ISAF after the January 2010 London Conference, postponing their replies to President Obama's and NATO General Secretary Anders Fough Rasmussen's calls for a military surge in Afghanistan.<sup>41</sup> The January 2010 London Conference was not a pledging conference and the voluntary troop contributions were even less than expected, with the majority of the promised

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<sup>35</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization 1949, Article 5

<sup>36</sup> King 2008, 13

<sup>37</sup> International Security Assistance Force 2010, History; For discussion of ISAF's political and military coordination/PRTs, please refer to the previous chapter in this section..

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, Troop Numbers and Contributions

<sup>39</sup> International Security Assistance Force 2010, Troop Numbers and Contributions; Colvin 2009

<sup>40</sup> Pew Research Center 2009, Support for War in Afghanistan

<sup>41</sup> The Guardian Staff 2009

troops earmarked for ANA/ANSF training programs. The United Kingdom pledged an extra 500 combat troops with the condition that other NATO countries also boost their force levels.

Germany pledged 850 troops, contingent on Bundestag approval, while France agreed to send 80 additional military trainers to Afghanistan.<sup>42</sup> Within a span of days, the Dutch coalition government collapsed over a raging debate regarding the possible extension of Dutch military presence in Afghanistan beyond their August 2010 withdrawal date.<sup>43</sup>

The mission in Afghanistan does not enjoy strong support with domestic audiences outside of Europe either. The 2009 Pew Global Attitudes Project report found that of those surveyed, 55% of the Canadian public opposed a military surge in Afghanistan. In early October of the same year, a small-scale study by Angus Reid Strategies found similar sentiments.<sup>44</sup> The severe domestic unpopularity of the Afghanistan mission has led Canadian Prime Minister Steven Harper to openly declare Canada's intentions to withdraw all 2,380 of its service members by the end of 2011.<sup>45</sup> Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has firmly ruled out an increase in the number of Australian troops sent to Afghanistan, though he did pledge financial commitment to the cause.<sup>46</sup> These announcements, combined with the steady drop of troop contribution levels, are an alarming indicator that the United States is at risk of losing support from many of its main allies.

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<sup>42</sup> MacDonald 2010; Spiegel 2010 ; AFP "NATO" 2009; Bryant 2010; Associated Press 2010; Deutsche Welle 2010; On February 9, 2010, Chancellor Merkel's cabinet approved all commitments made by Germany at the 2010 London conference. On February 26, 2010, the lower house of Germany's Parliament (the Bundestag) voted to approve the commitments (429-111, with 46 abstentions).

<sup>43</sup> nrc handelsblad Staff 2010; Radio Netherlands Worldwide 2010; Tyler 2010

<sup>44</sup> Pew Research Center 2009, Support for War in Afghanistan; Angus Reid Strategies 2009, Support for Afghan Mission drops in UK, Canada

<sup>45</sup> Gillies 2009

<sup>46</sup> Landers 2009

Beyond military contributions, many ISAF members have had previous experience with reconstruction and stabilization projects due to their extensive history of UN-peacekeeping involvement.<sup>47</sup> Besides the European Union's commitment to humanitarian and democratic causes around the world, European nations have a notable degree of institutionalized civilian memory with regard to reconstruction and stabilization operations. The knowledge is diffused among internal agencies of individual governments and various regional organizations such as ECHO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), but the civilian expertise in these areas of governance and economics can be mobilized by ISAF/NATO allies.<sup>48</sup>

So far, our NATO allies have continued to support stabilization and counterinsurgency efforts in Afghanistan in the face of significant disapproval from their electorates. It is entirely possible that the Dutch government will not be the last coalition government to fall if the United States does not take action. If the United States is to continue to rely on its allies to provide comprehensive support in Afghanistan, there is a crucial need to bolster international civil commitment for the ISAF mission in Afghanistan.

There is also an urgent need for NATO/ISAF forces to communicate and coordinate with American OEF troops. Besides the danger of friendly fire incidents, the main issue is that Afghan civilians have difficulty distinguishing between ISAF and American military uniforms, so the conduct of one military force reflects on the perception of the other.<sup>49</sup> There are currently two separate chains of command, both militarily and politically, that exist in Afghanistan: the U.S. and NATO/ISAF. The previous chapter addresses the crucial need to unify these two chains

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<sup>47</sup> Hunter 2008, 47

<sup>48</sup> Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe 2010; Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada 2010; Zentrum für Internationale Friedenseinsätze/Center for International Peace Operations 2010; United Kingdom Stabilisation Unit 2010; Pierson 2009

<sup>49</sup> Lamb 2009, 7



of command, yet also to preserve the U.S. ability to conduct effective counterinsurgency operations at the military level. In support of these efforts on the military side of counterinsurgency strategy, the U.S Department of State needs to push for the coordination and collaboration of military and political matters within the Atlantic Council and among its member states.

### ***The Global Islamic Community***

Since the beginning of his term in office, President Obama has emphasized the need to improve American relations with Muslim majority nations and with the international Islamic community as a whole. Relations in the past eight years with the global Muslim community have been strained over U.S. operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and exacerbated by continued tensions with Iran as well as the conflict in Israel-Palestine. On his first overseas tour, President Obama visited Turkey with a clear message that, “the United States is not, and will never be, at war with Islam.”<sup>50</sup> This point was reiterated two months later at Cairo University, where President Obama stressed that the U.S. presence in Afghanistan began as a war of necessity, not a war of choice. He further elaborated on American commitments to collaborate with Muslim states, not only in the war against violent extremism, but also on social and economic development projects.<sup>51</sup>

With regard to Afghanistan, the State Department should commit all possible resources to reiterate and expand on President Obama’s message. This agency is responsible for the translation of policy promises into concrete actions.<sup>52</sup> American motivations in Afghanistan have never been adequately, and in some cases accurately, explicated to the international community

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<sup>50</sup> White House 2009, Remarks By the President To the Turkish Parliament

<sup>51</sup> White House 2009, Remarks By the President at Cairo University

<sup>52</sup> Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan 2010, 29-30

in general, particularly to the roughly one billion Muslims living across the globe. This failure of communication has hampered U.S. ability to strengthen ties with the moderate Muslim majority, weakened U.S. soft power<sup>53</sup> in the world, and marred American political and moral legitimacy with the international Muslim community.

### ***The Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (SCR/S)***

The Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (SCR/S) was established in 2004 to enhance the U.S. institutional capacity to respond to complex crises abroad. The agency's core mission is "to lead, coordinate and institutionalize U.S. Government civilian capacity to prevent or prepare for post-conflict situations, and to help stabilize and reconstruct societies in transition from conflict or civil strife."<sup>54</sup> As a component of its mission, SCR/S established and manages the newly created Civilian Response Corps (CRC). The purpose of CRC is to train, manage, and deploy civilian experts to support overseas stabilization and reconstruction operations. While the agency has been institutionalized into the SCR/S annual budget as of 2008, the CRC is in its early development stages with insufficient staff and funds to carry out its specified mandate. The SCR/S also coordinates U.S. efforts to collaborate with international partners on stabilization and reconstruction operations, including the UN, EU, and NATO.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Bohorquez 2005; Former Dean of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, Dr. Joseph Nye, defines soft power as a country's ability to influence events and the actions of others through persuasion and attraction. In contrast, hard power is definite as a country's ability to influence events and the actions of others through military or financial coercion.

<sup>54</sup> U.S. Department of State 2010, Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization: Introduction

<sup>55</sup> Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization 2010, Introduction to the Civilian Response Corps; Ibid, Budget and Legislative Issues; U.S. Department of State 2010, Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization: What We Do

### ***Bureau of International Organization Affairs***

Established in 1949, the Bureau of International Organization Affairs (IO) is responsible for U.S. participation in the UN, its specialized agencies, and other international organizations. In these international organizations, the IO Bureau is responsible for advocating strategic U.S. policies and interests through multilateral engagements, and ensuring that these organizations remain effective through appropriate reform. Over the past decade, the Bureau supported and monitored UN action on management and accountability reform in an effort to improve efficiency and transparency within the organization and its agencies.<sup>56</sup>

### **U.S. INTERESTS**

The United States has a vested interest in preventing al Qaeda and its affiliates from reestablishing Afghanistan as a safe haven for extremist ideologies. To this end, significant and consistent levels of economic, social, and political development aid must be given to the Afghan government and people. The United States does not have the budgetary or logistical abilities to support these development programs independently; the international community's support is required to sustain these programs until the Afghan government is able to fully function as a capable state actor. As the United States bears the brunt of insurgent attacks, international reluctance to commit to the counterinsurgency mission in Afghanistan will cost more American service members their lives. The United States needs to make it clear that it is in the international community's interest for Afghanistan to be a stable and prosperous nation-state that is not a haven for extremist ideologies of any creed.

The international community's support is also vital to ensuring the moral legitimacy of the United States in the world, particularly with the global Islamic community, as American

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<sup>56</sup> U.S. Department of State 2010, The History of the International Affairs Bureau

forces continue to conduct counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations alongside civilian reconstruction and development projects. American moral legitimacy is heavily tied to the success or failure of the Afghan government to become a trustworthy and capable institution that protects and serves the interest of its people. The United States needs to ensure that American moral and political capital, financial investment, and the sacrifices of our military service members are not made in vain. To this end, the State Department should advocate for effective and immediate goals that unify international and national efforts to build a stable Afghan government and society, and elucidate a standing commitment to support the Afghan people and state.

### **OPTIONS**

In pursuit of advancing American interests in Afghanistan, the U.S. Department of State has the following options to advocate for support within the international community:

#### ***United Nations***

1. The United States requests that the UNSC allow ISAF an exemption from Chapter VII's peace-enforcement mandate. Counterinsurgency missions are not peace-enforcement missions, and to hobble the effectiveness of ISAF troops with a strict interpretation of Chapter VII is not only counterproductive in Afghanistan, but will increase the risk of casualties if ISAF troops can only act in self-defense and cannot conduct necessary offensive missions to clear and secure areas of hostile forces. This option will risk the strong likelihood of provoking harsh opposition from China and Russia on the UNSC.
2. The United States coordinates with UNAMA to ensure the widespread and equal distribution of aid across all Afghan provinces. This aims to avoid the overconcentration of development and humanitarian aid in a single area, which may be perceived as a slight

to the populations of other provinces. In order to accomplish this, SCR/S and IO will work in conjunction with each other: SCR/S to carry out the actual process of aid allocation and distribution, IO to advocate at UN headquarters for equal provision of total aid to provinces that are not under U.S. control. SCR/S should serve as the lead agency in the implementation of this option in the field, with IO in a supportive role at UN headquarters.

3. The United States advocates stronger transparency and coordination within the UNAMA concerning its aid and development programs. An increase in transparency regarding the use of aid funds will allow contributing nations to hold the UNAMA accountable for progress and allow for easier coordination between UN agencies on reconstruction and development projects. This will also allow the distribution of funds across a wide spectrum of programs. Given its expertise with UN bureaucracy, the IO Bureau would be the lead agency on this option.
4. The United States advocates for the implementation of UNAMA's anticorruption programs for the Afghan government. Rampant corruption erodes the Afghan government's legitimacy with its electorate and undermines the international community's work to increase Afghan state capacity to deliver basic goods and services to its populace. In conjunction, the U.S. should also strongly support the distribution of humanitarian aid via the Afghan government whenever possible, rather than the use of direct aid that circumvents local authorities.
5. The United States launches a global public relations campaign that elucidates American motivations in Afghanistan and progress made to date on reconstruction and development

projects in the nation-state. The goal is to improve perceptions of the U.S. around the world and to demonstrate American commitment to its stated priorities and promises.

6. The United States permits ISAF to remain at status quo under a strict peace-enforcement mandate. The legitimacy conferred by UNSCR 1386 must be preserved at all costs if the NATO-led ISAF mission is to maintain any degree of international political legitimacy. Furthermore, American bilateral ties with China and Russia should not be unnecessarily strained by U.S. policy in Afghanistan. The political and tactical flexibility of a relaxed Chapter VII mandate is not worth compromising the unity of the UNSC. In this situation, NATO/ISAF forces will be asked to play a supportive or neutral role in the American OEF-led counterinsurgency mission in Afghanistan.
7. The United States maintains the status quo in Afghanistan and continues operating with the existing systems of accountability, transparency, and coordination. The President has set a military withdrawal deadline in July 2011, which is a limited timeline for advocating and implementing reform. American political capital should be directed to focus on other causes that would have a stronger possibility of success within this timeframe.
8. The United States withdraws from actively engaging the United Nations, opting for a unilateral approach towards conducting counterinsurgency efforts in Afghanistan. Time is of the essence, and the U.S. does not have the luxury of negotiation in the international forum. The U.S. needs to be able to rely on dependable, effective systems of coordination and operations. As the U.S. has direct control only over American policies and agencies, the State Department should focus on streamlining interagency cooperation and coordination within the U.S. government rather than on the international level.

## ***European Union***

1. The United States spearheads a public relations campaign that targets domestic electorates with information about the progress made in Afghanistan since 2001. The main targets of these campaign would be France, Germany, and to a lesser extent, the United Kingdom. These three nation-states are the major influences in Europe, and an increase in public support for the mission in Afghanistan among these populations could serve as a bellwether for European public opinion. An increase in public support for the Afghan mission would grant European politicians the political capital to provide long-term military and financial support to the Afghan government and people. This could also have the beneficial side effect of increasing the aid accountability as electorates pressure for effective and efficient funding of EUPOL and other civil development projects. This option does risk the creation of a sharp increase in European public frustration with the inherently slow pace of counterinsurgency missions, and could accelerate European electorate demands for European troops to withdraw from Afghanistan.
2. The United States strongly encourages and supports the EU in coordinating its projects under a centralized authority, such as the EUSRA, in order to ensure sufficient funding for all necessary stabilization and development projects. While the United States cannot make EU policy, it can advise that for the sake of efficiency, European Union members should work cooperatively with each other to reduce duplication of labor and to put into practice the EU's attempts to work collaboratively on defense and security issues.
3. Through SCR/S, the United States coordinates reconstruction and development projects with the EUSRA in Kabul to allow for effective and widespread provision of funds and training across Afghanistan. In order to avoid oversaturation of aid in a particular area

and/or overfunding of only a handful of programs, the U.S. and the EU would share information about their funded projects and programs. This option relies heavily on the EUSRA's ability to quickly and efficiently centralize its operations under the control of the EUSR.

4. The United States refrains from interfering in any way in the domestic political debates in the European Union, even those related to American interests. The European nation-states are sovereign governments and fully functional democracies; the U.S. must respect that sovereignty. The European Union has the sovereign right to determine the type and extent of its involvement in Afghanistan and must take full responsibility for these decisions.
5. The United States ends any expectation of EU involvement in Afghanistan due to the EU's preoccupation with its domestic policies, its dysfunctional EUPOL mission, and its inability to elucidate and implement a coherent foreign policy and security agenda. While the EU has made financial and humanitarian commitments to Afghanistan, the political union is clearly unable to become an international actor at this time. Thus U.S. should not exert political capital on persuading the EU to actively contribute to the stabilization and reconstruction mission in Afghanistan.

***North Atlantic Treaty Organization/International Security Assistance Force***

1. The United States launches a coordinated public relations campaign in all NATO member states with a strong focus on progress made in Afghanistan. The intent is to explain to the electorates the importance of the ISAF mission and why NATO believes it is in the vital interests of American and European security that Afghans build a strong and peaceful society. The campaign should carefully stress the importance of long-term commitment



to the ISAF mission on the basis on human rights, humanitarian aid, and respect for human dignity. If the NATO/ISAF public can be convinced of the legitimacy of ISAF's counterinsurgency mission, this may result not only in increased financial support, but also an increase in troop levels by NATO members.

2. The United States continues to push for a reduction in caveats attached to committed troops in Afghanistan. As the previous chapter discusses in greater detail, caveats have severely hampered ISAF's ability to adapt quickly in counterinsurgency situations. The United States should ask countries that continue to use caveats to dedicate their troops to ANA/ANSF training. This will allow ISAF to effectively use all military troops stationed in Afghanistan for either active counterinsurgency operations or long-term training operations, and prevent the idleness of any military troops that are forbidden from combat operations in Afghanistan.
3. The United States encourages ISAF/NATO allies to dispatch its civilian expertise in the areas of economic development and reconstruction to Afghanistan. This utilizes a vital resource that is essential to the successful redevelopment of the Afghan government and society in a situation where the American equivalent, the CRC, is in its early stages of development. This civilian deployment can be used as a substitution for ISAF/NATO military combat troop contribution if necessary.
4. The United States coordinates with NATO/ISAF on humanitarian aid missions in combat areas through a partnership between SCR/S and NATO's Senior Civilian Representative.<sup>57</sup> This would also be in conjunction with UNAMA activities in

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<sup>57</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2010, NATO'S Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan; In the field, NATO's Senior Civilian Representative is responsible for maintaining clear and efficient lines of communication between NATO HQ in Brussels, the Atlantic Council, and the ISAF troops. The Senior Civilian Representative is also responsible for liaising with the GIRA, UNAMA, EU and assorted regional actors. In many respects, this

Afghanistan. The intent would be to allow the execution of minimal humanitarian aid operations in areas where civilian humanitarian agencies, such as USAID, UNAMA and EU agencies, would not be able to safely operate due to active conflict.

5. The United States actively pressures NATO allies for troop contributions as it is allowed to do under the auspices of Article 5, which the Atlantic Council unanimously invoked immediately after September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. As the mandate of Article 5 remains in force, the United States has a legitimate claim to exercise this right within NATO.
6. The U.S. requests that NATO forces operate separately from ISAF forces in Afghanistan. While this option runs the risk of invalidating UN legitimacy, this choice would also allow NATO combat troops to effectively execute their counterinsurgency mission without the restraints of a peace-enforcement mission. Combat troops would be allowed to proactively defend themselves against forewarned attacks, thus reducing the risk of allied casualties.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The United States needs to emphasize communication, coordination and collaboration with its international partners to reduce confusion, increase unity of effort, and avoid working at cross-purposes with each other. The State Department's goal is to strengthen American soft power in the world and to merge it with our military power. To achieve this end, the SCR/S will need to spearhead coordination on a massive international scale with a wide variety of international, regional, state and local entities. It will not be an easy task, but it is necessary to build a multinational coalition to provide reliable and long-term support to the government and people of Afghanistan.

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position is NATO's equivalent of the U.S. State Department as this person represents the official political leadership of NATO in Kabul.

The end goal is for the international community to transfer all responsibility for security and development to the Afghan government, and to take a long-term supporting role in maintaining the GIRoA's legitimacy with its people. The State Department must ensure that whatever actions are undertaken in the execution of these recommendations concerning American ties with the international community, all of these policies serve to strengthen the capacity and legitimacy of the Afghan government to protect and serve its people.

### ***United Nations***

It is vital that the United States addresses the situation in Afghanistan from a multilateral approach. To this end, the State Department should advocate the implementation of options 1-5 at the United Nations (discussed in order of priority):

### **Coordination**

SCR/S should actively cooperate and coordinate development and humanitarian aid distribution with the UNAMA and other international organizations that operate in Afghanistan (option 2). Developmental support must avoid the perception of overconcentration in a single area or appear to favor a single ethnic group, which may be perceived as a slight to the populations of other provinces and/or ethnicities and further complicate the situation. SCR/S will serve as the primary representative of American interagency coordination efforts to the UNAMA, EU and other international organizations in the field, while the IO Bureau will serve as a political liaison at UN headquarters. Given the sheer number of actors involved, this will be a complicated, but worthwhile task. Close coordination and collaboration with the international community will allow the U.S. and its allies to efficiently allocate resources and manpower to support the most effective reconstruction and development projects in Afghanistan.

## **Anticorruption**

In order to avoid undermining the authority and capacity of the GIRoA, humanitarian and development aid needs to be funneled through the relevant government ministries. International donors will want guarantees that humanitarian and development funds will not be diverted from their intended purpose by corruption officials. To this end, the State Department should support UNAMA's efforts to counter the rampant corruption that has paralyzed the ability of the GIRoA to function effectively (option 4). High-level corruption undermines the trust of the Afghan people and of the international community in the Afghan government, which results in decreased trust in the Kabul administration's fiscal responsibility. If corruption is allowed to go unchecked, the international community will resort to the use of direct aid to the Afghan people, circumventing the authority of government ministries and undermining any progress made in government capacity-building. A trustworthy government is a stable government, and it is in the U.S. interest for the GIRoA to become a stable and legitimate government that is independent of international aid.

## **Transparency**

The U.S. should support UN reform measures that would improve its current transparency and accountability practices (option 3). This recommendation should be pushed in conjunction with the previous recommendation. Given its extensive history with UN bureaucracy, the IO Bureau would be the lead office on this matter. The United Nations should be asked to set an example for the Afghan government in transparency and accountability. Implementation of this option will be a slow process, but the results will be worthwhile.

One of the main benefits of transparency between UN agencies will be the opportunity for stronger cooperation and coordination between all twenty UN agencies involved in

Afghanistan so that humanitarian aid will be evenly distributed throughout the nation. This will allow a wide variety of local projects to receive equal, sufficient funding from the international community. Increased transparency will also permit for greater accountability of UN programs by donor governments. This measure is intended to motivate the UN to higher efficiency rates, to lower organizational costs, and to avoid extensive use of outside specialists, rather than local experts in Afghanistan.

### **Communication**

The U.S. Department of State should launch a global public relations campaign that elucidates American motivations in Afghanistan and progress made to date on reconstruction and development projects in the country (option 5). The U.S. needs to refute al Qaeda and extremist propaganda that inaccurately portrays American motivations and undermines international support for U.S. policy in Afghanistan. Al Qaeda and its affiliates exploit the miscommunication between moderate Muslim communities and the U.S. to foster resentment against the West and to recruit people into radical ideology. The U.S. can erode al Qaeda's recruitment base by providing accurate and honest information that demonstrates U.S. commitment to President Obama's stated intentions in Ankara, Turkey and Cairo University in Egypt. While this information campaign is an essential component of basic counterinsurgency doctrine, successful execution of this option will improve perceptions of the U.S. in Muslim communities around the world and strengthen American moral legitimacy in the international community.

### **Chapter VII**

The United States should request that the Security Council redefine the rules of engagement for ISAF combat troops (option 1). While UN peace-enforcement mandate is the most proactive and robust of all possible mandates in its authorization for the use of force, many

ISAF troops refrain from the use of armed force, except in cases of direct self-defense. This increases the risk of injury and death among ISAF troops and hampers U.S. counterinsurgency efforts to actively protect the populace from hostile forces. The counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan is clearly a joint military-civilian operation that will, on occasion, require the use of offensive armed force to maintain peace and security. This request would allow the NATO-led ISAF to function effectively in a fluid combat situation while maintaining UN legitimacy. The expected objections of Russia and China should be countered with the assertion that proper counterinsurgency tactics refrain from the excessive use of force, even during offensive operations, as exemplified by the strict rules of engagement that govern the current American-led operation in Marja, Afghanistan.

### ***European Union***

The State Department should advocate for the implementation of options 1-3 to increase the European Union's involvement in Afghanistan:

### **Communication**

The United States needs to present a convincing case to our European allies, especially France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, that long-term involvement in Afghanistan is not only necessary, but worthwhile (option 1). These three countries are Europe's traditional bellwether nation-states; the attitudes of these states' politicians and electorates are often representative of general European attitude. The U.S. cannot afford to lose European support. The U.S. Department of State needs to address what are essentially global concerns that Afghanistan is a pointless conflict, one that is undeserving of long-term commitment and support. By launching an organized public relations campaign that stresses the economic, social, and political progress made in Afghanistan, the United States has the strongest likelihood to increase

domestic public support in the global community, particularly in ISAF-participant nations. An increase in domestic public support will allow governments to expand their contributions, both militarily and financially, to the counterinsurgency situation in Afghanistan.

### **Coordination**

The United States should strongly encourage and support the EU's centralization efforts of its development and humanitarian aid programs under the control of the EUSRA (option 2 & 3). This will allow the SCR/S to directly liaise with its EU counterpart over effective aid distribution policies so that all of the major international organizations operating within Afghanistan are aware of each other's activities. The intention is for development aid to be equally spread through the country, rather than having projects and programs overwhelmingly concentrated in certain areas or regions. This is closely linked with the aforementioned recommendation for extensive American collaboration with the UNAMA through SCR/S.

### ***North Atlantic Treaty Organization/International Security Assistance Force***

The State Department should advocate for the implementation of options 1-4 at the Atlantic Council to increase NATO's effectiveness in executing its Afghanistan mission:

### **Communication**

The United States should create and sponsor a public relations campaign for NATO member states (option 1). The intent of this recommendation is to explain to these states' electorates the importance and viability of the ISAF mission in Afghanistan. Subtle emphasis should be placed on the progress made in Afghanistan by Afghans over the past eight years, and the message needs to stress the importance of consistent, reliable commitment to the region's stability on the basis of human rights, humanitarian concern, and respect for human dignity.

If the electorates of NATO's member states can be convinced of the legitimacy of ISAF's counterinsurgency mission, this may result not only in increased financial support, but also an increase in troop force levels by NATO members. The implementation of this option is closely related to improving American communication with the international public as a whole, to explain American intentions in the region, and to refute false accusations and/or inaccurate information about U.S. motivations in Afghanistan.

### **Coordination**

By definition, successful counterinsurgency missions involve extensive collaboration between civilian and military leaders. Coordination between the U.S. and ISAF in both combat and civilian operations cannot be overemphasized (option 4). Through a partnership between SCR/S and NATO's Senior Civilian Representative, the U.S. and ISAF should work closely to provide adequate security and execute an effective counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan. The U.S. State Department needs to advocate for closer communication between NATO's civilian political leadership of the Atlantic Council in Brussels, Belgium and its military command center in Mons, Belgium.

Beyond military operations, the U.S. and ISAF are the two main forces that are capable of operating in less than secure circumstances and have borne the burden of distributing humanitarian aid in active conflict zones. It is likely that OEF and ISAF troops will continue to play this role, but a greater degree of cooperation and coordination means that aid will be distributed more evenly and effectively across Afghan provinces. The role of non-military assistance will increase in OEF and ISAF-conducted stability operations as counterinsurgency doctrine is utilized in all situations on the ground. SCR/S must prepare both CRC and non-



CRC/American military personnel to adequately handle the complex demands of coordinating multiple agencies in the field.

### **Caveats**

Caveats will always be a part of NATO's consensus-building culture. It is highly likely that NATO allies will continue to use caveats in Afghanistan due to a lack of adequate equipment or proper training, and/or domestic public opposition towards certain types of military operations. This does not mean the U.S. should cease advocating for the reduction of caveat usage in regards to the ISAF mission; in this situation, the State Department should encourage countries that attach caveats to their troops to ensure that their contributions to the ISAF mission facilitate the counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan (Option 2). For example, countries that are unable to deploy combat troops to Afghanistan may be asked to contribute financial funds to ISAF or provide civilian personnel for ISAF's ANSF training programs. All NATO member contributions, however token or symbolic, should be treated with appreciation. The main goal is to increase NATO member states' support for the ISAF mission, so it is important to avoid the perception of one ally being valued over another.

### **Civilian Surge**

Many ISAF/NATO members have a long history of civilian reconstruction and development expertise that could be vital to the counterinsurgency mission in Afghanistan. As noted in the background, the American equivalent is the CRC, which is still in the early stages of implementation, and cannot be useful in Afghanistan on a large scale in the immediate future. Given that many European members' preference is for greater involvement in the civilian side of counterinsurgency rather than military combat operations, the State Department should strongly encourage these members to increase the number of trainers and civil experts on the ground in

Afghanistan (Option 3). The current military surge is a short-term situation that aims to provide enough security in the country for basic political, economic and social developments to occur.

However, in the long-term, a civilian surge of expertise, training and mentoring of Afghans in all imaginable subjects and fields is necessary for the creation of a stable and prosperous Afghan nation-state.





## Conclusion

There are no easy solutions to the myriad problems currently facing the United States in Afghanistan. Eight years after the American-led offensive, militant groups such as the Taliban and al Qaeda are resurgent, the Afghan national government is corrupt and remains unstable, and many Afghans continue to live in at least some measure of poverty and fear. However, despite the difficulties of the current situation, hope is not yet lost. United States objectives to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda and its affiliates in Afghanistan, cripple this network's capacity to threaten the United States in the future, and assist Afghanistan in building a secure and stable nation-state are still achievable.

This report is a roadmap for the Department of State as its leaders decide how to confront and resolve the multitude of interrelated issues currently hampering the achievement of American goals in Afghanistan, and provides feasible recommendations as to how to meet these challenges. It is imperative that policy implementation be matched with a clear long-term vision of its potential consequences and be accommodating of the rapidly-changing conditions in the field. The nature of any successful counterinsurgency requires an enormous degree of flexibility and fluidity in practical implementation, a steady political commitment to the mission at hand, and an unwavering resolve to bring stability and peace to a region. As the center of American diplomatic power, the Department of State will be the agency that spearheads United States efforts to eradicate extremism in the region and create a prosperous the future for entire generations in Afghanistan. Civilian political leadership and clarity of vision will be vital in achieving victory in this counterinsurgency.

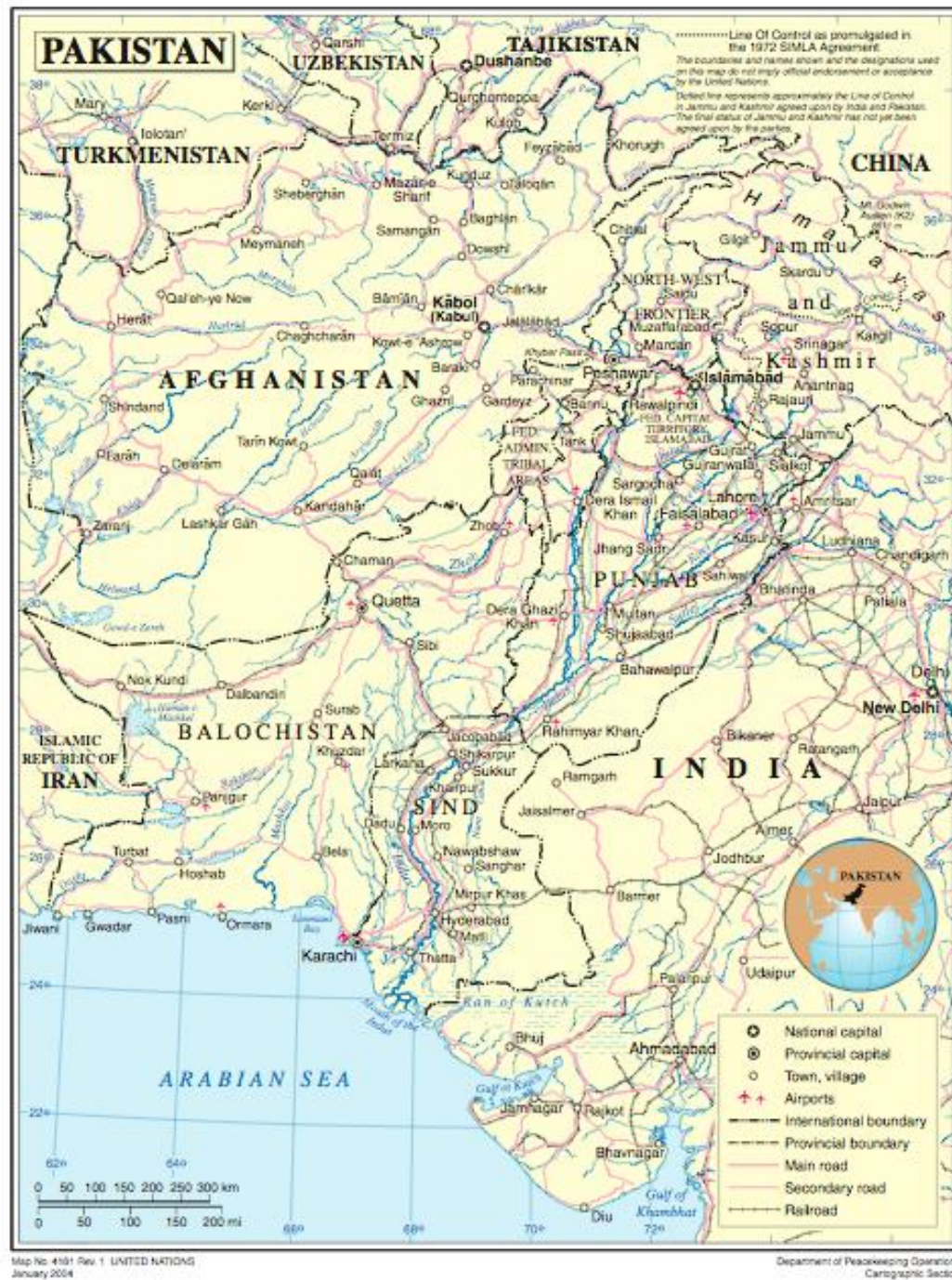
As the United States nears a full decade of involvement in Afghanistan without any concrete assurances of success, it is crucial to reevaluate strategic frameworks and design, and to implement clear-sighted American policies toward Afghanistan and its neighbors that focus on achievable goals. In doing so, the United States must reaffirm its commitment to the Afghan and Pakistani people through implementing a civilian surge, building the capacity of the Afghan government and security forces, and practicing policies that drive toward a full and responsible transfer of power to the Afghan government. Only with this clear-minded strategic framework can the United States hope to return from the brink of a descent into chaos and ensure long-term peace, stability and prosperity for the United States and the people of Afghanistan.







Figure 2: Map of Pakistan



Source: United Nations







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